Social Movements of Care

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Introduction

Over recent years, social policy has become increasingly concerned with the issue of 'user involvement' (Croft and Beresford, 1989: 5). On the one hand, this has arisen out of the New Right's welfare consumerism and, on the other hand, it has developed out of welfare users' critique of existing service provision which 'demands a voice in controlling standards and services themselves' (Ward and Mullender, 1991: 21). User movements thus challenge expert forms of knowledge and the authority of professionals, privileging the lay and experientially based needs of clients, patients or consumers. User involvement also emerged alongside 'the politics of participation' (Croft and Beresford, 1992) which has been made possible by the state and the 'political opportunity structures' it creates as well as by social movements pressing for change. Moreover, the current interest in user involvement is also associated with what has been identified as DIY social policy (Klein and Millar, 1995). This concept is used to demonstrate how people construct their own welfare mix of public and private sector services (see also Millar, 1996: 191). It also recognises the growing significance of 'empowerment' (cf. Ward and Mullender, 1991) as power is seen to be shifting from the producers to the consumers of welfare (Klein and Millar, 1995: 309). This, in turn, relates to a concomitant shift from passive recipients to active participants or 'active welfare subjects' (Williams, 1999).

In the States, attention has been focused not so much on the notion of user movements as with self-help groups. In Britain, though, mutual groups (oddly referred to as self-help groups) are seen as a vital aspect of a communitarianism which, according to Etzioni (2000: 25), ought to be at the heart of the Third Way. Indeed, Borkman (1997: 358) prefers the term mutual aid groups rather than self-help groups which tends to imply managing alone. Writing from a social movement perspective, Alfred Katz (1981; 1993) has pioneered work in the field of self-help in the States. Similarly, Verta Taylor has developed an approach to self-help which utilises social movement theory. She argues that despite the plethora of case material on women's protest produced by feminists writers scant attention has been paid to issues of gender by mainstream social movement scholars (Taylor, 1999: 8). Developing this interest in gender and social movements she argues that self-help is not a mode of collective action that simply represents an extension of women's nurturant and caring roles. Rather, it is intrinsic to the organisational form. Working with Van Willigen on postpartum depression and breast cancer movements, Taylor argues that '[c]aring and nurturant personal relationships are the essence of all self-help groups, whether or not the group is explicitly feminist' (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 135).

Much of the literature on self-help or mutual aid is concentrated in the area of health care and especially mental health (see Chesler, 1991; Kalifon, 1991; Rogers and Pilgrim, 1991; Powell,

1993; Emerick, 1995; Crossley, 1999a, 1999b). Taylor's work on postpartum depression falls into this category, too. However, it also relates to issues of parenting as well as partnering (hence, social movements of 'care') and has some theoretical poignancy. In this paper, I provide a historical perspective by, for instance, looking at the infant welfare movement that grew during the early part of the twentieth century. I also look at movements across a number of countries including Britain, America, Canada and Australia. While the paper is largely descriptive and empirically focused I do raise theoretically interesting points about social movements when I feel it is appropriate to do so.

I shall begin the paper by setting out Suzanne Staggenborg's (1998) general approach to the study of gender, family and social movements not least because it represents the only attempt to integrate these concerns, albeit in a textbook format. Before I do this there is a theoretical point that I wish to clarify. Over course of writing this paper, I struggled continually with the debate, which is rooted in the Marxist tradition (see Turner, 1986), as to whether social transformation is best achieved through reform or via more radical means. This is exemplified in the clash between liberal and radical feminists in the women's movement. While the former advocated policy and legislative change by means of institutional reform the latter proposed a broader cultural transformation by organising at grassroots level and raising people's consciousness. This also touches upon the contentious issue about the efficacy of the so-called new social movements which appear to pose only symbolic challenges to the dominant order and resemble more the radical form of organisation than the other. It became apparent to me, however, that there is a dynamic relationship between these two kinds of social movement activity. The two, if you like, are complementary. This is demonstrated by Levi and Singleton (1991) who show how the women's movement improved the bargaining power of sole-parents in Australia by (a) providing them with an ideology that enabled them to question traditional conceptions of women's roles and (b) bringing new organisational resources to bear on the bargaining process.

Gender, Family and Social Movements

Suzanne Staggenborg's (1998) book, *Gender, Family and Social Movements*, represents an attempt to analyse transformations in gender relations and family life from a social movement perspective. Verta Taylor, who is another social movement scholar, has also built up an impressive body of work around the issue of women's self-help and postpartum depression (Taylor, 1996; 1999, Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996). This is part of her wider project to produce a systematic theory of gender and social movements (see Taylor, 1999: 8-9). She argues that while there is a growing body of case material on women's protest by feminist writers, mainstream social movement theorists have paid little attention to gender processes in social movements that are not explicitly oriented to gender as a source of conflict. In part, this has to do with what she has identified as the gendering of social movement theory (Taylor, 1999: 26) which has focused upon the public face of movements and neglected the cultural arena wherein gender conflict is concentrated. While previous research has looked at how women's movements have played a part in reconstructing gender relations in society, Taylor's work is significant because it considers the gender effects or outcomes of social movements (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 123). I will return to Taylor's work shortly.

In Britain, Paul Byrne (1997) has produced a useful account of the women's movement which provides both case material and social movement theory. And, I shall discuss this in more detail below. Before I do so, I wish to outline Staggenborg's general approach which, although focused

on the States, provides us with a useful framework for understanding some of the ways in which gender and social movements interact in the family context. Her emphasis is two-fold. Firstly, she looks at gender relations within the family and the multitude of changes that it has endured. Secondly, she is concerned with the collective struggles that have accompanied changes in gender relations. Two associated questions thus emerge. Firstly, how have changes in gender and family arrangements affected the rise of social movements? Secondly, how have social movements altered gender and family arrangements?

Staggenborg argues that large-scale changes have transformed gender relations and provided the bases for collective mobilisation. Her argument, here, is not simply that wider changes affect the emergence of gender-based movements but that changes in gender relations are subject to structural limitations (Staggenborg, 1998: 6-7). Drawing on Taylor's work, she argues that the self-help movement to support women suffering from postpartum depression draws on cultural understandings of what it means to be a 'good mother' in defining the problem of this condition whilst also challenging prevalent ideas about mothering. Thus, support groups formed within this self-help movement are based on the assumption of 'traditional feminine responsibility for caring' (Taylor, 1996: 123). Staggenborg also points out, however, that social movements are important in fostering new gender consciousness and in bringing about social change:

> By raising consciousness and introducing new ways of talking about gender, social movements help to provide the vision, as well as the organisation and tactics, needed to bring about cultural and policy changes. (Staggenborg, 1998: 10)

Another important feature of Staggenborg's approach is that it emphasises the battles that take place between movements and 'countermovements'. She shows, for instance, how in the States in the 1970s the campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was instrumental in its defeat and how the anti-abortion movement prolonged the conflict over legal abortion. Therefore, changes in gender relations are not only limited by structural, cultural and political constraints but also by movements that oppose such changes.

