

Family

### **3. Family**

#### **(1) Sociological Theories on Family**

##### **a. Why Do People Fall in Love?**

Giddens, Anthony, *Sociology*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Polity Press

Giddens, Anthony, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Polity Press

The answer at first seems obvious. Love and romance provide some of the most intense feelings we ever experience.

Falling in love seems to be an experience arising from universal human emotions.

It seems natural for a couple who fall in love also to want personal and sexual fulfillment in their relationship, perhaps by marrying and/or starting a family.

Now, those facts seem quite 'natural', but sociologists say they are very unusual. Beginning a long-term partnership, or starting a family, with someone with whom you have fallen in love is not an experience that most people across the world have.

The idea of basing a long-term partnership on ***romantic love*** did not become widespread in European societies until fairly recently, and has never existed at all in many other cultures where more ***material or pragmatic reasons*** take precedence.

Only in modern times have ***love and sexuality come to be seen as closely connected*** in the Western industrialized societies. John Boswell, a historian of medieval Europe, has remarked on the ***unusual nature of modern ideas about romantic love***. In Europe during the Middle Ages, virtually no one married for love; there was even a medieval saying: 'To love one's wife with one's emotion is adultery.'

In those days and for centuries afterwards, men and women married mainly in order to keep property in the hands of the family or to raise children for working on the family farm.

People sometimes had sexual affairs outside marriage, but these inspired few of the emotions we currently associate with love. Romantic love was regarded as at best a weakness and at worst a kind of sickness.

Modern attitudes today are almost completely the opposite. Boswell quite rightly speaks of the 'virtual obsession of modern industrial culture' with romantic love. (Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., pp.329-330)

Marriage was never in the past based on intimacy and emotional communication, and although this was important to a good marriage, it was not the foundation of it. For the most modern couple, it is. (Giddens, *ibid*)

Love, emotion and intimacy are not natural phenomena.

They are socially (= intersubjectively) constructed realities.

## **b. Functionalism**

Functionalism is the 1st generation of sociological theory of the family.

Functionalism focuses on the function of an institution (a structure) that contributes to the working of the social system.

The main function of the nuclear family is reproduction, childrearing and initial socialization.

## c. Feminism

Before the 1970s, the standard vision of the family was that it was a harmonious and egalitarian world based on the emotion of love.

Feminists challenged this view and dominated sociology during the 70s and 80s.

Different from the preceding studies, feminists were interested in the *internal structure* of the family.

## **Major Feminist Points of View**

### 1) The Domestic Division of Labor

This was caused by

(a) industrial capitalism and

(b) patriarchy.

This distinction is related to that of paid and unpaid work.

## 2) Unequal Power Relationships

This is related to domestic violence and abuse.

## 3) Emotional Labor

Catering activities as domestic work are emotional labor used to maintain personal relationships.

### **c. Intimacy**

“This is a relatively new word in the sociological lexicon and, although sociologists have long researched the "private sphere," or families, or marriage, they have not seen intimacy as a proper focus for sociological theory. This changed, initially with the rise of feminist research which began to identify close personal, heterosexual, relationships as possible sites of oppression for women. In some senses feminist work prized open the black box of close personal relationships and began to challenge the assumption that intimacy was simply personal and/or the realm of psychoanalysis or psychology.

The mainstream sociological revolution in understanding intimacy came, however, with Anthony Giddens, in *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), who called to attention the ways in which the qualities of personal relationships were changing in late modern times. He introduced concepts of "confluent love" and the "pure relationship." The former refers to the quality of a relationship in which it is the mutual sharing of thoughts and feelings that matters most. Confluent love is said to be based on equality, while the more traditional idea of romantic love is based on gender inequality. The pure relationship signifies one which will only last as long as it is mutually fulfilling. Under such a regime it is seen as acceptable to end a relationship which no longer meets one's needs and interests.

In constructing these models of contemporary relationships, Giddens owes much to earlier feminist work which criticized the power imbalances between men and women. Indeed, he argues that it is women who are demanding these "new" kinds of relationships and who are leaving marriages if they are not satisfied with the quality of intimacy, that is established. Moreover, Giddens argues that it is same-sex relationships which are in the vanguard of the new form of intimacy, because they are not based on traditional understandings of gender difference.

