Part I

1 Families and family change

James Georgas

INTRODUCTION

The family has been studied within various disciplines, including sociology, cultural anthropology, psychology, education, psychiatry, economics, and demography from the early nineteenth century. This chapter will focus primarily on sociological and cultural anthropological studies of family, with some reference to psychological studies. Chapter 2 by John W. Berry and Ype H. Poortinga will present cross-cultural theory and methodology and its relationship to the study of family. Chapter 3 by Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı will present theoretical perspectives on the family, and psychological aspects of the family.

The first section of this Chapter discusses definitions of the family. The definition should be universally applicable across all cultures, account for the variety of types of families, and for recent developments such as the increase of cohabitating, unmarried parents, one-parent families, and homosexual families.

The second section discusses the sociological family theories of the nineteenth century, which presented basic issues related to family change in response to industrialization and urbanization. Family sociology played a major role in the study of family change in the twentieth century, with the theory of Parsons its most seminal influence. Cultural anthropology differed from sociological theories in that it explored the diversity of family structures and functions in thousands of small societies throughout the world, rather than primarily in Western societies, and it continues to influence studies of family and family change.

Family change in Europe, the United States, and Canada is discussed in the next section. Two theories of family change characterize sociological and anthropological thinking in the past 200 years: theories that emphasize family decline and breakdown and theories that emphasize the adaptive elements of family change. Family change in the Majority World, a concept coined by Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, referring to countries outside of the geographical areas of Western societies, is discussed in the next section.

The following section discusses family networks. The findings of research on social support indicate the importance of studying not only the nuclear family but also interrelationships with kin.

The next section presents the study of the history of the family and its analysis of the types of families and family change in societies before the nineteenth century.

The section "Household and family: nuclear and extended families" discusses methodological problems related to determining types of families, primarily nuclear and extended, based on demographic data.

The final section discusses the processes of modernization and globalization as possible explanations of family change in the Majority World, as well as the potential of modernization processes in the convergence of family structures and family functioning with those of Western societies.

DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY

There are numerous definitions of family from different theoretical perspectives, stemming primarily from sociology and anthropology. The term "family" is used by many Western sociologists and psychologists as synonymous with "nuclear family," that is, mother, father, and children. But this perception may reflect to a certain degree cultural values of Western societies about family. In most nations of the rest of the world, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, from both sides of the parents, and even unrelated persons are considered to be "family." That is, as will be discussed in detail further on, in most cultures throughout the world, kinship relations are included in the definition of family.

An acceptable definition of family should assume that family is a universal and necessary institution for human survival in all societies, a statement with which almost all social and behavioral scientists agree. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, types of families vary across the thousands of societies throughout the world. There are also different family types in most, particularly large, societies. The categorization of the types of families by sociologists and cultural anthropologists enables us to look at family types with similar as well as different structures and functions. Thus, definitions of family, as all definitions, necessarily refer to the minimal criteria for agreement as to what constitutes a family, so that the definition is universally appropriate in all cultures.

One definition of family which served as a point of reference for anthropology for decades was that of Murdock (1949, p. 2): "The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation,

and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults." Murdock's analysis of 250 small societies led him to conclude that the nuclear family was a universal human social grouping, either as the sole prevailing form of the family or as the basic unit from which more complex familial forms are compounded. This minimal definition of family has been challenged by some anthropologists (Bohannan, 1963; Goodenough, 1970; Fortes, 1978, as cited in Yanagisako, 1979) who offer evidence from some societies that the basic core of the family is the mother and her dependent children. Thus, evidence from even a small number of cultures has been used to challenge the definition that the nuclear family is the "building block" of extended families.

Murdock's definition has also been challenged, based on recent changes in the United States, Canada and northern Europe, in relation to the increase in one-parent families, including divorced, adoptive, unmarried, or widowed mothers, and same-sex families. For example, in sociologist Popenoe's (1988) definition, which has influenced the debate about the definition of family, (a) the minimal family composition is one adult and one dependent person, (b) the parents do not have to be of both sexes, (c) the couple does not have to be married.

