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Toward a theory of ideological socialization in the context of antidemocratic movements: Mead, Fromm, and modern cultural-political challenges

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Toward a Theory of Ideological Socialization in the Context of Antidemocratic Movements:
Mead, Fromm, and Modern Cultural-Political Challenges

by

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Contents

Introduction

George Herbert Mead's (1934) social theory of the self is foundational to the current sociological paradigm recognizing the self-society dialectic and remains the core theoretical model for socialization used in the wider sociological discipline. While his theory is largely embraced by sociologists, it has been critiqued for its inability to deal with power and domination, as well as irrational and emotional human behaviour (Wrong 1961; Goff 1980; Athens 2015). Mead attempts to account for the origins and development of the self by placing it within the process of evolution; that is, by seeing mind and conduct as inextricably linked, and by showing that in order to explain the nature of humans, we must view them in the context of evolutionary development. Therefore, we must view "mind" not as separate and disembodied, but rather as an integral aspect of human behaviour.

Further, Mead recognized the sociability of humans as a primary fact in their evolution and existence and used this fact to explain how humans experience selfhood. This has had a profound impact on sociology, fundamentally influencing how we understand human society and the development of self through such theories as symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969) and social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann 1966). However, Mead has been heavily criticized for operating through "rose colored glasses" (Athens 2015). Goff (1980) highlights that Mead has been criticized for presenting a conception of man as "oversocialized" and idealistic and that he ignored the conflictual, intentional and active side of social change in favour of emphasizing a continuous, unproblematic social evolution. For example, Goff (1980) argues that Mead appeared to view social change as largely unproblematic and that, through group interaction with diverse perspectives, reciprocal role-taking is represented as straightforward and automatically leads to a common attitudinal structure, a change in thought and action, and an end to conflict.

Meanwhile, Erich Fromm also has a sociological conception of self development, but from a perspective that combines Freud and Marx. His theory of self and society goes further than Mead with regard to understanding human emotion and how this intersects with power and domination (Fromm 1943); however, he has been criticized for placing too much faith in the reality of subconscious drives and having an overly critical depiction of society (Bendix 1952; Kraminick 1972; Izenberg 1975; Sadovnikov 2004). Fromm's theories revolve around concepts such as dis/obedience, authoritarianism, the anonymous authority, and freedom. Fromm sought to understand these concepts through a psychoanalytic lens to understand interpersonal relationships in the context of an imbalance of power (domination and subordination). He asserts that an individual's personality is a product of past experiences, especially those marked by intense personal trauma, and as such, present actions are interpreted as repetitions of earlier adaptations or defenses.

Therefore, he places dysfunction within a primarily psychological – that is, individually situated – framework. Many psychoanalytic commentaries on group psychology focus on the population's personal history and how that past is affecting present individual and group character, as the psychological mechanisms operating in a group are also the mechanisms operating in individuals. Thus, the same processes that give rise to "normal" and adaptive conduct in human life are also the nexus out of which "dysfunctional" and maladaptive conduct emerge and give rise to unpredictability, deviance, and social disorder. However, it is argued that Fromm does not allow for even a relatively independent role to thinking; he almost completely discredits human rationality and the capacity for critical thinking by attributing psychological dispositions to what is actually the result of social (economic, political, historical) forces (Bendix 1952).

This thesis intends to compare these important theorists to generate a new model to understand the socialization process of the human individual within specific social structures. Various works have been written about the convergences and divergences of psychoanalysis and sociology (e.g., Elliot and Meltzer 1981; St. Jean 2016; McLaughlin 1996, 1999, 2007), yet, to my knowledge, no one has attempted a Mead-Fromm synthesis as of yet. Fromm's work often stands in sharp contrast to Mead's in its views of human socialization and the formation of self; however, I believe that by synthesizing these two perspectives, we will be able to explore how the self develops within regimes of harmful ideology. Both theorists consider the emergence of human sociality to be unique, heavily structured by the socialization process, and to be the foundation of human interdependence. Fromm more thoroughly considers the aspects of domination and subordination and thus diverges from Mead on the nature of the formation of self.

By acknowledging that the different theories can be complementary rather than contradictory, we can understand that different individuals within social structures may be more susceptible to one type of socialization than another. My hope is that the strengths of each overcome the limitations of the other, and that the blending of the two will create a link between micro and macro processes leading to a more robust theory of human self-development for use in contemporary sociology. The answers from this conversation will provide a more robust and fulsome understanding of self-development in contexts of cooperation *and* conflict to provide a much-needed extension of Mead's early theories. This should provide not only a solid understanding of how ideological selves develop in extreme contexts of radical and fascist regimes, but the general model that evolves may inform how harmful forms of socialization are sustained through generations in our own purportedly democratic context.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide an introduction to G.H. Mead and Erich Fromm respectively. These chapters briefly discuss some biographical background, their social theories of the self, and how they dealt with the problems of their time. Further, I illustrate how they were both influential to our modern understanding of society and human self-development. I will also discuss some strengths and weaknesses of each theorist and how this impacts their theories. In so doing, I will lay the foundation for a theoretical synthesis between the two in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 3, I will provide a more extensive biographical background along three main lines: religion and social activism, the impact of world war, and Mead and Fromm as public intellectuals. This will demonstrate how their biographical backgrounds influenced their social theories. I will then turn my attention to the individual-society dialectic to discern who we are as human beings and how the process of socialization can be impacted by social structure as much as by emotional, unconscious forces. Democracy and education will be key elements of this discussion. I will also consider the problem of freedom and resistance through both a Meadian and Frommian lens in order to provide the base for Chapter 4.

In the final chapter, I will examine modern society and its associated issues, mainly neoliberalism and extremism, which serve to undermine democracy and education. I will illustrate how these do so while employing Mead and Fromm to better understand both the issues as well as potential solutions. I will demonstrate that Mead's theory can accurately account for the where and when of radicalization, while Fromm's is influential in our understanding of the how and the why. The combination of the two will thus provide a more fulsome picture of the troubling phenomena of recruitment and radicalization into extremist movements and ideologies, which can have far-reaching implications for individuals and societies more broadly by understanding the generic social processes of extremism.

Chapter 1: G.H. Mead (1863 – 1931)

George Herbert Mead has had a profound impact on the sociological discipline, with his social theory of the self largely embraced by many sociologists. A social psychologist and philosopher, Mead's work has been variously and posthumously described as social behaviourism (Morris in Mead 1934; McPhail and Rextroat 1979); symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1937); phenomenology (Natanson 1956); dialectical empiricism (Burke 1962); a philosophy of social behaviourism (Lewis 1979); symbolically mediated interactionism (Joas 1985/1997); social interactionism (Shalin 1986); social pragmatism (Cook 1993); and as a theory of the social act (Gillespie 2005). Indeed, as a result of these various definitions, Fine and Kleinman (1986) have argued for the impossibility of finding a "true" Mead.

In this section, I intend to provide a brief biography of G.H. Mead; introduce Mead's theory of self; examine Mead's works beyond *Mind, Self & Society* (1934) to provide a more fulsome account of the impact of politics and World War I; discuss how this influenced his theory of the self; and provide a background of both support for and criticisms of his theories. In doing so, I intend to illustrate the shortcomings of Mead's model and how they can be remedied by a synthesis with Erich Fromm's work; namely, Mead did recognize the emotional and unconscious drives at work in the process of socialization but failed to elaborate on these in his theory of self-development. This omission is grave and deserves to be addressed in much further detail in order to reinvigorate Mead's work in a manner that is both compatible with and relevant to modern society and sociology.

G.H. Mead was born in Massachusetts in 1863. His father was a Christian pastor before moving the family to Ohio to become a professor at the Oberlin Theological Seminary when Mead was six (Crossman 2020; Aboulafia 2016). His mother was a "devoutly religious woman" as well as an academic who taught at Oberlin College and later served as president of Mount

Holyoke College (Aboulafia 2016). Mead completed his post-secondary education at Oberlin,

receiving a bachelor's degree with a focus in history and literature. He later studied psychology

and philosophy at Harvard University but did not complete his graduate degree before leaving

for Germany in 1888. He joined his close friend Henry Castle and his sister Helen in Leipzig,

where he pursued a PhD in philosophy and physiological psychology at the University of Leipzig

(ibid). One year later, in 1889, Mead transferred to the University of Berlin to study economic

theory. However, in 1891, the University of Michigan offered him a position teaching

philosophy and psychology – a post which he accepted without completing his doctoral studies.

Before returning to America, he married Helen Castle in Berlin (Crossman 2020).

In his new role at the University of Michigan, Mead was introduced to Charles Horton

Cooley, John Dewey, and Alfred Lloyd, each of whom had a profound influence on the

development of his thought and work (Crossman 2020). Mead and Dewey, along with James

Hayden Tufts, later went on to form the "nexus of American Pragmatism" and were referred to

as the "Chicago Pragmatists" (ibid). Aboulafia (2016) argues that much of Mead's work can be

understood as an attempt to synthesize Darwin, Hegel, Dewey, and James. Mead taught with

Dewey at the University of Michigan for three years, and upon Dewey's appointment as chair of

the University of Chicago in 1894, he requested Mead also receive an appointment (Aboulafia

2016). Mead would spend the rest of his career and his life in Chicago, where he died in

1931(Crossman 2020).

A great degree of our understanding – and criticism – of Mead and his theories has

come from his posthumously published book, *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934). As Huebner

(2014) points out, this work has become "over ten times more likely to be referenced than

all of Mead's other work combined" (p. 198). This is particularly problematic, Huebner

asserts, because *Mind, Self, and Society* was "constructed" based on notes taken by students and stenographers in Mead's courses. In other words, Mead did not write the majority of what is actually in the book: "Mead is known in a discipline in which he did not teach for a book he did not write" (ibid: 3). However, many current social theorists have taken more novel and exciting approaches to Mead's ideas and have moved beyond *Mind, Self, and Society* to examine Mead's other works.

Huebner (2014) asserts that this reconstruction of Mead's social thought through other works beyond *Mind, Self, and Society* has greatly improved our understanding of his life and ideas. For example, Gary Cook (1993) details the intellectual development of Mead by tracing the origin of his social psychological and philosophical theories through articles and posthumously published writings. Hans Joas (1997) completed a major study to reassess the work of G.H. Mead by combining his political and intellectual biography with the progression of his theories. Musolf (1992), Reynolds (1993), Prus (1999), and Dennis and Martin (2005) have attempted to defend Mead's basic assumptions of the social act and extend its relevance to concepts of power, conflict, and domination. More recently, Mary Jo Deegan (2008) has traced the evolution of his thought during the most controversial period in his work, wherein he addressed state violence, democracy, and war. She analyzed dozens of archival works as well as published and unpublished writings to demonstrate Mead's relevance to macrosociology.

Conversely, Lonnie Athens advances a "radical interactionism" to add a vital dimension to Mead's model beyond the assumption of mere sociality by arguing that power and dominance permeate all aspects of human group life to some degree, including marriage, family, leisure, employment, etcetera (2013a: 18). This framework intends to recognize the prevalence of cooperative, functional acts while also stressing the indispensable nature of dominance that is

part of all of them and which Mead generally failed to discuss. Puddephatt (2017) argues

that by highlighting the significance of dominance in the social act, Athens has "redefined

the assumptions behind all institutions and patterns of interaction in the social world" (p.

112). Further, Puddephatt (2017) posits that a more explicit focus on power has led to

"studies of domination across a range of substantive contexts… [and] should continue to

generate rich conceptual and empirical rewardsmclaugh" (p. 112-113).

Therefore, I intend to demonstrate how power can negatively affect human self-

development through hegemonic ideology among groups. I aim to problematize the basic

building block of human self-development – that is, socialization – to better account for the

impact of harmful ideology in the proliferation and sustenance of undemocratic and

antidemocratic movements in supposedly democratic contexts.

Overview of G.H. Mead's Social Psychology

Mead is perhaps most notably remembered for his contributions to symbolic interactionism, a

term coined in 1937 by his former student, Herbert Blumer, and expanded in his 1969 seminal

work of the same name. Symbolic interactionism has been regarded as both a general framework

for the analysis of society (Blumer 1969) as well as a specialized social psychological theory for

engaging problems of socialization (Stryker 1980). Broadly defined, the framework focuses on

communication (the exchange of meaning through language and symbols) as the process through

which people make sense of their social worlds. While there have been numerous contributions

that have advanced concepts in the paradigm, G. H. Mead is generally considered the most

influential, and nearly all of interactionism's practitioners refer to him as the "true originator" of

symbolic interactionism (Reynolds 1993). Mead's conceptualization of the self and social action

remains a core tenet in all contemporary versions of the interactionist framework (Stryker 1980;

Reynolds 1993).

Mead located reality "within practical action between organism and environment, and the dialectical relation of individual experience and symbolic universals shared by the group" (Puddephatt 2009: 91). He argued that self and mind are not inherent at birth but rather develop through a longer process of human socialization. Specifically, their emergence depends on the "observable" interaction with others in an organized social environment through a process of internalization and "taking the role of the other" (Mead 1934: 150-2). Social interaction gives rise to both the self and social acts, therefore both mind and society are derivative of an "ongoing dynamic social process" (Mead 1934: 7). Similarly, Durkheim argued that "the evolution of humanity and society has occurred in tandem" (Thomson 2010: 220). Consequently, society – like mind and self – is never fixed or static; it is continuously (re)created via the ongoing action and interaction of selves to other selves and their environment.

As such, both social order and change can be conceptualized as aspects of a larger social process (Goff 1980; Stryker 1980). The development of self is a major process that defines societal structure, and the self and society mutually determine and shape each other (Bettencourt and Dorr 1997). This is a marked departure from social behaviourism wherein "the part is explained in terms of the whole, not the whole in terms of the part or parts" (Mead 1934: 7). Rather, Mead's model was more complex and dialectical: "the social act… must be taken as a dynamic whole – as something going on – a complex organic process implied by each individual stimulus and response involved in it" (ibid). Society is only possible because specific objects elicit similar responses among a group: "those attitudes… must be there on the part of all" (Mead 1934: 138-9).

The simplest social act is referred to as a gesture, which serves as a stimulus to the other participant(s) in the social act. Gestures first appear as stimuli and response patterns with no

meaningful significance as they are more instinctive than deliberative. For example, when two dogs are preparing to fight, one will growl and bare its teeth while the other reacts in some other way, such as crouching in subordination or growling back: "each response becomes a stimulus for the counter-response of the other in a succession of actions" (Thomson 2010: 299). However, when the gesture means something specific to the presenter and arouses the same meaning in the participant(s) involved in the act, the gesture becomes a significant symbol, forming the basis of language. As the symbol evokes the same meaning from all other members of the group, it allows them to "mutually adjust their behaviour… [by taking into] consideration the attitude the other is taking of him or herself" (ibid).

Mead argues that individual experience should be understood from the standpoint of society, with communication in the form of significant symbols and language being the essential foundation of social order as well as the organization of mind and self. Mind develops out of an awareness of socially significant symbols and matures through their use. The existence of society is made possible through the creation of common symbols that allow for communication: "thus social life, in all its aspects and in every period of its history, is made possible only by a vast symbolism" (Durkheim 1964 [1912]: 231). As we become linguistically capable, we develop the capacity to take the position or perspective of others (Aboulafia 2001). Language has a unique significance since it is the "most fully developed system of communicable symbols" which allows for what Durkheim termed collective consciousness, or the "totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of society" (Thomson 2010: 218; Durkheim 1964 [1912]: 444).

Mead (1934) argued that "the critical importance of language in the development of human experience lies in this fact that the stimulus is one that can react upon the speaking individual as it reacts upon the other" (p. 69). Mead elaborates on this fact by stating

> The vocal gesture, then, has an importance which no other gesture has. We cannot see ourselves when our face assumes a certain expression. If we hear ourselves speak we are more apt to pay attention. One hears himself when he is irritated using a tone that is of an irritable quality, and so catches himself. But in the facial expression of irritation the stimulus is not one that calls out an expression in the individual which it calls out in the other. One is more apt to catch himself up and control himself in the vocal gesture than in the expression of the countenance… But the vocal gesture is one which does give one this capacity for answering to one's own stimulus as another would answer (1934: 65-66).

In other words, language is significant because it produces the same meanings for both parties: when I speak, I hear the same thing as those to whom I am speaking hear; my voice elicits a response from the others as much as it does from myself since I can imagine how they will respond (Thomson 2010). As one's definitions of a situation may not be identical to the definitions of others, shared meaning emerges through interaction, allowing for the possibility of negotiation and compromise. Linguistic symbols become a prerequisite for more complex sets of behaviour, which may be verbal or non-verbal, and which Mead refers to as roles; we can put ourselves in the position of another, which "involves… an arousal in the individual himself of the response which he is calling out in the other individual, a taking of the role of the other, a tendency to act as the other person acts" (Mead 1934: 73).

Social interaction is the basis of self-development, which Mead argues is constituted by two stages: in the first stage, the self is formed by the attitudes that specific others have toward the individual which are shared in interaction with them (i.e., Cooley's "looking glass self"). In the second stage, all individuals in a social relationship have a common attitude toward their shared activity, meaning each individual is able to generalize the attitudes of all members engaged in the social process and take these attitudes as their own. Mead illustrates this process by

distinguishing between play and games. Thomson (2010) explains, "in play, a child takes on different roles, reflecting the response [they have] to a set of stimuli that would be similar for others. In a game, however, the child who takes one role must be ready to take the role of the others involved" (p. 301). For game playing to be successful, "the child must have the attitude of all the others involved in the game" (Mead 1934: 164). "As children learn to function in an organized whole through games," Thomson (2010) asserts, "they become self-conscious members of the society to which they belong" (p. 301).

Although we need specific others to take specific roles, we also need a generalized other to form a complete self (Aboulafia 2001). Through role-taking, one comes to share the perspectives of others, which provides the ability to act toward oneself in view of the generalized other (Reynolds 1993). The generalized other is the form through which "the social process influences the behaviour of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on, i.e., that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members" (Mead 1934: 155). All selves "are constituted by social experience in relation to the attitudes of others and, in particular, of the generalized other" (Thomson 2010: 301). In taking the attitude of the generalized other, one must also enter the larger organized process of activity. Mead expands,

> If the given human individual is to develop a self in the fullest sense, it is not sufficient for him merely to take the attitudes of other human individuals toward himself and toward one another within the human social process, and to bring that social process as a whole into his individual experience merely in these terms: he must also, in the same way that he takes the attitudes of other individuals toward himself and toward one another, take their attitudes toward the various phases or aspects of the common social activity or set of social undertakings in which, as members of an organized society or social group, they are all engaged; and he must then, by generalizing these individual attitudes of that organized society or social group itself, as a whole, act toward different social projects which at any given time it is carrying out, or toward the various larger phases of the general social process which constitutes its life and of which these projects are specific manifestations (1934: 154-155).

For Mead, taking the role of the other is an imperative, positive process because the self is made up by the common attitudes of the group to which one is a part; there is no self without others.

Similarly, Durkheim (1964 [1912]) argued that society exists only in and through individuals: "if the idea of society were extinguished in individual minds and the beliefs, traditions, and aspirations of the group were no longer felt and shared by the individuals, society would die. [Society] is real only in so far as it has a place in human consciousness" (p. 66). For Durkheim, there exists a "duality" between the "mentality which results from individual experiences, and that which results from collective experiences" (quoted in Giddens 1972: 253). Mead (1934: 133-4) argues that

> It is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of the mind.

In doing so, one comes to define their own behaviour in terms of the expectations of others or of society as a whole (Reynolds 1993), giving support to Durkheim's assertion of "duality."

Mead also distinguishes between the "I" and the "me" of the self, arguing that "the self appearing as 'I' is the memory image of the self who acted toward himself and is the same self who acts toward other selves… the 'me' whom the 'I' addresses and whom he observes is the experience which is induced by this action of the 'I'" (1913: 375). The "I" is our response to the attitudes of others while the "me" results from our adoption of others' attitudes. In other words, the attitudes of others constitute the organized "me," which is reacted toward as an "I" (Thomson 2010). Mead argues that people think about their situation in terms of internalized attitudes (the "me"); it is through the "me" aspect of the self that our behaviour takes on consistency, whereas the "I" accounts for experiences of freedom, initiative, creativity, and spontaneity (Goff 1980; Stryker 1980).

Aboulafia (2001) argues that much of our experience takes place as situations change and "me" systems are modified or replaced. Sociality allows the "I" to respond to situations in new ways, before the solidification of the "me," through reflecting on responses and accepting or modifying them (p. 17). The "me" is considered an "empirical ego," while the "I" is the "transcendental counterpart" (Aboulafia 2001: 14). "The self conscious, actual self in social intercourse is the objective 'me' or 'me's' with the process of response continually going on and implying a fictitious 'I' always out of sight of himself" (Mead in Aboulafia 2001). The "I" and the "me" are treated as functional rather than ontological distinctions and combined constitute the self or personality.

In separating the self into the "I" and the "me," Goff (1980) argues that Mead attempts to convey that people are, or can be, "more and other than the on-going social situation which lies at the basis of self and mind" (p. 64) Aboulafia (2001) contends that this distinction allows Mead to avoid falling into an overly socialized conception of man since one can never fully predict one's responses to novel social situations based on past behaviour: "responses have varying degrees of novelty" (p. 15). However, Cook (2014) argues that there is no aspect of Mead's theorizing that is "more in need of clarification and repair than his attempt to distinguish between [these] two dimensions of the self" (p. 110). Kolb (1944) argued that the distinction is "fundamentally flawed" since the "I" becomes a "residual category" for any phenomena that cannot be explained by the "me" (Cook 2014: 111). Subsequent commentators such as Cook (1972), Lewis (1979), and Habermas (1992) have attempted to "rescue Mead's distinction from Kolb's criticisms" (Cook 2014: 111), while Cook (2014) later attempts to reconstruct these concepts in light of Mead's earlier work. Indeed, Cook argues that the version of the "I" and

"me" outlined in *Mind, Self & Society* (1934) should be removed from Mead's theory of self altogether.

Instead, Cook (2014) suggests implementing Mead's earlier versions of these concepts, thinking about the "'I' and 'me' as the subject and object poles of a cognitive structure arising within the conduct of the human biological individual once that conduct acquires a particular level and kind of social complexity" (p. 122). He advocates for a more thorough examination of the "me" by extending William James's (1890) discussion on the matter and a deeper analysis of the "I" in terms of the role of social habits and attitudes in shaping the conduct of the individual. Further, Cook (2014) advocates for a more critical analysis of the relationship between the individual and society, looking beyond the "dualistic" thinking of the effects of social structure on human personality to understand that human reactions are a product of "various social patterns within the socialized personalities involved" (p. 123). This would involve a more thorough examination of selves in conflict with society in addition to selves in harmony with it.

Mead does not conceptualize the mind as an independent entity, but rather as an emergent and functional process through which the individual is able to understand the particular characteristics of a situation in terms of possible responses (or attitudes), enabling one to choose between various responses in order to achieve their desired ends (Goff 1980). The self emerges in tandem with the mind as an object of its own environment and is only made possible by internalizing the responses of others to itself:

> The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social

environment or context of experience and behavior in which both he and they are involved (Mead 1934: 138).

