

THE FUTURE FAMILY

Neal Summer

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Part 1

Thank you very much, John for that kind and fulsome introduction. Ok, so today I'm going to be talking about the future of the family, or we could even change those words round and call it 'the family of the future' because what I want to look at is what happens to the development of the family over historic time. I also want to have a look at what might happen to families in the future. So, we could turn that title round and call it, 'the future of the family and the family of the future'. This actually comes out of an interest of mine, John didn't mention in his introduction, which is sociology I've also taught sociology, a subject for which I have ever-increasing respect. So, what I'm going to aim to do today is to look at some developments in the structure values and importance of the family in societies around the world. So, although I sent along some preliminary reading about a family in the U.K. really that's just a microcosm, you know a small example of the larger issues around the global family that I want to talk about are over the next 40-45 minutes.

If at an point I'm dealing with concepts which you find difficult to understand, then don't hesitate to put your hand up and ask me questions, and I'll try to explain as well as I'm able, what it is I'm getting at. So, I'm looking at the development of the family and I'm looking at some trends and issues around, family structures in modern societies, which are of significant interest to policy makers - I'm talking about people not only in national governments but organisation like the United Nations, UNESCO, and so on, right? All of whom have a very keen interest in the family for various reasons. This is a huge subject. So I'm not going to be able to more than just skate across the surface of many of the issues, but as I say if you want to ask me about them, then please feel free to do so.

You will be aware, just as citizens of the 21st century, you know the family is in crisis, in many parts of the world. I was just thinking on the way over here this morning. You might be aware in United States of America at the moment, President Bush is trying to get the American Constitution changed to make gay marriages illegal. They have been made legal under the judgement handed down from the American Supreme Court, George Bush as a religious fundamentalist Christian isn't in favour of that, and he is currently campaigning to make gay marriages, something which would be against the American Constitution. I doubt that he'll succeed, but anyway that's one small example taken out of this week's news to point out how critical an issue this is for policy makers today.

So, what am I talking about when we talk about the family, and its functions. The term 'family' curiously in the English language, the language that you are studying. The etymology of that term is from *famulus* which means 'slave'. I think the original idea of family reflects something of the strongly patriarchal

nature of the family as an historic institution. That is to say, that family members were largely the slaves of the man who ruled over, that group of people. So, it could be, you know, on a tribal structure you'd have the chief and all the people in that local tribe would be his family, his extended family. So, it's only in more recent times, that the term *family* has come to be associated with relationships by blood, ok? So, your blood relations are now I think how we would understand the term, family. And indeed it's only even in more recent times over the last two to three hundred years, that the term family has come to mean something to do with love, love for your wife, your children. Before that, the term family was very much about authority relations, power relations, within the group. So, it's got some interesting origins then, the term 'family', right it's not perhaps what you think it is.

So I want to move on to look at functions of the family, what it is that the family actually does. And we can divide it into four different areas. Firstly, what I'm calling 'intimate interdependence'. This is about the relationships that are critical to any family identity. It's the way in which family members give each other emotional support. The family is often seen as a refuge, this is a point I will be returning to later, from the stormy life that we all have to live in public. Ok so, the family is a sort of private place where we can become dependent on each other. Secondly, it's about selective boundary maintenance, quite a complex concept there. What I'm getting at is that the family sort of maintains a division between the responsibility of its members and for its members, and the outside world. So, it's about the relationship if you like between the public sphere in which we work, we belong to, clubs and societies that sort of things, and the private sphere of our family. So we're talking about public and private.

Part 2

Families have the ability to adapt and change identity over time so we start out as children, then we become young adults such as yourselves. You might become parents, grandparents, you will be perhaps uncles and aunts and cousins. You belong to a whole range of networks that are brought to you through belonging to a family. And so what I'm getting at with this point is your identity as a member of a family is not fixed, it changes over time, all right? from being treated very differently as an infant to a teenager to somebody who's left home, travelled abroad to become a student. And fourthly, it's about the performance of family tasks. And I'll be saying a bit more about that in a moment. Anyway, those are the four main functions of the family, and I hope that's clear to you all, ok?

