



## Sociology Revision Guide

The Sociology of Gender (University of Leeds)

# Topic 1: Couples

The main sociologists you need to know for this topic are:

- **Parsons:** (Division of labour)
- **Bott:** (Conjugal roles)
- **Young and Wilmott:** (Bethnal Green study)
- **Oakley:** (Feminist)
- **Gershuny:** (Greater equality)
- **Dunne:** (Lesbian couples and gender scripts)
- **Pahl and Vogler:** (Family income control)
- **Dobash and Dobash:** (Domestic violence)

There has never been a 24 mark question on this topic

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Patriarchal family: A family that is male dominated, where the father makes the decisions.

## The Domestic Division of Labour

### **PARSONS:**

He argues that the roles of husbands and wives were separate and distinct.

\* **Instrumental role:** The man provides financially for the family, he is the breadwinner.

\* **Expressive role:** The wife looks after the home, the children and the emotional needs of the family.

He argues that this division is based on biological differences, **women** are more suited to **nurturing** and **men** are more suited to **providing**.

### **BOTT:**

She distinguishes two types of roles within marriage:

1. **Joint conjugal role:** Where couple share tasks such as housework and childcare.
2. **Segregated conjugal role:** Where couples have separate roles.

### **YOUNG & WILMOTT:**

Studied working class families in Bethnal Green and found that many working class families had segregated conjugal roles, and saw family life as improving for all member and becoming more democratic.

Part II of the study, found younger families had a more **symmetrical family** (where the roles of husband and wife were more similar).

## SHIFT FROM SEGREGATED TO JOINT CONJUGAL ROLES

<b>Changes in women's position.</b>	Women go out to work. They are now more equal to men. Legal differences, cultural differences and political changes have contributed to these changes.
<b>Geographical Mobility</b>	Moving around the country or from country to country. They may move for a job. This leads to an increase in the nuclear family, however they are more isolated but more symmetrical.
<b>New Technology</b>	Is more time saving Allows men to participate in housework. Gives women more time and allows them to go to work.
<b>Higher Standard of Living</b>	Two income family (dual earner family), this allows families to have more money, so they can afford luxuries such as holidays.

### The Feminist View

\*reject the march of progress argument that the family is becoming more symmetrical\*

#### **OAKLEY:**

argues that **Young & Wilmott** exaggerate the extent of the symmetrical family as their research shows that husbands help their wives with the housework once a week. They may also choose the easy or more masculine jobs such as taking the dog for a walk.

She also argues that married women in paid employment are often concentrated in low paid, part-time jobs that are just an extension of the housewife role, such as childminding, dinner ladies, cleaners etc.

#### **GERSHUNY:**

Explains the trend towards greater equality in terms of a gradual change in the values of society. He found that:

- Wives who didn't go to work did 83% of housework.
- Wives who worked part-time did 82% of housework.
- Wives who worked full-time did 73% of housework.

### **Improvements in the burden of housework**

1. **The commercialisation of housework:** goods and services provided by housewives are now mass produced and sold in stores, e.g. fast food shops, ready meals etc.
2. **More women working:** women can afford labour saving goods and services, however these goods and services are mainly available to the middle class only.

## The Dual Burden

The increase in the number of women working has simply given women the dual burden of paid work and unpaid housework.

Women also take care of the emotional side of the family, such as children going through puberty etc.

This means that women actually do a **triple shift** of housework, paid work and emotional work.

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## Lesbian couples and gender scripts

### DUNNE:

The traditional division of labour is deeply ingrained in gender scripts which set out the norms and expectations of husbands and wives.

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## Resources and decision making in the family

Sociologists argue that:

1. Men gain far more from women's domestic work than women do from men's financial work.
2. The financial support women get from men is both unreliable and comes with 'strings attached'
3. Women only make financial decisions when the figures are small.

Research shows that family members do not share resources equally, for example in low income families, it is the wives who tend to go without, in order to make ends meet.

Separated women living on benefits often considered themselves better off as their income when married was unreliable.

### PAHL & VOGLER:

They identify two types on the way that family income is controlled:

1. **Pooling:** Where both partners have access to and responsibility for income.
2. **Allowance:** Where wives are given an allowance by their husbands.

\*Pooling is increasing and is more common among couples where both work full time. However, big decisions such as relocating for a new job tend to centre on the husbands career.\*

Many important decisions were made by the husband, or jointly with the husband getting the final say. Important decisions were made jointly and less important decisions were made by the wife.

## Couples and decision making

The “New Man” is a man that helps out with the housework, and moves along with the times, instead of being traditional and old-fashioned.

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## Domestic Violence

Domestic violence accounts for almost one sixth of violent crime. Domestic violence does not occur randomly, but follows patterns:

1. Most victims of domestic abuse are women.
2. 99% of female victims were assaulted by men.
3. Domestic violence is difficult to escape.