Consciousness, then, for Mead, is "becoming other to oneself… [enabling self] to mediate self's own reflexes" (Gillespie 2005: 27). Tugendhat (1991) argues that this relation of oneself to oneself is not immediate; a person only relates to oneself as oneself by relating to others and adopting the relations internally, a process which is both linguistically and socially conditioned. Further, because self and other are often in the same social positions and act toward the same objects in the same ways, one often comes to acquire the same attitudes of others. Gillespie (2005) argues these attitudes are axiomatic, for "this identity of attitudes is the route through which self can take the attitude of the other" (p. 28). Meaning, as such, depends on the physiological/psychological apparatus of the human being, the selected sense-experiences within their physical environment, and the formative process of linguistic dialogue with others (Puddephatt 2009).

Therefore, there are multiple and conflicting "me's" that get presented from a heterogeneous society of multiple individuals and groups inhabiting multiple subcultures, which allows for individual freedom. Mead (1913) stated that since we interact with others by taking their role, "the inner response to our reaction to others is as varied as is our social environment" (p. 377). He further argued that "there are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions" (1934: 142). Faris (1937) stated that "personality is relative to group relations, we have as many selves as there are people we know" (p. 400-01). Durkheim (1964 [1912]) further argued that most states of consciousness would not have occurred among people who "were isolated from one another and would have occurred completely differently among people grouped together in a different way" (p. 286-7).

In other words, "societies differ from one another according to the nature and the number of the parts that make them up and the way these parts are combined" (Thomson 2010: 217). Thus, there is a relationship between an individual's experience and a group's abstract universals (Puddephatt 2009). This provides individuals the ability to govern their conduct self-consciously and critically in reference to other members within the social group: "self-criticism is essentially social criticism, and behaviour controlled by self-criticism is essentially behaviour controlled socially" (Mead 1934: 254). Like Habermas, Mead argues that "greater socialization leads to more, not less, individuation. Membership in various groups enhances one's individuality by increasing the range of one's experiences" (Aboulafia 2001: 21). Similarly, Durkheim (1964 [1912]) argued that individualism is not anti-social since it is a "product of society and presupposes it": "the consciousness of individuals comes from society. Individual differences don't precede social life; they derive from it" (Thomson 2010: 225). Indeed, Durkheim (1964 [1912]) claimed that the primary function of the division of labour is to produce social solidarity: "each part of society is increasingly specialized and differentiated, yet the result is the greater unity of the organism" (in Thomson 2010: 226).

Simmel (1904) also examined these concepts in his theory of group affiliation, arguing that people play many different roles in society and their identities are therefore made up of a vast collection of characteristics and relationships. Simmel further examined the process of deindividuation in relation to group affiliation, arguing that "the individual is freed from the worry of choosing and appears simply as a creature of the group, as a vessel of the social contents" (1904: 295). In other words, members en masse act upon a group mentality that need not necessarily reflect how an individual would react separately from the effects of the group. Indeed, both Durkheim and Mead conclude that society acts as a "controlling power over

individuals" (Thomson 2010: 215). However, Mead argues that social control is not against the individual or individuality; rather, it is actually "constitutive of and inextricably associated with that individuality" (1934: 254-255).

Since we relate differently to different people, the individual is constituted by multiple different selves: "the self is not a thing in itself but a relationship with the external world and with other mutually constituting selves… all social interaction involves our understanding of others and their mutual understanding of us" (Thomson 2010: 301-302). Even though there are various selves, all are formed by social experience relative to the attitudes of others and especially of the generalized other. The "me" is "merely a definite organization of the community there in our own attitudes"; the "'me' reflects the attitudes of all the community" (Mead 1934: 178, 187). This makes the individual "conventional and habitual" (Thomson 2010: 301). However, the "I" is important because it allows for surprises, novel behaviour, and the creation of new situations. Once we react to a social situation, our actions alter the situation, our attitudes, and the attitudes of others, banishing the "I" to memory. We are constantly seeking the realization of the "I" because this is where novelty and important values arise and are expressed; we identify ourselves with the "I" even though it tends to escape our memory.

Moreover, while the concept of the self is the "individual's configuration of beliefs and opinions that have the primary association to one's own behaviour… [and its] organization provides a relatively continual experience in different social situations" (Princy and Gupta 2020: 1), Mead does not consider mind and self to be static once they emerge. Rather, they remain embedded within the responses of others in varying situations (Goff 1980). Mead does not suggest that there is a definite, determinate end point to the process of self development; what one is, what one thinks, and how one acts can constantly develop or

change depending on one's social situations and the responses of others (ibid). Similarly, Cook

(1972) asserts that "since one tends to respond to himself in the roles of others in the social

environment… both the structure of inner consciousness and the content of the 'me' there

presented are largely importations from objective social experience" (p. 105). In other words, the

self is a social product occurring on both the conscious and unconscious level.

Reynolds (1993) argues that with this concept of self, Mead illuminates the notion that

individuals are both implicated in and detached from society. Further, he attempts to capture both

the regularity of social intercourse and the potential for uncertainty and change (Thompson

2010). Mead argues, in what Gillespie (2005) calls a feedback theory of consciousness, that "we

are conscious of our attitudes because they are responsible for the changes in the conduct of

other individuals… successful social conduct brings one into a field within which a

consciousness of one's own attitudes helps toward the control of the conduct of others" (Mead

1910: 403). Individual behaviour is rarely disconnected from the behaviour of others; it is

socially coordinated and often part of more complex activities involving multiple people (Hewitt

1989).

Mead's theory intends to avoid mind-body dualism (Hewitt 1989; Thomson 2010) to allow

for socialization not only through interaction with others, but also through direct interactions

within the surrounding physical and virtual environments (Puddephatt 2005; Puddephatt and

Brewster 2016). Therefore, as argued by Fine (1991), Chang (2004), and Puddephatt (2009), a

Meadian epistemology allows actors to adjust their actions toward other people, but also their

physical environments, abstract rules, tangible consequences, traditions, and temporal

constraints. Individuals are reflective, self-conscious, and self-controlling, and these processes

are subject to social control as influenced by others (Stryker 1980). Human society could not

exist independently from self and mind; however, self and mind, in turn, emerge from the social process (Thomson 2010).

For Mead, then, humanity arose from this synchronous evolution of mind and society through significant symbols. His argument suggests that the self is a process in which the individual is constantly adjusting and reacting to the situation at hand, and that this conscious action becomes part of the social process which makes a much more highly organized (human) society possible (Thomson 2010). As such, society cannot be understood separately from the interaction of individuals. Further, Mead argues that, as in nature where organisms either persist or fail via interaction with their environment, the survival of an individual (and the human species more broadly) depends on the success of social acts and cooperation within the physical world (Goff 1980). This is made possible by the "progressive achievement of greater and greater degrees of functional, behaviouristic differentiation…or… mere specializations of socially functional individual behaviour" (Mead 1934: 309).

Aboulafia (2001) argues that "it is impossible to appreciate fully the implications of Mead's approach to the social self without understanding the political dimensions of his thought, and this aspect of his thought has often been overlooked" (p. 7). Many of Mead's earlier works reveal shifts in his political thought that occurred before, during, and after World War I. Therefore, it is important that we consider the impact this had on his thought through his pre-, during, and post-war writings.

The Impact of World War I

Mead argued that "the human social ideal – the ideal or ultimate goal of human social progress – is the attainment of a universal human society in which all human individuals would possess a

perfected social intelligence" (Mead 1934: 310). This implies that it is simply a matter of time before the general progression of social evolution, and, within it, the nature of self-development and change, will culminate in the "ideal society," which Mead viewed as the "universal society of a common global consciousness and functional interdependence" (Goff 1980: 69). For Mead, this "universal society" is epitomized by democracy, which he considered a universal process (Thomas 2010). Shalin (2003) asserts that

> Mead's pragmatist cosmology… envisioned the pluralistic universe whose inhabitants incessantly multiply perspectives, reinvent their selves, and reconstruct their community for the common good. No society embodies this better than democracy. At its heart is a universal discourse or system of symbols binding individuals into a social whole… (p. 323)

Further, Goff (1980) suggests that Mead viewed human history as practically an automatic expansion of universality and that there is a "gradual realization of a global community of common and shared attitudes, characterized by democratic government and a high development of functional social differentiation and interdependence" (p. 78-79).

Perhaps unsurprising, then, Mead was an "international pacifist" until the United States entered World War I (Deegan 2008). He advocated his "co-operative, scientific, rational model of the self and society" wherein play and education, not war, held a vital position (Deegan 2008: 10; Mead 1999). He wrote extensively about democracy and cooperation, defining peace between the "self," the "other," the community, and the nation as "an interconnected process that was the most common, desirable, and beneficial relationship between the parts creating "society"… [and] recreated continuously through "democratic processes," emergent from shared "liberal values," the use of "the scientific method," equality in citizenship, "public education," and "community leaders"" (Deegan 2008: 19).

Further, Mead (n.d.) argued that democracy implicates a "basis of common interest in the community upon which differences can be settled [rather than] through the exercise of force,"

made possible through "enlightened public sentiment" which is achieved via equality of opportunity and social justice for all. Deegan (2008) offers a useful summary of Mead's theory during this time: "democracies created members and citizens who shared a common good, language, and fundamental equality which allowed for nonviolent arbitration" (p. 24).

Support for the War

Once America entered the war, however, Mead's theories underwent a dramatic shift: he had "dedicated his life to a vision of progress, rationality, education, co-operation, and growing internationalism. This vision was sundered and undermined by war which flourished in destruction, irrationality, ignorance, fear, conflict, and unreflective nativism" (Deegan 2008: 11). He transitioned from pacifist to war supporter during this time, arguing that a great opportunity had arisen for American democracy to address "the paramount issue of the elimination of war by the democratic principle" (Mead 1917). Indeed, this was the same general sentiment that WWI was the "war to end all wars." "Can we realize that a war to make the world safe for democracy is essentially an American war," he posited, "and thus make the outcome of the war a definite one with which we passionately identify ourselves?" (1915).

Mead (1915) asserted that the war had paid "certain great spiritual dividends," presented "moments of priceless emotional experience," and "enormously valuable experiences" for citizens through "complete identification with each other and the whole community." He argued that in sacrificing oneself for others or for one's country, man realized the "meaning of his identity with his whole group," living up to "the enlargement of self-consciousness which is the inner side of the consciousness of a nation" (ibid). This, for Mead, constituted the "ultimate heights of human experience." His supporting argument hinged on his social-democratic theorizing and his belief in war as a vehicle for democracy in the specific case of WWI. Deegan

(2008: 320) argues that his ideas were susceptible to state manipulation during wartime and that Mead had "misplaced optimism about the outcome of state violence [by trusting violent leaders to become strong advocates for peace after the war]." Further, she argues that Mead "dichotomized the United States versus its enemies;" that his rationality was impaired by his patriotism; and that his argument that violence would result in democracy and freedom was a mistake (2008: 328).

Post-Support Theory

Mead's support for the war was relatively short-lived. Post-WWI, he reverted to being an ardent pacifist and regretted his earlier support for it. Returning to his previous argument, he endorsed the idea of a league of nations to enforce an appeal to democratic principles to resolve international disputes before war could be declared: "The same democratic assumption in the relation of nations insists that there are no irreconcilable conflicts between peoples if only there is adequate opportunity for bringing these conflicting interests in deliberative contact with each other, backed by a public opinion that enforces a thrashing out of the questions, before resort is had to force" (Mead 1917). It was during this time that Mead asked several significant questions (1915/n.d. in Deegan 2008):

> Are the spiritual experiences, both egoistical and those of self-surrender, both the contemptible and the heroic, which seem to us to presuppose war, - are these so valuable that we can afford to purchase them at the expense of Armageddon?

> Is it possible to bring to consciousness the value of one's relationship to the whole community in these constructive activities of daily life, which presuppose it, while they seem to ignore it; or is it only by sacrificing them all for a community that we can reach an emotional sense of worth of the society to which we belong? Must we lose our lives to save them?

> Is [war] a necessity forced upon us by the inability of modern communities to come to agreement upon their disputes? Is it a psychological necessity? Is human nature, when found in world communities that must and do have close and continually close relations

with each other, unable to take steps toward resolving conflicting national interests of individual citizens?

He believed that Allied countries taking steps toward enforcing arbitration treaties, such as the Hague tribunals and later, the League of Nations, made these questions irrelevant. For example, he argued that the Pact of Peace, which had the "full-hearted support of the communities of the Western world," had "forever damned war as a legitimate measure of public policy" (1929: 386). He dismissed war as "an utterly stupid method of settling differences of interest between nations" (ibid).

The impact of the war in direct relation to Mead's theory of the self will be further explored in Chapter 3. For now, it is sufficient to say that the war created a logical contradiction for Mead and complicated his ability to adequately account for conflict, power, and domination in his theory.

Support for Mead's Model

Mead has had a lasting impact on social psychology and sociology. Blumer (1966) argues that he

> reversed the traditional assumptions underlying philosophical, psychological, and sociological thought to the effect that human beings possess minds and consciousness as original "givens," that they live in worlds of pre-existing and self-constituted objects, that their behaviour consists of responses to such objects, and that group life consists of the association of such reacting human organisms (p. 535).

Mead's view of the human being as an actor was radically different from the conception of man that dominated psychology and social science during his time (ibid). Cronk (n.d.) notes that his major contribution to social psychology was his "attempt to show how the human self arises in the process of social interaction, especially by way of linguistic communication." He successfully demonstrated that "we think of ourselves as individuals, but we are only able to do so by virtue of being a part of a larger social community" (*Social Theory Re-Wired* 2016).

Further, he is considered to be the "father of the school of Symbolic Interactionism in sociology and social psychology" and he also had a key impact on the development of social constructionism (Aboulafia 2016). He contributed an original theory of self-development via communication, action, and a "metaphysics or philosophy of nature that emphasizes emergence and temporality" (ibid). Indeed, his influence is undeniable; however, he has also been heavily criticized.

Critiques of Mead's Model

Mead has been heavily criticized for this optimistic, social democratic-based theorizing (Athens 2013b). Brittan (1973) argues that Mead's perspective overemphasizes self-consciousness to the detriment of unconscious factors and overemphasizes the situation, while Hall (1972) contends that it has long been apolitical. Reynolds concludes that "the perspective… needlessly ignores politics, the unconscious, and "the emotive"" (1993: 134). Huber (1973) and McNall and Johnson (1975) argue that it is laden with philosophical and ideological biases, while Riesman et al (1950) contend that it is culturally and temporally limited. Similarly, Kantner (1973) states that it lacks a proper appreciation of the role of power, and Shaskolsky (1970) and Horowitz (1971) find that the framework offers an "exotic portrait of social reality".

Stryker (1980) argues that Mead's model overlooks the importance of emotion and the unconscious in human behaviour, is not capable of adequately dealing with large scale social organizational features of societies, and its neglect of social structure constitutes an ideological bias. Further, despite his vast influence, Mead has been heavily criticized for viewing society through "rose colored glasses," holding a naïve view of the sway of power and domination that hinders the natural ethical progression he hoped for through democratic dialogue (Athens 2013). Goff (1980) indicates similar issues, showing that Mead appeared to believe that group

interaction with others would lead to reciprocal role-taking, automatically leading to a common attitudinal structure, requisite changes in thought and action, and an end to social conflict.

Moreover, Hinkle (1992) argues that Mead's theories are micro-oriented and apolitical; therefore, she draws on the work of Habermas to link Mead to the macro political world. While Mead insists on the importance of common responses and meanings acquired by taking the role of the other, his analysis focuses on impulses and attitudes in the context of a universal human process rather than on successful communication or intersubjective understanding (Hinkle 1992). By understanding rationality in communicative terms, Mead assumes the social as "organized, rational, and good, whereas Habermas takes the social as distorted organization to be critiqued and repaired" (Hinkle 1992: 328). Aboulafia (2001) similarly argues that Mead (perhaps blindly) trusted that constantly multiplying perspectives would provide enough of a critical check and that he seemed to have faith in the world that it would "push back if we tried to push it too far off its moorings" (p. 79).

Others argue that Mead presents a conception of "man as oversocialized" and idealistic (Wrong 1961), and that he ignored the conflictual side of social change in favour of emphasizing a continuous, unproblematic social evolution (Goff 1980). Stryker (1980) also notes that Mead's theory overlooks the importance of emotion and unconscious drives in human behaviour. Goff (1980) asserts that "Mead nods to the fact that there 'is not this development of communication so that individuals can put themselves into the attitudes of those whom they affect' to any complete extent. He also notes that existing institutions, or internalized response patterns can be 'oppressive, stereotyped and ultra-conservative.' However, he fails to elaborate these 'insights'" (p. 69). Similarly, Thomson (2010) states

that Mead failed to address the question as to whether structured social inequality affects the degree to which an individual can develop an independent sense of self. Denzin (1992) goes further, arguing that Mead's model of society lacks notions of group oppression in terms of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Similar critiques have also been advanced by Musolf (1992) and Cote (2015).

The impact of the unconscious or emotive drives within an individual and its relationship to the process of socialization has not been given full attention in Mead's theory. MacKinnon (1994) argues that "Mead effectively banished affect to the biological substratum of human consciousness, restricting its role in social psychology to the emotional overtones of impulses in the incipient stage of the act" (p. 1). Mead has been widely criticized for this neglect of emotion (Gerth and Mills 1964; Meltzer 1972; Collins 1986). Cox (2001) argues that "while the persuasiveness [of] Mead's theory remains, he provides an inadequate account of the significance of emotions and conflict for the development of self" (p. 1). Further, Collins argued that "the time is ripening for a theoretical upheaval… as we have to come to grips with the grounding of language not only in cognitive aspects of social interaction but in what may turn out to be its emotional interactional substrate" (1986: 1349).

While these critiques may themselves be contended, it is generally accepted that Mead recognized conflict but saw it more as a component within a generally progressive system where the best ideas and institutions survive, rather than understanding that inequalities are ever-present and strongly influence *which* ideas and institutions survive. But what happens when antidemocratic ideas and institutions triumph over democratic ones, and when individuals are socialized within the ensuing antidemocratic society or with antidemocratic principles? Hinkle (1992) argued that "Mead's optimistic image of society and his position on rationality are no

longer appropriate for discussing social issues in a global society with multiple rationalities" (p. 315). Contrary to Faris' (1937) argument, then, we must indeed problematize "how man learns to be social or how he develops into a social being" (p. 397).

This chapter has explored Mead's social theory of the self as well as a brief discussion of support and criticism. In doing so, I have illustrated how Mead's theory is ripe for expansion in order to apply it to modern social problems. The next chapter will explore Erich Fromm, beginning with a short biography and introduction to his social psychological theory of self-development. I will also discuss some of the support and criticism for his model in order to demonstrate how a synthesis with Mead can strengthen both theorists' work.

Chapter 2: Erich Fromm

Erich Fromm's model of self-development is particularly well-suited to this endeavour. In this section, I intend to: (1) provide a brief biography of Erich Fromm; (2) introduce his theory of human self-development as it pertains to his most well-known work, *Escape from Freedom* (1941) and his analysis of Nazism; (3) explore his various other writings to provide more contextual background for his theories; and (4) discuss both support for and criticisms of Fromm's theories. In doing so, I intend to illustrate how Fromm's theories can provide a useful bridge to G.H. Mead's work to offer a more fulsome understanding of the effects of unconscious and emotive drives in human self-development and socialization. Fromm paid considerable attention to these drives in his theory of self-development and as such should prove to be a useful addition to Mead's theory and his failure to explore these issues. However, contrary to Mead, Fromm has been criticized for portraying an overly negative view of the human condition and for not placing enough faith in rational and democratic thinking. This criticism came about largely as a result of the analysis he presented in *Escape.* He later advocated for a radical humanist approach and was likewise criticized for being overly optimistic. It is my hope that a careful synthesis between Mead and Fromm's conceptions of man will provide a unique middle road to understand the impact of socialization on human self-development.

Introduction to Erich Fromm (1900-1980)

Erich Fromm was a Marxist psychoanalyst, critical theorist, philosopher and socialist humanist. He was one of the original members of the Frankfurt School and enjoyed a successful academic career in the mid-1900s; his books have sold millions of copies worldwide and he was a highly influential figure during his prime. However, by the end of the 1960s, this influence and prestige was declining (Burston 1991; Cortina 2015). Today, he is largely regarded as a "forgotten

psychoanalyst and intellectual figure in the United States," with his work rarely being cited (McLaughlin 1996, 1998; Cortina 2015). Cortina (2015) argues that "much of this dismissal can be traced to the split with members of the Frankfurt School" and that when his work is cited, it is "often limited to a cursory note" that situates Fromm as a neo-Freudian (p. 401, 402).

However, numerous theorists have argued for the relevance of his thought – especially in modern contexts. For example, Weiner (2003) argues that Fromm's work is relevant today because "it draws attention to the relationship between the political and the psychological, suggesting a troubling but important link between our ability to question authority on one hand and our potential to transform our consciousness on the other" (p. 60). Weiner (2003) further states that Fromm's theories elicit a consideration of the "hegemony of individualism in the context of democratic life … [because] shadows of fascism do not necessarily reflect the lock step of jack-booted soldiers"; instead, fascism can sometimes "stretch out from the feet of an atomized and free constituency" (p. 61). Similarly, McLaughlin (2007) argues that Fromm's work is useful for "highlighting the centrality of the ever-present search for meaning and the desire for transcendence in human beings as well as focusing our attention [to] the often-deadly dialectical tensions between individualism and community in modernity" (p. 769).

Erich Fromm was "one of the great humanistic thinkers of the 20th century" (Cortina 2015: 388). He was raised an only child in a religious Frankfurt family, with both parents coming from a Talmudic background (Ortmeyer 1998). Fromm was a "brilliant student" who went on to study the Talmud himself and was "well on the road to becoming a rabbi" (ibid p. 25). However, by 1917, he had departed from the formal study of Judaism to pursue his studies at the University of Heidelberg, where he became particularly interested in Buddhism, Judaic existentialism, German mysticism, and Marxist theory (Ortmeyer 1998). Originally, he had intended to study

law in Frankfurt, but switched to sociology to study under Alfred Weber (Max Weber's brother) (Cortina 2015). He spent his early professional and academic years as a "psychologist-psychoanalyst-social activist" in Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Berlin, Germany during World War I and the Weimar Republic; in New York City during World War II and the early years of the Cold War; in Mexico City during the 1960s; and in Switzerland for the last decade of his life (Ortmeyer 1998: 25).

During these years, he practiced, taught, and wrote about psychoanalysis, developing several social character types that were specific to the culture, country, and times, while simultaneously attempting to differentiate between health and pathology in the individual patient as well as the larger society wherein he was located (ibid). Fromm was one of the founders of the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute in 1929 and a member of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research from 1930 to 1939, where along with other Frankfurt theorists, he turned to psychoanalysis to "make up for a deficiency in Marxian theory, i.e., its lack of psychology of the individual and the subjective" (Ortmeyer 1998: 27; Fuchs 2020). Fromm's approach "combined a humanist approach with the quest for socialism [and] stresses the need to realize all humans' potentials so that a good life for all is realized" (Fromm 1965; Fuchs 2020: 299). While he believed that "Marxism is humanism" (Fromm 1965: 207), the basis of Fromm's socialist humanism remained rooted in the Talmudic tradition and his work can best be understood as an application of humanistic principles to a wide range of topics (Cortina 2015).