The Infant Welfare Movement

I wish now to discuss the case of the infant welfare movement since it represents an early example of a social movement that had to do with care and intimate relations. Importantly, though, it was not a 'user' movement or self-help movement strictly in the sense that I defined in the introduction. This is because it was made up of 'experts' and professionals (e.g. doctors and nurses) as well as voluntary workers and philanthropists. On the other hand, by claiming that infant mortality was the responsibility of the individual mother, the movement did foster self-help in two related ways. Firstly, it meant that mothers of babies and young children became more autonomous but this, in turn, also encouraged them to develop a culture of self-help amongst themselves. Research into the infant welfare movement has focused on Britain and Australia utilising a variety of historical sources. Hence, a degree of controversy prevails amongst scholars. I want to pick up on some of these controversies as well as document some commonalities between analyses.

In Britain, infant mortality was a problem for the early part of the twentieth century because it meant that in a period of intensifying international economic, military and imperial competition the number of potential workers and soldiers would dwindle (Dwork, 1987). Perhaps it is not

surprising then that the infant welfare movement is seen as having been a conservative force in society. Jane Lewis (1980) argues that the movement claimed that responsibility for infant mortality lay with the individual mother. In schools and welfare centres young mothers were taught self-help. This emphasis on education rather than treatment was intended to instil a sense of responsibility. Rather like the charitable organisations *for* the disabled (Oliver, 1990: ch. 8), the attitude of voluntary workers tended to be patronising whereby the poor could best be reformed by contact with their betters (Lewis, 1980: 484). But there was a ideological dimension to this as well, since this emphasis on maternal responsibility was supported by the view that a women's proper place was in the home. The infant welfare movement thus functioned to bolster a conservative view of the family.

There was also a system of social closure at work here. Voluntary organisations and local authorities insisted that schools and welfare centres were to educate and not to give treatment which, in part, stemmed from the medical establishment's fear that infant welfare centres would threaten the livelihood of general practitioners (Lewis, 1980: 483). Deacon (1985) argues a similar point showing how doctors' control of the infant welfare movement deskilled women. Doctors created a stereotype of women as mothers which built moral and practical barriers to their participation in public life.

While these accounts paint a somewhat gloomy picture of the infant welfare movement, Lewis (1980: 485) says that it did provide many women with information, companionship and a measure of reassurance. Mein Smith (1993), though, is sceptical of these accounts which apparently overstate the power and the impact of the movement. Using various historical sources and a detailed case study of Wonthaggi, a coal town southeast of Melbourne, Australia, she argues that the experts were largely ignored. While 'mothering', however enjoined, varied in its effectiveness according to class she shows how all mothers exercised autonomy and, in the end, used their own discretion (Mein Smith, 1993: 66). When they were around, mothers listened to their own mothers. Indeed, it was customary to do so (Mein Smith, 1993: 71). They were also selective about what expert advice to adopt or reject.

What is most controversial about Mein Smith's thesis is her assertion that the mothers and babies movement was itself an *outcome* of the fertility decline and of reduced infant mortality (Mein Smith, 1993: 81). The evidence suggests it was not the case that the movement effected a decline in infant and child mortality. Rather, the decline preceded the rise of the movement. Environmental factors such as better food hygiene, cleaner water and improvements in urban sanitation along with education gave rise to low fertility and a decline in infant mortality. As families became smaller this changed the household disease environment such that young children were less likely to catch an infectious disease from a sibling. The chronological sequence of events indicates that the infant welfare movement capitalised on these rapid demographic changes which enabled doctors, nurses and philanthropic women to introduce a more intensive approach to baby care and so enhance the subsequent quality of life. In short, the movement represented an institutional response to health and social change.

> One argument which may be advanced is the factors that triggered the decline need not be conflated with those which contributed to its continuation, and it is the period of continuation with which mother and babies movements are coincident (Mein Smith, 1993: 82)

One possible reason for the strength of the infant welfare movement at this time may relate to what Farmer and Boushel (1999: 86-88) regard as the relative weakness of the feminist movement during this period. Their argument is that women have played a vital role in various campaigns to force the state to be more active in the protection of children. When the feminist movement has been strong it has been able to draw attention to the physical and sexual violence of men within the home. When it has been less active, society has concerned itself with issues of 'neglect' which is usually taken to mean poor mothering. For example, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, making 16 the age of consent for girls, and the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act 1889 which gave courts the power to remove children from abusive parents, were both the result of early feminist campaigns focused on men and fathers as perpetrators of physical and sexual violence. In the early part of the twentieth century, on the other hand, the women's movement was less prominent. Consequently, the focus shifted towards issues of neglectful mothers and especially the health and child-rearing practices of working-class mothers. Child abuse virtually disappeared as an issue for public concern and only reemerged in the 1970s.

This was because the women's movement had become, by then, more active and better organised. It influenced child and family welfare, for instance, in the setting up of select committees on violence in marriage in 1974 and 1976. The sexual abuse of children as a cause for concern also reemerged in the 1980s where the impetus was once again provided by the feminist movement. Here, the testimony of women seeking help from rape crisis centre in both Britain and the States indicated that many had been sexually abused in childhood over prolonged periods and often by family members. Women working in the area of child protection were at the forefront of campaigns to have these concerns addressed by their agencies. Crucially, Farmer and Boushel argue that notions of maltreatment are not neutral but are constructed around gendered definitions of proper parenting. In a two-parent family neglect could be considered the responsibility of either parent while in practice it is mothers who are deemed responsible for child care and any deficits therein. The very concept of child neglect arises from the norm of male breadwinning and female domesticity. This is why the women's movement has a stake in organising child rescue organisations and influencing the political agenda.

One final point relating to social movement theory ties in with what I have discussed above and this concerns what Verta Taylor (1989) calls 'abeyance structures'. By this she means the social networks and communities that sustain a movement through periods in which it is not publicly visible. This concept is useful because it not only recognises the importance of the organisational and cultural dimensions of social movements but also because it explains how movements survive over time. Accordingly, 'new' social movements are just the latest manifestation of movements stretching back as far as the mid-nineteenth century (see Pascall, 1998: 202). In the case of the infant welfare movement it seems that although the women's movement may not have been politically active and might not have had a direct impact upon welfare policy it was nevertheless sustained in familial and neighbourhood networks where women's collective action took the form of self-help rather than public campaigning.

The Women's Movement

The women's movement is perhaps the most obvious example of a social movement that addresses issues of parenting, partnering and relationships of care and intimacy. There is a profusion of written work on the women's movement. So, what I want to concentrate on here are

some of the issues that may be considered relevant to discussions on policy. The first point to make though is that women do not participate only in movements specifically *for* women. In the States, for instance, they played an important role in the civil rights campaign (Blumberg, 1990). Globally, women have also been an essential part of the peace and environmental movements (Jackson, 1994; Mellor, 1997; Roseneil, 1997).

Often it is suggested that women's participation in these protests constitutes an extension of their caring and nurturing role which ends in them reinforcing their subordinate position. Indeed, women are often excluded from the leadership of social movements and have little choice other than to operate at an informal, grassroots or community level (Taylor, 1999: 17). Taylor does not see this as a default position, however, but a strategy, a collective action repertoire, of women's self-help movements which act in defiance of the control of one's emotions that upholds gender differences; to insist that collective self-expression *is* politics (Taylor, 1999: 20). In this way, and as I pointed out in the introduction, whether the group be feminist or not, caring and nurturant personal relationships are the essence of self-help groups (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 135).