A second aspect of the definition of family has to do with its functions as a social institution. Murdock defined the functions of the family as sexual, economic, reproductive, and educational. In the study of families in many small societies throughout the world by cultural anthropologists, one finding seemed to be universal: the emphasis on genealogical relationships as a key element in families. Thus, procreation appeared to be a primary function of families in all societies (Bender, 1967; Goody, 1983; Murdock, 1949; Yanagisako, 1979). A second function was socialization of the child, primarily by the mother, but also by other caretakers such as grandmothers, sisters, and aunts. Economic cooperation of the members also appeared to be a key function of the family because subsistence was the means of family survival.

We can come to a tentative conclusion at this point that the issue of the definition of family is controversial at the present time. On the other hand, some (Needham, 1974; Yanagisako, 1979) suggest that words like "family" are useful as descriptive statements but that the concept reflects an inherently complex, multifunctional institution with different cultural principles and meanings. Indeed, some argue that in light of the variety of family types and kinship systems in societies throughout the world, it might be better to talk about "families" rather than attempting to define the irreducible core of "family" as two-person or nuclear. However, in

order to provide a standard so that the reader will be able to follow the discussion in this chapter, we will usually use the term "nuclear" or "two-generation" family in referring to a family with mother, father, and child, unless we specifically refer to a one-parent family. The different types of "extended families" will also be referred to as "three-generation" families. In addition, Murdock's paradigm of the extended family as a constellation of nuclear families at different levels of generation is a useful heuristic framework for viewing the relationship between the one-parent, the nuclear, and the extended types of families, and will be employed as a construct guiding the theory and methodology of this study, despite its limitations. We will return to the issue of the definition of family in the section "Family and household".

SOCIOLOGICAL FAMILY THEORIES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The scientific analysis of the role of the family in society began in France in the nineteenth century with the new science of sociology. Auguste Comte, considered by many to be the father of sociology, viewed changes in the family as a product of the French revolution. That is, the rejection of the hierarchical and autocratic relations between the aristocracy and the common people and the subsequent introduction of the egalitarian climate in the relations between all citizens after the French Revolution also had, according to Comte, a "leveling effect" on the relations between the members of the family which had a negative effect on the patriarchal authority of the family. Thus, Comte analyzed family change in terms of "social change," a concept which developed into the major theme in subsequent sociology and family sociology in the nineteenth century. His idea that social change results in family crisis and family disintegration, disturbing the equilibrium of the traditional extended family system, also became a recurrent theme in family sociology.

Some (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1982; Popenoe, 1988; Segalen, 1996) identify Frédéric Le Play (1855, 1871) as the founder of empirical family sociology. Le Play also perceived family change and the emergence of the nuclear family as a product of the industrial revolution. His theory described the stem family (*famille souche*), consisting of the parents and the eldest son, who inherited the family property, together with his family and the other unmarried children, as the dominant family type in France. The other married sons necessarily left the family home and formed separate nuclear families during the industrial revolution. Le Play also characterized the nuclear family as inherently unstable because it was separated both physically and financially from the stem family.

Le Play's theory of industrialization and the emergence of the nuclear family is considered to be a micro theory rather than a macro theory. The three influential sociological theories of the family in the nineteenth century were more complex and specified in more detail the dynamics between social change and biological evolution and their effects on family.

Evolutionary theory

Darwin's theory of evolution strongly influenced thinking in the nineteenth century. The seminal ideas of biological adaptation to the environment were also applied to theories of the adaptation of the family as a social organism to the physical and social environment. Lewis Henry Morgan (1870) has been identified with evolutionary anthropology and the explanation of the evolutionary development of family through six stages. The first stage was a horde in which promiscuity was the norm, paternity was difficult to establish, and thus the family was basically matriarchal (Popenoe, 1988), and the final stage was the monogamous family. In contrast to Le Play and Comte, that social changes resulted in the progressive decline and fragmentation of the family, Morgan argued, in line with Darwin's theory, that evolution results in the higher development of the species and that social and environmental evolution result in a higher level of development of family. This theory, which reached its epitome in the nineteenth century, was characteristic of the "civilized" nations of Europe and North America, while other "primitive" cultures at "lower" stages of social evolution had lower levels of family structure and function.

