

Key terms

Breadwinner - The person in the family who earns the money, usually the male.

Cereal packet family - The 'ideal' nuclear family shown in the media and advertising.

Cohabitation - When two partners live together in a relationship without being married.

Commune - Self-contained and self-supporting communities where childcare, property etc. are shared.

Conjugal roles - The domestic roles of married partners who does what in the home.

Domestic division of labour - The division of tasks such as housework and childcare in the family.

Double shift - When women are in full time employment and be responsible for household tasks.

Expressive role - Traditionally a woman's role in the family according to Parsons, where they look after the emotional needs of the family.

Extended family - A family which contains members beyond the nuclear

Family diversity - This means there are a range of families in society today e.g. lone-parent, reconstituted, same-sex.

Household - One or more people who live at the same address but may not be related e.g. university students.

Instrumental role - Traditionally the male's role within the family to be the breadwinner and provide financially for the family.

Lone-parent family - A family of one parent and their dependent children Usually headed by the mother.

Neo-conventional family - A typical nuclear family but where both parents go to work.

Nuclear family - A family of one man and one woman with their dependent children. Patriarchy - Male power and dominance over women.

Reconstituted family - A family of one man and one woman with children from previous relationships.

Secularisation - A decline in religious belief and activity.

Stratified diffusion - How the roles adopted by those at the top of the social hierarchy

(richer families) filters down to the rest of society.

Symmetrical family - Families which are equal on both sides where partners have joint roles

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Families and Households

Sociological views of families

Functionalist	<p>The family is a key social structure as it performs several essential functions for individuals and society. Murdock argue it performs four vital functions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sexual Function: regulates sexual behaviour that is approved by society, prevents breakdown and maintains stability 2. Reproductive function: creates the next generation to fill roles needed 3. Economic function: providing shelter, food & clothes, economic cooperation 4. Socialisation function: provides primary socialisation and learning of shared norms and values <p>Parsons – the family performs two important functions today</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary socialisation 2. Stabilisation of adult personalities (warm bath theory) <p>✗ Functionalists ignore the dark side of the family and the impact of diversity</p>	↓
Marxist	<p>The family helps to maintain the class divide and benefits capitalism. This happens in three main ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inheritance: money and wealth is passed down in richer families through inheritance and is not shared with the working classes 2. Consumerism – families are targeted as consumers who buy products, children use 'pester power', profits go to the ruling class 3. Socialisation – children learn to accept hierarchy and that someone is in charge meaning they accept it in the workplace and don't revolt <p>Zaretsky – The family provides an 'illusion' that society is fair and this maintains capitalism as it prevents a revolution</p> <p>✗ Marxists ignore positive functions and that not all families benefit capitalism</p>	↑
Feminist	<p>The family helps to maintain the gender divide and promotes patriarchy in society (male dominance and power). This happens through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Men acting as the breadwinner in the family (they usually earn more) so have more control and power 2. Women often have a double shift or triple shift and take on the majority of unpaid housework 3. Domestic abuse from men in the family 4. Gender socialisation in families teaching stereotypical roles for boys and girls <p>✗ Feminists ignore that some women may enjoy/choose the housewife role and that positive changes have been made</p>	↑
New Right	<p>Nuclear families are the ideal family type and are the best for members and society because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They promote traditional values such as marriage • Children grow up with two role models (for better socialisation) • They are more likely to be financially stable and less likely to be reliant on benefits (and become part of the underclass) <p>They see lone-parent and same-sex families as causing problems for society</p>	↑

Family diversity

	Increase or decrease	Reasons why
Nuclear	↓	Secularisation Increase in divorce Changing position of women
Reconstituted	↑	Increase in divorce Changing attitudes Greater individualism
Lone parent	↑	Increase in divorce Changing position of women Changing attitudes
Same sex	↑	Changing laws (gay marriage is legalised) Changing attitudes
Boypole	↑	Increase in life expectancy Decrease in the birth rate
Neo-conventional	↑	Changes in law (equal pay) Changing attitudes Changing position of women
Cohabitating couple	↑	Changing attitudes Changing position of women Increase in divorce
One person household	↑	Increase in divorce Longer life expectancy Greater individualism

Alternatives to families

- Living alone (increasing among younger and older individuals)
- Living in a commune (shared property, resources, childcare etc.)
- An example: Living in a kibbutz

Key studies

Rapoport and Rapoport (functionalist)

Families are changing, there is increasing diversity
Five different aspects of family diversity: organisational (eg internal divisions of domestic labour), cultural (beliefs and values), class (eg how the family's position in the social class system affects the availability of resources), life course (stage in the family life cycle) and cohort (historical period).