> In women's self-help movements, the belief in fundamental differences between female and male values - whether they are seen as socially or biologically determined - serves as the basis for a distinctive kind of emotion culture organised around female values, nurturant relationships, and an ethic of caring. (Taylor, 1999: 19)

Women's self-help movements therefore conform to a 'feminine logic' which in contrast to the masculine ethic of rationality and reason stresses emotion, empathy, expression and so on. This is not to say that men are incapable nor unwilling to participate in the emotion culture of women's self-help movements. In the postpartum movement, there are fathers' groups that encourage men to overcome their emotional detachment (Taylor, 1999: 20). Taylor also does not mean to imply that women's organisations always have an emotion culture or conform to a feminine logic. However, she does suggest that by examining the gender logic of a movement's mobilising structures we may be able to perceive the impact that gender processes have on social movements that do not explicitly evoke gender struggles (Taylor, 1999: 20-21).

In the peace movement, women are often seen to act as peacekeepers and moral guardians of the family and the world (West and Blumberg, 1990: 18; Feinman, 1995: 168). Similarly, in the green movement, whether socially constructed or the result of a much deeper affinity, women are seen as more responsive to the natural world (Mellor, 1997: 199-201). Women, though, have participated in and led collective protests in other 'nurturing' causes, such as child care, health, prostitution, alcoholism, and the abolition of lynching and the death penalty (West and Blumberg, 1990: 18). The Million Mother's March that took place in Washington DC in May 2000 provides a good recent example. Women here organised around the issue of gun control in the wake of several shootings in US schools. West and Blumberg (1990: 18) argue that women who participate in these sorts of protests are often labelled 'moral reformers' or 'do-gooders' since they are not recognised as actors who are involved in genuine (male) political struggles.

In fact, this points to an interesting distinction that is made by Steuter (1992: 290) who argues that while men's organisations for social change are characterised as social movements, women's organisations tend to be regarded rather dismissively as examples of 'voluntary organisations'. There is, however, some truth in this characterisation. Indeed, one might even say, in accordance with Taylor, that the development of grassroots, voluntary and self-help groups has been a strategy actively pursued by some in the women's movement. Here, I refer to the radical wing of

the women's movement which is frequently distinguished from the liberal/reformist wing. Byrne's (1997) potted account of the women's movement in Britain assesses the contribution each of these 'wings' has made. He also looks at the 'waves' of protest that women have been involved in at various points in time. It is important to consider these issues as they illuminate the debate about whether social transformation is best achieved by changing policy or people's consciousness.

In accounts of the women's movement it is conventional to discuss the waves of political mobilisation that women have participated in (see Byrne, 1997: 110). The suffragette movement represents the first of these waves and was concerned with equality based on the right to vote. The second wave is associated with the Women's Liberation Movement which grew out of the upsurge in political activity during the 1960s. Second wave feminism demanded equal pay, equal educational opportunities, child care, free contraception, abortion on demand, financial and legal independence for women, the right of women to choose their own sexuality, and freedom from male violence, intimidation and sexual coercion (Pascall, 1998: 198). However, during the late 1970s and into the 1980s the women's movement became factionalised. Liberal feminists sought equal rights through legal and institutional reform. Others within the movement, though, were suspicious of this tactic because it meant women needed to become like men and, it was thought, only middle-class (white) women would benefit since they were best equipped to fight men on their own terms (Byrne, 1997: 115). Socialist feminists attempted to rectify this situation by fighting for working-class women. Further, black women appeared excluded as they saw the family as a source of solidarity against racism rather than a source of patriarchal domination (Byrne, 1997: 117).

While liberal and social feminists differed in their orientation they agreed that there was little wrong in cooperating with men to achieve their ends (Byrne, 1997: 116). Radical feminists, on the other hand, believed that patriarchy was the central problem and thus adopted an approach which emphasised women's essential difference from men. They stressed the importance of interpersonal relations and set up women-only groups offering alternatives to male-dominated institutions. For instance, alternative forms of health care, such as midwifery, were made available to women by women (Byrne, 1997: 113). Thus, rather than looking to bring about change in the public or political sphere, radical feminists sought transformation in the private or cultural realm by challenging conventional forms of sexuality and the institutions of marriage and the family. They chose self-help over political agitation and set up rape crisis centres and women's refuges both of which symbolised men's inherent capacity for violence. This eventually resulted in a further split in the movement by women asserting that lesbianism was the only true form of feminism (Byrne, 1997: 117). Such a discussion of the women's movement asks us to consider whether purity or pragmatism is most effective in realising collective goals (Byrne, 1997: 124-127).

More than the movement in Britain, the American women's movement has exhibited organisation and unity at national level through, for example, the National Organisation for Women (NOW). Consequently, it has been better able to engage with policy-makers which has given the impression of it being more 'successful' than its British counterpart (Gelb, 1990: 144). However, this view of success has been challenged by new social movement theorists. They argue that social movements may effect change in a society at a more profound level and in a more subtle manner. Rather than influencing public policy, movements can transform the way a society thinks about things. In other words, they can transform our consciousness. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) refer to this as the 'cognitive praxis' of social movements. From this perspective,

Byrne (1997: 126) argues that the various disagreements within the British women's movement gave rise to an intellectual dynamism and vitality that stressed identity and questioned their own ideology rather than seeking policy change. By so doing the movement transformed the consciousness of many women (and men) in Britain. The contemporary women's movement thus challenges society's dominant codes.

> . . . the women's movement involves more than the affirmation of new rights and the demand for equality. It also claims the importance of difference, the need for alternative codes which demand recognition. Women raise the question of difference for the whole of society, and urge that everyone can be recognised as different. (Melucci, 1989: 56)

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the women's movement has been involved in struggles to publicise aspects of everyday life not formerly considered political (Calhoun, 1995: 186-188). Ironically, however, many of the issues voiced by women (e.g. birth control) did not make it onto the public agenda and it was suffrage that became the greatest achievement of the early movement. Before I go on to discuss Verta Taylor's work on women's self-help and postpartum depression I want to look briefly at some of the other collective struggles that women have been involved in. I wish also to set out some of the concrete and some of the less concrete accomplishments of social movements that have sought to change gender and family relations.

Staggenborg, as I have shown, outlines the struggles that have taken place in the States over the ERA and the issue of abortion. While both met with vehement opposition, the abortion rights movement eventually succeeded in making legal abortion widely available. The ERA, on the other hand, was ultimately defeated. Thus, for Staggenborg, the success of social movements is not straightforward. She is inclined to believe that the more threatening a movement seems the less successful it will be. Moreover, movements that do not challenge dominant cultural codes may alter gender and family relations indirectly. The temperance movement, for example, did not appear to threaten existing values but nevertheless contributed to the expansion of women's roles. It built on existing ideas about motherhood by using maternalist rhetoric and used conventional religious rituals at its meetings. However, it also extended the role of women into public life and offered a vision of community in which people took responsibility for the care and welfare of others (Staggenborg, 1998: 124). Likewise, women's self-help in postpartum depression utilises maternalist language yet challenges the dominant view that women automatically love their children (Staggenborg, 1998: 125).