Giddens's intimacy is, however, mainly a sexual intimacy; his focus is on the couple, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Other sociological discussions of intimacy have broadened the concept to include *friendship*, intergenerational relationships, and parent-child relationships. Thus Lynn Jamieson in *Intimacy* (1998) speaks of "disclosing intimacy" which is of a different sort to bodily or sexual intimacy and can encompass rather different sorts of close relationships. Work on friendship is perhaps the most interesting development because the predominant sociological emphasis on family life and relationships has tended to obscure the significance of intimate friendships.

Friends have been treated as being of less significance than family members, and friendships as less enduring than marriages. Social factors such as high rates of divorce, the growth of single person households, and the rise of childlessness have combined to ignite a re-appraisal of friendship as an important sociological category. Studies of friendship and friendship networks (often based on the workplace) have replaced studies of communities (based on where people live), and contemporary friendships are now understood to be relationships which endure notwithstanding the fact that individuals may have relationships based on sexual intimacy as well. (The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology)

# Privacy

“In contemporary thought, privacy is closely associated with individualism, because private space outside the public realm is assumed to be important for cultivating and protecting the individual from social scrutiny and political surveillance....

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1958), Hannah Arendt argued that in modern society **people are forced out of a shared public world into a lonely, isolated, and interior space**. In their isolation, pressures towards social uniformity undermine their individual autonomy, and they are psychologically exposed to totalitarian forces. According to Arendt, this clear distinction between private and public has been confused in modern times by the emergence of “the social”. In modern society, people are bound together, but these common threads are paradoxically the private desires of consumption and a common mass culture. **In a mass society, the social becomes the basis for mass conformity** and the moral calling of the political sinks into petty politics. The noble art of politics as a life of virtue becomes merely a trade in power and influence.(ibid.)

Arendt's vision of modern society was debated by David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd. A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950), in which he contrasted the tradition-directed personalities who are conformists and merely reproduce traditional culture with the inner-directed personality who emerged with the Renaissance and the Reformation. By contrast, the **other-directed personality** of modern America (and other societies dominated by the mass media) craves **approval from others**. The social relations of the other-directed character are mediated by the flow of mass communication, and their demand for social approval is an aspect of liberal, middle-class socialization.”(ibid.)

## **(2) History of the Family**

### **a. Eros and Trust**

What is love? Two different types of love.

## Love of passion and love of trust

**Love of trust** is a relation of personal trust.

It is a mechanism to secure stability in the social relation.

In the relation, you depend on others.

In other words, this relation is more or less ***binding and restraining***.

Because then, you can have ***expectations for the future***.

On the other hand, ***love of passion*** will be short-lived.

Love of passion and love of trust stand in ***a trade off relation***.

When one increases, the other decreases.

Love of passion, or Eros, will necessarily weaken as time passes.

On the other hand, love of trust will strengthen.

Thus, there are two different types of love.

## b. Pre-modern Family

In pre-modern societies, *love* and *marriage ( family )* were completely different things.

Marriage was not based on love.

Marriage in pre-modern society was not generally based on sexual attraction or romantic love; instead, it was more often linked to *the economic context*.

For the peasantry, a life characterized by unremitting hard labor was unlikely to be conducive to sexual passion.

The typical form of the family in pre-modern age was ***the extended family***, which was composed of more than three generations.

The extended family carried out such important functions as,

- 1) Religion
- 2) Politics
- 3) Education (Socialization)
- 4) Production
- 5) Consumption

It is no exaggeration to say that in pre-modern age, family was the most important basis of society.

= the most important system of *trust*.

In that age, trust in the abstract systems had not developed yet.

Therefore, the family must be ***stable***.

It must be separated from ***passionate love***, which is more or less unstable.

In that period, people got married in order to secure their lives.

It was not rare that you did not know your spouse until you got married.

So, marriage was ***not*** so much ***a personal relation*** as ***a social relation***.

### c. Love of Passion

The typical style of love at that time is called *Love of Passion*.

People enjoyed passionate and erotic love *outside of* marriage.

## d. Romantic Love

In the late 18th century, *novels* were created.

Novels gave narratives to an individual's *personal life*.

Almost at the same time, the idea of '*romantic love*' appeared.

This was a narrative or an ideology to connect love and marriage, which had been separated.

‘the notion that there is only one person in the world with whom one can unite at all levels; the personality of that person is so idealised that the normal faults and follies of human nature disappear from view; love is like a thunderbolt and strikes at first sight; love is the most important thing in the world, to which all other considerations, particularly material ones, should be sacrificed; and lastly, the giving of full rein to personal emotions is admirable, no matter how exaggerated and absurd the resulting conduct might appear to others.’

(Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity, pp.121-122)

In this narrative, love was sanctified and considered to be sublime --- idealization of love.