So let's go onto look at some of these tasks that are performed by the family. Physical maintenance is the first and most critical; this is about providing food, clothing, and shelter for family members. And that is a huge and important task. It's also about socialization and education, bringing children into the world and giving them the language, the customs, the manners, the modes of behaviour which allow them to adapt and succeed in the societies to which they belong. It's also about providing education. It's about the control of social and sexual behaviour, making sure that we all conform to the expected norms and values of our society in terms of our sexual relationships and our social relationships. And lastly it's about the maintenance of family morale, about encouraging all family members to support each other. I will be interested to know from you in

questions we might have at the end, or a discussion at the end, just how important this aspect of being a family member is to you. The fact that you rely on members of your family for support.

So, the whole essence of the family is to raise children to the point where they can go out, and choose partners for themselves and create new families, and that passes on from one generation to the other and leads to what we might think of as social progress. Ok so there are 3 main types of family that we can identify; the nuclear family – I won't spend very long on this – but the nuclear family is a kind of typical unit that we have here in Western cultures which is basically, it's sometimes called the isolated nuclear family, and this is Mum, Dad and the children, living together in a home and that has become the predominant model of family organisation in Western societies, ok. As distinct from the extended family which is where you not only have mother and father and children, but you might have the grandparents living at home. Or you might live in an area, say a compound for example, with other relations which is very common in many other parts of the world where you have that kind of extended family network, but living in close geographical proximity to each other.

And then the third one is what is referred to by some sociologists today as the 'attenuated family' and that is where you may not live with your grandparents, or even your parents but through the magical means of modern technology you are in daily contact with them. You might be doing that over your 'phone, over the Internet. I am sure that in a few years time you will be able to communicate with each other – we will be communicating with each other - over some sort of video link. This is becoming increasingly common with the use of videos and mobile phones and all the rest of it. So technology is promoting, perhaps a reconstituting of the family in its attenuated format by allowing people to be closer together than they would be otherwise, separated by geography. So we've got those various family types.

Now I want to move on to talk a little about demography which is looking at the kind of way that family structures and the future of the family fits into overall patterns of population development. So demography is about the study of populations, if it's a term you have not come across before. I andam going to be talking about something called the demographic transition model which I will show you in a moment. What I am doing with this section is looking at the changing structures of families around the world. As we have already said one of the main functions of the family is to provide a stable foundation for the conception and rearing of children. But what seems to be happening in the modern world is that this which has been the prime motivating force of family development for thousands of years has suddenly started to disappear. Here in the West especially we are living through a moment of very profound change in terms of what is happening to the family.

Part 3

So in western European countries the annual rate of growth, of population is 0.3 of 1%. 0.3 of 1%. So this is barely an increase at all in the overall population, in western European countries and indeed in North America. I will be coming back to that statistic.

So one of the consequences of that, is that we're now looking at all the kind of problems that we have seen over the last 6 months in the British press, particularly, and in European news items, about migration and immigration. The fact of the matter is that western European countries are barely able to keep their populations level. So they need people to flood in from other parts of the world, to do all the jobs that need to be done. But at the same time they can't really make their minds up whether these people have got to be from Eastern Europe, or from North Africa or from Asia or wherever. So we've got this huge moral crisis, part of which you could say, has its origins in the crisis of the family, and the fact that the family is no longer producing more children, and replacing the people who die off. Which is something that we'll be looking at in more detail in a moment.

Anyway, if you look at this demographic transition model it describes the history of population growth over time. And it identifies 4 main stages, here is the model. I am not expecting you to copy this down by the way, but I can certainly provide you with a version of it, if you need it for later. So the model describes how separate factors contribute to growth, that's births and deaths. I hope you can all see this - but the red line is about the birth rate and the blue line is the death rate. That's what the two lines represent - red line birth rate, blue line death rate, and this is the number of births and deaths per thousand per year, that's what that says over there - over time. But as I say, I'll leave a copy of this for you to peruse later if you need it.

So there are these 4 stages. Let's have a little look in more detail at each one of them. Stage 1, over on the left - is the situation that has characterised the world throughout most of human history. That is where births and deaths remain roughly the same. Ok. So the population is roughly being replaced at basically the same rate as they are dying off, in a period when average life spans would be between 30 and 50 years. So there's no steady growth - in that stage 1 period.