Evolutionary theory was also adopted by others, such as Herbert Spencer (1870), another proponent of social Darwinism, to explain how the family evolved from simple to more complex forms and to its present state of high development. However, Spencer was criticized in his view because his explanation was the opposite of theories of family sociologists such as Le Play and Marx and Engels, in which family appeared to devolve from complex extended family systems to simpler nuclear family systems (Popenoe, 1988). Spencer also contributed to family theory with the concept of structural-functionalism, a concept further developed by Durkheim and which formed the basis of Parsons' theory of family change in the nineteenth century, although biological evolutionary theory was not a significant element in Parsons' theory.

The ideas of social evolutionism were unacceptable to many cultural anthropologists in the twentieth century, led by Franz Boas and his students, such as Melville Herskovits, Ruth Benedict, and Margaret

Mead, who argued that evolutionism did not take into account the variations in family types resulting from different cultural contexts throughout the world. They employed the concept *cultural relativism*, that family and other aspects of society should be studied within the context of its culture, and rejected the idea that some cultures were more civilized than others. Although Benedict and Herskovits (as cited in Ember and Ember, 2002) took an extreme position of cultural relativism – that the values of each society were unique and should not be judged by comparison with other cultures – this viewpoint is not shared by all contemporary anthropologists.

Evolutionary theory was criticized at the end of the nineteenth century by Westermarck (1894–1901) and Howard (1904, as cited in Popenoe, 1988). They found no evidence for the stages of early promiscuity and matriarchy in prehistoric families. Evolutionary theory became a moribund theory until it resurfaced in the 1930s in a different form as Ecological Anthropology (Orlove, 1980). The concepts of ecological anthropology were attributed to the work of Julian Steward and Leslie White, students of Boas, and to Daryll Forde. The main features of the theory were the relationship between characteristics of the environment and traits of the culture. The method was comparative, in that similarities – or regularities – in cultural history or in ecological features were sought.

Marx and Engels

A major family theory in the nineteenth century was influenced by Marx ([1867], 1936) and Engels ([1884], 1942). In contrast to the explanatory power of biological determinism in Social Darwinism, Marxist theory employed the concept of economic determinism to explain how economic resources determined social power, which in turn determined class struggle. Employing a historical analysis of the family, and relying partly on the evolutionary model of Morgan, Engels came to a different conclusion as to the status of the family in the nineteenth century. Engels and Marx explained how the patriarchal family, based on the right of private property and the authority and power of the father, resulted in the defeat of the female and the matriarchal system in prehistoric hunting and gathering societies. Industrialization, based on capital and private property, led to the creation of the monogamous bourgeois family in urban centers. The result was that the bourgeois family became an economic unit to be exploited by the capitalistic system and an instrument of class oppression, particularly of women and children, and the dissolution of the family. The solution was, with the dissolution

of the capitalist system, the doing away with the bourgeois family, the liberation of the woman and the introduction of collectivist rearing of children. Thus, although Marx and Engels employed a historical analysis of the family, their conclusion was that family change in the nineteenth century was regressive, the antithesis of evolutionary theory which perceived family change in industrialized Europe and North America as progressive (Popenoe, 1988). Marxist family theory has recently had a fairly strong influence in feminist theories of family, particularly regarding gender differences in power.

Structuralism–functionalism

The basic ideas of structuralism–functionalism were attributed to Spencer and further developed by Durkheim (1888, 1892). Functionalism explained the existence and the changes in family structure and function as reflections of changes in society. Family was part of a greater whole, in which other units combined to establish an equilibrium, and in which changes in one part of the system reverberated to other parts. Changes, therefore, could have multiple causes, in contrast with the monocausal biological or economic determinism of Social Darwinism and Marxist theory.

Durkheim also perceived the evolution of family through six stages in societal change, from its primitive form to the village, to the city, to the state. His "law of contraction" proposed that the circle of kin during evolutionary stages contracts from many to smaller numbers of kin, as do the roles of family members. In the last two stages, the paternal family is reduced to the conjugal or nuclear family, in which the relationships between parents and children change from material or economic basis to "personal motives." The focus of the family changed to the conjugal relationship between husband and wife, and one result was the development of more "independent spheres of action" (Popenoe, 1988). According to Durkheim, then, the conjugal family represented the disequilibrium of the family, much in the same manner as Le Play, Comte, Marx and Engels had argued. Indeed, he was concerned that increasing divorce and suicide were harbingers of the decline of the family.