Drugs, violence, mental illness, learnt behaviour, religion, money and media can all trigger domestic violence.

### DOBASH AND DOBASH:

Incidents of domestic violence are often triggered when a husband feels that his authority is being challenged by his wife. They thus feel that marriage legitimates domestic violence as marriage gives power and control to men and created dependency in women.

The police may be more reluctant to record incidents of domestic violence than other violence as they believe that:

- What goes on in families is private.
- If the woman was unhappy, she is free to leave.

However, it may be difficult for a woman to just pick up and leave violent relationships as there may be financial or family issues, they may be ashamed of what’s happening to them, they may love the person abusing them, they may have a low self-esteem or be too scared to leave.

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## Radical feminists

They see the family and marriage as a key institution in patriarchal society and the main source of oppression to women. They argue that violence against women is an inevitable feature of a patriarchal society that maintains male power.

## Problems with studying domestic violence

- The difficulty of obtaining valid information on the subject.
- Official police statistics rely on reports they receive from individuals
- Methods of obtaining information may be invalid, as people might lie, refuse to answer the question, exaggerate or forget information.
- It is possible that male researchers may receive different answers to females.

**Past paper questions on this topic:**

- Suggest two reasons why there has been an increase in cohabitation. (4marks)*
- Explain what is meant by the gender division of labour (2marks)*
- Explain what is meant by the term patriarchal family (2marks)*
- Explain what is meant by the term segregated conjugal roles (2marks)*
- Suggest two reasons for the rise of the symmetrical family (8marks)*
- Explain what is meant by the dual burden (2marks)*
- Explain what is meant by emotion work (2marks)*
- Explain what is meant by geographical mobility (2marks)*
- Explain the difference between geographical and social mobility (4marks)*

## Topic 2: Childhood

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The main sociologists you need to know for this topic are:

- **Benedict:** (Cross cultural differences)
- **Aries:** (Historical differences)
- **Shorter:** (Historical differences)
- **Gittins:** (Age patriarchy)
- **Postman:** (The future)
- **Palmer:** (Toxic Childhood)

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### Childhood as a social construct

Childhood is not natural; it is defined and created by society. What is seen as 'childhood' varies between societies (cross cultural differences), within societies (between different classes), and historically (over time).

### Cross cultural differences

#### **BENEDICT:**

Children in simpler societies are treated differently from their modern western counterparts, as they have more responsibility at work and at home, less value is placed on obedience to adult authority, and children's sexual behaviour is often viewed differently.

### Childhood in the west

Western society has the following features:

- Childhood is seen as a special, innocent time of life.
- Children are seen as different from adults, they are physically immature and not competent to run their own lives.
- They need a lengthy protected period of nurturing and socialisation.
- Childhood is a distinct life stage; it is a separate status from adults.

- Children are seen as the opposite of adults, with the right to happiness.

## Historical differences in childhood

### ARIES:

In Medieval Europe, the idea of childhood didn't exist.

Children were not seen as having a different 'nature' from adults. Work began from an early age and children were mini-adults, with the same rights, duties and skills.

### SHORTER:

Parental attitudes towards children were very different e.g. high child death rates encouraged indifference and neglect, especially towards infants.

## The modern notion of childhood

- Schools began to specialise only in the education of the young.
- The church increasingly saw children as fragile 'creatures of God' needing discipline and protection from worldly evils.
- There was a growing distinction between children's and adults' clothing, setting children apart from adults.

## Why has the position of children changed?

1. Lower infant mortality rates and smaller families:
  - a. More infants surviving meant that parents had fewer children and could make a greater financial and emotional investment in both of them.
2. Specialist knowledge about children's health:
  - a. Children need supervision and protection.
3. Laws banning child labour:
  - a. Children changed from economic assets, to economic liabilities, financially dependent on their parents.

## Has the position improved?

### The March of Progress View (! important)

Family and society have become 'child centred'.

- Children are better cared for in terms of their educational, psychological and medical needs.
- Most babies now survive: the infant mortality rate in 1900 was 154; now it is 5.
- Higher living standards and smaller family sizes mean parents can afford to provide for children's needs.
- Children are protected from harm and exploitation by laws against child abuse and child labour.

## The Conflict View

Marxists and feminists argue that the 'march of progress' view is an over-generalised and idealised image. It ignores inequalities among children and between children and adults.

Third world children have different life chances from those in the West. In Western societies, there are:

- Gender differences: girls are expected to do more housework.
- Ethnic differences: Asian parents are more likely to be strict towards daughters than sons.
- Class inequalities: poor children are more likely to die in infancy or do badly at school.

## Age Patriarchy

### GITTINS:

He argues that there is an age patriarchy of adult domination that keeps children subordinate. Adults exercise control over children's time, space and bodies. Adults make children economically dependent by preventing them from working.