Then in Stage 2 we suddenly have this dramatic difference emerging, between the birth and the death rate. This began to happen here in Western Europe about 300 years ago, so between 1700 A.D. or in the common era, as we now call it, and 1800. And what happened there is that death rates began to decline dramatically, as you can see. And this was partly because of improvement in agricultural production so there was more food available, it was to do with improvements in medicine so that people would not die of the diseases that they had been dying from hitherto. For example it was during the 18th century that the process of inoculation was discovered. Where you could inoculate people against various diseases. And so big killer diseases began to have much less of an impact, and so you would then have far more people living longer than had been the case before.

When we get to Stage 3 we have a continuing decrease in death rates but this is also accompanied by the beginning of a decline in birth rates. Less children are dying young, this means that the number of births needed to reach a desired family size drops. So whereas for most of human history you couldn't guarantee that the children you would have would live beyond 1 or 2 years there were no ways of controlling fertility. This means that a woman might get pregnant up to 20 times during her lifetime, but of those 20 pregnancies maybe only 2 or 3, of the children would actually reach adulthood because they'd die. To be blunt. But now that's no longer the case, it began not to be no longer the case in this stage 3

period. So what this means is that a disproportionate share of people of child bearing age has resulted in the fact that the population grows, even when the fertility rate has declined. Perhaps we'll come back to that point in a little while.

And then finally in Stage 4, this is a stage where Western Europe is at now, and North America is at now. You can see what's beginning to happen. The death rate has remained fairly constant and the birth rate is actually beginning to dip below the death rate. So this is unprecedented. It's never happened in human history, ok? And clearly this is all bound up with what's going on in families. So, I want to kind of focus in more detail now on this Stage 4 family. Because one of the things that I want you to think about, and maybe you will want to go on and discuss after this lecture, is 'will all societies progress through these stages in the way that Western society has?' So, as societies develop, in other parts of the world will they also go through this stage of demographic transition, to the stage 4 family.

Part 4

How can we explain the fact that birth rates are now lower than death rates in stage 4? What behavioural changes are happening in the modern western family? Well, one thing is that we've moved away from what I think of as a fatalistic world view, that is to say that we have no control over our own destinies. So, that used to be the case. People would explain the fact that their children died 'oh well God intended it' that's what they would say 'Allah willed it' so that was the only way that you could explain things that you didn't have any scientific explanation for. But with the massive increase in scientific knowledge that we have had over the last two to three hundred years we no longer, in the West, accept such a fatalistic world view. We now think 'oh we can do something about this', we can intervene, we can control our future, we can control our destinies in ways which we haven't been able to hitherto.

So it means that we have more free choice, so now we can control fertility through science, through the introduction of the contraceptive pill for example. So we no longer have to have children year on year on year, but we can choose, we are free to choose whether to have children or not. And if you want children you can choose when to have them. So we've got far more control, than we had in the previous kind of fatalistic era, if I can call it that. So rather than having lots and lots of children, which is how it used to be, you can now have very few children. Children have become much more prized possessions than, kind of economic benefits to you, if you like. So in the agricultural era, that preceded the industrial era, of course it was in the families interest to have lots of children. Why? Because the children could give you labour on the farm, in the fields. They would start working for you when they were about 5, 6, or 7 years old and then as you became old as a parent your children would look after you. Hey that model has completely collapsed in the West, that just does not happen. We don't have large families any more, we choose to have children at times when it suits us, and indeed as often as not, having children is seen as an obstacle to our own self-fulfilment.

So it's no longer something that we naturally do. We choose whether we are going to have children or not. And if, as a woman, I think, well, my career is more

important to me than having a family, then I can do that. This wasn't a choice that was ever available to women before, is it? So this is something quite new.

Of course against the notion that you are free to choose whether or not to have children, there is still the attraction of the family as some kind of shelter from the rages of modern society, some kind of refuge from the isolating forces that are sweeping through modern society. So we have this eh, changing patterns of population growth. And I have already referred to the rise of migration and immigration. These are massive global forces in the first decade of the 21th century, as I am sure you are aware. Everybody is concerned with these two issues of migration and immigration. And these are to some extent, the result of the drop in fertility that we have had in the West, and although these decreases have been relatively gradual, for most of the last one hundred and fifty years, in the last ten to twenty years they have become very rapid.