Cortina (2015) states that Fromm's background as a humanist and psychoanalyst enabled him to cultivate a "hopeful and positive view" of the human condition while simultaneously acknowledging the capacity for "destructiveness and evil" that stem from the same conditions that give rise to these hopeful and positive expressions (p. 396). Moreover, Cheliotis (2011)

contends that Fromm was able to extend beyond a surface level understanding of socio-political processes to include "the links between perceptive and socio-political structures, on the one hand, and the innate structures of the human psyche on the other" (p. 438). Fromm's humanistic values influenced his attempts to reconcile "psychoanalysis with the social sciences and Marxist thought to develop a view of the human condition rooted in our biology and history, and to explore the social, cultural, ethical, and religious ramifications of this approach" (Cortina 2015: 415).

Further, and in line with other critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, Fromm intended to reconcile Marx and Freud. While he was heavily influenced by Freud and devoted significant time attempting a "creative synthesis between [Marx and Freud]," he later took issue with Freud's neglect of the role of societal factors on an individual's personality (Landis and Tauber 1971: 2). J.J. Bachofen's studies of matriarchal and patriarchal principles had led Fromm to recognize that Freud's theories had an "extreme patriarchal bias," though Fromm never abandoned his attempts to synthesize these ideas (Landis and Tauber 1971: 3). Weiner (2003) argues that because of this, Fromm's work naturally traversed and blended the "theoretical borders of psychological, societal, and political" (p. 61). Fromm believed that "psychoanalysis could provide the missing link between ideological superstructure and socioeconomic base" (Jay 1973: 92). He considered the main goal of psychoanalysis to be assisting us in discovering and developing our best selves and providing the freedom to be who we are rather than what is expected of us (Cortina 2015).

Overview of Erich Fromm's Theories

Much like Mead, Fromm "understood man's nature as something created through relatedness to the world and interaction to others" (Jay 1973: 89). As a result, Fromm's perspective resists

positivistic influences in its attempt to understand the relationships between the individual and macro sociopolitical structures (Weiner 2003). By expanding beyond the typical individual clinical setting, Cheliotis (2011) argues that Fromm

> … puts entire cultures 'on the couch' without missing or undermining the forces exerted upon the collective unconscious 'from the outside'. In so doing, he wishes not only to explain mass subordination to powerful authorities as the outcome of given patterns of socialization, but also to expose how socialization may work to draw large cohorts of subordinates into acceptance or even the commission of destructive acts against weaker others. The promising implication of this otherwise dispiriting endeavour is that neither the instinctual apparatus nor the social forces that leave their imprint on it are pre-programmed towards domination. Most prominently, Fromm substitutes the mainstream, pathologizing conception of narcissism as natural precursor to submission and destructiveness with one that attends to the ways in which the form and direction of narcissistic cathexes are malleable to influences residing in the social environment, including benign influences towards reflexive disobedience and humanistic action (p. 440).

Fromm did not view human beings as a tabula rasa: "man is not a blank sheet of paper on which culture can write its text," he argued (Fromm 1986 [1949]: 23). Instead, human nature adapts itself to the cultural environment, allowing history to develop. However, he did not see culture itself as a "fixed factor to which human nature adapts itself passively and completely" (ibid p. 22). Rather, Cheliotis asserts that for Fromm, "the influence of culture on human nature is commensurate with the degree to which the former appeals to the intrinsic needs of the latter" (2011: 456). Thus, the human being is based on a "dialectic of the body and the mind"; the "dialectic of thinking and living" accompanied by the dialectic of "feelings and actions": humans have a need for "completeness in the process of living" and strive to realize this need "also in the process of living" (Fromm [1947] 2003: 34; Fuchs 2020: 301). Fromm ([1941] 1969) believes that "the most beautiful as well as the most ugly inclinations of man" result from the social processes that create us: "society has not only a suppressing function – although it has that too – but it has also a creative function" (p. 11).

Cheliotis (2011) argues that many theorists of action seek to answer what is perceived as one of the most "pressing practical problems" in human history: "Why do people consent to forms of social domination when it is objectively against their instrumental interests and moral values to do so?" (p. 439). Fuchs (2020) states that a starting point of Fromm's works are the questions: "What is the human being? And What is the human being's essence?" (p. 300). Fromm (1964) adopts a Marxist lens to argue that the human being is "*life aware of* itself" (p. 117); the human being is "a productive animal, capable of transforming the materials which [one] finds at hand, using [one's] reason and imagination… [one] *must* produce in order to live" (Fromm [1947] 2003: 61). He further argues that human beings differ from animals due to their capacity for "self-awareness, reason, and imagination [which] enable them to reason morally, anticipate alternatives and consequences of action, and to dream" (Fuchs 2020: 300).

Human beings, Fromm continues, do not possess the same advanced instinctual structure as other animals. Indeed, this "dynamism between [our] minimal instinctual equipment" coupled with a "large brain capable of learning, creating symbolic forms, and imagining past, present, and future" creates numerous existential oppositions (Cortina 2015: 405). Fromm thus departs from Freud, arguing that human beings' instinctual structure, like the structure and demands of society, is neither given nor unmodifiable. For Fromm, the history of human development is a progressive departure from instinct-based behaviour (Cortina 2015; McLaughlin 2021); "[man is] the most helpless of all animals at birth. His adaption to nature is based essentially on the process of learning, not on instinctual determination" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 41 in McLaughlin 2021).

The significance of self-awareness, reason, and imagination is that they enable human beings to "denote objects and acts by symbols" (Fromm [1947] 2003: 28). Much like for Mead,

the implication of this is that it allows the human being to become a language-using,

communicating being. Our productive orientation implies "a mode of relatedness in all realms of

human experience. It covers mental, emotional, and sensory responses to others, to oneself, and

to things. Productiveness is [one's] ability to use [their] powers and to realize the potentialities

inherent in [oneself]" (Fromm [1947] 2003: 61). Communication gives rise to "sociality, social

relations, social structures, groups, social systems, organizations, institutions, and society"

(Fuchs 2020: 300). Similarly, Cortina (2015) argues that

> It is not surprising that social engagement takes the form of a conversation, because communication is its most important function, and prepares the ground for the extensive cooperation and social learning needed to assimilate a huge amount of cultural knowledge that has accumulated through several millennia (Boyd et al 2011). For humans, this form of social engagement is the earliest expression of a social instinct to engage with others (p. 409).

Fuchs (2020) further argues that communication is the process whereby the "social character and

social structures are formed and reproduced… [they] are mediated through communication, and

the social relations that humans enter condition… and constrain individual thought and action"

(p. 307).

Again, like Mead, Fromm envisions the human individual and society at large as an

ongoing, dynamic process. Fromm therefore attempts a sociological account of human

motivation based on the "relationship of man to others, to nature and to himself" (Fromm [1949]

1986: 57; McLaughlin 1996). Fromm placed equal emphasis on society, mind, and the self

(Wolfe 1989; McLaughlin 1996). While Mead attempted this link and was careful to consider

each, McLaughlin (1996) argued that his analysis was flawed due to focusing on society *in*

general rather than on *specific* societies. Fromm, McLaughlin contends, was able to move

beyond "an abstract philosophical and literary discussion of the emergence of the self in the child

to a historical discussion of European Feudalism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and through

to the 1930s" (1996: 251). The advantage for Fromm is a commitment to more concrete socio-historical analysis than Mead was willing to pursue. Fromm used this form of analysis to argue that the breakdown of feudalism resulted in "both modern individualism *and* fascism" (ibid, emphasis in original).

Further, McLaughlin (2021) notes that for Fromm, the necessary conditions of human existence stimulate the "need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 34). Lacking relatedness through values, symbols, and patterns leads to "moral aloneness," which Fromm argued is as "intolerable as physical aloneness" (ibid p. 33). This need to relate to others is more powerful than any potential instinctual drives and can lead human beings to various refuges, "however absurd or degrading," in order to escape "what man most dreads: isolation" (ibid p. 34; McLaughlin 2021). Human self-awareness exacerbates this fear of isolation, which Fromm argued results in our desire to escape via negative freedom, or the tendency to submit to others to escape the uncertainty of the world. Fromm examined these issues in *Escape from Freedom* ([1941] 1969), distinguishing between positive freedom (individual spontaneity and solidarity with others) and negative freedom as well as discussing social character and "mechanisms of escape" from negative freedom.

Fromm ([1941] 1969), again from a Marxist perspective, argues that the most primary motive of human behaviour is the need for self-preservation, and in order to do what is required for self-preservation, we must work and produce. However, he continues, work is "nothing general or abstract. [It is] always concrete" (p. 16). In other words, there are specific kinds of work that exist in specific kinds of economic systems, and different kinds of work "require entirely different personality traits and make for different kinds of relatedness to others" (ibid). These positions are determined based on the society into which one is born, Fromm continues,

and while one's need to live and one's social system may be unalterable by one as an individual, they constitute "the factors which determine the development of those other traits that show greater plasticity" (ibid). Fromm terms this collection of more plastic traits the "social character."

We are further differentiated from other animals due to a "prolonged immersion in intimate close relationships and attachments during… the most protracted [period of development] of any known species," as well as a strong affiliation to groups which produces a sense of "we-ness" and group solidarity, often leading to tribal identities, in-group solidarity, and intergroup hostility and war (Bjorklund and Rosenberg 2005; Choi and Bowles 2007; Bowles 2006, 2012; De Dreu et al 2010; Cortina 2015: 408). To understand this better, Fromm (1941, 1947; Fromm and Maccoby 1970) advanced social character theory, proposing that social character is the "matrix of the character structure common to a group" (Fromm 1965: 210). The social character is "the totality of the common psychological features of a particular social group. It is shaped by society's institutions" (Fromm 1965, [1956] 2002; Fuchs 2020). Essentially, social character works as a "social glue that helps group members identify with each other and bond together" (Cortina 2015: 392).

In other words, the social character is the "sum total of cognitive and affective traits typical of human beings in a given society or group" (Cheliotis 2011: 451). Fromm expands, "it is the essential nucleus of the character structure of most members of a group which has developed as a result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group" (Fromm 1994 [1941]: 276). Its main purpose, Fromm contends, is to "maintain and enhance civil order by shaping the energies of the members of society in such a way that their behaviour is not a matter of conscious decision as to whether or not to follow the social pattern, but one of wanting to act

as they have to act and at the same time finding gratification in acting according to the requirements of culture" (2006 [1955]: 77). This concept is similar to Mead's "generalized other," which is the form through which "the social process influences the behaviour of the individuals involved in it and carrying it on, i.e., that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members" (Mead 1934: 155). However, while Mead emphasises the importance of symbols, rationality, and problem-solving in the context of a group, Fromm puts more emphasis on attachment and group behaviour in satisfying internal unconscious and emotional needs.

Further, Fromm (1947) argued that the family and other social institutions act as "psychic agents of society" (p. 68), which "inculcate shared social norms and beliefs beginning early in childhood [which then] become internalized as emotionally based character traits that operate automatically" (Cortina 2015: 392) so that people "will want to do what they have to do [to adapt to society]" (Fromm and Maccoby 1970: 18). These developments prepare young children to internalize shared social norms and assimilate cultural values (Rahoezy and Schmidt 2013). For example, Sroufe et al (2005) have found that parents' cooperativeness and helpfulness with their children strongly predicts how cooperative and helpful they will become with their peers and teachers later in development (in Cortina 2015: 411). Moreover, just as the psychological structure of the individual is largely conditioned by early childhood socialization within the family, the family itself is conditioned by its social class and background (Cheliotis 2011: 449). Fromm (1978[1932]: 483) writes "The family is the medium through which society or the social class stamps its specific structure on the child, and hence on the adult." This is also similar to Mead's notion of the "generalized other" since class-based and societal-level expectations are exerted on the individual in order for them to fit in and adapt to society.

With this theory, Fromm has attempted to bridge a missing link in Marxist thought by asking "How are shared ideologies that reflect economic modes of production created and reproduced?" (Cortina 2015: 392). He argues that the "social character is the intermediary between the socio-economic structure and the ideas and ideals prevalent in society" (1965: 212). Fromm and Maccoby (1970: 18 [footnote 24]) explain:

> The ideological superstructure is not a reflex-like consequence of the socioeconomic structure and in the concept of the social character, the connection between the economic basis and the superstructure is understood in their interaction. The practice of life, as it results from the socioeconomic structure, produces a certain social character which, in turn, produces the superstructure, which in turn reinforces the social character. The social character, in this view, is the intermediary between basic economic structure and superstructure (in Fuchs 2020: 302).

In other words, social character differences are "fundamentally the result of adaptations to different modes of production, how people actually make a living under different socioeconomic conditions" (Cortina 2015: 393). Importantly, there is a significant difference when compared to Mead with this concept, as Fromm employs the Marxist views that Mead never had.

Fromm viewed character orientation as a "reflection of the social-economic-political-religious culture in which people live" (Ortmeyer 1998: 32). In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), he mapped out two opposite social character types: the *biophilic* and the *necrophilic*. Unlike Freud, Fromm suggests that the "only fundamental, and fundamentally normal, biological drive in [humans] is *biophilia*," the "love of life," an "affinity to life and growth" (Cheliotis 2011: 449). Countering Freud, Fromm argues that *necrophilia* (Freud's "death instinct"), or "destructive aggressiveness," is a psychopathological phenomenon that only occurs when the "appropriate social conditions for life are not present" (ibid; Fromm 1964). Fromm (1936) explains his revision of Freud's theory in an unpublished letter to a colleague:

> The central point of this fundamental disagreement (with Freud) is that I try to show that drives which motivate social behaviour are not, as Freud assumes, sublimations of sexual instincts. These drives, which I divide into those having to do with human relations (love,

hate, sadomasochism) and those having to do with methods of acquisition (instincts of receiving, taking away, saving, gathering, producing), are fundamentally different from natural factors, namely the instincts of hunger, thirst, sexuality. Whereas these are common to all human beings and animals, the former are specifically human products and not biological: they are to be understood in the context of the social way of life… (quoted in Ortmeyer 1998: 29).

McLaughlin (1996) argues that while Fromm accepted certain aspects of Freud's theories, such as the existence of unconscious drives, he departed from Freud's positivist and instinct-based foundations. Fromm insisted that "man's passionate striving cannot be explained by the force of his instincts" ([1949] 1986: 46; McLaughlin 1996). Rather, these "striv[ings] for power, or for love, or for destruction… are what constitutes and characterizes the peculiarity of human life" (ibid; McLaughlin 1996).

Fromm ([1941] 1969) contends that there are three main mechanisms of escape from negative freedom: authoritarianism, destructiveness, or automaton conformity. Authoritarianism, which he further divides into sadism (domination) and masochism (submission), is the "tendency to give up the independence of one's own individual self and to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside of oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking" (p. 140). Masochistic tendencies include feelings of "inferiority, powerlessness, and individual insignificance"; these individuals typically have an external locus of control, exhibiting a "marked dependence on powers outside of themselves" (p. 141). Fromm states that these trends are most often rationalized: masochistic dependency, feelings of inferiority, and one's suffering are usually perceived as love or loyalty, reasonable expressions of shortcomings, and as a result of unchangeable circumstances, respectively (p. 142).

Sadism, on the other hand, is divided into three subtypes: to make others dependent on oneself and to obtain unrestricted power over them; the impulse to both rule over and exploit others; and to cause or observe suffering among others ([1941] 1969: 143). Fromm argues that

these tendencies are more frequently rationalized and less conscious than the masochistic tendencies. Both, nonetheless, imply a dependency on others and "tend to help the individual to escape his unbearable feeling of aloneness and powerlessness… in both cases, the integrity of the individual self is lost" (p. 150, 157). Fromm asserts that both sadistic and masochistic traits are likely to be found in everybody on a scale ranging from those whose personality is consumed by them to those for whom these traits are not characteristic; however, we can only speak to the sado-masochistic *character* when discussing the former (p. 161).

Here, Fromm is speaking of *character* in the same sense as Freud, however, he moves beyond Freud's assumption that the basic motivating forces are sexual ones, instead focusing on different character types such as sadistic or masochistic. The dynamic concept remains the same, however, in that behaviour patterns are used to discuss the "dominant drives that motivate behaviour… [which may] not necessarily [be] conscious as such to a person whose character is dominated by them" ([1941] 1969: 161). These individuals may not necessarily be neurotic; Fromm argues that the character structure depends largely on the social situation in which people live and work. Here, Fromm departs from the term "sado-masochistic" since it implies perversion and neuroses, and instead uses the term *authoritarian character.* He justifies this change in terminology since "the sado-masochistic person is always characterized by his attitude toward authority. He admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time he wants to be an authority himself and have others submit to him" (p. 162).

Authority, argues Fromm, can be more than that exerted by another person or an institution: rather than internal or external, authority has made itself *anonymous.* Anonymous authority is "disguised as common sense, science, psychic health, normality, public opinion… it is more effective than overt authority, since one never suspects that there is any order which one

is expected to follow" ([1941] 1969: 166). Similarly, Fromm (1981) later distinguishes between the authoritarian conscience ("the internalized voice of an authority which we are eager to please and afraid of displeasing") and the humanistic conscience (based on universal human "intuitive knowledge of what is human and inhuman") (p. 6). He argues that authoritarian conscience, or "obedience to outside thoughts and power", tends to incapacitate humanistic conscience, or "the ability to be and judge oneself" (p. 6-7).

Further, according to Fromm, the authoritarian character is the "personality structure which is the human basis of Fascism" ([1941] 1969: 162). This is so because, Fromm argues, "the attitude of the authoritarian character toward life, his whole philosophy, is determined by his emotional strivings. The authoritarian character loves those conditions that limit human freedom, he loves being submitted to fate" (p. 168). Fate is considered unchangeable, "natural law," a higher power outside of the individual toward which one can only submit, which negatively influences the activity, courage, and beliefs of the authoritarian character (p. 170). Thus, the authoritarian character acts "in the name of something higher than one's self," has the courage to "suffer what fate… may have destined him for," and one's beliefs are "relativistic and nihilistic," ultimately rooted "in doubts and… attempt[s] to compensate them" (p. 171).

While Fromm is discussing the extreme forms of helplessness and attempts to escape, it is important to note that there are, more commonly, less extreme versions of this character type which may not be dangerous. Here, he is referring to "the kind of persons whose whole life is in a subtle way related to some power outside themselves" ([1941] 1969: 172). However, in principle, the reasons behind this are the same as those found within the authoritarian character: "an inability to stand alone and to fully express [one's] own individual potentialities" (p. 174).

Essentially, these characters arise out of an unsuccessful attempt to "solve the expansiv between basic dependency and the quest for freedom" (p. 177).

Next, Fromm turns to his analysis of destructiveness as an escape from freedom. While its cause is rooted in the same basis as authoritarianism – the "unbearableness of individual powerlessness and isolation" – it is differentiated by its goal of "elimination of its object" ([1941] 1969: 177). Fromm states that one believes they can escape their own powerlessness in comparison with the outside world by "destroying" it; while the isolation will remain, the power of outside objects will diminish, thereby empowering the individual via the absence of external threats. As with authoritarianism, Fromm further divides destructiveness into two distinct forms: the more rational and reactive tendencies that occur in response to specific situations, and the irrational "constantly lingering" tendency that is merely waiting for an opportunity to be expressed (p. 178). Both forms of destructiveness lead to anxiety and the "thwarting of life," which Fromm suggests may lead to physical and mental illness or even suicide (p. 179).

Freud, too, touched on the relationship between destructiveness and the "thwarting of life," as evidenced in his "death instinct." Freud assumed this instinct could be "blended with the sexual energy and be directed either against one's own self or against objects outside of oneself" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 180). Further, he assumed that it was a biological – and therefore necessary and unalterable – quality. However, Fromm argues that if this were true, we would have to assume that the amount of observed destructiveness is more or less constant across individuals and social groups. The contrary seems to be true, as Fromm argues is evidenced by anthropological studies: "the amount of destructiveness varies enormously among individuals and social groups… not only does the weight of destructiveness among individuals in our culture

vary a great deal, but also destructiveness is of unequal weight among different social groups" (p. 181).

Thus, Fromm ([1941] 1969) argues that "it seems that any attempt to understand the roots of destructiveness must start with the observation of these differences and proceed to the question of what other differentiating factors can be observed and whether these factors may not account for the differences in the amount of destructiveness" (p. 181). Fromm (1962) maintains that alienation leads to neurosis and later expands his argument, departing from Freud's concept of the death instinct to state that attraction to death (necrophilia) is "a phenomenon deeply rooted in a culture which is increasingly dominated by the bureaucratic organizations of the big corporations, governments, and armies, and by the central role of man-made things, gadgets, and machines" (1981: 35). Ultimately, Fromm argues, "destructiveness is the outcome of unlived life" resulting from individual isolation and "suppression of individual expansiveness" ([1941] 1969: 182-3).

Third, and finally, Fromm discusses automaton conformity as an escape from freedom. He argues that this is the most used method of escape, wherein an individual

> ceases to be himself; he adopts entirely the kind of personality offered to him by cultural patterns; and he therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be. The discrepancy between the 'I' and the world disappears and with it the conscious fear of aloneness and powerlessness ([1941] 1969: 184).

While this mechanism may prove useful in relieving feelings of isolation and anxiety, Fromm argues that it results in the loss of the individual self. He asserts that feelings can not only be externally introduced yet subjectively experienced as one's own; they can also be "repressed and cease to be part of one's self" (p. 185). Similarly, Fromm argues that the authoritarian conscience acts upon the same principles: "consciously, I believe that I am following *my* conscience; in effect, however, I have swallowed the principles of *power*" (1981: 6). Essentially, modern

industries have transformed human beings into "things," or "cogs in a machine," with limited importance compared to the endless progress of industry itself (Deslandes 2018: 1649). The individual becomes inextricably linked to their economic utility; anyone without such utility is considered practically worthless (ibid).

Further, Fromm differentiates between "genuine" feelings which originate in ourselves and "pseudo" ones which originate outside of ourselves but which we believe to be our own. He argues that in observing human decisions, it is striking to see how often "people are mistaken in taking as 'their' decision what in effect is submission to convention, duty, or simple pressure" ([1941] 1969: 197). Similarly, Fromm (ibid p. 197) states that

> What holds true of thinking and feeling holds also true of willing. Most people are convinced that as long as they are not overtly forced to do something by an outside power, their decisions are theirs, and that if they want something, it is they who want it. But this is one of the great illusions we have about ourselves. A great number of our decisions are not really our own but are suggested to us from the outside; we have succeeded in persuading ourselves that it is we who have made the decision, whereas we have actually conformed with expectations of others, driven by the fear of isolation and by more direct threats to our life, freedom, and comfort.

Eventually, Fromm argues, since pseudo acts replace genuine feelings, the genuine self is replaced and "completely suffocated" by a pseudo self, which leaves the individual in "an intense state of insecurity" that can only be remedied by absolute conformity (p. 203).

