

Key Ideas

Definitions and Theories

- Basic definitions: Family (e.g. Murdock's definition (old), General Household Survey definition (modern)). Household. Kinship
- Nuclear family
- Extended family (horizontal, vertical, modified, diffused...)
- Household (examples: students, communes)
- Single-parent (include knowledge of causes: e.g. divorce, choice)
- Reconstituted (step-parent family)
- Homosexual (rare, but increasingly possible).
- Varieties of family structure can be related to class and ethnicity
- "Universal Family" Debate: (Importance of how "family group" is defined)
- Functionalist, Sociobiological, New Right arguments for existence of Universal Family as essential to human society.
- Debate related to gender roles and relationships (Universalists argue for "traditional" forms of these)
- Marxist, Feminist and Critical Theory arguments against concept of Universal Family group.
- Alternatives to Nuclear family (see: Family Diversity)

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Families and Households

Key Ideas

Functionalism

- Functionalism (especially Murdock, Fletcher and Parsons)
- Focus on the functions (needs and purposes) of the family group.
- Family performs two main functions for any society
- Socialisation: Integrating mechanism in society
- Social Order: The family as a unit of stability
- Fletcher: main (core or essential) functions of the family:
 - ✓ Procreation and Child-Rearing
 - ✓ Regulation of Sexual Behaviour
 - ✓ Provision of a Home
- "Non-essential" functions provide linkages with the wider social world.
- Government of internal relations (social control and stability)
- Economic consumption of goods
- Education; Health care (both physical and mental); Recreation / Leisure
- Religious (first exposure to religious ideas / socialisation)
- Parsons: Modern family = two core functions:
 - ✓ Primary socialisation of children
 - ✓ Stabilisation of adult personalities.

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Key Ideas

Marxist, Feminist and Critical

Marxist Conflict Perspectives: (Note: Marx, Engels, Zaretsky)

- Acts to control sexual behaviour: (Engels).
- Serves to reproduce labour power for Capitalism:
- Is a safety valve for people's frustrations:
- Channels and legitimates the exploitation of women:
- Provides "free" services for Capitalists (reproduction of labour)
- Primary consumer of Capitalist products

Feminism (Note: McIntosh, Oakley and Barratt, Millett):

- Varieties (Liberal, Marxist, Radical, Socialist, Black, etc.).
- Men exploit and oppress women within the family
- "Rationalising myths" legitimate male domination over women.
- Women have a service role forced on them ("unpaid servants")
- Increasingly "Dual role": women as paid workers and unpaid housewives

Critical Theory (e.g. Cooper "Death of The Family")

- Leach - family as source of stress / Social Isolation of individuals
- Private world of suspicion and social control
- Laing - family and schizophrenia (mental illness)

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Key Ideas

New Right / Sociobiology

New Right (Mount, Thatcher / Reagan, Paul Johnson, Patricia Morgan)

- Nuclear family essential (fundamental co-operative unit in any society)
- Traditional male / female gender roles and relationships
- Anti-single-parenthood (sometimes anti-abortion)
- Fundamental social unit (pre-dates all other forms of social organisation)
- Held together by necessity, love and, in its modern form, marriage.
- Family as source of social stability ("in changing world").

Sociobiology (Note: Wilson, Tiger and Fox).

- "Family group" present in all human societies ("Universal")
- Mother-child relationship represents the basic family unit predetermined by "nature".
- Concept of "human biogrammer": biological programming that predisposes people to behave in certain ways. Used to justify traditional male / female gender roles (men=hunters / breadwinners, women= carers / mothers).
- Nuclear family / extended family group = biologically desirable

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