Social movements do not only aim to change legislation or public policy. They might also be concerned with fighting wider transformations at grassroots level. We are now living through a period where it is not unusual for both men and women to go out to work. We are also witnessing a rise in the number of single parents who are increasingly 'encouraged' to find employment. We live in a society that is becoming more mobile and consequently many couples and single parents are less likely to live in the same place as their siblings or their own parents (Staggenborg, 1998: 127). Hence, traditional structures of care, such as the extended family, are less accessible. In the light of these social transformations it is perhaps not surprising that Staggenborg considers child care to be one of the foremost issues confronting social movements concerned with gender relations and family life.

Movements can press governments to enact measures such as the Family and Medical Leave Act 1993 which requires employers to give people time off work in the event of the birth of a child or

illness in the family (Staggenborg, 1998: 132). Such legislation, however, has its limitations. The workplace, too, continues to be gendered and the problem of child care tends often to consist in an individual solution such as hiring a babysitter rather than in making collective demands on employers (Staggenborg, 1998: 132). Staggenborg proposes a communitarian response to the problems posed by child care which also represents a challenge to the model of the nuclear family. This is because support for working parents, gay and lesbian couples, single parents or reconstituted families that involves a larger community of people in parenting departs radically from the idea that children are the concern and responsibility solely of their parents (Staggenborg, 1998: 115).

In Britain, many of the same trends are observable. The women's movement has had a public and a not so public face. There have been important legislative and policy changes as well as the emergence of a number of self-help groups that have helped raise people's consciousness. Among the most significant changes ushered in over the past thirty years or so have been abortion reform, equal pay legislation, employment protection, the creation of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Byrne, 1997: 110). Gillian Pascall (1998) assesses the success of the original claims made by the Women's Liberation Movement. However, while she argues that women's movement has been and continues to be an important agent in the development of the social policy agenda in Britain she is at pains to make clear the limits of legislation and the problems surrounding the provision of welfare that women have campaigned for.

The Equal Pay Act 1970 was the first piece of legislation to reflect the second wave of the women's movement. However, more that twenty years after it came into effect the pay of women in full-time employment is still only 74 per cent that of men (Pascall, 1998: 199). Notwithstanding this, equal pay has been pursued by the Equal Opportunities Commission and other key social agents, such as the labour movement, and legislation has been widened to apply to the European context. Campaigns of women in work have also continued in areas such as promotions, appointments, child care and sexual harassment. Women have not only been involved in campaigns to change public policy, though.

Women have been both the greatest users of welfare and have played and, as workers, have played an essential role in the evolution of the welfare state. Lack of autonomy and state support, however, have caused them to establish self-help organisations as a radical critique of welfare (cf. Langan, 1998: 15). Since 1975, Women's Aid has provided refuge to women who have been subject to domestic violence. This has constituted what Lovenduski and Randall (1993: 307-308) have termed an 'alternative political practice' and has offered a deliberate challenge to the welfare state. Political action, though, has also helped bring in legislation for safe housing and changes in police practice (Pascall, 1998: 195). Rape Crisis organisations such a the Rape Crisis Group and Women Against Rape in London have provided similar support for women who have been victims of male violence. At a deeper level, this campaign has been instrumental in changing the public perception of these crimes which has undoubtedly contributed to the establishment of marital violence as a crime (Pascall, 1998: 200).

Just as in the States, the Right to Choose campaign met with intense opposition from advocates of the Right to Life. However, the National Abortion Campaign has been able to defend women's right to abortion and the law has changed little in the past thirty years or so. Women's health has also widened. A number of groups have sprung up, for instance, around issues of reproductive rights and control and others have challenged the predominance of male medics, e.g. the Radical

Midwives Association were set up to offer a more women-centred maternity care (Pascall, 1998: 200).

Finally, like Staggenborg, Pascall raises the issue of child care as an important one. The National Child Care Campaign which was launched in 1980 demanded that greater flexibility in work and benefits would enable both men and women to combine paid work and care. Later, the Workplace Nurseries Campaign and the Working Mothers' Association took up this campaign. This time, unlike in the States, these campaigns did not meet with opposition by countermovements. Rather, it was the then Conservative government that resisted them the most operating, as it did, in a political milieu which emphasised fiscal austerity and propagated the fear that such a move would erode the traditional role of women and, in turn, the family (Pascall, 1998: 201). Pascall argues that the women's movement has won a good measure of success especially in creating equal educational opportunity and free contraception. Moreover, issues raised by the women's movement in the 1970s have, in the 1990s, become more established in political debate. Indeed, they inform a great deal of New Labour's policy:

> The primacy given in Labour Party strategy to flexibility of work, parental leave and child care seems to be a clear result of the increase in women party activists and the influence of the women's movement. (Pascall, 1998: 203)

In a similar manner, Levi and Singleton (1991) consider how feminist bureaucrats or 'femocrats' have influenced change in sole-parent benefits in Australia. Femocrats 'are women employed in bureaucracy who are committed to improving the position of women in government and of promoting policies that improve the condition of women in Australian society' (Levi and Singleton, 1991: 638). Since sole-parents are in weak bargaining position they have not succeeded in forming effective pressure groups (630). They have therefore had to count on the support of influential allies in order to 'mobilise to bring pressure on the relevant agency to change its policies' (Levi and Singleton, 1991: 630).

Levi and Singleton argue that the women's women has transformed the bargaining process as it applies to sole-parents in two ways. Firstly, the ideology of women's liberation alters the traditional conception of women's roles and encourages women to consider circumstances that are unacceptable and act on their own behalf to change them. Secondly, the women's movement of the 1960s and early 1970s provided new political resources 'in the form of organisations of women and of relatively powerful allies within the bureaucracy and policymaking apparatus' (Levi and Singleton, 1991: 637). Self-help groups such as the Council in the Single Mother and Her Child (CSMC) have been set up and are largely comprised of *recipients* of sole-parent benefits. Although this group were initially critical of social workers and other officials it seems to be Levi and Singleton's (1991: 641) argument that they had eventually to ally themselves with social workers and femocrats in order to effect policy change.