Fromm ([1941] 1969) argues that the helplessness and insecurity of the average individual in modern society has increased due to automatization, thus increasing one's willingness to "submit to new authorities" for security and relief from doubt (p. 203). Importantly, Fromm later (1981) related this analysis to the current century, stating that it is the century of

> [H]ierarchically organized bureaucracies in government, business, and labor unions. These bureaucracies administer things *and* men as one; they follow certain principles, especially the economic principle of the balance sheet, quantification, maximal efficiency, and profit, and they function essentially as would an electronic computer that

has been programmed with these principles. The individual becomes a number, transforms himself into a thing. But just because there is no overt authority, because he is not "forced" to obey, the individual is under the illusion that he acts voluntarily, that he follows only "rational" authority. Who can disobey the "reasonable"? Who can disobey the computer-bureaucracy? Who can disobey when he is not even aware he is obeying? (p. 22)

Modern media, "slogans, suggestions, voices of unreality," Fromm asserts, deprives individuals of the "last bit of realism [they] may still have" and discourages "true convictions" from an early age (p. 49). This, in turn, diminishes critical thought and genuine feelings, leading to conformity as the only hope for escape from "an unbearable feeling of loneliness and lostness" (ibid). The individual is transformed into a "thing" by bureaucratic organizations, big corporations, governments; the individual becomes "dependent on powers outside of himself into which he has projected his living substance" (ibid).

Support for Fromm's Work

McLaughlin is a strong advocate and leading scholar of Fromm's work, arguing that he is "an obvious missing figure in public sociology from the mid-twentieth century" (2021: 3). McLaughlin (1996) contends that while sociologists are increasingly recognizing the necessity of analyzing the "emotional dynamics of irrationality, destructiveness, vengeance, and rage," we still do not have an "adequate sociologically informed theory of emotions" (p. 241). Cheliotis (2011) states that it would not be affordable to ignore the role of emotions, both as "necessary preconditions of rational choice [as well as] orientations of decision-making (p. 442). McLaughlin (2007) argues that scholars have begun to acknowledge the importance of emotions and biography for theories of collective action and political mobilization because "people join movements not simply for strategic reasons, but because of emotional identifications with participants and the [emotions] articulated by movement leaders. Emotional appeals, deep hatreds, and passionate commitments are central to political action" (p. 774).

Similarly, Scheff (1994) argues that "emotions have virtually disappeared as creditable motives in modern scholarship" (p. 62) and that "honour is an undertheorized motive for social and political action" (McLaughlin 1996: 255) due to a focus on power, territory, and other more objectifiable motives. In line with Fromm's analysis of Nazism, Scheff argues that "labelling, segregation, and stigmatization of Germany after its defeat in World War I [created a context in which Hitler's own] continual humiliated fury produced a program responsive to the craving of his public for a sense of community and pride rather than alienation and shame" (1994: 105). McLaughlin (1996) argues that Fromm's existentially influenced analysis of the human condition provided Scheff with a theoretical microfoundation (p. 256).

Criticisms of Fromm's Work

Still, like all major theorists of the human condition, Fromm's work is rife with its own strengths and limitations (Cortina 2015). Sadovnikov (2004), arguing from a Popperian standpoint, criticizes Fromm on the basis of contradictory statements, arguing that "Fromm provides neither social nor psychological foundations for the development of specific types of ideologies and regimes" (p. 264). Additionally, he continues, Fromm does not allow for the capacity of human rationality and critical thinking. Sadovnikov (2007) later argues that Fromm's theories are not empirical because they are inconsistent and uncriticizable (a key consideration in Popperian methodology). Fromm undertakes "labelling-as-theorizing," states Sadovnikov (2007) which has "ruinous consequences for understanding" since it contributes to a dogmatic approach that simply looks for confirmations (p. 781, 793). In his rebuttal to Sadovnikov, McLaughlin (2007) agrees that *Escape* is "a book with serious empirical limitations," but previously argued that it should not be read for its concrete analyses but rather for its theoretical insight (1996).

However, "Fromm was always a controversial figure" (McLaughlin 2021: 27).

Menninger (1942) argued that *Escape* was a subjective book which contained many simply

incorrect statements, while others loyal to Freud critiqued Fromm for abandoning psychoanalysis

and presenting false critiques of Freud's theories (Fenichel 1944; Goodman 1945). Marxists also

argued that despite making significant contributions, Fromm's work was damaged by many

misinterpretations (Bartlett 1942). Fromm's psychoanalytic combination of Freud and Marx,

Bartlett (1942) argued, did not emphasize that the psychological character plays only a

subordinate role, secondary to "total economic and political development" (p. 189). *Escape*,

therefore, was "marred by 'pessimism' and a 'defeatist mood', which suggest the petty bourgeois

is doomed 'to succumb to fascist propaganda', the working class 'act blindly', and the 'finance

capitalists alone act rationally'" (Bartlett 1942: 189 in McLaughlin 2021: 27-28).

Importantly, some of Fromm's harshest critiques arose from his [former] colleagues in

the Frankfurt School (Weiner 2003: 62). Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse criticized Fromm's

revisionist social psychology, arguing that it erroneously attempted to "psychologize culture and

society," thus ignoring Freud's essential notion that "psychology was necessarily the study of the

individual" (Jay 1973: 103). Adorno considered this a serious mistake, given the Freudian

importance of the libido. By critiquing Freud's patriarchal and libidinal theories, it was argued

that Fromm and other revisionists had embraced a conformity that "smoothed over social

contradictions" (ibid p. 105). Fromm's optimism was "considered to be as dangerous as it was

naïve" during a time when the atrocities of the Holocaust dominated the School's work (Weiner

2003: 62). Further, Cortina (2015) argued that Fromm lacked an understanding of how emotional

ties developed or how they could "interfere with the growth of autonomy or the ability to love"

(p. 411). Fromm's *The Art of Loving* (1956) could only provide encouragement to develop

positive relationships but could not provide an "empathic understanding of the developmental pathways that derailed their ability to develop loving relations, or explain why they became anxiously attached or panicked about being abandoned" (Cortina 2015: 411-412).

As demonstrated, both G.H. Mead and Erich Fromm have powerful, yet contested, theories of human self-development. By examining a range of their writings, this thesis contends that while there are shortcomings for each, their theories can be readily modified by incorporating elements of both. The remaining chapters will explore this possibility further, as well as its applicability to modern society and its associated problems.

Chapter 3: Mead – Fromm Synthesis

While there are some similarities to be found in both their social context and writing, George

Herbert Mead and Erich Fromm differ in several key areas that partly flow from their respective

biographies. This section seeks to investigate their biographies more closely in a comparative

manner, i.e., their religious roots and social activism, the impact of war, and as public

intellectuals. Upon laying the biographical groundwork, the individual-society dialectic and the

problem of freedom and resistance will be compared and contrasted in order to achieve a

theoretical synthesis. This synthesis will then be used to contextualize the issue of modern day

"democracy" in light of the rise of contemporary neoliberalism and political extremism in

Chapter 4.

1. **Biographical Convergences and Divergences**

      A. Religious Roots and Social Activism

G.H. Mead (1863-1931) was born to a successful middle-class family in the United States in

1863. His parents were white, anglophone, and devoutly Christian. Mead grappled with the

religious convictions inherited from his family and community for years, even considering

becoming a Christian Social Worker for a short period (Aboulafia 2016). However, after college,

he became a "committed naturalist and non-believer" (ibid). While he moved away from his

religious roots, he maintained strong Christian ethics and his "activist spirit remained with him

[:] he marched in support of women's suffrage, served as treasurer for the Settlement House

movement, immersed himself in civic matters in Chicago, and generally supported progressive

causes" (Aboulafia 2016). Indeed, Huebner (2014) provides an extensively researched synopsis

of Mead's public participation, drawing attention to his "local social reform efforts" including

his support and promotion of social settlement houses, his public mediation of labour disputes,

advocating for universal public education and vocational training, and ensuring the rights of immigrants and racial minorities (p. 25-26). Similarly, Shalin (2011) disputes the common misperception of Mead as an "armchair philosopher," stating instead that "Mead was at the forefront of the contemporary movement for social reform" (p. 37).

Erich Fromm (1900-1980) was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, as an only child to orthodox Jewish parents. Similar to Mead, Fromm received an intensely religious education. Noted scholars and family friends groomed him to carry on the family tradition and become a Talmudic scholar (Hornstein 2005). A "decisive, early influence on his life were the writings of Old Testament" (Landis and Tauber 1971), which Fromm described in a short autobiography in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962) as having "touched [him] and exhilarated [him] more than anything else." The visions of universal peace and harmony, that there are "ethical aspects to history" in that "nations can do right and wrong," and that history has moral laws presented therein were equally as important to Fromm as the spirit of traditional Judaism (Landis and Tauber 1971: 1) Fromm often felt that this mode of life made him a "stranger in the modern world," because the principles of traditional Judaism were in "sharp contrast to those of contemporary capitalism" (ibid). Experiencing the opposition between these two contrasting ways of living, according to Landis and Tauber (1971), was one of the "creative forces in his life" (p. 2).

Fromm was heavily influenced by prominent Talmudic scholars Rabbi J. Horowitz, S.B. Rabinkov, N. Nobel, and L. Krause, who were also described as "humanists of extraordinary tolerance with a complete absence of authoritarianism" (Landis and Tauber 1971: 2). Similar to Mead, Fromm would also later give up religious practices entirely; however, the principles and values of his Talmudic teachers remained intact, evident in his humanist-socialist convictions

and critiques of capitalism (Landis and Tauber 1971). Rosengarten (2015) notes that while Fromm was deeply "inspired by Jewish moral philosophy and steeped in the study of the Old Testament and the Talmud," he went beyond these boundaries in his quest for "a system of thought that was universalist rather than narrowly sectarian, and international rather than nationalistic" (p. 83; see also Friedman 2013).

Religion, for both Mead and Fromm, impacted their understanding of society and thus their social theories. While both moved away from organized religion, the ideals they obtained from Christianity and Judaism would influence their social activism, morals, and ethics. Religion, for Mead, was a "larger and more abstract social relationship," alongside economics, which are both universal in nature and "can be applied to anyone" (1934: 289). Mead (1934) argued that while the tender attitude espoused by religion is not always dominant since it is sometimes overwhelmed by the hostile reaction, the fact that it exists "makes possible a universal form of society. The Christian saints represented that sort of society to which every individual could conceivably belong" (p. 290). While I do not agree with this (as religion has been the origin of many violent struggles throughout human history), this attitude is indicative of Mead's own social location, which will be expanded upon further.

Fromm analyzed religion through a psychoanalytic lens, arguing that religion is "any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion" (1950: 21). With this definition, he contends that any secular system, including fascism and authoritarianism, "deserve the name of religion" (Han-Kyung 2001: 1). Similar to Mead, Fromm also sees a universality to it, arguing that there is no individual who does not have a religious need since "almost every sector of human life reflects religious need and its fulfillment" (ibid). However, he distinguishes between "authoritarian" and "humanistic"

religions: the former is characterized by a higher power that has control over an individual to which the individual submits, the latter rejects this divine being to argue instead that religion is a way of expressing a higher dimension of being human, i.e., as being within rather than outside of the individual. Further, he connects religion to the socio-economic status of a society, arguing that this is more important for the development of religious experiences than any particular religious tradition (Han-Kyung 2001). In this way, Fromm accounts for how religion can be both a positive and a negative influence upon an individual.

B. Impact of the World Wars

When World War I erupted in July 1914, Mead was an "international pacifist" advocating for the "cooperative, scientific, rational model of the self and society" and emphasizing the importance of play and education rather than war (Mead 1999; Deegan 2008). True to his roots, he was a strict proponent of democracy and cooperation, stressing the value of appealing to common interests to settle differences rather than the use of force (Mead, n.d.). However, it is important to reiterate that, for a short period of time, Mead became a somewhat disillusioned, yet very avid, supporter of America's entry into the Great War. Perhaps through "rose-coloured glasses" (Athens 2013), Mead argued that America's entry into the war created a "great opportunity… for American democracy to eliminate the need for war through the democratic principle" (Mead 1917). This short-lived support was rooted in his social-democratic theorizing and his belief in war to disrupt tyranny as a vehicle for democracy. Yet his ideas, like many others during that time, were susceptible to state manipulation, and according to Deegan (2008), Mead had "misplaced optimism about the outcome of state violence" (p. 320).

WWI was not the war to end all wars, nor was it a war for democracy, as Mead argued. "It was violent, international chaos," Deegan (2008) stated, "imbedded in militarization,

ethnic/racial strife, and sexism" (p. 326). Mead tried to understand the negative effects of

patriotism, nationalism, and social disorganization; the puzzle was not why nationalism could

occur in the first place, but why it could take such violent forms (Harnisch 2010). The main

cause, he asserted, was militarism. According to Mead, "whenever nations identified with the

state as such rather than with the people [and] if the state in an exclusive understanding of

sovereignty prevails over the human aspiration of its citizens, then war becomes possible" (ibid

p. 15). Mead viewed nations and their formation in much the same way as he viewed the

formation of self: "states, as the constitutive elements of the inter-national community, do not

'exist as such' in the Meadian view, but are products of their own 'role play as states' in their

society" (Wendt 1999: 327 in Harnisch 2010: 5). Rather than focusing on a "rationalist or

cognitivist design of learning," Mead stressed the "intersubjective, the social capacity to create

new meaning, i.e., shared roles and identities" at both the individual and nation-state levels

(Harnisch 2010: 10). In doing so, Mead argued that the "individual can only grow through active

participation and society can only be sustained through 'critical reflection'," thus "social

criticism and personal reflection become two sides of the same coin as they allow agency to

creatively reconstruct the social and cultural setting in which the actor lives" (Harnisch 2010:

11).

Mead was a firm believer in participatory democracy, according to Aboulafia (2001), and

argued that for democracy to flourish, "society must recognize that it has an obligation to assist

its citizens in the actualization of their potential. A society that does not is simply less than a just

society" (p. 9). According to Mead, democracy assumes societies of different nations always

have a common social interest wherein lay the solution to social strife: "democratic institutions

recognize this assumption in giving political power to all groups and individuals, confident that

out of the political struggle of the conflicting aims and interests of individuals and groups the common interest must eventually rise to command the allegiance of all" (1917). Democratic advance, he argued, meant the breaking down of social barriers and vested privileges that inhibit people from recognizing these common denominators.

In the context of war, democracy meant the "opportunity for the full discussion of international disputes under conditions which open the discussion to the public opinion of the world before war may be declared" (Mead 1917). He believed that democracy does not allow for irreconcilable differences between people because it encourages deliberative contact among peoples of conflicting interests and backing public support for a "thrashing out of the questions" before resorting to force (ibid). If issues that would lead up to war could be "intelligently presented" to those involved, war would never be the rational outcome (Mead 1929). He argued that the general growth of democracy would bring about the necessary changes to make national subjugation to military force no longer necessary – indeed, no longer possible – for solving disputes: "[War] has become unthinkable as a policy for adjudicating national differences. It has become logically impossible" (1929). It was his opinion that these changes would be quickened by the "terrible experiences of [World War I] that actually such a catastrophe will become in consequence no longer possible" (n.d. in Deegan 2008).

Fischer (2008) draws on the work of Thomas Knock to further describe Mead's internationalism in relation to his war-time writings. Knock (1992) distinguishes between "progressive internationalists," those who "worked for a negotiated end to the conflict [and] feared that an Allied military victory would result in a victor's peace, sowing seeds of resentment and hatred that would lead to future wars" and "conservative internationalists" who were "a larger, wealthier, and more elite establishment group, who thought a decisive military victory

over Germany was imperative…" (in Fischer 2008: 515). Fischer (2008) argues that Mead's war-time articles are "consistent with conservative internationalism" and that his stance "represented the dominant form of internationalism at the time" (p. 515). While the war clearly impacted his thought, especially immediately before, during, and after, this experience seems less central to his theory than it does for Fromm. For example, Aboulafia (2001: 7) argues that "the political dimension of his thought… has often been overlooked," perhaps because it is perceived as less influential or relevant to his core theory.

Fromm was a teenager during some of the most tumultuous times of modern German history (Finn 2021). He was a 14-year-old student when World War I broke out and was shocked by how instantaneously his teachers and fellow students became "fanatical nationalists and reactionaries" who attributed the war to British aggression (Friedman 2013; Simkin 2022). He later described the war as "the most crucial experience in [his] life," (Fromm 1962: 9) stating that it was the "event that determined his intellectual development more than anything else" (Durkin in Finn 2021). Fromm had lost uncles, cousins, and friends in the conflict, and when the war ended four years later, he became "obsessed by the question of how war was possible, by the wish to understand the irrationality of human mass behaviour, by a passionate desire for peace and international understanding" (Fromm 1962: 9). The war, coupled with his interest in Marxist revolutionary and humanistic spirit, would awaken Fromm's political interests (Landis and Tauber 1971).

Mead would not live to see the rise of authoritarianism and fascism during World War II; however, such events influenced Fromm's social theory immensely. McLaughlin (1996) argues that Fromm's inclusion of existential dread and moral aloneness have provided a "crucial motivational drive lacking in rational choice, symbolic interactionist, and instinctual theories…

[which] generally downplay the theoretical significance of irrational destructiveness" (p. 250).

Fromm uses these concepts in his chapter on the "Psychology of Nazism" to better understand

the success of such a regime. Essentially, Fromm argued that the "modern world had created

both new freedoms and increased anxieties, and the stage had been set for Nazism by both the

breakdown of security provided by feudalism and the political crisis of the 1930s" (McLaughlin

1996: 242). The racism, nationalism, militarism, and "spirit of blind obedience to a leader"

espoused by the Nazi party were an "escape from freedom" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 235;

McLaughlin 1996). Fromm offered a novel approach to the topic by refuting simplistic national

character theories to instead raise larger questions about human motivation in the context of

modernity (Lenkerd 1994; McLaughlin 1996).

For Fromm, Nazism was intimately linked with socio-economic class and religion,

specifically the lower-middle class and Protestantism, in Germany. While this "middle-class"

theory of Nazism was popular during the 1940s, it does not hold up to more recent historical

accounts (McLaughlin 1996). For example, Hamilton (1982) argues that there is little empirical

evidence to support this assertion and that, in fact, the upper middle class was more likely to vote

for the Nazi party. However, Fromm was correct to recognize a correlation between

Protestantism and Nazism; according to McLaughlin (1996), "Protestantism is the single best

predictor for Nazism" (p. 253). The significance of the Protestant Reformation, Fromm argues, is

that it was "one root of the idea of human freedom and autonomy as it is represented in modern

democracy" ([1941] 1969: 38). Fromm expanded his argument, stating that the Reformation

stressed "the wickedness of human nature, the insignificance and powerlessness of the

individual, and the necessity for the individual to subordinate himself to a power outside of

himself" (ibid). Thus, "probably no period since the sixteenth century… resembles ours as closely in regard to the ambiguous meaning of freedom" (ibid).

McLaughlin (2021) argues that at the root of Fromm's analysis of Nazism lies his discussion of the Reformation and Lutheranism's appeal for the middle class. This further led Fromm to a discussion of capitalist modernity and the creation of human beings that were freed from traditional bonds but made "more and more alone and isolated" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 123). Similarly, Zakai (2018) argues that *Escape* "charts the growth and decline of freedom and self-awareness in the West from the Middle Ages to modern times, when people sought refuge from insecurity and responsibility in totalitarian movements, such as Nazism and Fascism" (p. 440). For Fromm, the Protestant Reformation's idea of the "unworthiness of the individual, his fundamental inability to rely on himself and his need to submit, is also the main theme of Hitler's ideology, which, however, lacks the emphasis on freedom and moral principles which was inherent in Protestantism" ([1941] 1969: 38-39).

Fromm is careful to connect these concepts to the political and psychological basis of Nazism. He analyzed the significant political and social events that were occurring during this time, such as unemployment, inflation, and rapid cultural changes after World War I (McLaughlin 2021). Zakai (2018) notes that *Escape* seeks to explain why "millions in Germany were as eager to surrender their freedom as their fathers were to fight for it; that instead of wanting freedom, they sought for ways of escape from it; that other millions were indifferent and did not believe the defense of freedom to be worth fighting and dying for" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 5). McLaughlin (2021) states that while the older generations were "bewildered" by these changes, younger generations had become disillusioned and "rebelled against the authority of their discredited elders" (p. 26).

Defeat in war coupled with economic depression undermined the legitimacy of democratic institutions, and Hitler's "evangelism of self-annihilation" had shown millions of Germans a way out (Fromm [1941] 1969: 235 in McLaughlin 1996). Hitler represented a "humiliated but now resurgent Germany," and the authoritarian character that Fromm argued was prevalent among the lower middle class and Protestants provided a well of opportunity to be exploited by the "radical opportunism" of Nazism (Fromm [1941] 1969: 245; McLaughlin 2021). "Just as Luther expressed the social and psychological insecurities of his supporters during the Reformation," argues McLaughlin, "Hitler was a representative of the threatened and marginalized lower middle class and a humiliated nation" (2021: 26). Fromm's theoretical exploration of the basis of Nazism combines "macrostructural and micropsychological analyses" (McLaughlin 1996: 242) to maintain that a thorough explanation of Nazism must account for the larger socio-political realties; "the mass base of Nazism [must] be accounted for with an analysis that avoids both what we now call an 'over-socialized' explanation of Nazism [as well as] psychological reductionism" (McLaughlin 2021: 21).

Mead's theory of self-development through socialization with others is ripe for expansion. Mead, perhaps somewhat shallowly, explored the concepts of human violence as evidenced by his war-time articles; however, he failed to offer an in-depth analysis on the subject (Fischer 2008). He emphasized the importance of dialogue and communication between nations, as much as he did between individuals before they could resort to conflict. This fact was clearly demonstrated by his unwavering support for the League of Nations, which he believed provided the grounds for full and open discussion of international disputes before the declaration of war could be made. Mead (1929) believed that if war-inciting issues could be "intelligently presented" to those involved through deliberative contact among conflicting parties and a

"thrashing out of the questions," then war could never be a rational outcome, and indeed war would no longer be logically possible.

While Mead was eager to condemn German imperialism during World War I, he remained relatively silent about the United States' hemispheric interventions, aided by the implementation of the 1823 Monroe doctrine (Fischer 2008; Côté 2017). Originally designed to "keep European powers out of the Western Hemisphere" by "warn[ing] European nations that the United States would not tolerate further colonization or puppet monarchs," President Roosevelt extended the act by proclaiming the right of the U.S. to exercise an "international police power" which justified sending troops into other countries (*National Archives* 2022). In his 1915 article "The Psychological Basis for Internationalism," Mead "does not speculate on the origins of war. He does not discuss territorial or economic imperialism, or whether internationalism entails opposition to all war" (Fischer 2008: 514). Indeed, Mead did not view U.S. economic policies as imperialistic at all: in his 1917 article "America's Ideals and the War," Mead explicitly asserts that "the U.S. has never had and could never have imperialistic aims, and that its foreign policy regarding imperialism as expressed in the Munroe Doctrine was only that of excluding European powers from colonizing in this hemisphere" (Fischer 2008: 515). This is again in line with the "conservative internationalism" he displayed during the war; Fischer (2008) notes that most conservative internationalists "had supported U.S. ventures in the Caribbean, and did not consider these… imperialistic" (p. 515).

