

Chiu ka po adele

Sociology, Feminism



Chiu Ka Po Adele 3035043051 Word count: 2500 Essay question: 5

Introduction Since the very beginning of civilization of human being, family has been a fundamental institution of our society. In the study of sociology, there are two dichotomy of defining family, which are the structural-functional approach and the conflict approach (including feminists), mainly focusing on the patriarchy. I would like to briefly explain the two approaches and provide with some concrete examples to illustrate them in a more specific fashion and at the end, compare which one would be more applicable and true in the context of Hong Kong society. Structural-functional approach First of all, the structural-functional approach can also be defined as functionalism, which views the society through a macro-level orientation. It examines the social structure and social functions, believing the society evolves as an organism. (Schaefer, Richard T , 2012) When applying the theory to the family, it basically performs a few paramount functions, which outlined by sociologist William F. Ogburn. I would like to introduce them briefly in the following paragraphs. Function of Reproduction Firstly, reproduction is one of the essential functions of family . From the traditional society until nowadays, family is viewed as a legitimate institution to give birth to next generations. However, many couples nowadays in Hong Kong , do not view reproduction is a necessary duty of marriage. According to the figures shown by the Census and Statistics Department of HKSAR, in the past 20 years, the birth rate has been decreased by 54%. It clearly demonstrates that function of reproduction might no longer a necessary function of family anymore. Role of protection and companionship Secondly, family plays a role of affection and companionship for them. However, it is frequently observed

that it is a phenomenon that children seldom talk with their parents, not even mention deep chat or communicate with their parents. According to the research done by the Public Opinion Programme of Hong Kong University in 2010, among the interviewee, when asked who is their most ideal chatting person, parents only plays 14%, which mother plays 11% while father plays 3%. It significantly proves that family is no longer an intimate basis or an anchor for their members, when people encounter problems or wish to find someone to talk with, they might seldom find their parents. It is a generally accepted view that there is diminishing time or communication between parents and their children, not mention they have a close relationship with each other. Worse still, family might even be the source of desperation or frustration to people, instead of a reliance or place for comfort or companionship between parents and children, as it can be seen by the statistic shown by Census and Statistic Department and domestic court, the divorce rate in HK has been increasing rapidly in recent years and divorce rate of HK is the third high among Asia's regions. As stated by much psychological report, divorcement can create a number of psychological problems to both the divorcee and the children. Sometimes, the traumatic effect done to them are incalculable and cast a long-term effect on them, which illustrate that family might not be as beneficial and act as a protection to their children, but might constitute conflicts and problems in the society. (Zill, N, Morrison, D. R., Corio, M. J, 1993) Function of Socialization Thirdly, family also provides children with socialization. Parents and other relatives play an important role in transmitting the norms, values and language, religion or their culture to their children. For example, many Catholic or

Christian couples arrange baptism for their children when they are still infants or babies and their children would naturally follow their parents' religion and practise their religion when they are brought up , which can be viewed as an socialization process by the family in a religion fashion. However, through changes over time, family is not the only place or institution that provide socialization for children . Some might argue that other social institutions, such as schools, religion groups, interest clubs or even mass media have gradually taken up the role of family in this aspect . I strongly agree to this point, since nowadays children or teenagers are occupied by different activities and they may spend little time with their family. Also , the rapid development of technology and fast transmission of information as well as mass media have casted great influence to the current young generation, for example, they might get used to socialize with their friends in Facebook and the language used in internet, instead of being influenced by the language used by their parents. According to the research done by the Public Opinion Programme of HKU in 2008, when the interviewee asked to evaluate their relationship with their parents, 10 the max , 0 the min, the average mark is only 5. 7. The result implicitly shows that people have a loosened relationship with their family members and seldom associate with them, inferring that the role of socialization of family is losing its significance following the diminishing time associate with the family.

Gender role socialization Fourthly, regulation of sexual behavior done by the family is another crucial function as well. The strongest influence on the social gender roles is family and children first learn the sexual “ stereotyped” behavior first at home . (Witt, S. D. , 1997) “ Children internalized parental