Because their bargaining resources are so slight, sole-parents utilise 'weapons of the weak' (Levi and Singleton, 1991: 630) which, in their case, consists in behavioural withdrawal of consent 'by manipulating rules or failing to comply with them. The effect of such actions is to raise the costs of enforcement. This can, under some circumstances, lead to policy change' (Levi and Singleton, 1991: 630). This noncompliance is aided and abetted by their allies. Levi and Singleton (1991: 649-650) say that noncompliance may or may not be used as a political weapon. More often than not, it is simply used as a means of protection against harmful rules or as a way of enhancing material well-being. This can take the form of fraud, free riding or evasion. However, Levi and

Singleton believe that it is a political phenomenon precisely because it has potentially significant consequences (There are parallels here with the protests over the Poll Tax in Britain):

> As the femocrats, women's groups, and advocacy organisations argued for a reconsideration of the policies under which sole-parent beneficiaries must live, they may have effectively, even if not always intentionally, encouraged recipients to question the treatment they have traditionally received and to question the rules with which they must comply. The vocalness of their allies may have engendered new dissatisfactions with the previous levels of benefits and rules concerning cohabitation and outside work. What had come to be considered fair or at least the best possible bargain seems to have become less acceptable. (Levi and Singleton, 1991: 644)

The Case of Women's Self-Help and Postpartum Depression

Verta Taylor's work on women's self-help has a number of facets and, to an extent, builds on her previous work about social movement communities (Taylor and Whittier, 1992). Her wider project is to link theories of gender to mainstream social movement theory. Social movement theorists have looked at how women's and men's movements have attacked gendered policies and practices pertaining to employment, the family and reproduction but have not considered how gender might be used, as an analytic category, to understand the social construction of gender in movements not necessarily focused on issues of gender and how social movements, in turn, contribute to the reconstruction of gender relations in society. Moreover, Taylor (1999: 26) notices a gendering of social movement theory which has predominantly focused upon the male-dominated public sphere and ignored the private or quotidian sphere that has been the traditional domain of women. This has meant that analysts are preoccupied with the political and economic arenas and overlook the significance of the cultural arena. The tendency to adopt a strict political interpretation of the success of social movements has also caused scholars to be less concerned with *what* social movements accomplish than with *how* they mobilise (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 123).

Writing with Van Willigen, it is Taylor's objective to place women's self-help firmly at the heart of contemporary debates about social movements by showing how it is not simply 'an apolitical variety of cultural feminism or identity politics' (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 125). Rather, it is just one example of the panoply of movements that are no longer bound to conventional forms of political protest but pose challenges to the symbolic codes and practices of institutions such as art, religion, medicine, mental health, law, education and the mass media as well as to social policy (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 125). Social movement theorists have not considered fully the transformative potential of women's self-help groups which Taylor shows are, in the case of the postpartum depression movement, actively engaged in advocating social change by questioning sexist institutional practices.

Thus, Taylor appears to be doing for American social movement studies what Melucci has done for European approaches. However, while Melucci's (1984: 822) work is also premised on a critique of 'political reductionism' he tends only to regard contemporary movements as symbolic challenges and does not consider seriously movements that may be oriented about issues of power and redistribution (see Bartholomew and Mayer, 1992). Taylor and Van Willigen, on the other hand, demonstrate that women's self-help movements are concerned with the redistribution of power *as well as* cultural struggles that 'revolve around disputed meanings and contested identities' (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 128). In short, this approach is more sensitive to the

issue of how movements that are not strategic but internally oriented and following an identity logic of action (Taylor, 1999: 10) might influence policy and bring about social change.

The contemporary postpartum movement stands in stark contrast to the infant welfare movement discussed earlier. Its origins lie in the women's health movement of the 1970s which represented a feminist critique of a male-dominated medical profession but was also part of a larger context of burgeoning women's self-help in light of the transformation of American feminism (Taylor, 1999: 16; Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 124). Like all user movements or self-help groups, women in the postpartum movement express grave dissatisfaction with professional service providers and challenge 'expert' knowledge of postpartum illness choosing instead to generate lay understandings based on their own lived experiences (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 133).

While the postpartum movement exists on a national scale through the organisations Depression After Delivery (DAD) and Postpartum Support International (PSI) which formed in the mid-1980s, small group interactions and one-on-one support are the mainstay of the movement. As Taylor (1999: 18) puts it, 'the crux of women's self-help is to be found in the submerged networks or social movement communities that coalesce loosely around the informal leadership and personal relationships stitched out of participants' giving and getting emotional and other very individualised kinds of support'. The postpartum movement has three principal strategies: direct service; consciousness raising; and lobbying.

Face-to-face support groups that provide information and mutual aid constitute the first of these. Other tactics which also encompass consciousness raising include telephone support, self-help reading, pen-pal networks and 'survivor narratives'. These stories are made public through media such as talks shows and nationally televised tabloids. It is Taylor and Van Willigen's (1996: 130) argument that 'speak-outs' are important not only because they bring postpartum illness into the public eye but because they challenge images of femininity that tie women to the private realm of the home and to motherhood. However, it is only when collectivities, not individuals, engage in and publicise new gender practices that a serious challenge is posed to the gender order (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 128). This is because collectivities can define such action as *personal political resistance* to, for instance, the assumption that mothers automatically have a desire to love and nurture their new babies. The postpartum movement also highlights the oppressive nature of the motherhood role. Women with postpartum depression are thus able to define a new kind of mother (Taylor, 1999: 27). One that differs from the traditional or ideal mother only because she suffers a complication of pregnancy.

Lobbying is another, more conventional, collective action repertoire used by the postpartum movement. Amongst other things this consists in pressing and winning the support of medical and mental health professionals to recognise postpartum illness as a medical condition, to advocate new experiential treatments, and to treat postpartum depression as a complication of pregnancy rather than a mental disorder (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 132-133; Taylor, 1999: 13). Just as in the case of the infant welfare movement, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was the male-dominated medical profession that led the way in the campaign for the medicalisation of postpartum depression (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 134). The women's health movement of the 1970s, though, was strongly against the medicalisation of women's conditions as it was believed that this would ultimately reinforce institutionalised gender differences between men and women. The postpartum movement today is in favour of medicalisation because it is seen as a means by which they can gain access and control over medical resources and treatments (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 132).

Opponents of this strategy argue that medicalising women's conditions could increase women's reliance upon the male-dominated medical establishment without altering the structural inequalities that have given rise to women's health problems. On the other hand, Taylor and Van Willigen (1996: 134) say that 'it is difficult to argue with the claim that women's self-help movements, by demanding a role in medical diagnosis and treatment, pose a gender-based challenge to the lay/expert dichotomy that undergirds medicine's institutional legitimacy'. Thus, like the Gulf War veterans who pushed for the identification of 'post-traumatic stress syndrome' and the gay rights activists who have campaigned for the recognition of homosexuality as a mental disorder, postpartum activists see disease classification as a political arena (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 132).

The social composition of the postpartum movement is white, educated and upper-middle class which is consistent with other new social movements (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 127). This constituency reflects the movement's structural origins which reside in 'white middle-class women struggling to balance work and family roles as their participation as caught up with that of African-American, single, and working-class women' (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 127). Despite the apparent absence of Afro-American women in the postpartum movement, Taylor and Van Willigen (1996: 135) argue for a politics of inclusion whereby women's self-help groups base their claims on an ideology of sex difference. The aim of this is to construct a *collective identity* that is based on women's common experiences (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 135; Taylor, 1999: 23-25).

The formation of a collective identity is an essential part of what has been termed 'prefigurative politics' (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 134; Staggenborg, 1998: 128-129). In this way, '[w]omen's self-help communities strive to exemplify a better way of organising society by constructing a distinctive women's culture of caring in which participants can find emotional support as well as receive practical information to understand and overcome their problems' (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 135). By building a collective identity self-help groups are able to connect women's personal experiences to the general problem of gender subordination. Herein lies the larger social significance of women's self-help.