However, he neglected consideration of the more irrational tendencies of [inter]national (and individual) struggles for power. As Fischer (2008) reflects, "I wish he had explored more deeply how violence fractures communities and fractures selves. I wish he had placed his theory of the generalized other… where the [internalized] generalized other… is full of contempt" (p.

524). His conflicting disapproval-turned-approval-turned-disapproval of World War I, his naivety in not considering the dehumanization and trivialization of the views and interests of others, his situational lack of reflexivity, and his selective, nationalist support for imperialist ventures diluted his arguments and reflected his own unique biographical context and bias. True to his own theories, then, Mead was a product of his social experience and these experiences informed how he interacted with his environment and, further, how he created and consumed knowledge.

World War I created a stumbling block and logical contradiction to Mead's ethical philosophy. This is evident in his inability to adequately account for conflict, power, and domination. Further, his faith in democracy and communication may have been misguided because, despite these being noble goals, Mead was perhaps overly optimistic and naive about the effects of power. Alternatively, World War I was an "awakening" for Fromm, and World War II became a crucial driver for his most important work (*Escape from Freedom,* 1941). He analyzed the wars in much the same way he analyzed society at large, i.e., psychoanalytically, which may make him better suited for understanding such an occurrence compared to Mead.

C. Public Intellectuals

Mead did much more public speaking than writing, and many of his published works are based on speeches, university classes, and conference presentations (Huebner 2014). In analyzing these speeches-turned-publications, Huebner (2014) contextualizes Mead, illustrating the more emphatic and direct orientation he often took towards "other individuals, ideas, and social institutions, where Mead is not merely talking about, but talking to, particular people for particular purposes" (p. 33). Huebner further notes that through being very closely involved in many of the intellectual and reformist movements of his time, Mead sought to "bring contentious

issues into the public for discussion… and to foster the broader distribution of general knowledge" (2014: 29). Indeed, it was in this light that Joas (1997 [1985]) deemed Mead to be a "radically democratic individual."

Moreover, while an avid social activist, Mead was not entirely unproblematic in his personal and professional life. While many of the biographical studies of Mead focus on Chicago as the "essential index for the 'context' of Mead's thought and writing," Huebner (2014) examines the impact of Mead's experiences while visiting and living in Hawaii (p. 62). He contends that "Mead's engagement with Hawaii constitutes a whole domain of his social experience that is fundamentally underemphasized… but which has an impact on the way we understand him as an intellectual and a historical person" (ibid). Mead was heavily involved in the social and political life of Hawaii, giving special lectures on education to its teachers, attending formal gatherings of the political elite, and travelling widely across the islands for a variety of social obligations. During these travels, Mead "toured the conditions of the native and immigrant populations on the island of Hawaii" and upon reporting his findings to the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society was "'much impressed' by the scarcity of native Hawaiians and noted that the race relations on the island raised 'many interesting social questions'" (Huebner 2014: 67).

Huebner (2014) reports that this sentiment "presages the considerable interest Hawaii would come to have as a 'sociological laboratory' of race relations," noting the subsequent "strong interest in Hawaii's intricate race relations and immigration issues" during the 1920s (p. 67). I argue that his experiences in Hawaii further illustrate the sometimes-paradoxical nature of his life and work as previously discussed in his awkward stance on the war (Huebner 2014; Côté 2017). For example, Côté (2017) draws attention to two pieces Mead published regarding

Hawaii: the first, an article Mead wrote for the *Chicago Tribune* in 1898; the second, a speech he delivered to the National Land Farm Congress in Chicago in 1909. In the first article, entitled "Hawaiians Are Fit," Mead argued in favour of the "self-ruling capacity of the population in the islands," or, in other words, he was in favour of the U.S. annexation of Hawaii. Mead argued that Hawaiian society was "ready" to join the United States, due in large part to the "contributions of missionaries and their descendants" who "paved the way for such a development" (p. 50). Côté (2017) argued that at the time of this article, there was a "rise of imperialism within nationalism in the United States," and that the United States was emerging as a new power on the world stage, "signalling the implementation of a foreign policy that would deeply affect societies around the world" (p. 51).

In an unpublished manuscript based on a speech given to American farmers, Mead is much more transparent about the issue of colonization: there is an "open call, if not exhortation, to farmers in the United States to join the effort to further colonize Hawaii" (Côté 2017: 51-52). The first sentence of the 1909 speech succinctly summarizes Mead's argument: "Hawaii represents America's oldest and indeed only colony in the proper sense of that term" (in Côté 2017: 52). Mead continues on, somewhat ironically, about the different nationalities that are present on the Islands, expressing concern that Americans are fewer in number than the Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese, and Indigenous peoples of Hawaii (ibid). By presenting the advantages farmers would gain by moving to Hawaii, Mead was intent to encourage further American colonization of the Islands in order to "roll back the tide of Oriental population which has threatened to take possession of this gateway to our western coast… it needs to be occupied still more completely by Americans who can adapt themselves to the Islands in order to possess them" (Mead in Fischer 2008, note 42).

How is it that Mead could defend immigrants and racial minorities in mainland America, denounce German imperialism, *and* advocate for the annexation and further colonization of Hawaii while not viewing the U.S. as imperialistic? Fischer (2008) and Côté (2017) argue that Mead's position was in-line with the then-prevailing view of the United States as an *international* society; a "nation of nations," as Woodrow Wilson deemed it after the Treaty of Versailles. This provided the ability for America to be "defined according to a brand of nationalism that could accommodate itself with internationalism, if not with its own type of imperialism" (Côté 2017: 52). Alternatively, Huebner (2014) asserted that Mead's mainland experiences in Chicago informed the way he experienced society and its problems in Hawaii. Mead experienced and participated in a rich social and political life in Hawaii, "all the while reflecting on the broader significance of the problems of the moment and placing them in dialogue with analogous issues from elsewhere in his experience" (ibid p. 81). While it is obvious that Mead did great work for progressive causes, his public sociology reveals the contradictions in his theory based on his socio-political position. His theory's principles are sometimes stressed or break down when confronting real-world issues.

Conversely, much of Fromm's public sociology was influenced by his therapeutic and clinical psychological background; his aim was to help individuals while simultaneously critiquing society. Cheliotis (2011) contends that Fromm was able to extend beyond a surface level understanding of socio-political processes to include "the links between perceptive and socio-political structures, on the one hand, and the innate structures of the human psyche on the other" (p. 438). In 1927, Fromm began training with Hanns Sachs and Theodor Reik, while also associating with many left-leaning therapists (Simkin 2022). Together, they began to consider the "social and political impact on the clinical situation" (Simkin 2022), exploring ways to find a

"bridge between Marx and Freud" (Quinn 1987: 197). In 1929, Fromm and colleagues established the South German Institute for Psychoanalysis in Frankfurt (Simkin 2022). Later that year, Fromm gave a lecture entitled "The Application of Psycho-Analysis to Sociology and Religious Knowledge," wherein he outlined the basis of his attempt to integrate Freud and Marx. He argued that the true challenge for psychoanalysis lay in "grasping the reciprocal conditioning of man and society" and that "social relations are parallel to, not the opposite of, object relations" (Danto 2005: 213). Fromm published another article the same year entitled "Psychoanalysis and Sociology," wherein he argued that the psychoanalyst must emphasize that "the subject of sociology, society, in reality consists of individuals… the individual must be understood as socialized *a priori* and thus the psyche is to be understood as being developed and determined through the relationship of the individual to society" (Fromm 1929: 5).

The Nazis would seize power only a few years later in 1932, and Fromm, among many of his Jewish colleagues, would flee Germany for the United States (Simkin 2022). He would lead a very active professional life in the United States, giving a series of lectures at the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute, leading a private practice in New York, becoming one of the founders and trustees of the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Psychology, and serving as the Chairman of both the Faculty and Training Committee here from 1946 to 1950 (Landis and Tauber 1971). Fromm also played a critical role in bringing the Frankfurt School to Columbia in 1935, as well as in bridging American and European social theory (Blaustein 2014: 1122). In 1949, Fromm moved to Mexico, where he accepted a professorship at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Department of Psychoanalysis in the graduate department of the University's medical school, where he taught

until 1965. Here, he also founded the Mexican Psychoanalytic Institute (Landis and Tauber 1971).

Fromm remained an avid proponent of the peace movement and the humanist socialist movement for the majority of his life (ibid). He played a multifaceted role as a social critic and public intellectual, often acting as an informal advisor to presidents and availing himself to countless progressive causes, such as helping to establish the Committee for Sane Nuclear Policy (Friedman 2013; Rosengarten 2015). He "played an important role, on a global scale, in the peace movement; actively opposed the Cold War; and, as an advocate of what Friedman [2013] calls 'a democratic socialist Third Way' between capitalism and Stalinism… grounded in socialist humanism" (Rosengarten 2015: 83). He continued to be a prolific writer and political activist until his death in 1980 (Kellner 2010).

As illustrated, Mead was part of the privileged elite, which may have impacted his theorizing. While his assumption of people as symbolic-rational-actors is not false, we are so much more than *just* that, which is where Mead's theory has shortcomings. Therefore, in comparing Mead and Fromm, the significance of social experience in the formation of knowledge – and the discipline of sociology more broadly – can be underlined. For example, unlike Mead, Fromm "found it difficult to believe in the principle that armament preserved peace" (Friedman 2013: 9). It is one thing to *symbolically* "take the role of the other," as advocated by Mead, and quite another to *actually* endure similar experiences, especially traumatic ones, as experienced by Fromm. Empathy may only go so far. Therefore, emphasizing the importance of not only biographical differences (e.g., where or when one was born, what language or religion they practiced), but also how these may impact social experiences and the

creation and consumption of knowledge will assist in our understanding of their differing priorities with regard to social theory.

Mead was undoubtedly a progressive reformist with a deep belief in the power of democracy and rationality to solve social problems. However, he assumed a model of society very much in the image of America in his time, with individual rights, political progress, equal participation, and democracy taken for granted. Further, Mead and Fromm were from two different worlds in more way than one: Mead was part of a religious and racial majority playing a personal role in the process of colonization and colonialism (as evidenced through his "Hawaiian sojourns"). As such, Mead was ultimately hindered in his ability to account for issues that Fromm would face in his lifetime, such as the rise of Nazism and the Cold War. Alternatively, Fromm wanted to help the individual – he connected psychoanalysis and therapy to the larger social structures, thus contextualizing psychological issues within more specific and problematic structures of society. Fromm used multiple and vastly different societies (e.g., Germany, America and Mexico) in more concrete terms to foster his understanding of the self-society dialectic. Each of these societies had its own problems and challenges for individual development, which Fromm recognized and incorporated into his theory. His humanistic values influenced his attempts to reconcile "psychoanalysis with the social sciences and Marxist thought to develop a view of the human condition rooted in our biology and history, and to explore the social, cultural, ethical, and religious ramifications of this approach" (Cortina 2015: 415).

Conversely, Fromm was Jewish and therefore skeptical of elites and of nationalism as Jewish people often suffered at the hands of both. While Fromm was able to flee Nazi Germany in 1933, he was separated from family, friends, and colleagues who faced growing anti-Semitism and persecution ultimately leading to World War II and the Holocaust. Fromm was "involved in

an intense and urgent campaign to save those lives who were in peril," often asked to come to the aid of family, friends, political activists, intellectuals, and religious leaders (Frie 2019: 5). Fromm paid large sums of money to help his mother escape, but others in his immediate social circle were not so fortunate (ibid). These experiences had a direct impact on Fromm, culminating in one of his most well-known works, *Escape from Freedom,* in 1941. Further, while there have been many posthumous syntheses between Mead and Karl Marx, Mead never adopted Marxism to the extent that Fromm was able to. These personal differences had profound impacts on their social theory.

2. The Individual-Society Dialectic

The social theories of Mead and Fromm explained in the first two chapters have provided the basis for further exploration into their respective views on human society: who are we as human beings and what do we need? What is the process of socialization according to each theorist and how can it be impacted by factors such as ideology, class, religion, or nationality (among others)? What is the impact of power? How do we overcome hardships at both an individual and societal level? While both Mead and Fromm accept that human society has evolved out of material forces and recognize the pressures of material life, each takes a different approach to the application of their theories to the individual-society dialectic.

While both Mead and Fromm believed that our understanding of human behaviour and social processes could be "enriched by reciprocal knowledge of how society molds and adapts instincts to its structures, and how human beings shape and change their environments to meet their needs" (Kellner 2010), Fromm endeavoured to better understand human behaviour by paying particular attention to violence and irrationality. Fromm's Marx-Freud synthesis artfully combines psychoanalysis with historical materialism. He believed that the psychoanalytic

emphasis on the importance of family in human development could (and should) be corrected with historical materialism. Since "the family is the medium through which the society or the social class stamps its specific structure on the child" (Fromm 1978 [1932]: 483), the analysis of family and socialization processes can illuminate how society reproduces and imposes class structure, ideologies, and practices on individuals (Kellner 2010).

Fromm suggested that psychoanalytic theories abstract from the study of these concepts and processes and tend to "take bourgeois society as a norm and to illicitly universalize [their] findings" (Kellner 2010: 2). As illustrated, it is likely that Mead was also guilty of this. Historical materialism, Fromm posited, could correct these errors by "stressing the intrinsically historical nature of all social formations, institutions, practices, and human life" (ibid). Cheliotis (2011) argues that Fromm moves beyond Marx in that he "does not only privilege a cultural interpretation of class relations, but also stretches such an interpretation to include the role of instincts… his approach is broad enough to interpret the self as a general, cultural-anthropological category" (p. 452). "The influence of culture on human nature," argues Cheliotis, "is commensurate with the degree to which the former appeals to the needs intrinsic to the latter" (2011: 456). Therefore, if we as humans are naturally seeking safety and stability, confiding in a fascist leader for reprieve from social chaos becomes fathomable – even preferable – to a complete absence of social order.

Fromm ([1941] 1969), from a Marxist perspective, argues that the most primary motive of human behaviour is the need for self-preservation, and in order to do what is required for self-preservation, we must work and produce. However, he continues, work is "nothing general or abstract. [It is] always concrete" (p. 16). In other words, there are specific kinds of work that exist in specific kinds of economic systems, and different kinds of work "require entirely

different personality traits and make for different kinds of relatedness to others" (ibid). These positions are determined based on the society into which one is born, Fromm continues, and while one's need to live and one's social system may be unalterable by one as an individual, they constitute "the factors which determine the development of those other traits that show greater plasticity" (ibid). Fromm terms this collection of more plastic traits the "social character." The "social character," which is the "*essential nucleus of the character structure of most members of a group which has developed as the result of the basic experiences and mode of life common to that group*" (Fromm 1994 [1941]: 276; emphasis in original), and recognizes the impact and control that society exerts upon individuals.

Similarly, in a paper titled "The Social Character of Instinct" (date unknown), Mead argued that "the primitive instincts of the human animal are practically all social… whatever group one gathers together is bound to refer to conduct that is determined by the movements of other individuals whose conduct is like our own" (p. 1). Mead places emotion as the primary building block of all things social, including individual selves: "these instinctive social processes [social objects, the selves, the me and the others] are intimately connected with the emotions…" and, by extension, the expression of emotions has a function in mediating social conduct (ibid). Further, not only does instinct have a social character according to Mead, but our drive to develop social character is partly instinctual. Importantly, there is a significant difference when comparing Mead and Fromm's concept of the social character, as Fromm employs the Marxist views that Mead never had; while Mead emphasises the importance of symbols, rationality, and problem-solving in the context of a group, Fromm puts more emphasis on attachment and group behaviour in satisfying internal unconscious and emotional needs.

Further, Fromm extends his theory to argue that the "content of the social character always pertains to the range of needs deeply rooted in the nature of man" (Cheliotis 2011: 451). For Fromm, the social character acts as an "intermediary between the socio-economic structure and the ideas prevalent in society" (1965: 212) and is a "reflection of the social-economic-political-religious culture in which people live" (Ortmeyer 1998: 32). In *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (1973), he mapped out two opposite social character types: the *biophilic* and the *necrophilic*. Unlike Freud, Fromm suggests that the "only fundamental, and fundamentally normal, biological drive in [humans] is *biophilia*," the "love of life," an "affinity to life and growth" (Cheliotis 2011: 449). Countering Freud, Fromm argues that *necrophilia* (Freud's "death instinct"), or "destructive aggressiveness," is a psychopathological phenomenon that only occurs when the "appropriate social conditions for life are not present" (ibid; Fromm 1964).

Fromm (1936) explains his revision of Freud's theory in an unpublished letter to a colleague:

> The central point of this fundamental disagreement (with Freud) is that I try to show that drives which motivate social behaviour are not, as Freud assumes, sublimations of sexual instincts. These drives, which I divide into those having to do with human relations (love, hate, sadomasochism) and those having to do with methods of acquisition (instincts of receiving, taking away, saving, gathering, producing), are fundamentally different from natural factors, namely the instincts of hunger, thirst, sexuality. Whereas these are common to all human beings and animals, the former are specifically human products and not biological: they are to be understood in the context of the social way of life… (quoted in Ortmeyer 1998: 29).

McLaughlin (1996) argues that while Fromm accepted certain aspects of Freud's theories, such as the existence of unconscious drives, he departed from Freud's positivist and instinct-based foundations. Fromm insisted that "man's passionate striving cannot be explained by the force of his instincts" ([1949] 1986: 46; McLaughlin 1996). Rather, these "striv[ings] for power, or for love, or for destruction… are what constitutes and characterizes the peculiarity of human life" (ibid; McLaughlin 1996).

Therefore, Fromm's concept of social character reflects his "effort to account for the ways in which cultural constructs that appeal to basic human needs facilitate adaptation to objectively unsatisfactory conditions of existence and to the underlying states of social domination" (Cheliotis 2011: 456). Fromm's advantage over Mead, according to McLaughlin (1996), is that he focused on *specific* societies rather than *general* ones, which allowed him to move beyond "an abstract philosophical and literary discussion of the emergence of the self in the child to a historical discussion…" (p. 251). This makes Fromm the ideal theorist to employ when discussing extremism, conformity, mass culture, and so forth. While Mead's theory can likely be applied to *any* society, differing levels of abstraction would be required for differing societies. For example, Mead was generally an American pragmatist and used America as his model to theorize society (while being careful to define it more broadly), while Fromm had a more concrete approach to understanding structural issues in three very different countries.

Further, Fromm was able to clearly see the economic-political structures as power-based and influential on people's life chances, beliefs, pressures, etc. This facilitated Fromm's commitment to a more concrete socio-historical analysis than Mead, and by linking concepts such as irrationality and destructiveness to social institutions and cultural constructs, he successfully refuted simplistic national character theories to instead raise larger questions about human motivation and modernity (Lenkerd 1994; McLaughlin 1996). For example, Fromm ([1941] 1969) argues that "it seems that any attempt to understand the roots of destructiveness must start with the observation of these differences [between social groups] and proceed to the question of what other *differentiating factors* can be observed and whether these factors may not account for the differences in the amount of destructiveness" (p. 181, emphasis added). Indeed, Blaustein (2014) argues that Fromm's influence in bridging American social science and

European critical theory was complicated because Fromm "refused to see anything particularly 'German' about the rise of Nazism. [American theorists] were uneasy with the universalistic assumptions of *Escape from Freedom…*" (p. 1122). "One of the strongest themes in his writings," according to Durkin, "was this deeply critical position toward nationalism… he called it our form of insanity" (in Finn 2021).

Perhaps Mead's greatest contribution to our understanding of self and society is his "social first" approach, i.e., that the "self is constituted and created by its social context" (Little 2012). Rather than Durkheim's notion of irreducible social wholes, Mead posits that "individuals always take shape within the ambit of a set of social relationships, language practices, and normative cues" (ibid). Similarly, Doyle McCarthy (1989) argues that since "reality and mind are coterminous," the "reality that human beings act toward and exist within" is neither a mental construction nor something that exists outside the bounds of human activity: "reality is something emergent, something formed in relation to people's actions, and these actions in turn are the source of what they know and how they will act in the future" (p. 107).

If "reality is the accomplishment of knowing," (Rock 1979 in McCarthy 1989: 107), we must "inquire into its actual structure, its relationship to the groups, classes, and institutions that compete in its generation and its dissemination" (Doyle McCarthy 1989: 107-108). Mead's theory does leave room for an analysis of how "languages, discourses, and vocabularies must be situated within the institutions, groups, classes, and elites for which they provide rationales, reasons, and motives for action" as elaborated upon by C. Wright Mills (ibid). For example, Mills demonstrated, via Mead, "how language mediates social meanings and ideas and how mental functions are essentially linguistic" (ibid). However, as Doyle McCarthy (1989) further argues, Mead's pragmatist view of knowledge is not necessarily concerned with the "study of

conditions that foster the ideological thinking of particular social groups and classes" but rather,

"it attempts to understand the *social functions* or consequences of mind's activities for the social

worlds that individuals inhabit" (p. 107; emphasis added).

Blumer (1966) argues that Mead's theory challenges that conception of human society as

a structure or organization. Rather,

> It sees human society not as an established structure but as people meeting their conditions of life; it sees social action not as an emanation of societal structure but as a formation made by human actors; it sees this formation of action not as societal factors coming to expression through the medium of human organisms but as constructions made by actors out of what they take into account; it sees group life not as a release or expression of established structure but as a process of building up joint actions; it sees social actions as having variable careers and not as confined to the alternatives of conformity to or deviation from the dictates of established structure; it sees the so-called interaction of a society not as a direct exercising of influence by one part on another but as mediated throughout by interpretations made by people; accordingly, it sees society not as a system, whether in the form of a static, moving or whatever kind of equilibrium, but as a vast number of occurring joint actions… (p. 543).

This is not to say that structure does not exist, i.e., social roles, status, norms, values, etc.

However, Mead argues that their importance is not in determining action; social interaction is an

interaction between *people* rather than between *roles* (Blumer 1966). It is worth noting that

Blumer may have written this largely in opposition to the more dominant structural

functionalism of the time that privileged roles and institutional structures within social systems.

Certainly, for Mead, the "social" goes far beyond roles alone, and incorporates biological,

physiological, and materialist interactions with the physical environment as well (Mead 1938;

Joas 1985; Puddephatt 2013). Still, while Mead had a multifaceted understanding of the social

life of human beings in a complex and emergent world of biotic and material actors, "role-

taking" and fitting one's self into institutional demands predicted by the "generalized other"

were still central to his social-psychological theorizing.

3. The Problem of Freedom and Resistance

According to Da Silva (2007a) and Harnisch (2010), a "driving concern of George

Herbert Mead was the question of how to reconcile the tension between an ever more

individualistic self and an increasingly universalistic social order" (Harnisch 2010: 4). For Mead,

the

> …fundamental and disabling flaw in psychological analysis is that of trying to explain group behaviour on the basis of individual qualities rather than explaining people's behaviour in terms of the irreducible, linguistic, enacted, and interactive essences of the human group in which *all* of the meaningful activities that people engage are based (Prus 2005: 59).