Parsons (functionalist)

Family has two basic functions which are common to all families in all societies: primary socialisation of children and the stabilisation of adult personalities e.g to give and receive emotional support

Young and Willmott (functionalist)

Large scale social survey (over 2,000 respondents in Greater London and surrounding areas)

Families are more symmetrical with both husband and wife make similar contributions to the running of the household eg shared chores and decisions. More common in working class families.

Stage 4 is the 'managing director family'. This is work centred and the wife is responsible for home and children – more common in middle class families

Zaretzky (Marxist)

The family also helps to maintain capitalism in society. He thinks that the family helps to provide an 'illusion' that society is fair and provides a safe haven away from exploitation at work. Women become responsible for personal relationships within the family. This cushions them from capitalism.

Delphy and Leonard (Feminist)

Men benefit the most from the exploitation of women's labour. They believe that the family has a central role in maintaining patriarchy. Women are oppressed because even when wives have paid employment outside the home they still have to carry out household tasks which are not equally shared

Oakley (Feminist)

Segregated conjugal roles adopted by men and women are part of the conventional family also known as the 'cereal' packet' family. This contains married parents and at least one child, the father is the breadwinner and the mother stays at home to look after the house and children. This type of family may actually exploit women and support patriarchy.

Criticisms of families: isolation, loss of functions, lack of contact, dysfunctions, patriarchy

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Families and Households

Changing patterns of marriage

Trends	Reasons	Impacts
First time marriages are decreasing	Secularisation / changing attitudes Changing position of women Increasing cost of marriage	Less married nuclear families More cohabitating couples
Remarriages are increasing	Secularisation / changing attitudes Increase in divorce / changes to divorce laws	More reconstituted families Serial monogamy
Age of first time marriage is increasing	Changing position of women Increasing cost of marriage Changing attitudes	More couples cohabit before marriage
Increase in same-sex marriages	Changing attitudes Changes in law	

Is marriage still important?

Yes	No
Remarriages are increasing Same sex marriages are increasing Married persons tax allowance was introduced (policies encourage marriage) People still aspire to be married	First time marriages are decreasing Cohabitation is more acceptable Divorce is increasing (suggesting marriage isn't valued) Some couples choose a civil partnership

Changing patterns of divorce

Trends in divorce	42% of marriages end in divorce The divorce rate has increased compared to 30 years ago The divorce rate has declined slightly over the past 10 years but is still high
Reasons for increases in divorce	Changes in law – Divorce reform act (1969) widened the grounds for divorce (to include irretrievable breakdown), waiting time for a divorce decreased from 3-1 years Changing attitudes – More acceptable to divorce Changing position of women – greater financial independence
Sociological views of divorce	Functionalist – divorce can lead to fewer dysfunctional families and greater harmony. Divorce creates jobs to help the economy. Divorce shows people have higher expectations of marriage. Marxist – divorce is more common in working class families due to stress/inequality caused by capitalism, Feminist – divorce can be positive to allow women to escape patriarchal relationships.

Changing relationships

Families over time

Pre-industrial: Extended families, worked as a productive unit, families performed most functions

Industrial: Nuclear families, male took on breadwinner role, government took over functions from families

Contemporary: Family diversity, diversity of roles, smaller families

Gender roles

Wilmoth and Young: Families are more symmetrical with shared contributions and equal roles.

Reasons for symmetrical families: changing attitudes, commercialisation of housework.

Stratified diffusion: roles filter from middle to working class (will become less equal)

Are gender roles more equal?

Yes	No
Symmetrical families – joint conjugal roles The New Man Women take part in decision making	Double shift/triple shift The New Man is myth – women still responsible (men cherry pick) for housework/childcare Men still make the most important decisions 1/4 women are victims of domestic abuse (evidence of patriarchy)

Parents and children

Relationships in the past: Parents had authority, strict discipline, children 'seen and not heard'

Relationships today: Parents show less discipline, children have more freedom, families are more child-centered

Reasons for changes: women are having less children (families are more child-centered), greater emphasis on children's rights, families more likely to be dual worker

Toxic childhood: children poisoned by junk culture of media and food, leading to poor behaviour and development

Extended families

In pre-industrial era, extended families were important. Extended families may be less important today due to: seeing less of each other (living far away), may only see for special occasions

Extended families may still be important today due to: Grandparents helping with childcare, better technology to keep in contact, still common in some cultures