Something that all movement analysts must consider is not only the extent to which movement's effect social change but also the ways in which they might support, unwittingly or not, the status quo. In this way, Taylor (1999: 26) shows how the postpartum movement has the potential to challenge the gender order but has a role in affirming it too. By encouraging husbands of women with postpartum depression to be participate in housework and child care as well as provide support and understanding the movement poses a challenge to the gendered division of care in society (Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 136). Moreover, self-help groups mount a challenge to the gender division of labour by placing a moral significance on caring where it would otherwise be devalued and when women are increasingly less able to care for others as a result of their expanded participation in the workforce (cf. Staggenborg, 1998).

The postpartum depression movement also challenges gender inequality 'by targeting the practices and logic of social institutions, including medicine, the family, and the law, that inscribe gender difference and maintain gender stratification' (Taylor, 1999: 26). Activists have gained access to medical information and resources and have questioned the way in which medical acknowledge and practice is constructed. The movement also poses a cultural or symbolic challenge by alerting society to the contradictions of motherhood which does not

necessarily infuse new mothers with a joyous desire to love and care for their babies (Taylor, 1999: 27).

Feminist critics have argued that women's self-help reinforces their subordinate position by effectively defining them as 'victims' (see Taylor and Van Willigen, 1996: 26). Indeed, Taylor is quick to point out the paradox of women's self-help in relation to postpartum depression. Firstly, it affirms conservative norms of femininity by constructing collective identities around the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual women. It also adopts organising structures and strategies that assume women's modes of relating are different to those of men and which 'position women as helpless victims of an uncaring medical establishment' (Taylor, 1999: 27). This has the effect not only of bolstering the gendered institutions that are the target of the postpartum movement but also reinforcing the view that the sexes are fundamentally different from one another. Taylor sees this as the result of the movement mobilising around an interpretive frame of gender difference which ultimately limits its ability to challenge the 'binary divide' that is the foundation of gender stratification.

Lesbian and Gay Rights

Using her framework that I outlined above Staggenborg (1998: ch. 6) shows how the battle over gay and lesbian rights has evolved in the States. What I want to do here is set out briefly her arguments about the gay and lesbian liberation movement that emerged during the 1960s. Like the women's movement, the gay and lesbian movement is characterised by diversity; it contains conservative as well as radical elements; and it has used both reformist and more radical tactics to bring about change. The movement arose in a broader context of militant collective action which included civil rights, women's rights, environmentalism and opposition to the Vietnam War (Staggenborg, 1998: 110). The women's movement had already set about challenging traditional gender roles which helped facilitate gay and lesbian protest. However, working-class lesbians had already established 'a culture of defiance' by presenting themselves openly as 'butch-fems'. Staggenborg argues that this pre-political form of resistance provided one of the bases for the gay and lesbian liberation movement of the 1960s because it 'expanded the boundaries of acceptable female behaviour by claiming new public spaces for socialising, introducing new fashions, and making new sexual relations possible' (Staggenborg, 1998: 106).

Staggenborg shows how the gay and lesbian movement represents fundamental challenges to conventional family and gender relations which she connects to broader transformations in family and gender in the twentieth century. For instance, gay and lesbian sexuality is part of the wider practice of nonmarital, nonreproductive sexuality. Likewise, the alternative gender roles adopted by gay men and lesbians are part of a larger movement towards less restrictive gender roles for men and women. Moreover, the various family forms that are created by gay and lesbian partnerships are part of a wider context in which reconstituted families, single parent families and other alternative forms exist alongside the conventional nuclear family. Supporters of this version of the family and so-called traditional family values are amongst those most resistant to these changes.

Same-sex partnerships *per se* presents a challenge to traditional ideas about marriage and family. However, the gay and lesbian movement are fighting for domestic partnership legislation to gain spousal benefits such as insurance cover and bereavement leaves. This would not only provide concrete benefits but also would act as a means of legitimating same-sex relationships

(Staggenborg, 1998: 114). As I said earlier when discussing the case of the women's movement, gay and lesbian couples also generate new kinds of families and parenting arrangements. They are not the only families that depart from the conventional nuclear family, however. Staggenborg (1998: 115) argues that some of the problems same-sex parents face may be similar to those faced in step families, e.g. how to define the role of the second parent? While gay and lesbian parents face many of the problems common to all parents, the families they create may serve as a prototype of nonnuclear families where people other than biological or adoptive parents are involved in raising children (Staggenborg, 1998: 115). Members of the gay and lesbian community sometimes help couples meet the needs of their children and support groups have sprung up in many cities. This itself poses a challenge to the conventional view that children are sole concern and responsibility of the parents (see above).

In States, the gay and lesbian rights movement has not been without its opponents and anti-gay groups have work to overturn gay rights measures and legislate against gay men and lesbians. Much of this hostility comes from concerns about how they might threaten gender and family life. Staggenborg (1998: 116-117) provides a catalogue of cases where gay rights law has been challenged. In 1978, for instance, conservative Californians attempted to pass a referendum, known as the Briggs initiative, which would have allowed the dismissal of teachers involved in the promotion of homosexuality. Gay rights groups were joined by unions in opposing and successfully defeating the Briggs initiative. At the same time, in Seattle, voters decided to retain a gay rights law.

This resonates with battles going on at this present time in Britain over Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 which was passed to ban the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities, for example, in schools. The anti-clause lobby are concerned that if this piece of legislation is repealed it with seriously undermine the institution of marriage and family life. Lobbying groups, such as Stonewall, who are in favour of repealing the law argue that it amounts to discrimination against gay men and lesbians who ought, in fact, to be protected from such forms of prejudice much in the same way as the Race Relations Act 1976 is able to deal with discrimination based on 'race'. Stonewall are waging a number of other campaigns at the moment including an equal age of consent, repeal of the offence of gross indecency between men, and equality at work by, for instance, extending the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Some of these campaigns have been successful. In September 1999, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the ban on lesbians and gays in Britain's armed forces contravened Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights which confers the right to privacy and respect for family life.

Stonewall also have continuing campaigns to gain legal recognition as parents and partners and have set up a parenting group (see www.stonewall.org.uk). The recent case of the two gay fathers, whose child born of a surrogate mother in the Sates, had to battle to regain entry into Britain illustrates both the unease and discrimination that still exists towards homosexuality. It is for this reason that Stonewall is predominantly a lobbying group seeking equality before the law for gays and lesbians. However, people's consciousness also has to be changed if we are to get away from the deeply embedded view that families are the best place for children to grow up in. This can be done, for example, by challenging the way that social workers and other welfare professionals think about such matters (see Taylor, 1993)

Most substantial work on the gay and lesbian rights movement has been carried out in the States (see Cruikshank, 1992; Adam, 1995). Shorter commentaries on aspects of the movement include Stein (1995) who considers how lesbian feminism has changed since the 1970s and Spatt (1995)

who reflects upon gay and lesbian involvement in the antiwar movement (supporting the view that it is not only women who participate in movements that do not explicitly evoke gender conflict). In a manner that is similar to Staggenborg (1998), Frank and McEneaney (1999) provide an illustration of how broad social changes affect social movements and transform state policy. They show how high levels of individualisation and gender equality provide a 'cultural opportunity structure' (cf. Taylor, 1999: 14) that gives rise to lesbian and gay activism and liberalised state policies on same-sex relations. They also argue that active lesbian and gay movements and liberal state policies facilitate each other. Some work has also begun here in Britain (see Bristow and Wilson, 1993).