Further, as previously discussed, Mead stressed the importance of taking the role of vast and

multiple others in order to increase the capacity to "create and maintain lasting patterns of social

organization" (Mead 1934: 264). Social and organizational norms and rules do not only lend

themselves to social order, they also work to "civilize" members of society by teaching "self-

restraint through continuous role-taking" (Harnisch 2010: 12).

Society's (changing) structure shapes individuals, but only the parts of it they encounter,

while individuals also simultaneously shape societal structures through their actions; it is a

dialectic that only works through the process of ongoing activity. Therefore, while a person

could be "civilized" or "socialized" into a certain role, they also have the agency to re-shape the

role expectations and behavioral patterns that constitute that role. In other words, individuals

have the ability to resist society to some extent. For example, socialization involves selves

developing via a social process of language and action in the world of things/objects/others and

hence, no two individuals have ever been socialized in exactly the same way. This allows for

uniqueness, chaos, and unpredictably, meaning there is always a sense of "slippage" or mis-fit

between the individual and a particular institution since individuals are not perfect reflections of

these institutions (Côté 2017). Individuals have a wide variety of experiences (physical, social, etc.) that shape the self, and therefore can have the ability disrupt conformity.

Further, Mead's concept of emergence and sociality also allow for resistance. Emergence suggests that social and institutional life is at least somewhat unpredictable, meaning there are constant opportunities for innovation. Sociality is the idea that physical and social systems overlap and hence are constantly influencing and adapting to each other in ways we cannot fully understand. The individual self, for example, is connected to geographic, environmental, biological-physiological, social, and institutional systems (Brewster and Puddephatt 2016). None of these systems necessarily "care" about the others, but the self must still adapt successfully to them all. There is always the emergent unplanned element in everything, and with it a guarantee of change and conflict as they continually emerge (between individuals and each other, individuals and institutions, institutions and institutions, etc.). This is also similar to Mead's notion of the "I" in the self-dialectic, wherein even individuals themselves are not entirely sure what they will do in the present and must often interpret what they did after the fact to make sense of it (Cook 2013). This may be where Fromm's concept of freedom from authority comes in, since individual instincts and impulses are partly biologically derived or the matter of past instinctual habits, e.g., not fully understood at the level of consciousness.

While Mead argued the importance of moral development through ever-expansive connections to multiple and diverse others, Fromm focused on the reasons we tend to narrow – rather than widen – our social net. As human beings began to acquire a full awareness of ourselves as separate entities through the emergence of individuality, our newfound freedom created "a deep feeling of insecurity, doubt, aloneness, and anxiety" (Fromm 1969 [1941]: 63). Fromm asserts that modern humans thus turn to various mechanisms to "escape from aloneness

and powerlessness… to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by a compulsive conforming to accepted patterns" ([1941] 1969: 134). Fromm continues:

> On the one hand [human freedom] is a process of growing strength and integration, mastery of nature, growing power in human reason, and growing solidarity with other human beings. But on the other hand this growing individuation means growing isolation, insecurity, and thereby growing doubt concerning one's own role in the universe, the meaning of one's life, and with all that a growing feeling of one's powerlessness and insignificance as an individual ([1941] 1969 35).

The process of human freedom between growing strength and growing individuation was not balanced, according to Fromm, and the "lag" between the two has made "freedom an unbearable burden" (ibid).

In *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962), Fromm further developed not only his concept of the social character, but also of the "social unconscious." He argued that the latter "occurs from fear of loneliness, ostracism, isolation, and failure; and this repression leads to conformity and alienation, i.e., the enslavement of man" (Ortmeyer 1998: 27). Fromm termed freedom from authority "negative freedom" because it "imprisons individuals within a social matrix of isolation, fear, and anxiety… [it] creates the conditions for a fear of authority by positioning authority as the opposite of freedom, while, at the same time, offering itself as the only hope for escape" (Weiner 2003: 64). Negative freedom symbolizes "an inability to stand alone and to fully express [one's] own individual potentialities" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 176-177). Fromm contends that we try to escape from the "negative freedom" granted to us through individuation by attempting to eliminate the gap between the individual self and the world: "powerful tendencies arise to escape from this kind of freedom into submission or some kind of relationship to man and the world which promises relief from uncertainty, even if it deprives the individual of his freedom" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 36).

For Fromm, negative freedom undermines positive "freedom to," which he considered to be the ability of one to "relate [one]self spontaneously to the world in love and work, in the genuine expression of [one's] emotional, sensuous, and intellectual capacities; [one] can thus become one again with man, nature, and [one]self, without giving up the independence and integrity of his individual self" (p. 139). This concept is very much in line with Mead's reasoning, i.e., his argument in favour of moral development through ever-expansive connections to multiple and diverse others. If the process of human freedom had been balanced, the individualized man would have acquired "active solidarity with all men and his spontaneous activity, love and work, [would have] unite[d] him again with the world… as a free and independent individual" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 35). However, Fromm ([1941] 1969) argues that the process has been unbalanced; negative "freedom from" thus undermines positive "freedom to" by leading individuals to give up their independence and fuse with someone or something external and more powerful in order to compensate for their own individual lack of strength in the face of the world's uncertainties.

In other words, "freedom from" is the tendency for modern humans to turn to various mechanisms to "escape from aloneness and powerlessness… to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by a compulsive conforming to accepted patterns" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 134). Our "fear of loneliness, ostracism, isolation, and failure" leads to "conformity and alienation, i.e., the enslavement of man" (Ortmeyer 1998: 27). Negative freedom inhibits individual spontaneity, thus perpetuating a destructive cycle: "negative freedom, escape into new structures of domination, dependency due to isolation and the denial of the spontaneous self, then a renewed escape from negative freedom into new bondage" (Weiner 2003: 64; Fromm 1995). This phenomenon, Fromm asserts, is what pulled many toward Hitler

and Nazism (Fromm [1941] 1969; Zakai 2018). Indeed, Seville (2017) contends that negative

"freedom from," often coupled with social unrest, is what has contributed to the successful

consolidation of power for many dictators, from Caesar and Napoleon to Mussolini and Hitler.

McLaughlin (2021) notes that for Fromm, the necessary conditions of human existence

stimulate the "need to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness"

(Fromm [1941] 1969: 34). Lacking relatedness through values, symbols, and patterns leads to

"moral aloneness," which Fromm argued is as "intolerable as physical aloneness" (ibid p. 33).

This need to relate to others is more powerful than any potential instinctual drives and can lead

human beings to various refuges, "however absurd or degrading," in order to escape "what man

most dreads: isolation" (ibid p. 34; McLaughlin 2021). Human self-awareness exacerbates this

fear of isolation, which Fromm argued results in our desire to escape via negative freedom, or the

tendency to submit to others to escape the uncertainty of the world. Alternatively, like Habermas,

Mead argues that "greater socialization leads to more, not less, individuation. Membership in

various groups enhances one's individuality by increasing the range of one's experiences"

(Aboulafia 2001: 21). Similarly, Durkheim (1984 [1893]) argued that individualism is not anti-

social since it is a "product of society and presupposes it": "the consciousness of individuals

comes from society. Individual differences don't precede social life; they derive from it"

(Thomson 2010: 225).

Arguably, Mead theory was more analogous to Fromm's concept of positive freedom

rather than his contrasting problem of negative freedom. Contrastingly, Fromm was able to view

human development and destructiveness on a continuum, wherein the "same biological

conditions that give rise to the best expressions of being human" also give rise to the worst

(Cortina 2015: 396). He described the loving and spontaneous side of the human condition as a

"productive orientation," defining productiveness as "a fundamental attitude, a *mode of*

relatedness in all realms that includes mental, emotional, and sensory responsiveness to others,

to oneself and to things" (Fromm 1947: 91, emphasis in original). Productiveness, then, is "the

result of the growth in developing our capacities for love and reason and is characterized by a

sense of abundance, a freedom to be oneself, and the desire to affirm the best in others" (Cortina

2015: 397). Further, he recognized that "all of us are a mixture of productive and non-productive

attitudes" (Cortina 2015: 397). He conceptualized human destructiveness and extreme sadism as

perversions of the human personality, understood as "negative transcendence," i.e., "if I don't

have the power to be a loving and creative person, I have the possibility of turning to the

perverse power to kill and inflict untold suffering on my victims" (Cortina 2015: 396).

However, productiveness, in the modern sense, has become intimately tied with the

economy. Rather than contributing to an increase in love and reason, i.e., individual growth,

productiveness now reflects material and economic growth. Mead supported Durkheim's (1964

[1912]) claim that the primary function of the division of labour is to produce solidarity: "each

part of society is increasingly specialized and differentiated, yet the result is the greater unity of

the organism" (Durkheim in Thomson 2010: 226). However, Weiner (2003) argues that while

neoliberalism disguises its hegemony under the guise of "commodified difference and

individuality," this has ultimately "decimated community and democratic life in exchange for the

market and hyper-individualism" (p. 71).

In this chapter, I have provided a more extensive biographical background along three

main lines: religion and social activism, the impact of world war, and Mead and Fromm as public

intellectuals. In doing so, I have demonstrated how their biographies influenced their social

theory. Next, I discussed the individual-society dialectic to discern who we are as human beings

and how the process of socialization can be impacted by structure as much as by emotional, unconscious forces, as demonstrated by Mead and Fromm. Importantly, democracy and education were foundational elements of this discussion. I also considered the problem of freedom and resistance through both a Meadian and Frommian lens. In so doing, I have laid the foundation for the next chapter to discuss how a synthesis between the two can help us better understand modern social structures and their associated issues.

Chapter 4: Neoliberalism, Polarization, and Extremism: How a Mead-Fromm Synthesis can help to Study Modern Cultural-Political Challenges

Both Mead and Fromm had interesting things to say about the political challenges of their day, but what might they offer for modern day issues? Specifically, what can they contribute to the issues of extremism, polarization, and populism that arise within a global neoliberal order? In this chapter, I will first discuss the problem of neoliberalism and the associated challenges of extremist political movements and polarized conflicts and "modern day" fascism using some contemporary examples. I will then consider how Mead and Fromm, taken together, can help us to study and understand these issues as well as how to resolve them. I will discuss their faith in democracy and education, as Mead and Fromm recognized that the social unrest that they experienced in their lifetime was a product of a lack of democracy and argued in favour of systems that could increase democratic principles, especially education. However, they both also had doubts about the state of education at the times they were writing. They acknowledged that education could have exactly the opposite effect under certain circumstances, i.e., destabilize human social bonds, create and solidify in-groups and out-groups, and lead to the suppression of critical thought. Each of these can have detrimental impacts on the foundations of democracy.

The Modern Problematic: Neoliberalism and the Rise of Polarization, Populism, and Extremisms

Democracy supposedly overcame fascism and its associated discontents – populism, nationalism, Nazism, etc. – when Victory in Europe and Victory in Japan were declared in 1945, signalling the end of World War II (Conway 2001). Democratic governments were established across Europe as the rest of the democratic world proclaimed "never again" in response to the atrocities of the Holocaust (Polya 2014). However, Mann (2004) argues that "fascism has been an essential if predominantly undesirable part of modernity" (p. 1) and Wolin (2017) predicted the threat of

inverted totalitarianism, which would continue to espouse democratic ideals while separating actual practices from what they were professed to be. Mann (2004) further stated that "there is a chance that something quite like [fascism], though almost certainly under another name, will play an important role in the twenty-first century" (p. 1).

Has society advanced toward Mead's ideas of peace, democracy, and internationalism? Have we achieved an "international, cooperative, and restorative model of world-wide democracy" that Mead advocated (Deegan 2008: 320)? While rationality and dialogue have worked to change public consciousness on some fronts and society has arguably progressed a great deal since Mead's time, Hinkle (1992) argues that "Mead's optimistic image of society and his position on rationality are no longer appropriate for discussing social issues in a global society with multiple rationalities" (p. 315). The "utopian image of a homogeneous, equilibrated society, free from social tension and conflict with freedom of choice and equality for all" may have been suitable for earlier theoretical endeavours, but they have become "out of touch in our current global and heterogeneous society" (p. 316). Although this is not an entirely fair claim as Mead's view of society was not free from conflict or tension, he did place a great amount of faith in democracy to solve these issues. However, Wendy Brown (2015, 2019) argues that neoliberalism's "stealth revolution" has played a central role in the rise of antidemocratic politics in the West and has contributed to a rise in far-right ideology and extremism which operates to further subvert the democratic foundations upon which Western society has been built.

Broadly speaking, neoliberalism is a form of governmentality that universalizes free competition through economization, disseminating the "model of the market" to all domains and activities (Foucault 2008; Brown 2015). "First wave" neoliberalism was established in the 1980s (Steger and Roy 2010; Labonté 2012) and has since evolved as numerous iterations replace

earlier forms. Fraser (2018) distinguishes between "progressive neoliberalism" and "hyper-reactionary neoliberalism," contending that the progressive form has become less hegemonic as it is replaced by the hyper-reactionary form. This latter form, Fraser states, masks the ongoing destruction of the economy through the "scapegoating of minorities, immigrants, women, and others" (in Phelan 2019: 456). Extremist groups on both sides capitalize on the weaknesses induced by neoliberalism and use them to advance their own agendas.

A. The Rise of Neoliberalism

Is neoliberalism contributing to the twenty-first century reincarnation of fascism that Mann and Wolin foresaw? Lebow (2019) argues that "neoliberal authoritarianism is inverted fascism" and that the human rationality (or Mead's perfected social intelligence) that was supposed to "liberate humankind" (lead to the ideal society) has conversely and increasingly made people into objects of social control and domination, resulting in subjugation to "totalitarian power and genocidal aggression" (p. 1). Collins, McCartney, and Garnham (2016) argue that "[neoliberalism] rejects ideas of solidarity – and indeed at times the idea of 'society' itself – and looks to undermine, if not actually destroy, social institutions based on such ideas" (p. 129).

Carastathis (2015) contends that neoliberal policies and imperatives are thoroughly violent means of capital accumulation that occur at the expense of progressively precarious social relationships. She further argues that [social] austerity becomes the ethic of globalized, neoliberal capitalism, and is often invoked as the cause of hostility. To illustrate her argument, Carastathis (2015) notes that conditions resulting from neoliberalism are redefined as catalysts for the circulation of racist and xenophobic ideologies, and "…neoliberal regimes violently lay waste to human lives relegated to social death" (p. 75; Bauman 2004). Thus, stigmatization and

the subsequent rejection of a moral obligation to help becomes entrenched in the neoliberal

discourse (Abrahamson 2004).

It is clear that neoliberalism has become foundational to twenty-first century capitalism

and that it is increasingly embedded in modern society (Caplan and Ricciardelli 2016; Cerny

2016). Brown (2015) argues that neoliberalism has redefined human beings as *homo*

oeconomicus, or human capital, for both themselves and their social groups, thereby

responsibilizing individuals for themselves while they are simultaneously instrumental yet

potentially dispensable to the whole (p. 38). Brown continues, stating that social security and

protection are no longer guaranteed, leading *homo oeconomicus* to become concerned with

making strategic decisions to enhance one's own value and competitive positioning against

others, thereby normalizing inequality. Consequently, she argues, we no longer possess "moral

autonomy, freedom, or equality. We no longer choose our ends or the means to them… the

normative reign of *homo oeconomicus* in every sphere means that there are no motivations,

drives, or aspirations apart from economic ones" (p. 42).

Similarly, Fromm (1965) notes that 20th century capitalism "advanced the social

character of the 'homo consumens,' who is socialized by capitalist culture and advertising to

consume commodities" (p. 214; Fuchs 2020). Since the consolidation of capitalism in the 18th

and 19th centuries, "the concept of the self was narrowed down increasingly… [the ideology] 'I

am what I have' [has become the dominant mindset]" (Fromm [1947] 2003: 101-102; [1976]

2008: 63, 91). Moreover, this mindset implies "possessive individualism" (Fuchs 2020: 312) and

accumulation, "the wish to have much, to have more, to have most" (Fromm [1976] 2008: 91).

Here, again, the Marxist influence on Fromm's thought is apparent: in the introduction to his

1961 translation of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts,* Fromm notes that it was

Marx who first stressed the "difference between the sense of *having* and the sense of *being"*

([1961] 2008: 30).

Additionally, Weiner (2003: 73) argues that "freedom in the name of capitalistic

individuality minus the social referent of equitable power sharing will eliminate vital forms of

autonomy and freedom" and Aronowitz (1999), quoting Marcuse, writes that "fascism is the

consummation of competitive individualism… social groups are replaced by the crowd" (p. 49).

The crowd then becomes an object of control, characterized by "a lack of civic agency" and

"disincentive toward social autonomy" thus undermining the "viable democratic project"

(Weiner 2003: 73). Fromm, quoting John Dewey, warns that

> The serious threat to our democracy is not the existence of foreign totalitarian states. It is the existence within our own personal attitudes and within our own institutions of conditions which have given a victory to external authority, discipline, uniformity and dependence upon The Leader in foreign countries. The battlefield is also accordingly here - within ourselves and our institutions (1939: 36).

It is interesting that Fromm would quote Dewey, who was a great friend and colleague to Mead,

and a fellow American pragmatist. This quote resonates with Mead's concern about nationalism

and his discussion of in-groups and out-groups. However, Mead assumes that people have the

privilege to think freely and participate democratically, while Fromm argues that people are not

truly free-thinking since they are caught within loyalties and attachments to powerful leaders in

order to regain a sense of security.

B. The Rise of Extremisms

Grzanka et al (2019) argue that despite neoliberalism's popularity and importance for

understanding social inequality in disciplines such as political science and sociology, the study of

its effects on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that shape individual and group experiences has

been neglected. To better understand this relationship, then, the process of socialization must be

placed within the larger [neoliberal] society wherein it occurs. Davidson and Saull (2017) argue that neoliberalism is an "important agent of populist insurgency" (p. 708). Lebow (2019) also argues that neoliberalism has led many to populism against the policy state rather than anti-neoliberalism: "… neoliberal reason has colonized both the American state and culture [which] has carved channels directing mobilization into populism against the state" (p. 9). Neoliberal reason's hegemony, argues Lebow, has reinforced resistance to social solidarity, regulation, and pluralism, which thus works to strengthen populism. Further, Brown (2020) asserts that diverse processes of neoliberalization have fostered various forms of de-democratization, thereby increasing opportunities for populist responses to "crises of too little democracy" (p. 1185).

In the current context, Coles (2017) connects the economic impact of the imposition of neoliberalism to a decline in people's standards of living, which he argues that the far right capitalizes on because of their wrongful connection to "economic migrants as a threat" (p. 22). Of course, this is nothing new or unique to neoliberal society; immigrants, migrants, people of colour, and other marginalized populations have long been scapegoats for a plethora of social problems, ranging from terrorism, violent crime, and drug trafficking to a perceived loss of economic opportunity for native-born (white) Americans. However, the rapid spread of neoliberal ideology has been paralleled by an increase in the number of hate groups and the incidence of far-right attacks, especially in recent years (Jones, Doxsee and Harrington 2020; SPLC 2021). Davidson and Saull (2017) state that the far right exploits the transformations, instabilities, and dislocations resulting from neoliberalism by reacting with anger and resentment aimed toward perceived threats. Thus, while the far right and neoliberalism are not synonymous, the resurgence of the former is indicative of the specific "political pathologies and organic necessities" of the latter (p. 708).

Davidson and Saull (2017) further note how the neoliberal reorganization of the political realm has aided in the creation of significant and temporally unique opportunities for the far right. Wodak (2017) highlights that populism and far-right ideologies continue to play a significant role in modern American politics, especially with the 2016 election of Donald Trump as president. For example, Dimock and Gramlich (2021) state that throughout his presidency, Trump "questioned the legitimacy of democratic institutions" and repeatedly casted doubt on the democratic process of the 2020 election. Further, critical social scientists have documented the fact that the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been characterized by the "transformation of discriminatory attitudes into subtle and socially acceptable forms of prejudice that perpetuate a status quo of inequality" (Grzanka et al 2019 p. 45; see also Bonilla-Silva 2002; Gaertner & Dovidio 1986; McConahay 1986; Neville et al 2000). During Trump's presidency, "racial tensions were a constant undercurrent," with a majority of Americans reporting in 2019 that Trump worsened race relations in the U.S. and perceiving him as "too close with White nationalist groups" (Dimock and Gramlich 2021).

The divide between Republicans and Democrats became more partisan than it had been in the previous three decades under former president Trump (Dimock and Gramlich 2021). Indeed, Donald Trump's presidency has perhaps been the greatest example of the realization of the modern neoliberal agenda has been. For example, Milanovic (2020) argued:

> Until Trump came to power the invasion of the political space by economic rules of behavior was concealed. There was a pretense that politicians treated people as citizens. The bubble was burst by Trump who, unschooled in the subtleties of democratic dialectics, could not see how anything could be wrong with the application of business rules to politics. Coming from the private sector, and from its most piracy-oriented segment dealing with real estate, gambling and Miss Universe, he rightly thought— supported by the neoliberal ideology—that the political space is merely an extension of economics (*Global Policy Journal*).

Further, Wraight (2019) argued that Trump "generally governed in the neoliberal mode established by Reagan" and that his [neoliberal] protectionism relied heavily on legislation and precedents formed during the Reagan years (p. 735/741). While neoliberalism is not typically used to define policy agendas, Bessner and Sparke (2017) contend that Trump's policy agenda largely aligned with neoliberal rhetoric, aiming to increase privatization, deregulation, tax-cuts, anti-unionism, and the strict enforcement of property rights.

Additionally, Trump has served to further the neoliberal agenda of decreasing government interference and regulation along with increasing individual freedoms. According to Katherine Cramer, a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the most consistent theme in right-wing media is a "desire to trust people to make their own decisions, rather than trusting the government to make decisions for people" (in Khazan 2020). Many Trump supporters (particularly white men) feel that they have been shortchanged by the government and its affirmative-action programs, wherein they perceive women, African Americans, immigrants, and other minorities as "cutting in line in front of them" on their way to the American dream. Hochschild, in her interviews with people in heavily conservative areas, has noticed that white men have felt a significant loss of pride and have turned to Trump to restore it. To them, Hochschild asserts, Trump seems to say, "I'm taking the government back and having it serve you" (in Khazan 2020). Hochschild (in Khazan 2020) further argues that Trump has allowed his male supporters "to feel like a good moral American and to feel superior to those they considered 'other' or beneath them." Further to Carastathis' (2015) argument, this creates an "affective economy of hostility," pitting "us" against "them."

Similarly, Bauman (2008) points out that when "the ideology of privatization assumes the presence of a culprit behind every case of suffering or discomfort, there ensues a feverish search

for the persons guilty of debasing them" (p. 23). Lebow asserts that the "culprit" in neoliberal America is immigrants because they are simultaneously "vulnerable, racialized outsiders" and "entrepreneurs responsive to globalization who invest in themselves by crossing borders" (2019: 14). Illegal immigrants, more than any other group, fit into the psychological mould of "scapegoating in response to the anxieties of the neoliberal economy" (ibid). Davidson and Saull (2017) concur, stating that neoliberal racism and far-right racism are conceptualized as a "new type of racism," which serves to facilitate "certain types of hierarchical and exclusionary social orders based on what are regarded as the inherent qualities or deficiencies in oppressed groups" (p. 715). These social orders are justified, they argue, because the behaviour of the out-groups is deemed to be at odds with [American] conceptualizations of social solidarity and citizenship (see also Fekete 2004, 2014; Müller-Uri & Opratko 2014; Seymour 2010).