message regarding gender difference, with awareness of adult sex role differences being found in two- year-old children. " (Weinraub et al., 1984). We can see that until nowadays, this function is still significant and it helps to stabilize our society as the gender role socialization process can help to facilitate the " gender division of labor". Role of ascribing social status Last but all least, family can ascribe people with social status. Family gives their children with an inborn and ascribed status, based on race and ethnicity which help to define the position of people in the social fragment. In some cases, one's inherited ascribed ethnicity might sometimes be a disadvantage to one's development. From the survey results of Racial Discrimination of CUHK Social Work Department in 2005, more than a majority of respondents think that racial discrimination was serious in HK and many thought that their ethnicity determines their career prospective. Also, children would inherited the wealth and economic class from their parents, which result in different degree of development of their children, especially at early stage . The ascribed status , regardless ethnicity or economic class, thus, can be viewed as the contributor to social's conflict or class struggles , rather than a benefit to the society. Conclusion In conclusion, the functions of family have not been as essential as it was in the traditional society or last decades. Moreover, family's role as a contributor to the society , has been diminishing and some of the functions , like the ascribed status , is even a drive to social conflict rather than benefiting the society. Conflict approach On the other hand, there is other paradigm in viewing family as an institution, which is the conflict approach, in the context of patriarchy . The exponents, including the feminists, contend that family is not a contributor of social instability but

perpetuating social inequality and gratifying social stratification. (Schaefer, 2012). I would like to introduce some dominant arguments which are mainly the male dominance under the conflict approach as well as feminist view.

Male dominance Firstly, it is traditionally believed that father is the anchor and the main character in the family, especially in Chinese family . According to the survey done by EOC on gender discrimination on 1996-97, it is found husband is generally regarded as the “ legitimate head”. Also, husband usually make the relatively more important decisions, like investment , removal , raising a home mortgage, while women decide more trivial matters. Furthermore, the dominance of male can also be demonstrated by the prevalence of domestic violence. By the statistics shown by the Social Welfare department, support for victims of child abuse, spouse, cohabitant, battering and social violence (from January to December 2012), the reported domestic violence cases by women is higher than men for 27% . The increasing trend of the domestic violence performed by men on women in family has manifested the male dominance and the notion that women are men’s property which formed the main domain of the conflicts perpetuated in social inequality still stands

Economic factor In terms of the economic factor deriving from the conflict approach, the economic power and social networking of the family perpetuate social inequality. First of all, family is an economic basis to transfer property, capital and wealth to their next generation. With richer support and more wealth , their children can be better equipped in different aspects, for example, their education , engagements in different activities as well as better health care, to name but a few. Moreover, the social networking is also a valuable resource given by

family to their children. With a wider social networking, children can receive more opportunities and more chances to have socialization with different kinds of people, especially the upper classes which is conducive to their upward mobility in society. According to the statistic done by the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the difference between the admission to university of lower class family and upper class family is 30 % , which significantly illustrates that richer the family , the higher chance that their kids can receive tertiary education and their children can be enriched more knowledge , experience as well as more opportunities to exposure to different things , and most important thing is they can be received by the society with more ease and welcome. Generally , children with richer resources can have a better development in future. Thus family as an economic unit, does influence the development of next generation and perpetuate social inequality as well as widened the social classes. Feminists' view Feminist theory focuses the nature of gender inequality and examines the women's social roles in, interests and feminists' policies. (Johnson, 1997) Their research always based on women generally experience subordination and being oppressed as well as put in the disadvantaged position in the society. Imbalance of degree of conformity in catering the spouse/family It is also observed that there is an imbalance of contribution between women and men for the marriage, which might be coincide with the feminists' viewpoint. (Barnard , 2005) According to (Barnard, 2005) , he pointed out that married women suffer more from psychological problems and more of them report of marital dissatisfaction. So how did the psychological problems suffered from married women related to the unfair contribution between men and women?

In fact, the plight of the married women can be traced to the Pygmalion effect introduced by Barnard. His research has pointed out that women would conform themselves to the expectation and standard of society to what an ideal married women should be. Also, there is a report presented in his article show that women tend to change their daily life routines and old habits to accommodate their husbands or families than men do. When we look back to our society, it is proved to be true too. Although women can pursue their career and earn high level of income, from society's view, they are still expected to care more about the house chores and children's family matters instead of fully concentrated on their career, if they do not do so, they would be considered as irresponsible mothers, while men would not suffer this condemnation since it seems right and non-problematic when men put a more significant effort and time on his career and less in household work and family matters. Inequality in contribution to household chores

Feminist theorists have also developed their argument based on household inequality. It is commonly in many societies to take for granted that men should work outside and women should take up most of the housework. (Sen, 2001) According to a baseline survey on Equal Opportunities on the Basis of Gender in 1996-97, traditional gender-division on house chores is still evident. Most household chores and responsibilities are still primarily household's chores and it is uncommon for the husband to share the household duties with their wives. Not only there is unfair balance of house chores, an extensive of statistic and reports convey us the fact that women spend a lot more time in dealing with their children than their partners do. Both of the aspects manifest the unequal contribution towards household