Comments

These grand sociological theories, which shaped the basic parameters and concepts influencing generations of sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists, were characteristic of the burgeoning scientific theories

of the nineteenth century, such as in biology, physics, and chemistry. One characteristic was the diachronic dimension; they attempted to explain family stages on the basis of evolutionary theory or historical periods. They were deterministic in that societal changes were presumed to be the causes and family changes the effect. Economics, and in particular industrialization, generated social change. Another characteristic of this period of generation of theories of family change was the general lack of communication between sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists. It is true that during the nineteenth century, psychology was identified primarily with experimental psychology and psychoanalysis, the former employing the experimental paradigm to study perception and the senses, for example, and the latter concerned with intrapsychic processes of the individual. Indeed, Durkheim was adamant that psychology had little to offer to the study of family change because of his belief that social processes, and not psychological processes, shaped family change.

Another characteristic of this period was that these sociological theories were products of European sociologists representing European views regarding family as well as the critical issues of European civilization of the nineteenth century, such as science, evolutionary theory, industrialization, urbanization, social unrest, revolution, and the emergence of nation states. Cultures outside northern Europe and North America were perceived as less civilized. The monogamous and nuclear family in northern Europe, the United States, and Canada, with all its problems, was considered to be the historical or evolutionary epitome of social change. Some criticize sociological theory and research in North America and Europe, even today, as employing a white middle-class nuclear family model as the standard with which to compare families, rather than viewing families on their own terms and in a particular sociohistorical context (Ingoldsby and Smith, 1995; Stacey, 1993). Indeed, much of the criticism of this ethnocentric perception of families comes from anthropology, as will be discussed below.

FAMILY SOCIOLOGY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Family sociology early in the twentieth century, undertook an empirical orientation. During the rise of socialism of this period, family sociologists studied the effects of deleterious economic and social changes on family. Symbolic Interactionism was introduced by Burgess (1926) to study the family as a "unity of interacting personalities." Burgess' approach, considered to have transformed the study of family, was a rejection of the emphasis of the grand sociological theories of the nineteenth

century on the focus of social change as a determinant of the structure of the family. Symbolic Interactionism focused on the interacting behavior of family members as a dynamic unit and spawned research such as the systematic observation of group interaction processes leading to the differentiation of instrumental and expressive roles (Bales, 1950; Bales and Slater, 1955). The interactionist school was also strongly influenced by George Herbert Mead (1934). The work of Ralph Linton (1936, 1945) on role theory can also be traced to interactionist theory. Related research on interaction within the family was the study of *power* in family roles (Safilios-Rothschild, 1967), defined as the "legitimate authority" of husbands-fathers to exercise control over wives and children (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Herbst, 1952).

Talcott Parsons

Talcott Parsons (1943, 1949, 1965) was, perhaps, the most influential sociologist to further develop structuralism–functionalism as a theory for the analysis of family change. Society was viewed in a structural–functional perspective as an organism that strives to resist change and to maintain a state of equilibrium. According to Parsons, family has two main functions: *instrumental*, related to survival, and *expressive*, related to the maintenance of morale and cooperation. The adaptation of the extended family unit to the industrial revolution required a nuclear family structure to carry out societal functions and to satisfy the physical and psychological needs of family members. Parsons argued that the nuclear family was fragmented from its kinship network, leading to psychological isolation. Its reduction in size resulted in loss of its productive, political, and religious functions. The nuclear family becomes primarily a unit of residence and consumption. Its financial and educative functions are dependent upon the state and its major remaining function is the socialization of children and the psychological equilibrium of the parents. The nuclear family parents, who have chosen each other freely based on love, in contradistinction with the extended family system in which marriage choices are based on family interests and not romantic love, are isolated from their kin and share rational and pragmatic values. Social mobility, particularly in the highly mobile North American culture, was made possible by the breaking of family ties.

Parsons' theory of the structure and function has strongly influenced research on family change since the 1940s. In contrast with Durkheim and other nineteenth century family theories, Parsons did not perceive changes from the extended family to the nuclear family system as reflecting the decline of the family, but as a positive adaptation to social change.