## The future of childhood

### POSTMAN:

He argues that childhood as we know it is disappearing, and that children are becoming more like adults – gaining similar rights and acting in similar ways.

Television culture is replacing print culture.

- In Print culture: children lacked the literacy skills needed to access information, so adults could keep knowledge about sex, money, violence etc.
- In Television culture: makes information available to adults and children alike.

## Toxic Childhood

### PALMER:

Rapid technology and cultural changes are damaging children's development, e.g. junk food, computer games etc. Children are deprived of a genuine childhood.

## Change or continuity?

Some aspects of childhood suggest it may be disappearing or changing, others that it is continuing. Much depends on what happens to:

- The emphasis on children's rights.
- The length of time spent in education.
- Children's access to means of communication.
- Growing similarities between children and adults in leisure activities, dress, diet etc.



**Past paper questions on this topic:**

*Examine different sociological views on changes in the experience of childhood in the past 50 years or so (24 marks).*

*Assess the view that the modern family has become more child-centred (24 marks)*

## Topic 3: Theories of the Family

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The main theories you need to know for this topic are:

- **Functionalist** (Parsons)
- **Radical Psychiatry** (Leach and Laing)
- **Marxist**
- **Feminists**

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### **Functionalism**

It is a consensus theory which argues that there is value consensus in society which enables people to live harmoniously together.

Functionalists believe that **society is made up of different sub-systems** that depend on each other, such as health care, education, law etc.

#### **4 basic functions:**

1. Stabilisation of the sex drive: If a woman is in a stable relationship, she will be more committed and may be less promiscuous.
2. Reproduction of the next generation
3. Socialisation of the young: Families teach young children morals, how to talk, walk, eat, use the toilet etc. This is **primary socialisation**.
4. Meeting economic needs: Providing food, shelter etc; these are basic needs of the family.

#### **PARSONS: FUNCTIONAL FIT THEORY**

He argues that the functions of the family vary depending on the society. He identifies 2 family structures:

**Extended**: 3 generations in one area/house (grandparents, parents, children)- horizontal or vertical (parents, children, cousins, aunts and uncles)

**Nuclear**: 2 generations (2 parents, 2 children)

Parsons believes there has been a shift in the structure of the family when society moved from pre-industrial to industrial.

**Structural differentiation**: social institutions (such as the family) have progressively lost many of the functions they performed in the past, they become more separated but also become more specialised.

Functions of the family in pre-industrial:	Functions of the family in industrial:
Health and welfare provided	Schools (outside family)
Education	Work (outside family)
Socialisation	NHS, Social services (outside family)
Economic	Socialisation
Emotional needs	Emotional needs

These 3 functions have been lost

Parsons states that industrial society has 2 basic needs:

1. **A geographically mobile workforce:** small units to move around
2. **A socially mobile workforce-** easier to move around social classes.

The nuclear family meets these needs more effectively than the extended family because they are smaller and easier for them to move around. You can shift the social class of children- harder for aunts/uncles/cousins at the same time.

As a consequence of these changes many of the family's functions have been taken over by other institutions such as NHS.

Parsons argue that the modern nuclear family has become specialised into performing 2 irreducible functions.

1. **The Primary Socialisation of Children:** basic values, how to speak, eat, the difference between right and wrong.
2. **The Stabilisation of Adult Personalities:** (warm bath theory) - the family helps to relieve stress and tension from work

### Radical Psychiatry

#### **LEACH:**

- Leach believed that the nuclear family was too isolated and lacked the support of the extended family.
- This puts too much pressure on parents who take out their frustration on one another.

#### **LAING:**

- Family life can cause anxiety, depression and schizophrenia.
- Parents invest too much in their children and expect too much of them.
- Children therefore feel suffocated and this can make them ill.
- The family acts like a pressure cooker, rather than soaking away the stresses and strains of life.

## Marxism

Society is based on the inequality between the bourgeoisie and proletariats. Marxists do **not** believe in value consensus. They believe that all institutions in society (inc. family) function to preserve the inequalities of capitalism and prevent a revolution.

Ways in which the family helps to maintain capitalism:

- **Inheritance of property:** The rich stay rich, as the more wealthy middle class have more property to give to their children, whereas the poorer working class may not have anything to hand down. Families were developed to ensure that property was passed down from generation to generation.
- **To pass on ruling class ideology:** Children are instructed by parents to do what they are told without question. Well behaved children do as they are told. Much like the functioning of the hidden curriculum, the family helps to create passive unquestioning citizens.
- **Unit of consumption:** Parents are persuaded by children to provide goods they don't need. Family is the ideal unit of consumption.