Men's Movements and Fathers' Rights

The issue of fathers' rights has come to the fore recently with debate over Tony Blair taking paid leave to assist in caring for his newly born son, Leo. As I have shown above, men do participate in social movements that are not specifically concerned with men's issues and which are seemingly geared to the interests of women as, indeed, women participate in movements that are not oriented explicitly about issues of gender inequality. However, a spate of men's movements have emerged that consist predominantly of men and are concerned with issues relating to them. In this section, I shall look at social movements that have mobilised around the issue of fathers' rights as they relate to struggles over child support after divorce or separation.

In Britain, the Child Support Act 1991, enacted in 1993, was introduced by a Conservative government who were concerned about escalating welfare costs due to the growing number of one-parent families who relied on state support. This was believed not only to create a culture of dependency but also had the potential to undermine the family by taking away a sense of family obligation and mutual support (see Millar, 1996: 181-182). The principal targets of the Act were 'feckless' fathers who had apparently reneged on their family responsibilities. Ironically, however, while fathers' have successfully campaigned to change the Act, the Child Support Agency 'has not yet wrested enough from fathers to make much impact on mothers, and the proportion of mothers on Income Support remains high' (Pascall, 1998: 196).

The main aim of the Child Support Act, as Millar (1996: 183) points out, was to 'to ensure that separated parents always accept financial responsibility for their children, even if the relationship between parents has broken down'. The Act was conceived amidst the moral panic surrounding lone-parent families and although little was known about what fathers or lone mothers would think about it there seemed to be general support for it or something like it in principle (Millar, 1996: 186). However, while it appeared a good idea in theory, in practice it turned out to be a disaster. Not least was the fact that the Child Support Agency found it easier to identify and pursue those fathers who were already paying maintenance (Millar, 1996: 187; Wallbank, 1997: 191). This largely consisted of middle-class fathers who believed that the object of this exercise was simply to recoup money for the Treasury's coffers (Wallbank, 1997: 201) which, as I suggested above, is not too far off the mark.

The various fathers groups that set up to change the Act constituted a formidable adversary for the Government not only because they were well equipped to challenge the view that they were feckless but also because they represented potential voters which was perhaps why ultimately the Government listened to their demands and changed the law accordingly (see Millar, 1996: 187; Wallbank, 1997: 211). The fathers, some joined by their new partners (Wallbank, 1997: 191),

were also supported by large sections, but not all, of the media (Millar, 1996: 186; Wallbank, 1997: 198) and invoked some powerful imagery and rhetoric in their campaign.

Wallbank (1997) argues that, above all, the fathers contested the view that they were 'absent'. Thus, she chooses to talk of them as *non-residential fathers* instead. In a cultural context where active, participating fatherhood has become the norm to which fathers should aspire the fathers that opposed the Child Support Act claimed that they were involved in active fathering. In other words, they used the idea of the new participant father in their campaign (Wallbank, 1997: 202) and presented themselves 'as the much lauded participating father of modern day' (Wallbank, 1997: 207). The idea, that is, that a father's physical presence is no longer enough since fathers must actively contribute to their children's upbringing in emotional *and* physical ways (Wallbank, 1997: 204-5). When they live apart from their children and perhaps have reconstituted families, fathers also claimed that the Act mitigated against them sustaining a paternal relationship because after they had made their maintenance payments they simply could not afford to travel to see their children. The argument was that the Child Support Act undermines the relationship between the father and the child and also endangers family life that has been reconstituted through divorce or repartnership (Wallbank, 1997: 206). Fathers therefore portrayed themselves as victims of child support legislation which exacerbated an already vulnerable father/child relationship (Wallbank, 1997: 205). These claims contributed to reform of the law such that under the new rules to travel costs to see children are taken into consideration when assessing the maintenance of those fathers whose costs are exceptionally high (Wallbank, 1997: 197).

Fathers' support groups, such as Families Need Fathers (FNF) and Dads After Divorce (DAD), sought to re-establish the eighteenth century notion of 'father-right' in order to protect the rights of fathers after separation or divorce. Their argument was that the Child Support Act made further inroads into the balance of power between fathers and mothers which has swung too far in the direction of protecting the rights of mothers (Wallbank, 1997: 206-209). Fathers' groups claim that paternal deprivation can lead to social problems such as juvenile crime, drug abuse, suicide and poor educational attainment (Wallbank, 1997: 207). However, they also stress that it is not only children who suffer from prolonged separation. FNF argue that mothers can actively work to exclude non-residential fathers. This has been termed 'Parental Alienation Syndrome' (PAS) (see Wallbank, 1997: 208). Thus, the father/child relationship is seen as mutually beneficial. The idea that both children and their fathers suffer from lack of contact places the interests of the father closer to those of his children and at the same time acts as a 'direct counter claim to the strength of the assumption that child welfare is most secure in the hands of mothers' (Smart and Sevenhuijsen, 1989: 9).

Wallbank (1997: 211) argues that the proliferation of negative discourses about 'absent' fathers enabled fathers' support groups to produce a number of counterdiscourses. By battling against the Child Support Act which they believed disempowered them and eroded their status, fathers' groups sought to 'reclaim some of the bargaining power they felt they had in financial settlements on divorce before the Act's implementation' (Wallbank, 1997: 208-209). It is Wallbank's (1997: 210) argument that women's ability to now chose to have children and to raise them alone or with other women coupled with the dissolution of the traditional family form dominated by a male head has led men to seek to reassert the notion of father-right. They see themselves as victims of progressive feminism and as such the father-right represents an assault on the feminist project (Wallbank, 1997: 211). Men do not only feel emasculated by a feminism that has gone too far, however, but also feel disempowered by the state and recent trends in child

support legislation. In the campaign to change the Child Support Act they have 'successfully harnessed the discourse of "victim" in order to reclaim some of the rights that they feel they have lost as a result of women's gains' (Wallbank, 1997: 212).

Jane Millar (1996: 186-187) shows how the 100 or so local groups that opposed the Child Support Act and organised numerous protests and demonstrations, along with major pressure groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group and the National Council for One-Parent Families caused the Conservative government to introduce a number of changes. She also argues that the Australian scheme was far more successful than the one in Britain. For instance, it was introduced over an eight year period and was subject to evaluation. Bertoia and Drakich (1993) look at the child support and the fathers' rights movement in Canada which is startlingly similar to the movement against the Child Support Act as set out by Wallbank (1997).

Their central argument is that there is a contradiction between the public and private faces of the fathers' rights movement. In a seemingly uniform voice, the movement promulgates the view that fathers have been treated unfairly by the legal system and it uses this rhetoric to legitimate lobbying to increase the power and control available to fathers after divorce. Bertoia and Drakich (1993: 593), however, argue that the public rhetoric of the movement contrasts with the subjective, individualised accounts of members of fathers' rights groups. Thus, while '[t]he public rhetoric of equality and rights established fathers' rights groups as advocates for fathers postdivorce' (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 595), most men were drawn to the movement because they were experiencing personal troubles and did not join because out of a commitment to the general principle of equality between fathers and mothers (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 596).