So for example if you take a country like Italy or Spain, in Western Europe. These are countries where it is actually against their religion to practice contraception, to practice birth control. But people have just started to ignore that. And it is in those two countries particularly, Spain and Italy, where populations are now lower, than they were ten to twenty years ago in terms that they are not replacing their indigenous people at the same rate as they were before. So the birth rate has really collapsed in those countries. And at the same time, if we switch our attention to the developing world, what we see there, is a massive increase in the number of children being born to families because of rising prosperity. So they haven't yet gone in to the Stage 4 model. So again one of the challenges I want you to think about is 'will the family structures in developing societies end up going through the same phases as the family in developed societies? That's really one of the biggest issues that I think the world has to address at the moment. Is that clear? Have you got the picture? Good.

So, let's go on to look at future patterns of population growth. We have had a look already at some of the current trends in sub-Saharan Africa for example in that part of the world. It is the world's fastest growing area in terms of population. Nearly 60% of the population there lives in countries that are at either the Stage 1 or Stage 2 of my initial model. In the Middle East, that's the second fastest growing region in terms of population in the world, the Middle East. Asia has a slightly more complex picture. There are parts of Asia which are almost moving into the Stage 4 western model.

Part 5

And there are other parts of Asia that more in the Stage 2 part of that model really. If you look at Latin America we've got largely a Stage 3 kind of society there. Fertility rates have dropped substantially, but they have a very youthful age structure to their population, and there is till very rapid population growth. But there is lots of evidence that in parts of Latin America, some of the behavioural changes that we associate with State 4, part of that model, have already occurred, or are continuing to develop. And as we have seen it's in Stage 4 countries where we have birth rates now below death rates. So what I want to look at are some of the pressures that are on all of these societies around the world, and I am characterizing some of the most profound changes under these heading of 'Globalisation', and a rather long word but I think it is easy to

understand 'Detraditionalisation'. So these are two forces that I am identifying that contribute to changing family structures and have a massive impact on the rates of population growth around the world, ok, these two forces.

So I think you all know what I mean by 'globalisation' don't you? This is the idea that we all live in a global village, with instant communications. We can share in ideas and consume cultural artefacts from countries all over the world, just by going on to the internet and ordering them up basically. The world is shrinking in terms of speed, it's accelerating, but in terms of distance it's shrinking. What do I mean by 'de-traditionalisation'? I mean the disappearance or the erosion, probably a better word to use, the erosion of traditional cultures, of conventional ways of doing things, of conventional moralities. More and more young people around the world are rejecting the cultures that they've have grown up in and, this is probably being a little crude, but maybe sort of imitating a Hollywood model of society rather than the one which they have inherited from their local traditional background. So you could argue that this is to do with westernisation, but I don't think - it's not only western values that are contributing to this de-traditionalisation. Another thing is what you in this room are a very good example of, and that is the increasing propensity of people to travel around the world and to experience different cultures and to take the ideas in, from western cultures back to their own, and you know that has an effect back in their home environments.

So what I want to do then for the remainder of this lecture, have to get a bit of a move on, is to look at some of the changes that have occurred in the Western family particularly. To see to what extent these changes might affect family structures in other parts of the world. Ok?

So - what are the changes that are occurring in the Western family? I am going to identify four, and I'll talk about each of these. Just let me go back there for a minute...there we are...The first of them is about 'from production to consumption'. So for most of human history the family has been a unit of economic production. I've talked already about the way that children and parents would work together on the local family farm or before that even they would all be herdsmen following some kind of nomadic lifestyle. But the family in the west today is no longer a unit of economic production at all, or very, very rarely. Rather it's a unit of consumption.

What I mean by that is that we consume images of childhood, childhood is now massively expensive, childhood has become a prized asset. It has been estimated that to raise a child in the West now costs the average family about a quarter of a million pounds. So you know this is no longer a kind of a thing that you can just do because Nature dictates it, you have to make a conscious choice because it is hugely expensive to have children. Well that was never the issue before, was it - you had children before so that they could help you produce more. But now you need less and less children because you can't afford them, right, so this is a very profound change.