The erotic aspect of love was not emphasized, but the aspect of trust was.

Marriage was considered to be the *perfection of love*.

At the same time, the idea of *maternal love of instinct* began to be emphasized.

Despite its promise of an equal relationship based on mutual attraction, romantic love has in practice tended to lead to the dominance of men over women.

The double standard

Women were expected to remain a virgin until the right man arrives, whereas no such norm applied to men.

## e. Nuclear Family

In modern times, there was ***functional differentiation*** of the family.

Various functions the extended family carried out were differentiated, and fulfilled by different systems of society.

- 1) Religion ----- religious group
- 2) Politics ----- political party
- 3) Education ----- family and school
- 4) Production ----- company
- 5) Consumption ----- family

## **f. Nuclear Family and Industrial Capitalism**

The nuclear family has a close functional relation with industrial capitalism.

In the early stage of capitalism, different from that of our age, labor was manual and physically tough.

It was so tough and exhausting that it was almost impossible for males to do the house works including fostering children.

Thus, females took the responsibility for housework.

This is *the division of labor* in family.

Therefore, marriage in modern times was indispensable for the survival both for females and males.

Though many functions of the nuclear family were transferred to other systems, the ***nuclear family still remained as the infrastructure of society.***

Thus, at that age, marriage was considered to be a matter of course, and everybody was expected to get married when he or she came of age.

### **(3) Family and Modern Society**

#### **a. Plastic Sexuality**

In our age,

- 1) there is a much greater choice over when, how often and with whom people have sex than ever before.
- 2) sex can be untied from reproduction partly due to improved methods of contraception.
- 3) the development of a sense of self that can be actively chosen.

## b. 'Confluent Love'

Romantic Love: a belief in 'the forever, one-and-only qualities of love'. Once people are married, they should be stuck with one another.

Confluent Love: a new type of love based on the expanded freedom.

## 'Pure Relationship'

A relation in which couples remain because they **choose** to do so.

### c. 'The Normal Chaos of Love'

Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim,  
*The Normal Chaos of Love*, 1995

Today, individuals are confronted with an endless series of choices as part of constructing, adjusting, improving or dissolving the unions they form with others.

Our age is filled with colliding interests between family, work, love and the freedom to pursue individual goals.

Both men and women now place emphasis on their professional and personal needs.

The 'battle between the sexes' is the central drama of our times.

Divorce is more common, but rates of remarriage are high. The birth rate may be declining, but there is a huge demand for fertility treatment.

Fewer people choose to get married, but the desire to live with someone as part of a couple holds steady.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim say today's battle of the sexes is the clearest possible indication of people's 'hunger for love'.

People marry for the sake of love, divorce for the sake of love and engage in an endless cycle of hoping, regretting and trying again.

It is precisely because our world is so overwhelming, impersonal, abstract and rapidly changing that love has become increasingly important.

“Love is a search for oneself, a craving to really get in contact with me and you, sharing bodies, sharing thoughts, encountering one another with nothing held back, making confessions and being forgiven, understanding, confirming and supporting what was and what is, longing for a home and trust to counteract the doubts and anxieties modern life generates. If nothing seems certain or safe, if even breathing is risky in a polluted world, then people chase after the misleading dreams of love until they suddenly turn into nightmare.

(Beck and Beck-Cernsheim, *The Normal Chaos of Love*, Polity Press, pp.175-176)

## d. Liquid Love

Zygmunt Baumann, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, 2003, Polity Press

‘The man without bonds’

‘bonds’: family, class, religion or marriage. Fixed, unbreakable ties.

'A man without bonds' has loosely knotted ties that can be released again, with little delay if the circumstances change. And in our society, circumstances rapidly change.

The age of conflicting desires:

On the one hand, there is the desire for freedom, for loose bonds which we can escape from easily.

On the other hand, there is the desire for greater security that is gained by tightening the bonds.

## **e. Alternatives to Family**

Cohabitation: two people share lives in a sexual relationship without being married.

Cohabitation has become widespread in advanced societies.

A growing number of people choose not to marry but to reside and raise children together.

“It is alright for a couple to live together without intending to get married.”

In the UK, 88% of British people aged between 18 and 24 agree. 40% of respondents aged 65 and over did (2004).

## Rate of Cohabitation (UK)

Women born in the 1920s ---- 4%

1940s ---- 19

1960s ---- 50

By 2001-2, the proportion of cohabiting unmarried women under the age of 60 was 28%. (for Men 25%)