Like the movement in Britain, the Canadian movement uses the media to further its cause and promotes the rights of fathers *and* children (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 595). Most fathers did invoke the rhetoric of rights to explain their involvement but also joined for emotional support and because the lawyers attached to the movement were more competent and able to help them get things done. Like Wallbank's analysis of the British case, Bertoia and Drakich show how the fathers' rights movement in Canada argue that there is a maternal bias in family law (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 598). They also appeal to active fathering or, as Bertoia and Drakich put it, gender equality in parenting skills and parenting roles by claiming that 'the father of the 1980s and 1990s is one who nurtures and is involved in all activities of the family with his children' (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 599). Moreover, they argue that while men have recognised women's right to equality in the workplace, men have been denied the right to equality in the family. Thus, they believe that they are being 'victimised by reverse discrimination' (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 600). Bertoia and Drakich also identify a phenomenon similar to PAS of which Wallbank talks about. In this way, fathers feel that mothers have all of the power to control their children after divorce and argue that if they are denied influence this may have detrimental effects upon the sociopsychological well-being of their children (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 603-604).

Despite the apparent unity of the public rhetoric of the fathers' rights movement, Bertoia and Drakich expose a number of contradictions. For instance, while the public discourse of the movement 'focuses on the coparenting aspect of joint custody in terms of equal sharing of responsibility and primary care' (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 602), joint custody, in reality, does not mean equal division of labour in child care. In fact, the majority of fathers expressed a willingness to 'help' with child care and domestic responsibilities which implies an expectation that mothers would still assume primary responsibility for children (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993:

601). Bertoia and Drakich argue that the rhetoric of rights and equality masks the real reasons for fathers' involvement with the movement. They are quite simply angry men who 'join fathers' rights groups for personal reasons and personal gain' (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 597). Their involvement, in other words, is self-serving rather than motivated by a desire for equality:

> Our data do not support the public image of fathers' rights groups as groups motivated by concerns of equality to transform the divorce process and postdivorce coparenting. Rather, what we have found is that fathers privilege their private troubles over fathers' rights groups' equality posturing. (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 597)

In conclusion, Bertoia and Drakich (1993: 611) argue that '[f]athers' rights groups have taken fathers' personal troubles and recast them as issues of equality and rights'. While the rhetoric of the movement gives the illusion of equality, in essence, the fathers rightist are lobbying not for joint or equal responsibility and care of children postdivorce but for equal access to their children and, to information and decision making (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 612). Bertoia and Drakich (1993: 612) argue that this is a typically masculinist construction of equality and show, like Wallbank, that it derives from a desire that fathers have to continue in their 'predivorce role of the traditional father who exercises his power and control' (Bertoia and Drakich, 1993: 613).

Children: Back to the Future

What I want to do in this final section is return to the issue of child welfare. Some of the social movements discussed here are similar to the infant welfare movement I looked at earlier, in that, they are organised by professionals, such as social workers involved in child protection. However, some differ because instead of being led by professionals, responsibility for defining welfare needs and informing policy-makers is devolved to families (cf. Edwards, 1995). This can be seen as marking a shift towards the growing recognition of children's rights and a welfare focus that is more bottom-up than it is top-down, e.g. New Labour's Sure Start programme and their concern with child poverty.

Blitsch et al. (1995) show how child welfare in the States has often been connected to movements for family preservation. Issues surrounding child welfare, child protection and so forth hinge upon questions about whether it is best to keep children in their homes and provide them with support services there, whether to encourage temporary solutions such a foster care, or to put children into institutional care which could prove damaging to their development and expensive too. There has long been a healthy scepticism of institutional care (see Pawel, 1995) just as there has been a tendency to regard the family home as the best environment for the care and nurture of children. Meckel (1985), for instance, shows how the child welfare movement in America's Progressive Era (1890 and 1920) was premised on this view. The belief then was that child saving had to be done 'in conjunction with preserving the sanctity and the stability of the American family' (Meckel, 1985: 457).

Blitsch et al. (1995) trace the development of child welfare from a time when child abandonment, abortion and infanticide were the norm, through to when children were valued for their ability to supplement the family income, to the establishment of the Children's Bureau in 1912 which was a federal agency set up to represent children's interests. The 1960s saw the rediscovery of child abuse. Child protection services thus emphasised 'child rescue' which was based on the prevalent value that the child was more important than the parent/s (Blitsch et al.,

1995: 38). Consequently, services were designed primarily to provide legal intervention *on behalf of* the child when they needed it and help for families was only a secondary goal. While there was a resurgence of home-based services during the 1960s, the focus for intervention was still firmly fixed on the child rather than the family; although some services towards family preservation did still exist (Blitsch, 1995: 38).

From the mid-1980s, 'family preservation services' emerged that were designed to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their families. These services 'reflect a philosophy about valuing family life and strengthening the family's ability to function on its own and provide a safe and stable environment for the children' (Blitsch, 1995: 39). Using family therapy, '[t]he focus of treatment was to heal interpersonal family relationships' (Blitsch, 1995: 40). Other work that relates to 'family empowerment' include Sherman's (1999) use of therapeutic techniques designed to enable the extended family to organise itself as a self-help group, and Zigler and Black's (1989) study of grassroots and university-based initiatives to provide family support.

Despite the historical precedents, Minow and Weissbourd (1993: 1) ask why there are no movements *for* children. They believe that movements which act on behalf of children are necessary because they themselves do not vote, lobby or have any money to influence the authorities. Most worryingly, though, they show how contemporary reform campaigns for children as well as children's needs echo those of America past. The need thus for social movements for children is long overdue. This approach might be regarded patronising by some commentators.

Aldridge and Becker (1999) write against a background of growing recognition amongst policy-makers of the contribution made by young carers to family and community care. They come from a children's and carers' rights standpoint and concur with the argument that Minow and Weissbourd propound when they define 'young carers' as a negative welfare category. In this sense, they comprise those who lack access to appropriate advocacy and support (Aldridge and Becker, 1999: 312). However, they propose a *family* approach (reminiscent of the family therapy approaches outlined above) which requires us to listen to what families say about the kind of help they want (Aldridge and Becker, 1999: 314). A more bottom-up rather than top-down approach.

Finally, Donati (1993: 205) argues that the new challenge posed by family movements to family and children's policies across Europe consists in 'the worsening of generational relations as a widespread social phenomenon'. This goes beyond traditional conflicts. Like Minow and Weissbourd, Donati shows how old issues such as poverty persist. However, new trends have emerged. Various sociodemographic changes (e.g. falling fertility rates, an ageing population, etc.) have left the family and the rights of children in a state of crisis. Donati (1993: 209) argues that what the families need above all else is to be recognised as families. To this end, he proposes a number of measures to restore generational equity across the EU. These include economic support for families perhaps through a taxation system that benefits families with children over those without and policies for parental leave. These family friendly policies confer a new citizenship upon children who, Donati argues, must be seen as active subjects. They also constitute a new citizenship for families which must be recognised in their own right (Donati, 1993: 218).

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