matters among men and women. The negative stereotype imposed on married women in middle age. There is a negative and derogative term which is reserved exclusively for middle aged married women, which is "C-lai". They are seen by the general public to be ignorant, overweight, and "penny-wise" but pound-foolish, as well as know nothing and have no higher goals except pleasing their family.' (Ho, 2008) Since "C-lai" is normally full-time worker at home, what they do, ie household chores, is regarded as non-economical productive. This kind of labeling on women has sparked off some negative psychological effect on them and adversely affect their relationship with the family. The negative stereotype and status of married middle aged women as "just home makers" have put women in a disadvantaged and lower position compared to men who work outside, which derive social inequality and conflicts and might harm the social stabilization, which is collided with the conflict theorists, instead of the functionalists, who contend that family is a contributor to social solidarity. How about same-sex family? We should not ignore the existence of another kind of family in our discussion, which is same sex family, despite it only plays a small proportion of family type in our society and it is not even legally recognized in HK. From the above analysis, we can observe that the significance of functions performed by traditional form of family is diminishing in a great extent and there is relatively less discussion on the functions of same sex marriage, thus, we shall focus on the conflict-approach more in this context, instead of the functionalist approach. There are hierarchies of respectability and good citizenship among heterosexuals (Seidman, 2005). The heterogeneity is generally regarded as "good" or "normal" sexuality. (Rubin, 1984) It

implicitly imply that homosexual is regarded as " bad" or " abnormal " sexuality. The discrimination or inequality imposed on heterosexuals inevitably brings to same sex marriage. In our discussion context , HK , same sex marriage is still not legally recognized which is in breach of international and domestic legislation as well as basic human right(Chan, 2005) . Thus, same sex marriage is still viewed as a second class or status compared to the traditional ones and the sexual inequality for the sexual minority in our society perpetuates social conflict . In conclusion, from the society's view and legal view towards the same sex marriage, the object itself, already manifests severe social conflict and inequality as the sexual minority is put under a disadvantaged position due to lack of marital right . Conclusion In conclusion, it is conceived that to a large extent the structural-functional approach is losing its significance in many aspects and fields. Many of the family's functions are being replaced and performed by other institutions. While the conflict approach which refers that family helps perpetuating social inequality, for both traditional and same sex family, are proved to be still applicable and true. Therefore, I think that the conflict approach is more suitable in describing family , especially in Hong Kong context. Reference: 1) Schaefer, Richard T. 2012. Sociology, 13th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2) Ho, P. (2007). Eternal Mothers or Flexible Housewives? Middle-aged Chinese Married Women in Hong Kon. Sex Roles, . 3) Ho, P. (2007). Desperate Housewives: The Case of Chinese Si-Nais in Hong Kong . Affilia 4) Ho, P. (2008). Squaring the ('charmed') circle: Normality and happiness of middle-aged married women in Hong Kong. asian journal of women s studies 5) Rubin, Gayle (1984, 1993), " Thinking Sex: Notes for a radical theory of the

Politics of Sexuality. " Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, ed. C. S. Vance, London: Pandora.) N. Johnson Shaping the future of feminist psychology: Education, research, and practice (Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association, 1997), pp. 15-35 7) Brabeck, M. and Brown, L. (with Christian, L., Espin, O., Hare-Mustin, R., Kaplan, A., Kaschak, E., Miller, D., Phillips, E., Ferns, T., and Van Ormer, A.) 'Feminist theory and psychological practice', in J. Worell 8) Sen, A. (2001). Many Faces of Gender Inequality. Frontline, 18 . 9) Barnard, J. (2005). The Husband's Marriage and the Wife's Marriage, in Classic Readings in Sociology, edited by Eve L. Howard. Canada: 10) Zill, N, Morrison, D. R., Corio, M. J. (1993). Long-term effects of parental divorce on parent child relationships, adjustment, and achievement in young adulthood. Journal of Family Psychology 11) Witt, S. D. , (1997). Parental influence on children's socialization to gender roles. . Adolescence, 32 12) Marsha W., Lynda P. C., Sockloff A., Ethridge T., Gracely E. and Myers Child Development , Vol. 55, No. 4 (Aug., 1984), pp. 1493-1503 13) Susan M. McHale, Ann C. Crouter and Corinna J. Tucker (1999) Child Development , Vol. 70, No. 4 (Jul. - Aug., 1999), pp. 990-1004 14) Mchale, S. M., Crouter, A. C. & Corinna, J. T. (1999). Family Context and Gender Role Socialization in Middle Childhood: Comparing Girls to Boys and Sisters to Brothers. Child Development, 70 . 15) Chan, C. W. (2005). The lack of sexual orientation anti-discrimination legislation in Hong Kong: breach of international and domestic legal obligations . The International Journal of Human Rights, . 16) Public Opinion Programme , The University of Hong Kong 17) Equality Opportunity Committee , HK 18) Survey results of Racial Discrimination of CUHK Social Work Department in 2005