So having children is no longer an economic benefit, it's an economic cost. You can see why that is. The cost of living, the cost of education or the things that children say that they need to have if they are going to be accepted by their peers just becomes ever more expensive. So the average family size in Europe now is

1.2 children per family. It used to be twice that about 20 years ago. There used to be a well known phrase 2.4, well that nearly halved in some European countries now, the average number of children per family.

Part 6

And of course, as I've hoped to have demonstrated to you, having a child is now much more emotional decision, rather than an economic decision. We prize children in ways that we've never done before. I'm not that old, but even I can remember when I was growing up, the stop phrase about children was 'children should be seen but not heard' ok? So, just keep them out of their way. You know, children, I don't mind talking to them now and again, but basically they should be seen but not heard. I don't know if it has been like that in any of your societies, but that the dominant cultural trade of the Western until fairly recently. But nowadays it's not like that at all. Children are prized assets to a family. We dress them in fashionable clothes, you know. We eh, we encourage them to consume all the artefacts of modern culture, in a way that was never allowed before. So, just think, five or six hundred years ago in the West, in Western Europe, infanticide was very common, you know, you killed children. You used to kill girls because they weren't thought to be as economically valuable as boys. Or in times of plague, or failing harvest, children would just be killed because they were not regarded in this kind of very special prized way that we now regard them. I mean the notion anybody could deliberately kill a child now would cause a huge moral outrage, but it used to be fairly common - it just shows how the scale of values has shifted entirely from what it used to be, when infanticide was common to what it is today.

So there are very big shifts in our attitudes to children, in the cost of having children which may be going to happen in your societies, or maybe already happening there, I don't know.

Second big change, I think we've looked at all those things there, - is changing gender roles. Particularly fascinating area. This is about the relationship between men and women. A few generations ago, gender roles were very clearly fixed. The man was the breadwinner and the woman was the nurturing stay-at-home person who looked after children, ok. So, the man was out in a public doing the work, bringing home the wages for the family to consume. If you were born as a woman, you pretty much knew what life had in store for you, for most of human history. It was a life of giving birth to children, nurturing those children, and looking after the family. That was the path that you were on. Well, we know what's happening the West to that model, it has been completely blown out of the water. 2006, here in the U.K., there are more women working than men. More women have full-time jobs than men. Three or four generations ago, that would have been unthinkable.

And of course the fact that more women are working, means that they now have the choice, as to whether or not they are going to become mothers, and that has profound implications for what is happening to the structure of the family. So this means that in family life, in marriage and in other relationships it's now much more a matter of negotiation, rather than fixed roles as to what you will do. There are some families nowadays where the man stays at home and looks after the children, and the woman goes out to work because she is capable of earning

more money than the man. Now some people are very comfortable about that, other people think that it goes against nature. Whatever you think I don't know, but I mean it's something which is profoundly disturbing to many people. Just to go back to the example which I started with in the United States. There is a whole kind of fundamentalist religious movement sweeping through the southern States to try and get women to give up going out to work, to go back to being the 'surrendered wife' that is they will accept that biology is their destiny and that all they have to do is stay at home and raise children, ok.

I don't know whether that is going to appeal to them we will have to wait and see. It certainly appeals to some, we'll see. You have probably heard these phrases bandied about, like 'the new man' so not only does - these changes I am talking about have an impact on what women do but also the way that men's identity is constructed. What is 'a new man?' somebody who is more caring, who spends more time at home with the family who is able to change babies nappies, that sort of thing. Not a traditional man who is a spear-carrying warrior who can go out and brings home food in a sort of hunter gatherer mode, or somebody who is going to be a very patriarchal and dominant figure within the home environment. The new man is much more caring, sharing, in touch with his emotions. Are these kind of models of masculinity becoming common in your cultures I wonder, or are they still very much based in a traditional view of male power and female submissiveness.... you know.. Or are those roles changing? That's something again which you might like to think about. So there's an identity crisis, basically, for both genders.

