

Power structures exist in most societies across the world, and these structures can manifest in many different ways. For example, in Euro-American society an elemental family, defined by Encyclopaedia Britannica as 'consisting of a group of people who are united by ties of partnership and parenthood and consisting of a pair of adults and their socially recognized children' (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022) is the most common family type and this has made way for a patriarchal power structure to form. As well as this, in his book *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Karl Marx describes society splitting up into two great hostile camps that directly face each other - the Bourgeoisie, elite members of society who profit off of sales, and the Proletariat, the workers who are profited off of (Marx and Engels, 1848, p. 15). However, some societies discard these power structures in favour of a more egalitarian lifestyle. These are mainly hunter-gatherer societies that do not engage in agriculture, one of the main components that creates 'Leaders'.

An example of an egalitarian society in the modern day is the Ju/Hoansi, residing in the Kalahari Desert, along the Namibia/Botswana border. They are an acephalous group, meaning they have no leader, however if a consensus cannot be reached on an issue then an elder will be the final decider. This is mainly prevalent in defining who fits where in the Kinship system, where elders have the right to determine an avoidance or a joking framework for social interactions (Lee, 2013, p. 105). Elders are also given the authority to be healers, and even those in their 60s, 70s and 80s come to sit quietly at the talking fires. As Katz says in *Boiling Energy: Community Healing Among the Kalahari Kung*, "As village elders in a culture that deeply respects age, their presence lends a note of authority and approval." (Katz, 1982, p. 148). Another example of the Ju/Hoansi's egalitarianism is through certain levelling mechanisms that they use so that a hierarchy cannot be established, as through them no-one feels as if they are better than anyone else. One of these is the process of Insulting the Meat, which is detailed in Richard Lee's book *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*. Lee (2013) explained that when a hunter returns from a successful hunt, the people of the group usually react with indifference or negativity towards it, rather than praise the hunter for their skill. This is done to quell the hunter's pride and, as famous healer ≠ Tomazho puts it, 'stop the man from thinking of the rest of us as his servants or inferiors' (Lee, 2013, p. 57). This does not mean men are not encouraged to hunt as well as they can, just that the correct demeanour for a successful hunter is 'modesty and understatement'. All of this is done in a joking but merciless way, the hunters know their kill was a success but they also know that the verbal abuse they receive for it is to keep them at the same level as everyone else. Lee described it as 'hilarious and painful' (Lee, 2013, p. 58).

There is another group with a similar yet unusual power structure. They are called the Mbuti and reside in the area of North-Western Congo (the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and move regularly within this given, known territory. Being known as 'the Forest people' they have a rich diet from the bushmeat they hunt within the forests they live in and rely on medicine that the forest provides them with. As with the Ju/Hoansi, the Mbuti are also an egalitarian society with no leader, however, at the age of three children go to the children's land - 'The Bopi'. Here, the children rule and adults are banned as children are seen as pure in Mbuti society, as they have not eaten as much meat as the adults. Colin Turnbull wrote in his book *The Human Cycle* about the Mbuti belief that killing and eating meat created death itself, and that before hunting was created 'God made all living things to be immortal and perfect' and 'If only they could find a way of surviving without killing, say these hunters, they might regain their immortality' (Turnbull, 1983, p. 180). This links to the Mbuti belief that Children are purer than adults and therefore have the authority to chastise adults for their transgressions and be the pseudo-politicians of each group. The bopi is also an area of play

for the children where older children swing from vine-to-vine whilst the younger children watch from their smaller trees (Turnbull, 1961, p. 108). Although there are no leaders in the Mbuti groups, in certain situations, such as large conflicts, an elder is usually seen as an authority and listened to due to them having too many relatives to be seen as taking a side in the affair. For example, in Turnbull's book *The Forest People* he wrote of a uncharacteristically large fight between Ekianga and Amabosu, both who had married each other's sister. After an angry verbal exchange about Ekianga continuing to sleep with Kamaikan (Amabosu's sister) even though he recently had a child with her, Ekianga attacked Amabosu with a spear and Amabosu threw it into the rubbish dump, gravely insulting Ekianga. After this, both men and their wives were fighting each other and did not look like stopping anytime soon, until Ekianga's senior wife Arobanai 'came striding out of her hut and announced that she couldn't rest with all this noise going on, so it had to stop' (Turnbull, 1961, p. 114). Because Arobanai was an older woman, had many relatives so she was more impartial, and was also Ekianga's wife, she had the authority to stop the others from fighting, without her gaining a leadership role from the ordeal. This type of event also occurs semi-frequently in Mbuti society, where an elder member of society steps in with a remark that everyone is making too much noise so the conflict must end (Turnbull, 1961, p. 115).

Reference List

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