Social Imagination And Personal Troubles

I remember my grandmother telling me, “Once you are married, mijita, you stay there forever.” I was raised in a catholic family, under the impression that marriage was eternal (literally), and divorces a sin. At the same time, I was growing up in a country where the divorcing patterns were practically shaping the culture, and cheating was as normal as getting married. The divorce rates in Cuba were and still are one of the highest divorce rates in the world. My intention has always been to follow what my grandma taught me (a manifest function, right there); but here I am, debating if I should divorce my husband or not. Two days ago, my life turned upside down when I found out he was cheating on me. How am I coping with the problem as a “personal trouble”? Is it trouble, an issue, or both? Are my “imposed” values and norms conflicting with me? Am I not even coping with the problem yet? Will Mill’s sociological imagination help me to have a better understanding of my “trouble”? Would I be able to pull myself away from my problem, not biased, and have a better understanding of the situation from an alternative point of view?

If I take into consideration the functionalist perspective, my family, an institution of society, is not working, which means it is dysfunctional. Divorcing my husband will bring stability to my family, as a micro-sociological group, and to the community after all. So our dysfunctional situation may lead to a functional divorce just because the divorce would be serving its purpose of bringing order and stability. Isn’t that funny? Conflict theory, as another macro-sociologic perspective, considers society as a venue where the competition of power, friction between groups, and social struggles lead to troubles. Now, I ask myself if our dysfunctional situation is a result of social disagreements or it is something coming from deeper cultural issues like machismo, for example. Machismo gives the males the right to satisfy their sexual desires every time they want. Here, I think, is when symbolic interaction theory takes place in my analysis. Is this “machismo” a learned behavior that unconsciously pushes men to cheat without guilt or fear of failure in their marriage? Is the interpretation of our actions, not based on the same believes anymore, what has led to the conflict we have now?

The fact is that after analyzing all these sociological perspectives trying to gain clarity in my life, symbolic interaction has given me guidance on how to cope with my troubles. I have realized how important is face-to-face interaction to create healthy personal bonds. I have accepted that not all the time, people will act as I expect, and that does not mean conflict.

Unfortunately, my trouble is not an isolated event. Divorce is one of the most significant issues our society is facing. Social media, peer pressure, television shows like “The Bachelor” and individualistic culture, among other examples, emerge from weak social structures and contribute to the origin of personal troubles. They are some of the causes that 40 to 50 percent of marriages, in the USA, divorce or separate, according to APA (American Psychological Association, 2018)

Considering “society” exists in the immediate social interaction (Anderson & Taylor, 2016, p. 19), divorce is more complicated than I thought. It is not only a crisis between two people but also something that fractures the morals and the well-being of our communities.

Surprisingly, after this assignment, I feel confident that I will make an educated decision for the good of my family. I would not be happy to be part of the statistic mentioned above, but if we achieve stability after a divorce, why not?