Notably, there have been massive changes to the way we consume information in more recent decades. Neoliberalism affected the evolution of news media: deregulation due to contempt for "big government" and state "interference" in the market "fuelled a series of mergers, acquisitions, and leverage buyouts, involving some of the nation's largest corporations" (Steger and Roy 2010: 31). Included in these mergers were news broadcasting corporations, and for the first time, "there was an expectation that the news divisions had to make money, just like the entertainment divisions" which ultimately led to an "erosion of the concept and standards of quality news" (Griffin 2017). These mergers, which occurred during the Reagan years, led to a shift away from trustworthy, high-quality, distinguished news sources to ones that were focused on improving the bottom line (ibid).

The proliferation of market segmentation, followed by cable television, targeted ever more specific audiences. This meant that instead of spending large amounts of money to reach a

mass audience, advertisers could spend less and reach the narrow demographic they were really after. Ultimately, the emphasis for news companies changed and "news became just another commodity" (Griffin 2017). The 24-hour news cycle brought even more changes: newsrooms no longer had time to prepare, check, edit, or vet information before presenting it. This resulted in "rushed and incomplete reports, inaccuracy, distortion, and misleading material," creating a massive lack of trust in the media among the public (ibid). Importantly, this lack of trust is currently at an all time high (Brichacek 2016). This contributes to narratives of "fake news," the spread of misinformation, and conspiracy theories which influence people's interest in extremist groups.

Further, Bergland (2019) argued that the proliferation of technology over the past three decades has "revolutionized how news content is produced, consumed, and disseminated via smartphones and other electronic devices." Journalism in the United States gradually shifted away from "objective" news coverage to content that is more opinion-based, appealing to people's emotions, and relying more heavily on argumentation. In a recent report published by Kavanagh et al (2019: iii), the authors highlight the "diminishing role that facts, data, and analysis play in today's political and civil discourse." The authors analyzed text from a representative sample of news outlets: print journalism (*The New York Times, Washington Post, and St. Louis Post-Dispatch)*, television (*CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, Fox,* and *MSNBC*) and digital journalism (*Politico, The Blaze, Breitbart News Network, Buzzfeed Politics, The Daily Caller, and The Huffington Post*). They concluded that both print journalism and television news shifted from "straight reporting" to a more "subjective, conversational, argumentative style of news presentation" (p. 73).

Bergland (2019) further argued that around the turn of the 21st century, Americans began a shift away from broadcast news toward cable news, which relies more heavily on "politically partisan on-air personalities." The differences brought about by this change may be driven by the dramatically different viewership between partisan cable news channels that target their programming toward Republican or Democrat audiences (ibid). Importantly, Trump promoted viewership of right-leaning news outlets by denouncing those that were left-leaning as "fake news." Indeed, Trump called journalists and news outlets "fake news" almost 2,000 times throughout his presidency (Woodward 2020). This further served to undermine the credibility of journalists and the news media, particularly more left-leaning resources.

Becker (1967) invoked the "hierarchy of credibility" to describe how credibility and the right to be heard are unevenly distributed throughout the ranks of a system:

> In any system of ranked groups, participants take it as a given that members of the highest group have the right to define the way things really are. In any organization, no matter what the rest of the organization chart shows, the arrows indicating the flow of information point up, thus demonstrating (at least formally) that those at the top have access to a more complete picture of what is going on than anyone else. Members of lower groups will have incomplete information, and their view of reality will be partial and distorted in consequence. Therefore, from the point of view of a well socialized participant in the system, any tale told by those at the top intrinsically deserves to be regarded as the most credible account obtainable… we are, if we are proper members of the group, morally bound to accept the definition imposed on reality by a superordinate group in preference to the definitions espoused by subordinates (p. 241).

Extrapolating these principles to society, President Trump became the embodiment of the superordinate, exercising the most influence over his supporters. Indeed, Bail (2015) underlined the vast literature that "explains how policy makers shape public understandings of social problems in order to accomplish their agenda" (p. 97) He further argued that by controlling the meaning attached to social problems, the state is able to structure public debates, monopolize legislative agendas, and ultimately create laws, protocols, and institutions for the long-term

management of social problems. This impacts the structure of society, which has direct implications for individual actors on the ground.

McKee and Diethelm (2010) highlight cognitive research that elucidates the neurological processes whereby individuals differentially interpret a message according to who is delivering it. People tend to subconsciously suppress their recognition of contradictory messages from politicians they support, whereas they are more easily able to identify contradictions from those they oppose. Additionally, evidence that refutes strongly held views can, paradoxically, reinforce those views. McKee and Diethelm (2010) further argue that "deliberate falsehoods are rarely used to convince people that something is true, but rather are used to seed doubt about the actual truth." Miller-Idress (2020) discusses how this is yet another tactic employed by the far right: they appropriate and create knowledge itself by targeting institutions of knowledge through physical attacks, pushing the limits of free speech, and distributing recruitment and propaganda. They undermine mainstream knowledge and expert opinion through anti-intellectual attacks and proliferating misinformation and conspiracy theories while simultaneously re-appropriating existing knowledge for their own ends because "where necessary, they can simply alter the information and spin the results to help craft narratives that fit their own agenda(s) while appearing to have the authority of experts on their side" (Boismier 2021: 845). Authoritarian leaders, much like the far right, have "no use for truth or the facts, because they use and disseminate only what will help them achieve and maintain power" (Galston and Kamarck 2022).

Brown (2020) further argues that "conservative nativist-populists seize opportunities by appealing to nostalgic nationalist notions of supposedly former glory days… by looking to an imagined past" (p. 1185). Miller-Idriss (2020) highlights that this is an oft-employed tactic for

the far right to cultivate nationalists who are physically and mentally prepared to defend a "homeland" against "outsiders." Moreover, Davidson and Saull (2017) contend that neoliberalism is grounded in a "collective socio-economic insecurity" that aids in rekindling pre-existing racialized idealizations of solidarity and that, in a number of ways, these racialized effects of neoliberalism have facilitated the oppositional and populist politics of the far right (p. 716). Fraser (2018) and Phelan (2019) classify this trend as "[hyper-]reactionary neoliberalism," characterized by the combination of "neoliberal political economy with overt hostility to cultural difference" (Phelan 2019: 456). This is further enforced by statements such as "make America great again," which was Trump's presidential slogan – aptly borrowed from Reagan.

According to Cuperus (2017), social democracy itself is in danger as centre-left social democrats have attempted to conform to centre-right, neoliberal political hegemony. "Social democracy appears unable as a political vehicle," Cuperus continues, "to bridge the differing concerns" between citizens, to deal with issues of [im]migration, integration, and global free trade (p. 185). Differences between centre parties are diminishing with severe consequences: a political science rule states that when the left/right divide diminishes, a new chasm replaces it – the populist chasm – dividing "the people" and "the elite" (Cuperus 2017). The far right is able to capitalize on this, argue Davidson and Saull (2017), because the growing interchangeability of mainstream political parties has allowed them to position themselves as "outside the consensus" with regard to social policy (p. 717; Cole 2005).

Shields (2012) notes the absence of a coherent left alternative in his examination of oppositions to neoliberalism, highlighting that the alternative has instead come from the nationalist right. However, despite claims that authoritarianism is only characteristic of the far right, McClosky and Chong (1985) argue that observation of both left-wing and right-wing

regimes highlights that there are "striking parallels in their styles of political engagement, their reliance upon force, their disdain for democratic ideals and practices and their violations of civil liberties" (p. 329). Further, Applebaum (2020) asserts that the far left and far right are radicalizing each other as people tend to become more violent, extreme, or sympathetic to violence and extremism when "they feel their political opponents are not just wrong, but evil – almost the devil" (Eatwell quoted in Applebaum 2020). Both sides influence "an intolerance of opposing views, a vogue for public shaming and ostracism, and the tendency to dissolve complex policy issues in a blinding moral certainty" (Applebaum 2020).

Further, left-wing extremism may prove just as dangerous as right-wing extremism. For example, counter demonstrations can often take an aggressive turn: EXAMPLE. O'Harrow Jr., Ba Tran, and Hawkins (2021) report that there has been a record increase in domestic terrorism incidents; however, this surge has been "driven chiefly by white-supremacist, anti-Muslim and anti-government extremists on the far right." Right-wing extremist attacks have greatly eclipsed those from the far left and have caused more deaths: "since 2015, right-wing extremists have been involved in 267 plots or attacks and 91 fatalities… attacks and plots ascribed to far-left views accounted for 66 incidents leading to 19 deaths" (ibid). Cortina (2015) argues that the "totalitarian collectivist ideology in Nazi Germany" and the "hyper-individualistic ideologies" of the extremist movements in the United States might seem to be worlds apart, but in fact have "striking similarities" (p. 400).

These movements are the result of "ideologies that obfuscate and distort the real causes of social problems, create scapegoats, and channel populist anger, powerlessness, and humiliation into hateful and mean-spirited social policies" (Cortina 2015: 400). Labonté states that "thirty years of a dominant discourse of individualism, coupled with attacks on the state by

the right (aided as well by attacks from the left) and fused with media-sated stories of corruption, has bred a cynicism in organized politics that only strengthens the neoliberal agenda" (2012: 263). While almost every state has "seen at least one domestic terrorist attack or plot in recent years" (ibid) and that many of these are related to right-wing extremism, it is important to note that this is in the context of the United States. There is much to be said about extremist movements in other localities worldwide, such as the Communist Party of China or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but these are beyond the scope of this paper.

How Would Mead and Fromm Account for these Issues?

Mead and Fromm have both postulated about the social issues that they faced in their lifetimes. Fromm uses his concept of the authoritarian character to argue that the masochistic and sadistic drives often accompanying it emerge from dire economic conditions that are endemic of capitalism (Chelitotis 2011). Further, these conditions make people susceptible to ideologies that "further the development of economic forces even if those forces tend to contradict the economic interests of that class" (Fromm 1985: 295). While "autonomous self-conscious" may arise out of such a contradiction, Fromm argues it is more likely that "political myths [will] displace real insecurities onto fictitious substitutes as well as divert public anger away from accountable rulers and onto weak identifiable subjects" (Fromm 1970 in Cheliotis 2011: 454). In *Escape from Freedom,* Fromm ([1941] 1994) emphasizes how modern society has "undercut the traditional religions that provided consensual meaning for solidly integrated societies with little individualism" (McLaughlin 1996: 256). Thus, people become "drawn to symbiotic relationships with new systems of meaning – like nationalism and fascism" (ibid).

Lebow (2019) also draws on the work of Fromm (1994) to contend that the essence of the authoritarian character prominent among far-right groups lies in the synchronous presence of the

sadistic and masochistic drives. These serve to motivate "dissolving oneself in an overwhelmingly strong power and participating in its strength and glory," while simultaneously aiming at "unrestricted power over another person more or less mixed with destructiveness" (Lebow 2019: 14). This results in the creation of in-groups and out-groups, whereby the out-group becomes martyred (symbolically or physically) by the rage and discontent of the in-group, thus solidifying the collective identity of the in-group. Out-groups "must at once be identifiable with the concrete and weak, and with the abstract and powerful" in order for violence against them to appear a plausible solution (ibid).

In his 1918 article "The Psychology of Punitive Justice," Mead elaborates on his theory of human conduct, arguing that "individuals adjust themselves to each other in common social processes, but come into conflict with each other frequently in the process, that the expression of this individual hostility within the whole social act is primarily that of the destructive hostile type…" (p. 578). He considers hostility a "fundamental instinct" alongside sex and parenthood, arguing that it has been "modified and softened" through social interaction to become a matter of "self assertion" rather than of destruction of others (p. 579). However, he asserts that the process of obtaining consciousness of self through consciousness of others is responsible for a "more profound sense of hostility – that of the members of the groups to those opposed to it, or even to those merely outside it" (1918: 580). According to Mead, this "more profound" type of hostility becomes the foundation for the "inner organization of the group" and provides the "most favourable condition for the sense of group solidarity because in the common attack upon the common enemy the individual differences are obliterated" (1918: 580-581).

Mead viewed patriotism on the same scale as nationalism, race consciousness, and mob

consciousness and argued they were ultimately "destructive element[s] of social consciousness"

(Deegan 2008: 25):

> For nationalism, race consciousness, patriotism, mob consciousness are psychologically
> all one… in all cases it is the expression of the relation of the individual to the group to
> which he belongs, of the social possession that takes him out of himself. From the time
> that men passed into the clan down to the present it has represented that mechanism of
> human nature which has proliferated into all forms of society. Out of it has sprung all the
> spiritual treasures of the race and most of the inhumanities of man to man. But it is too
> intimate[,] too subconscious to admit of ready analysis. We applaud and objugate, we do
> not study, nor control it… we fail to identify the force nor do we determinately seek for
> the technique by which it may be brought under our direction, and yet men's escape from
> the domination of the [other has al]ways been by way of the realization of some larger
> social relation with that by which men have bound (Mead year in Deegan 2008).

He argued that, for many, the heightened emotional tone prevalent during wartime continued

after the initial danger had passed, and for even more, it ebbed into "the hatred of the enemy by

which one can still get that sense of solidarity that under other conditions we call mob

consciousness" (Mead 1915). He further argued that during times of social disorganization, it is

easier to relate to generalized others through defining specific others as enemies or outsiders,

thus grounding group solidarity in opposition to an enemy (1929). "Devotion [to the nation]," he

stated, "passes quite naturally into hatred of the enemy" (1915). Temporary relief from social

friction is found in the elimination of individual differences through a common attack upon

enemies, as well as in "gossip, scandal, patriotism, mobs, and warfare" (ibid).

Those in power have the ability to manipulate this feeling of temporary relief, especially

in times of social disorganization, because we are afraid to lose this "peculiar national self-

consciousness, the sense of superiority to people of other nations, and the patriotism and lofty

devotion which seems to be dependent upon national egotisms" (Mead 1915). Similarly,

Thomson (2010) argues that there is a "constant demand to realize one's self through some form

of superiority over others" (p. 302). This sense of superiority is magnified when we identify with

a group and is "especially aggravated in patriotism" (ibid). Indeed, Mead argued that "we all

believe that the group we are in is superior to other groups" (1934: 199, 205-7). He contended

that this "hostile attitude" is particularly favourable to increased social cohesion: "to join

ourselves with others in the common assault upon the common foe we have become more than

allies, we have joined a clan, have different souls, and have the exuberant feeling of being at one

with this community" (Mead 1929: 394).

These feelings are especially prevalent during wartime because the interests of the nation

become the interests of our "primal selves" (Mead 1929: 392). Through conflict, Mead believed

we relate more to those around us as we fight for the same cause. Those who would otherwise be

perceived as hostile to our interests or possible enemies before an extreme threat, become allies

to be supported: "the great issue itself is hallowed by the sense of at-oneness of a vast multitude"

(p. 393). Nationalism, according to Mead, meant the realization that an individual belongs to a

macro-community that transcends one's micro-groups, such as families. The individual enters

into a relationship with their common citizens, and the only way to capitalize upon this new

spiritual experience is to "fight for its symbols, their common language and literature, and their

common political organizations" (p. 402-403).

The downfall, he argued, is the inability to experience these feelings except in the "union

of arms" (i.e., war) (ibid). Arguably, however, similar feelings can be experienced in dire social

conditions, such as political polarization, extreme social unrest, or various other contexts. Mead

asserts that the hostile attitude softens as it "passes over into *functional* activities," wherein the

individual "becomes aware of himself, not through the conquest of the other, but through the

distinction of *function*" (ibid p. 581; emphasis added). It is not the hostile act that is transformed,

but rather the individual in realizing opportunities other than destruction of the enemy: "thus the

conqueror who realized himself in his power of life or death over the captive found in the industrial value of the slave a new attitude which removed the sense of hostility…" (ibid). Aboulafia (2001) argues that the issue, for Mead, becomes whether "[one's] manner of seeing the world enriches or violates the other according to fixed and arbitrary categories" (p. 26).

In other words, Mead's argument is that "advance takes place in bringing into consciousness the larger social whole within which hostile attitudes pass over into self-assertions that are *functional instead of destructive*" (1918: 581; emphasis added). Mead did realize that some groups are subjugated by others, which creates relations of domination and subordination (case-in-point the conqueror and slave noted above). However, he argued that this was better than simply treating the other as "an enemy to be destroyed" because subordinating them "signifies the expression of self-consciousness reached of one's self in others" (Mead 1934: 284). Unfortunately, Mead failed to examine this in-depth, instead arguing that "we have no direct control over our loves and our hates, our likes and our dislikes, and for this reason we are relatively helpless when a common enemy fuses us all into a common patriotic pack or stampedes us under the influence of sympathetic terror" (1929: 396). While the central question in Mead's approach is "the effect that the social group has in the determination of the experience and conduct of the individual members" (Mead 1934: 7), he failed to examine "whether structured social inequality affects the degree to which an individual can develop an independent sense of self" (Thomson 2010: 304).

Further, while Mead did note that there are "stages in the genesis of a growing and increasingly complex self," he provided little insight on the steps involved in the "process of the emerging "self" and did not specifically name the different types of structures of the self emerging in the self-development that he describes" (Deegan 2008: 322). He acknowledged that

it is both "apt and obligatory" for us to examine the hostile attitude but believed this to only be possible when we are "not caught in its meshes, and are free to comprehend it" (Mead 1929: 394). Otherwise, when we are involved in it, it is nearly impossible to approach it in an impartial manner. The dictum *gnothi seauton* is not applicable to nationalists in their moment of exaltation nor members of mobs in their unrestricted intensity. While Mead believed it to be possible for these individuals to "conceivably get outside of [their] intoxication," he argued that this only led to engaging in controlling their impulses rather than analyzing or understanding them (ibid). "It is a great deal easier to feel than it is to think," Mead argued, "it is a great deal easier to be angry with one's enemy than to sift the grounds of one's quarrel and find the basis for a reasonable solution" (1929: 402).

Mead believed that the only credible response to conflict was to become aware of more expansive communities, and that greater socialization led to more individuation (Aboulafia 2001). Rather than focusing on a "rationalist or cognitivist design of learning," Mead stressed the "intersubjective, the social capacity to create new meaning, i.e., shared roles and identities" at both the individual and nation-state levels (Harnisch 2010: 10). In doing so, Mead argued that the "individual can only grow through active participation and society can only be sustained through 'critical reflection'," thus "social criticism and personal reflection become two sides of the same coin as they allow agency to creatively reconstruct the social and cultural setting in which the actor lives" (Harnisch 2010: 11). Yet is this necessary critical reflection possible for those "caught in the meshes" of extreme ideology? While Mead insists on the importance of common responses and meanings acquired by taking the role of the other, his analysis focuses on impulses and attitudes in the context of a universal human process rather than on successful communication or intersubjective understanding. By understanding rationality in communicative

terms, Mead assumes the social as "organized, rational, and good, whereas [it should be taken] as distorted organization to be critiqued and repaired" (Hinkle 1992: 328).

However, Solt (2008) notes that when factors beyond one's control systematically undermine opportunity, individuals are more likely to experience feelings of disillusionment and resentment. As the neoliberal machine rages on, the American working class becomes increasingly fragmented and disorganized, and the far-right's appeals to "blood and nation" seem "the only form of collectivity still available" (Davidson and Saull 2017: 711). Similarly, Lowenthal and Guterman (1948) argued that in an increasingly isolated and dislocated society, agitators play on the fears and anxieties of the population by offering a sense of belonging and participation in a worthy cause. These words resonate, they argue, because individuals are spiritually and communally "homeless" and need to find a way to believe in the possibility of renewed social well-being and unity. Similarly, As Fromm (1947) states,

> Self-awareness, reason, and imagination have disrupted the 'harmony' which characterizes animal existence. Their emergence has made man into an anomaly, into a freak of nature. He is part of nature, subject to the rest of nature. He is set apart while being a part; he is homeless, yet chained to the home he shares with all creatures. Cast into the world at an accidental place and time, he is forced out of it, again accidentally. Being aware of himself, he realizes his own powerlessness and the limitations of his existence. He visualizes his own end: death. Never is he free from the dichotomy of his existence… (p. 49).

Berlet (1995) contends that this is not a personal "pathology," but collective "desperation" (p. 285). Consequently, neoliberal global and structural changes during the last 40 years have contributed to a revival of extremist politics as an escape from this "homelessness." Responses to these dislocations have most often come not in the form of leftist anti-neoliberalism, but of far-right populism (Shields 2012).

Importantly, Bay-Cheng et al (2015) developed a Neoliberal Beliefs Inventory (NBI) (a 25-item measure of neoliberal beliefs), wherein they found neoliberal beliefs to be positively

correlated with social dominance orientation (SDO) (the preference for one's in-group to dominate an out-group) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA). SDO has been found to negatively correlate with empathy, tolerance, and altruism (Pratto et al 1994), while RWA has been found to significantly correlate with SDO, racism, and sexism (Zakrisson 2005). Moreover, the SPLC (2021) found that 29% of Americans report personally knowing someone who believes that white people are the superior race. Similarly, as previously discussed, Fromm developed an instrument to probe social character on a representative sample of German workers during the Weimar Republic that was published posthumously in 1984 (Cortina 2015). Despite some of its methodological issues, such as his false assumption that it was largely working-class individuals who supported Hitler, Durkin argues that the study was "eerily prescient… important not only for what it tells us about authoritarianism on the right but also, authoritarianism and misogyny on the left" (in Finn 2021).

Mead and Fromm had similar beliefs in what potential solutions to the social issues of their day would entail. Specifically, they were both strong advocates for education and democracy. Democracy, Mead argued, would provide a voice to minority social groups and nations, and thus increase universality in international terms:

> Within our communities the process of civilization is the discovery of these common ends which are the bases of social organizations. In social organization they come to mean not opposition but diverse occupations and activities. Difference of function takes the place of hostility and interest. The hard task is the realization of the common value in the experience of conflicting groups and individuals. It is the only substitute. In civilized communities while individuals and classes continue to contend, as they do, with each other, it is with the consciousness of common interests that are the bases both for their contentions and their solutions. The state is the guardian of these common interests, and its authority lies in the universal interest of all in their maintenance. The measure of civilization is found in the intelligence and will of the community in making these common interests the means and the reason for converting diversities into social organization (1929: 403).

Again, Mead's assumption of, and faith in, democratizing forces toward universalization of society is apparent. He argued that in modern social politics "the most effective government is through public opinion" (cited in Da Silva 2007b: 297) wherein "continued and informed deliberation among competent and civically engaged citizenry is the foundation of democratic polity" (Harnisch 2010: 11). Through his conceptualization of democracy, Mead "merges the scientific ideal of a rational exchange of arguments between equals, in which all 'facts' must be taken into account and in which every solution is necessarily provisional," where "discourse exists between equals" and "all citizens are capable of participating in deliberating social problems" (Harnisch 2010: 11). Further, Mead believed that democratic institutions "establish the conditions for rational dialogue, through structures and practices preventing the parts from having recourse to violent means" (ibid p. 16). However, it is the responsibility of citizens to complement and reinforce these democratic institutions through "active citizenship," i.e., voting, lobbying, and discussing public issues (Deegan 2008; Harnisch 2010).

