New Times: New Families

New Times: New Families

by

Victoria Carrington

*Graduate School of Education,
University of Queensland, Australia*

SPRINGER-SCIENCE+BUSINESS MEDIA, B.V.

A C.I.P. Catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-90-481-5962-8 ISBN 978-94-017-2420-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-2420-3

Printed on acid-free paper

All Rights Reserved

© 2002 Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht

Originally published by Kluwer Academic Publishers in 2002

No part of the material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or
utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,
including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and
retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner.

DEDICATION

Allan.... thank you for the knowledge.

Brook.... thank you for the joy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	ix
Part One. Contextualizing Family.....	1
1 Reconstituting Traditional Family.....	3
Introduction	4
Neoliberal reconstitution of 'traditional' family in Australia	4
2 Apolitical Accounts of the Family	13
Introduction	13
Social Darwinism	15
Structural Functionalism and the nuclear family	18
Systems theory	24
3 The pre-1970s politicized family.....	29
Introduction	29
Patriarchy and the Western nuclear family—a gift from God.....	29
Marxist approaches.....	31
Feminist theory and the family	38
4 Critiques from within: Post-1970s modernist critiques and the nuclear narrative.....	43
Introduction	43
An ecosystemic analysis of the nuclear family.....	43
Wilden's family	46
Habitus and symbolic violence.....	47
Oedipus and colonization	51
Part Two. From Fordist Keynesianism to Neoliberal New Economies.....	63
5 The Boom Years: 1945-1973	65
Introduction	65
Nation building.....	66
The Keynesian social contract.....	70
Family narratives.....	73
6 Capitalism after 1973	77
Introduction	77
After 1973.....	77
The Information Society—fast, late, globalizing capitalism	82
Part Three. New Times: New Families.....	93
7 Ethnicity and Race to Interethnicity	95
Introduction	95
8 Interethnicity and Globalization	101
Introduction	101
The Australian Context.....	101
A generational shift	103
Geographies of interethnicity	111
9 Globalization, Family and Community	115
Introduction	115
Globalization and community	117
Imagined community.....	117
Glocalization	120

New ethnicities and old framings 122

10 Symbolic Violence: The shape(ing) of things to come..... 127

 Introduction 127

 The nationstate response..... 128

11 Landscaping ‘Family’ 135

 Introduction 135

 Conclusion..... 142

Reference List..... 145

Index..... 159

INTRODUCTION

There can be little doubt that ours is a society riding the crest of vast and profound social and economic change. The material conditions and social landscapes through which we experience our lives are increasingly an uncharted sea of unanticipated shift and hidden consequence and many of us have the unsettling feeling that we are out of our depth. It is natural to respond to this rapid and fundamental change with concern, particularly when many of the enduring keystones of our lives have been problematized. Family is one such keystone.

Family—and its apparent decline—is a topic of great interest. The breakdown of marriage and other relationships, family roles and responsibilities, the alienation of children, the rights of grandparents, juvenile crime and drug usage, and the emotional fallout of divorce are all current and emotive issues. Few individuals remain untouched by this debate.

The changes we are witnessing in relation to family are made all the more worrisome because we have a limited vocabulary for discussing and understanding profound change—a vocabulary characterized by normative framings and assumptions of deficit. It is very easy to look at the changes in ‘traditional’ family structure and read ‘breakdown’, ‘decline’ and ‘loss’. A politics of blame and rhetoric of ‘reconstitution’ very quickly follows. However, given the fundamental nature of contemporary social and economic change, this is not an adequate response. The shifts that we have experienced will not disappear; there will be no reversion to the ‘good old days’; and to continue to interpret change through a lens of deficit is counterproductive. We therefore need to develop a framework and vocabulary for addressing families in new times.

New Times: New Families begins the exploration of a new vocabulary and new theoretical framing that might have some salience given the context of new times. It begins by outlining how we came to talk about the modern nuclear family—what we would now call the ‘traditional’ family—in negative terms, chronicles some of the fundamental changes that have taken place of late, and then building upon current sociological and cultural studies work, it describes a new, more flexible framework that can accommodate difference and ongoing change without looking for lack or dysfunction.