Part 7

I talked about the identity crisis for men, but it's just as much an identity crisis for women. As we escape the tyranny of biology, if you like. You know, they're now talking about the male contraceptive, men can be responsible for controlling the fertility of themselves, and their relationships with women. We have got all these kind of bizarre things where women can now have children when they are past sixty due, you know, medical interventions. There are all kinds of developments taking place in reproductive technologies, aren't there. I wonder how long it's going to be before we get into cloning and that sort of thing. What sort of impact will these kinds of things have on traditional families and their expectations. So we are living through a period of very rapid change in which all of these things are going to have a big impact on families and children.

So power relations within the family are now quite different, they are utterly transformed to what they used to be a few generations ago. We have had women's liberation, we have many marriages of same-sex couples who are raising children here in the West. I know that, I think it's Vice President Cheney in America - his daughter is in a lesbian relationship with children. To choose one example from the public sphere over there. But it's increasingly common throughout the West to have same-sex marriages, then they can adopt children and raise them in those kind of ways, so power relations in the family are transformed in part because of that. The relationship between men and women in traditional families is breaking down as women assert their right to equal rights, equal power.

We have this massive increase in divorce rates, a decline in marriage. You have got statistics about these on the handout that I gave you to look at about the number of divorces that now occur in the U.K. as against the number of marriages. Probably one in every two marriages will end in divorce within ten to twelve years now. It's kind of curious and maybe going full circle, that now before people get married they have to go into some kind of economic contract and make a pre-nuptial agreement to decide what they can afford to share with their marriage partners whereas in centuries gone by, everything that a woman brought with her into the marriage would automatically belong to the man, but hey, that's no longer the case.

So, these are profound changes I am sure you will agree. Are they changes that are happening in your own societies? Are they changes that are being demanded in your own societies? Do they want easier divorce? Do women want equality with men? Are they being allowed to develop that equality with men? If so what impact is that going to have on the kinds of family life that develops there? Will it become like the Western family? Which you could argue, is in serious decline. So, we've got these shifting sexual identities, it's now almost got to the point in the West where you can choose your sexual identity. It's no longer something which is biologically determined. Came across this marvellous phrase last year for the first time called a metro-sexual. Metro-sexual is somebody, usually a man, who shares many characteristics of being woman, they can be in relationships with other men some times, you know, so that can be bisexual, this is something that is increasingly common amongst young people in urban environments that they experiment with their sexual identities. And it's something which is not exactly approved of by the media, but certainly the media has a massive interest in it, and sells lots of papers and television programs, just look at the kind of popularity of these characters on 'Big Brother'. Any of you watch Big Brother? So, you will be very familiar with the kind of the things I am talking about. You probably will be more familiar with it than I am. So, this shifting boundary of sexual identities is another result of the crisis of the family. And the fact that it's no longer for fulfilling the very traditional roles that it used to, and it would be interesting for you to debate whether or not these changes are good or bad, and whether they are inevitable.

Ok. I really ought to draw these comments to a close now, so very quickly this is really the end of the lecture, just these final two points. I said at the beginning that what is happening to the family is of major concern to policy-makers from the United Nations, down to regional government like the European Union, as well as to national governments. Because everybody recognises that the family which for so many generations, for countless generations has been the main unit of social organization is fragmenting, is disintegrating, is transforming under our eyes. The pace of this change, which really accelerated over the last thirty to forty years. And it's massive and I hope I demonstrated for you this morning, it is a very profound change. So policy-makers are really focused on the family, because they need to develop policies which are going to encourage families somehow to be the shock-absorbers of this change, to be the ones that deal with the change because if you don't get it right at the family level, where are you going to make it right?

So, it will be an interesting discussion for you to have about what kinds of policies you think, could be applied to encourage families if you think families are good

thing. Or to replace families, if you think families aren't such a good thing. Then, finally to leave you to ask yourselves really, what would be the pattern of family development in the future. Will it be, as I hope I have made clear to you this morning along the lines of Western development. Or do you think that in the communities and cultures you've come from, that there will be different paths into the future and that you won't have to go through this kind of Western crisis of the family which I spent a large part this morning talking to you about. Ok. Anyway, that's the end of my lecture. So, thank you very much. I think you had been very attentive audience. Thank you.