

Types of family

Nuclear: Male/female parents and their children – presented as the ‘best’ and ‘normal’ family type.

Reconstituted: One or both partners with children from a previous relationship – fastest growing type of family.

Lone parent: One parent with their dependent children – about ¼ of families in the UK (90% of lone parent families are headed by women).

Same sex: Couple of the same sex who have been legally able to marry since 2014, and adopt since 2002.

Extended: Consists of relatives as well as immediate family. Can be vertical or horizontal.

Beanpole: Multiple generations may be alive at the same time, but there are fewer people in each generation.



Global families

Polygamy: One partner is married to several partners at the same time – usually the man has more than one wife (widespread across West/Central Africa).

Polyandry: When a woman has more than one husband.

Arranged marriage: Parents choose who their children are going to marry – agreement between two families of similar economic and social standing, but children do have a choice (common in India and Pakistan, and amongst these communities in the UK).

Forced marriage: Where one or both people do not, or cannot, consent to the marriage – often involves child brides (most common in poorer countries)



Functionalist View: Murdock

Nuclear family performs 4 universal functions.

1. **Education:** Socialising children into society’s norms and values.
2. **Economic:** Providing resources and financial stability.
3. **Reproduction:** Ensuring new members of society.
4. **Sex** (within marriage): Stabilises couples and therefore society.



Talcott Parsons – Warm Bath Theory

Family performs 2 basic functions. 1. **Primary socialisation:** Teaching children the shared norms and values of society. 2. **Stabilisation of adult personalities:** Married couples provide comfort and emotional support for each other – sanctuary from the stress of everyday life (like a warm bath). He argued that a clear division of labour was needed to do this – men were more suited to being breadwinners and women more suited to being homemakers. And that the nuclear family was the best environment for this.



Marxist View: Families serve the interests of capitalism

• Families are organised to benefit capitalism – the structure and activities of the family helps to keep capitalism going • Children are brought to follow instructions which trains them to be obedient workers.

Zaretsky: ‘Cult of private life’: Where people bury themselves in family life and close their eyes to the injustices of capitalism. Families are the target of consumerism: • Buying good is central to most people’s lives – this keeps capitalism going • Adverts persuade families that their happiness will increase by buying goods – and they pass this message onto their children • Adverts put pressure on parents and make them believe that their children must have the latest products to be acceptable to their peers.



New Right View: Charles Murray

Shares functionalist view of the family – but very conservative (traditional).

- Belief that the nuclear family is the only correct family type
- Important for children to have stable home with married mum and dad
- Ideally wife stays at home to look after children.

Decline of nuclear family: Has caused social problems such as...

- Higher crime rates
- Declining moral standards

Introduction of the welfare state:

- Has led to a culture where people have become dependent on hand-outs...
- ...and has made being a single parent financially ‘doable’...
- ...which has led to more deviancy and further decline in moral standard

Feminist View: Belief that the family is organised to benefit men

Men get more out of family life – they wield the power and make the significant decisions. Nuclear performs 2 functions that oppress women: 1. Socialises women into accepting ‘housewife’ role as the only possible/acceptable role for a woman 2. Socialises girls into accepting subservient roles with the family, and socialises boys into believing they are superior.

Delphy & Leonard – the family is a place of work for women, leisure for men. Oakley – canalisation means the family is used to reinforce patriarchy. Women also have a dual burden.

Walby – women are the victims of domestic abuse.



Key Changes in Family Life:

Marriage – fewer people are getting married, age of first marriage has increased, remarriages most common.

Divorce – legalised in 1969 and huge upward trend until the 1990s. Has plateaued more recently (but there are fewer marriages taking place).

Cohabitation – is increasing. Most couples view it as a trial marriage.

Childbearing – women are having fewer children. Average age of first child is increasing.

Singlehood – is increasing, now a legitimate lifestyle choice.

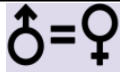
Childhood – has become child-centred. More disposable income. Palmer says it's toxic. Has led to 'helicopter parents'.

Conjugal roles – have arguably become more equal. Some state there is a 'new man'

Older people – ageing population. Families having to look after them. But also a lifestyle choice. More involved with grandparents.



Conjugal Roles:



Young & Willmott - Symmetrical family:

Male and female roles similar and balanced – wage earning, childcare and housework shared (emergence of 'new man') – better living standards mean men are happy to spend time at home.

Ann Oakley - Dual burden:

Women still do the majority of housework as well as doing paid work. Men see housework as women's work and that their role is to 'help out'.

Duncombe and Marsden - Triple shift:

Added 'emotional work' to this, e.g. listening to and sorting out personal problems for the kids. The mental load of running a home and keeping everyone happy.

Dobash & Dobash – Domestic Abuse:

Women are most likely to be victims so it's a patriarchal issue. Caused by arguments about money or sex.

Family Diversity:

The Rappaports - 5 types of diversity

1. **Organisational:** Different types of family structure & division of labour. 2. **Life course:** Reflects choice or circumstance, e.g. the no. of children 3. **Class:** Wealth and income affect type/size of housing, financial stability, holidays, etc. 4. **Cohort:** Those born around the same time may have a shared experience, e.g. introduction of birth control. 5. **Cultural/ethnic:** People from ethnic minorities may follow the customs and norms of their ethnic group,

Robert Chester – Neo-conventional family: diversity has been exaggerated because...

- Most people live in a nuclear family at some point in their lives
- The nuclear family is the type that most people aspire to
- Many people who get divorced then go on to re-marry
- Most co-habiting couples do go on to marry
- More married couples stay together than divorce
- The traditional nuclear family has been replaced with a modern version, where both parents go out to work

Reasons for changes in family life (FAMILIES):

FEMINISM – women now have more equal rights in the workplace as well as social life. They have independence politically, socially and financially. Which has led to higher aspirations in work and education (Sharpe).



ATTITUDES - Social attitudes have changed.

Things like same-sex relationships and divorce are no longer taboo (unspoken) there is no longer a stigma (bad feeling) about them.

MEDIA – We are shown a range of family types and relationships in TV and film. This normalises them. We are also exposed to celebrities with different family relationships which makes them more acceptable.

INDIVIDUALISM – The idea that society is less focused on meeting expectations and people now act for themselves. Giddens said we are able to use relationships to meet our needs, moving on when it no longer does.

LAWS – Legislation has changed to permit certain things like divorce, abortion, same-sex marriage so they are now all more common. Laws also now protect equality more successfully.



INVENTIONS – Safe and effective contraception and abortion have changed women's lives by giving them more choice over if/when they have children. Gadgets in the home have also affected how domestic roles are organised.

ECONOMY – Money affects families hugely. House prices have risen more than wages so many families rely on two incomes. Consumerism has affected weddings (and therefore rates of marriage) and also how parents may treat their children.



SECULARISATION – Is the decline in the importance of religion. Traditionally religion has promoted traditional values which pushed women into the home, preventing abortion, contraception and divorce. This now has less sway over peoples' views.