Mead also asserted that democracy assumes societies of different nations always have a common social interest wherein lay the solution to social strife: "democratic institutions recognize this assumption in giving political power to all groups and individuals, confident that out of the political struggle of the conflicting aims and interests of individuals and groups the common interest must eventually rise to command the allegiance of all" (Mead, 1917: page). A central tenet of Mead's theory is the assumption that "growing collective interdependence allows truly international sorts of communities to arise" (Aboulafia 2001: 27). He believed this would lead to increased interaction and the necessity of taking the perspective of others more frequently; he "looked forward to concrete conditions conspiring to fulfill his prescriptive aspirations" (ibid).

Fromm was also a strong proponent of democracy and advocated for it alongside his socialist humanism. He argued that both "require the individuals' collective control and management of the economy, the political system, and society," (Fuchs 2020: 300) so that the "full development of the individual [is] the condition for the full development of society, and vice versa" (Fromm 1965: viii). In a departure from Mead, however, Weiner (2003) asserts that Fromm's analysis "draws attention to the relationship between the political and psychological" (p. 60) and "stubbornly reclaims a psychological perspective that resists positivistic impulses just as it struggles to understand the relationship between the individual and larger social and political structures" (p. 62). Similarly, Cheliotis (2011) notes that Fromm "pays equal attention to the instinctual and the societal within the socialized psyche, whilst his approach is also broad enough to interpret the self as a general, cultural-anthropological category" (p. 452).

Further, Mead was also a strong advocate of the "vital position" of education in his "co-operative, scientific, rational model of the self and society" (Deegan 2008:10). Education and democracy, for Mead, were intimately connected: "democratic processes" emerged from liberal values, the use of the scientific method, equality in citizenship, public education, and community leaders (ibid p. 19). Further, Mead's social theory "depicted education as essential to social life and as the primary mechanism of social advance" (Bredo 2010: 328). He understood this in much the same way as the rest of his work: as an interactional process, i.e., that social life was equally as essential to education (ibid). For Mead, education was a matter of conveying meanings, or, said differently, its main purpose is to allow for the possibility of meaningful interaction with one another (Mead 2008; Bredo 2010).

For this to occur, as previously discussed, children must engage in cooperative social activity: "we have to recognize that what the child requires is not poured into a receptacle.

Meaning must arise in the child's consciousness in some sort of intercourse with others… the

attitudes we take in response to other persons are the processes in getting meaning" (Mead 2008:

177). This approach, argues Bredo (2010), "suggests that education… cannot occur without

social participation… no social participation, no meaningful education" (p. 328-329). The

developmental aspect of Mead's theory has important psychological implications for our current

endeavour. For example,

> Consider student adjustment to a new school or class in which the first day is emotionally
> uncomfortable because one does not know how others will respond. This discomfort is
> allayed over time as classmates get to know one another and build trusting relations. *This*
> *may gradually lead to valuing the group and its activities, and even to the adoption of cult-*
> *like features, such as mascots, stories about the 'ancestors' who came before, and other ways*
> *of distinguishing their group from others* (Bredo 2010: 329; emphasis added).

Such situations may be some of the earliest experiences of in-group and out-group behaviour

solidified in primary socialization and carried through into adulthood.

However, while Mead was attempting to gain greater recognition of the importance of

play and emotion as the socioemotional foundation for later more specialized activity (Bredo

2010), he also argued that modern life undermines this: modern life gives the child "an enormous

amount of information but little appreciation of… real *human values*" (Mead 2008: 178;

emphasis in original). Fromm similarly argues that modern society has the tendency to suppress

critical thinking through a "pedagogy of representations." These representations teach us about

ourselves, legitimate certain behaviours and attitudes, and are therefore strong indicators of our

"common-sense notions of social reality" (Weiner 2003: 69). Further, they often simplify

situations, making what is [in]correct seem obvious, or making what is real "appear to be so

enormously complicated that only a 'specialist' can understand, and he only in his limited field,

actually – and often intentionally – tends to discourage people from trusting their own capacity

to think about those problems that really matter" (Fromm [1941] 1969: 250).

Mead's analysis suggests that we focus on "evaluating and ranking children on individual task performance" and that education tends to "privilege autonomous over collaborative performance, and adult understandings over those that make sense to children" (Bredo 2010: 330). Fromm argues that original thinking is discouraged from the very start of education: children are curious and truth-seeking but are not taken seriously and thus are discouraged from independent thought and acted toward with insincerity. Fromm also discusses various other educational methods that discourage original thinking, such as an emphasis on facts and information and regarding all truth as relative, which can have lasting impacts on an individual. For example, in our current context, Fromm (1981) argues that despite having widespread communication and information networks, people are more misinformed and indoctrinated than ever about political and social reality. One need only look at the previous example of Trump's presidency for modern-day corroboration of this: in 2019, 50% of adults in the United States said that "made-up news and information was a very big problem in the country," 68% said "made-up news and information had a big impact on public confidence in the government," and 51% said it "had a major effect on Americans' confidence in each other and political leaders' ability to get work done" (Dimock and Gramlich 2021).

Fromm argues that, in light of political pressure and fear, the "uniformity in our opinions and ideas could be explained without difficulty… the fact is that all agree 'voluntarily,' in spite of the fact that our [democratic] system rests exactly on the idea of the right to disagreement and on the predilection for diversity of ideas" (p. 51-52). Therefore, while we believe that modern democracy ensures freedom of thought and expression (and thus, individuality), Fromm contends that "*the right to express our thoughts means something only if we are able to have thoughts of our own*" ([1941] 1969: 240; emphasis in original). Throughout *Escape,* Fromm demonstrates

that "our attitudes are fundamentally rooted in a masochistic desire to rid ourselves of our *selves,*
to lose ourselves, to sacrifice our own personalities in the service of some external force"
(Deslandes 2018: 1652). The suppression of critical thought is thus "*more dangerous to our
democracy than many open attacks against it*" (ibid p. 126). Further, Galston and Kamarck
(2022) argue that "the very existence of a sizeable number of citizens who cannot agree on facts
is an enormous threat to democracy."

How would a Mead-Fromm Synthesis Offer Hope?

Much like the watershed of unexpected events and unanticipated social conditions that
"undermined consciousness and dominant sociology" in the 1960s and 1970s, it is "difficult if
not futile to maintain a sociology of stability, consensus, and integration under [the above-noted]
conditions" (Hall 2003: 35). The social forces of modern, global society (including ongoing
processes of racism, hatred, and exclusion) function "on a structural level [and] are supported by
affective and emotional mechanisms that operate on a conscious and unconscious plane" (Clarke
1999: 21). Clarke (1999) argues that a purely structural explanation of hatred and exclusion is
inadequate, while McLaughlin (2007) notes that the same is true for a purely rational-choice
theory. Similarly, Durkin (2020) states that "in a political context that is rapidly moving into
dangerous territory… a socialist account that pays no heed to the danger of authoritarianism
would be as irresponsible as one that presented it as our inevitable fate." If, however, we
combine elements of psychoanalytic thinking with structural determinants [as per Fromm], we
may create a clearer image of "the way in which affective and emotional mechanisms support
and perpetuate acts of exclusion which in turn are shaped and moulded by the social [as per
Mead]" (Clarke 1999: 25).

As illustrated, there have been numerous social developments over the last century that have complicated the attainment of Mead's ideal society, with several key threats emerging from *within* the democratic system itself. There are still many countries globally who adopt a differential governance structure, such as authoritarian or dictatorship. The countries that do function democratically, conversely, are in a Sisyphean struggle against neoliberal reforms which serve to undermine the very democratic ideals from which they were born. For Fromm, much like for Mead, "democracy is a system that creates the economic, political, and cultural conditions for the full development of the individual" ([1941] 1994: 274). However, Fromm also illustrates how "economic and social restraint can lead to authoritarianism anywhere" (Zakai 2018: 450). Further, Fromm warns that "fascism is a system that, regardless under which name, makes the individual subordinate to extraneous purposes and weakens the development of genuine individuality" ([1941] 1994: 274).

Fromm's socialist humanism advocated for "opposing the mode of having to the mode of being" (Fromm [1976] 2008 in Fuchs 2020: 312). Such an endeavour would replace an attitude of "possessing and owning, one in which I want to make everybody and everything, including myself, my property" (Fromm [1976] 2008: 21) with an attitude of relating to others through love: "I am what I practice. I can only practice something in relation to others. I can only love myself if I love others. I can only love others if I love myself. I can only by myself fully if I do something that helps others. We can only fully be and only fully be ourselves if we create, sustain, and live in a society controlled by humans together…" (Fuchs 2020: 312). Similarly, Mead's most important lesson, argues Bredo (2010), is "to remind us of a collaborative and emotionally sensitive approach to social life" (p. 331). However, in light of the current context, it "often seems we can no longer fully imagine or believe in" such an approach (ibid). With such a

dismal outlook of modern society, how do we move toward a more equitable, socially just society as imagined by Mead and Fromm?

While Mead and Fromm both underlined the coterminous nature of mind and society and recognized that the formation of self, i.e., socialization, is an inherently social process, they did not problematize this process itself. Rather, Mead viewed socialization as a functional mechanism inherent to successfully integrating into and progressing human society. Further, Mead's focus was more on human society rather than on the human individual, with his explanations of agency and freedom rooted in emergence, sociality, and the "I" of the subject. Alternatively, Fromm realized the Marxist, structural angle that can affect one's self-development, paying more attention to the human individual. Fromm's explanations of agency and freedom are rooted in the social character: the "committed humanist" capable of saying "no" and of "being free, independent, and authentic in the sense of thinking, feeling, and designing courses of action for oneself" (in Cheliotis 2011: 456).

If, then, we accept the argument put forth thus far, i.e., that self and society are coterminous, and we combine Mead's focus on the functional process of socialization with Fromm's focus on emotions and structural forces, we can extend this analysis to include the effects of emotional, structural forces *on the process* of socialization itself. For example, Mead stressed that individual interactions with significant others are crucial to socialization and that significant others can influence the formation of individual perspectives (Pavalko 1971; Potts 2015). Further, "variously structured societies socialize their children differently" (Potts 2015: 640; Hage and Powers 1992). Locality is the most basic source of self-identity for individuals (Castells 1997). While localities are not the cause of specific behaviours or identities, they do generate feelings of belonging and cultural identity (Castells 1997; Potts 2015).

Following Mead, Weiner (2003) notes that since we only know ourselves in relation to others, our relationships function as an "affect of the structural realities in which they exist" (p. 71). Weiner is not inferring that we do not also have an impact on social structures but asserts that the "power of social structures to construct identity is, in the end, more forceful than an individual's ability to transform social structures" (ibid). As Miller-Idriss (2020) notes, social structures and localities are especially important for far-right groups because "extremist engagements take place *in* particular places and spaces" (p. 30, emphasis in original). Places underline where "people encounter ideas: they can become key parts of collective criticisms that can serve to mobilize extremist action; they can become important ways of framing ideals of past or future eras; and they can frame geographic claims to privilege, inclusion, and exclusion, ultimately calling upon 'nationals' to protect and defend a 'homeland'" (Boismier 2021: 844). Space and place are essential for the far right through these "calls to protect and defend, underpinning anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and racist sentiments that influence policies like building border walls, forced relocation, and re-migration" (ibid).

Further, spaces and places are the targets of propaganda, recruitment, and radicalization campaigns. The far right's use of physical and virtual spaces has worked to normalize extremist rhetoric by "infiltrating political speech, spreading disinformation, and mainstreaming their aesthetics and communication styles" (Boismier 2021: 844). Fromm contends that ideas can become "powerful ideological forces… [if they] respond directly to specific human needs prominent in a given social character" (Cheliotis 2011: 451). Here, he expands beyond Marxist thought, asking "how are shared ideologies that reflect economic modes of production created and reproduced?" (Cortina 2015: 392). Fromm brings social structure to the forefront while incorporating Mead's emphasis on language and significant symbols: "ideology is… a

communication process through which classes and groups try to convince others to defend and favour certain structures of exploitation and domination" (Fuchs 2020: 311). Fromm argues that ideology prevents and/or represses "dangerous awareness," i.e., Mead's notion of reflexivity, in order to preserve systems of exploitation and domination (1965: 218). It operates in "a) language, b) logic, and c) social taboos" (ibid). Arguably, this points to the importance of taking into consideration social structure when examining social action. As such, it is imperative we include them in our analysis. Fromm's theory illuminates that there is a "disturbing relationship between individualism on the one hand, and the ability for individuals to think collectively and transform social structures on the other" (Weiner 2003: 59).

Both Mead and Fromm advocated for the power of democracy and education to combat growing social unrest in their time. Galston and Kamarck (2022) argue that "support for democracy as the best form of government remains overwhelmingly and mostly stable across party lines," however, approximately 20% of Americans "have views that make them at least open to, if not outright supportive of, authoritarianism." Therefore, while education and democracy have both been undermined by neoliberalism and extremist movements, their restructuring is perhaps our best hope of escape. Fortunately, public support for fundamental change to the American political system to make it work better is very high (ibid). Exactly how this is to be accomplished, however, is up for debate.

The market and democratic institutions have become inextricably linked: "the free market and democracy are interdependent, a systemic risk to one is, by definition, a systemic risk to the other" (Galston and Kamarck 2022). In other words, "the free market needs free politics and a healthy society" (Harvard Business School 2020). There is a strong relationship between "economic prosperity" and "political accountability," therefore, Galston and Kamarck (2022)

argue that it is in the market's best interest to "actively push back on efforts to weaken or dismantle… democratic systems." Further, the continued involvement of the private sector in the fight for democracy is essential for both (ibid): Moynihan and Freeman (2020) assert that "business should recognize its own stake in the shared space of the rule of law, accountable governance, and civic freedoms… business has a responsibility – in its own interest and that of society – to support the pillars of profitable and sustainable operating environments." Glaston and Kamarck (2022) state that this requires market institutions to establish a framework for the ongoing consideration of this issue and to act collectively to defend democratic institutions.

It is clear that we must amend the neoliberal reforms that have undermined democracy. Fromm (1941) argued

> "In capitalism economic activity, success, material gains, become ends in themselves. It becomes man's fate to contribute to the growth of the economic system, to amass capital, not for purposes of his own happiness or salvation, but as an end in itself. Man became a cog in the vast economic machine – an important one if he had much capital, an insignificant one if he had none – but always a cog to serve a purpose outside of himself" (p. 95).

He thought that capitalism and a "sane society" were not possible together, that "the principle underlying capitalist society and the principle of love are incompatible" (in Durkin 2020). Rather than a capitalist democratic society, Fromm advocated a "democratic, humanist form of socialism that placed the human being at the center" by increasing "grassroots participation in the economic, social, educational, and political spheres" (ibid). He called for "practical economic, social, [educational] and political reforms… proclaiming what he saw as 'the beginning – and rapidly increasing – decline of capitalism'" (ibid).

Batiuk and Sacks (1981) argue that Fromm and the rest of the Frankfurt tradition's Freud-Marx synthesis to understand the conditions of social life within industrial capitalism, however, is "unsatisfactory on epistemological, theoretical, and practical grounds" (p. 207). Rather, they

state that "a more suitable approach can be found in the integration of the work of Marx with that of George Herbert Mead" (p. 208). The concept of alienation was a "paramount reality of 'democratic' capitalism" for Marx and represented a specific historical example of Mead's "more general process of the separation of the 'I' and the 'me'" whereby self and social reconstruction cease (ibid p. 216). This demonstrates that certain social structures inhibit the social interaction that, for Mead, is necessary for self-development. Batiuk and Sacks further argue that modern society "often restrict[s] the individual's opportunity to integrate various expectations for the self into a unified whole" which represented the "fullest development of the self," according to Mead (ibid p. 217). While a "genuinely democratic society would facilitate the dialogue necessary for this integration," Marx – and Fromm – pointed out that social interaction could be devoid of human content even in an "ostensibly democratic social structure" because the free market characterizing democratic capitalism reduces all interaction to exchange (ibid).

Since Mead stresses a more general conceptualization of self and society, Batiuk and Sacks (1981) assert that it allows for the recognition of the potential for alienated forms of consciousness to emerge in any social setting. Mead thus allows us to expand the concept of alienation, recognizing that social structures that enhance personal dialogue (i.e., the basis of human consciousness and action) can "facilitate a more complete self and a more humane environment" (ibid p. 217). Further, this points to the "possibility of a solution to the problem of domination and consciousness through change in social structures," whereby a combination of Marx's materialism and Mead's social behaviourism provide the strategy for "achieving structural change at the level of the concrete interpersonal act" (ibid). For example, whereas Marx noted that the structural reconstruction of society and the transformation of the self were

simultaneously emerging out of an ongoing, dialectical social process, "the structural reconstruction alone cannot guarantee the automatic emergence of a new creative subjectivity" (ibid p. 218). However, Mead's approach involves attempting to "reintegrate the 'I' and the 'me' at the point of each novel interpersonal act" while understanding that these acts "occur within clear structural constraints" (ibid).

Therefore, within the interpersonal act, transformation of consciousness and social change are not mutually exclusive: "interpersonal action which is qualitatively different (i.e., person-oriented versus commodity-oriented) necessarily impinges upon the boundaries of a reified social structure as those boundaries are encountered within that social setting" (Batiuk and Sacks 1981: 218). For Mead, each "I" acting in the present "is inherently critical of those aspects of the social setting which restrict the completion of the interpersonal act" (ibid). As such, the integration of each action and each "I" into the corresponding "me" is representative of a novel understanding of self in relation to others, which forms new social relationships. Increasing such opportunities enhances self-definition, thus each interpersonal act progresses the goal of enlarging opportunities for creative action (ibid). Thus, "the action following Mead changes the system rather than simply adjusts to it" (ibid). This results in the nature of the new social community and social self.

This process, argue Batiuk and Sacks (1981), must take place within the public sphere whereby the "primary activity of such groups is solely to foster interpersonal relationships which promote creative self-determination without dictating the end point of that determination" (p. 220). One of the most important areas, they assert, is educational communities since educators "already possess an ideology of community which emphasizes the priority of dialogue and upholds the tradition of critique" (ibid). Indeed, both Fromm and Mead recognize the necessity

of reforming education. In our current context, only 32% of Americans have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in public schools, representing a decrease of nine percent from the previous year (Brenan 2021). Further, confidence in public schools ranks seventh out of 16 major U.S. institutions (ibid). Mead suggests that if we reverse education's current priorities, i.e., begin with social activities like play and emphasize the socioemotional, "the resulting approach would be less efficient for training workers for industry but more efficient for fostering mutually regarding members of a community" (Bredo 2010: 330). Similarly, in Fromm's view, "creative intellectual work demands *moral* qualities, such as courage and faith. Intelligence, unanchored in the affective life, is as limited as the other extreme espoused by social scientists who boast of their commitment to subjectivity" (Riesman 1971: 25; emphasis in original).

The question thus becomes one of the transformation of the very core of our society, of restructuring the educational and socialization processes to encourage the adoption of Mead's *human values* rather than of neoliberal *market values* and Fromm's mode of *being* rather than mode of *having*. Mead's analysis of space and place combined with Fromm's emphasis on emotional, unconscious drives provides a deeper understanding of how to combat modern society's most pressing issues. Therefore, implementing a theory that synthesizes the two may offer a way out. Otherwise, how do we fix society with a broken system?

Conclusion

In Chapter 1 and 2, I provided an overview of the social theories of G.H. Mead and Erich Fromm. I gave a brief biographical overview of each theorist, then I discussed how they dealt with the problems of their time and how both were influential to our modern understanding of society and human self-development. I also discussed some of the strengths and weaknesses of their theories. In so doing, I laid the foundation for a theoretical synthesis between the two in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 3, I was able to provide a more extensive biographical background along three main lines: religion and social activism, the impact of world war, and Mead and Fromm as public intellectuals. This demonstrated how their biographies influenced their social theory. I then turned my attention to the individual-society dialectic to discern who we are as human beings and how the process of socialization can be impacted by structure as much as by emotional, unconscious forces. Importantly, democracy and education were foundational elements of this discussion. I further considered the problem of freedom and resistance through both a Meadian and Frommian lens in order to provide the base for Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 examines modern society and its associated problems, mainly neoliberalism and extremism, which serve to undermine democracy and education. I have illustrated how these do so, while employing Mead and Fromm to better understand both the issues and potential solutions. I demonstrated that Mead's theory can accurately account for the where and when of radicalization, while Fromm's is influential in our understanding of the how and the why. The combination of the two thus provides a more fulsome picture of this troubling phenomena, which can have far-reaching implications for individuals and societies more broadly by understanding the generic social processes of extremism.

The synthesis of Mead and Fromm illustrates how these issues can be better understood by employing both rather than using each individually. For example, Miller-Idriss (2020) argues that a major shortcoming of contemporary studies on the far right is their lack of consideration for the *where* and *when* of radicalization as most focus on the *what* or the *how*, which obscures and distorts analyses of collectively engaged activity (Boismier 2021: 843). In using Mead's social theory, we can provide an analysis of space and place in concrete terms and how structure influences action, while Fromm's approach accounts for the emotional and unconscious drives that lead people toward extremism or "escape from freedom." Miller-Idriss (2020) argues that the globalization and growth of extremism cannot be understood solely through focusing on the *how* and *why*. Therefore, a Mead-Fromm synthesis directed at the empirical (i.e., ethnographic) study of the when, where, why, *and* how of radicalization and extremism could "offer a novel method for understanding the shifting, flexible pathways in and out of extremism" (Boismier 2021: 846).

In implementing such a synthesis, we could locate these issues within the broader analytic context as well as open avenues to develop more fulsome conceptualizations of radicalization and recruitment (Boismier 2021). This provides researchers the potential to better understand the generic social processes of extremism, from recruitment through to radicalization. Future research should examine intersectionalities as well as differences among those who are recruited and radicalized into extremist ideologies and movements, including the when, where, why, *and* how. For example, are there gender, racial, or socio-economic differences among those who are radicalized versus those who are not? Are extremists more successful in certain geographical locations or political climates? As discussed, this paper has focussed on an American context; there is much to explore in other localities. This would have far-reaching

implications for law enforcement, government agencies, schools, and community organizations in responding to and combatting the potential for future violent extremist attacks.

While happy endings may not be common in the kinds of polarizing events discussed herein, Applebaum (2020) argues that, in the past, "cumulative extremism has usually subsided in one of two ways… a full-scale civil war… [or] the emergence of moderate forces on both sides, often with the aid of outsiders, who take the political momentum away from the extremists." Arguing from the perspective of the United States, she asserts that Americans cannot rely on outsiders to help them get out of the "death spiral" of extremism; "all we have," she contends, "is the power to vote" (2020). Mead and Fromm similarly placed their faith in the power of democracy to overcome the social unrest they faced in their time. They both wanted to ensure a robust democracy through the establishment of ongoing structural support from institutions such as education. However, this support is not a given – once established, it needs to be maintained so as to not let the weeds of antidemocratic movements through the cracks.

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