## **CRITICISMS OF MARXISM:**

1. Marxists tend to overestimate the widespread nature of the nuclear family.
2. Feminists argue that Marxists ignore the importance of gender when studying the family.
3. Functionalists argue that Marxists ignore the positive aspects of family life.

## Feminists

Feminists focus on the unequal division of labour and domestic violence. They do not see gender inequality as normal or natural; they see it as created by society.

### **Liberal feminists:**

They are concerned with campaigning against sex discrimination. They hold views similar to those of 'march of progress' theories. They believe that the role of women is improving.

### **Marxist feminists:**

Marxist feminists believe that the oppression of women in the family not only supports patriarchy but supports capitalism too. Women maintain and reproduce the labour force. Women absorb the anger created by work in capitalist society. Women are a reserve army of cheap labour.

### **Radical feminists:**

They believe that men are the enemy. Marriage and the family allow men to benefit from women's unpaid work.

### **Difference feminists:**

They believe that it's not possible to make generalisations about the position of women in society since there is no single experience. A middle class woman may have a different experience to a working class woman.

### **Past paper questions on this topic:**

*Identify and explain the Marxist functions of the family (8marks)*

*Examine Marxist views of the role of the family (24marks)*

*Assess the contribution of feminist sociologists to an understanding of family roles and relationships. (24marks)*

*Assess the view that in today's society, the family is losing its functions (24marks)*

*Assess the Marxist view that the main role of the family is to serve the interests of capitalism. (24marks)*

## Topic 4: Demography

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Demography is the study of populations and their characteristics.

### **Births**

The number of births affects population size.

The **birth rate** is the number of live births per 1000 of the population per year.

There has been a long term decline in the birth rate since 1900. There has been 3 baby booms: these are a rise in the amount of babies being born:

1. **After WW1**
2. **After WW2**
3. **The third was in the 1960s – birth rate then fell in the 70s, rose during the 80s, fell again in the 90s and rose in 2001.**

The **total fertility rate** is the average number of children women will have during their fertile years.

There has been in a decline in the TFR, two reasons are:

1. **More women are remaining childless now than in the past.**
2. **Women are postponing having children in order to create an established career or remain in full-time education for longer.**

## Reasons for the decline in the birth rate

### Changes in the position of women

- Women have increased educational opportunities
- More women working
- Changes in attitudes to family life and women's role
- Easier access to divorce
- Access to abortion and contraception

### Fall in the infant mortality rate

- The infant mortality rate is the number of infants who die before their first birthday per 1000 babies born alive per year.
- In 1900, the IMR was 154, by 2007 it was 5.
- A fall in the IMR may cause a fall in the birth rate: if infants survive, parents will have fewer of them.
  - **Reasons for the fall:**
- Improved housing, sanitation, nutrition, knowledge of hygiene, child health and health services.
- Medical factors did not play much part until the **1950s** when the IMR began to fall due to mass immunisation, antibiotics, and improved midwifery.

### Children as an economic liability

- Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, children were an economic asset because they went to work from an early age.
- Now they are an economic liability:
  - **There are laws banning child labour** and introducing compulsory schooling mean they remain economically dependent for longer.
  - **Changing norms** about children's right to a high standard of living raises their cost.

### Child centredness

- Childhood is socially constructed as an important period.
- This has led to a shift from quantity to quality:
  - Parents now have fewer children and lavish more attention and resources on these few.

## Effects of a falling birth rate

- Having fewer children means women are freer to go out to work, creating the dual earner couple.
- The **dependency ratio** is the relationship between the size of the working population and the size of the non-working (dependent) population.

- The working population's earnings and taxes support the dependent population.
- Children are a large part of the dependent population; so fewer children reduce the '*burden of dependency*' on the working population.
- Public services: fewer schools and child health services may be needed, and less needs to be spent on maternity/paternity leave.
- There are political decisions, e.g. the government can choose to either reduce the number of schools or to have smaller class sizes instead.

### Deaths

- The number of deaths has been stable since 1900 (600,000 per year).
  - There have been fluctuations e.g. the two world wars and the 1918 flu epidemic
- The death *rate* is the number of deaths per 1000 of the population per year. It has almost halved from 19 in 1900, to 10 in 2007.

**\*\*Since the 1950s, the death rate has slightly declined\*\***

### Reasons for the decline in the death rate

#### **Improved nutrition:**

*Better diet accounted for half the reduction in the death rate, by increasing people's resistance to infection.*

#### **Medical improvements:**

*Before the 1950s, medical improvements played almost no part in reducing deaths from infection.*

*From the 1950s, the death rate fell due partly to medical factors such as vaccination, antibiotics, blood transfusion, better maternity services and the NHS (1949)*

#### **Public health improvements:**

*More effective government with the power to pass and enforce laws led to improved public health e.g. better housing, purer drinking water and cleaner air, laws against the adulteration of food and improved sewage disposal.*

#### **Other social changes:**

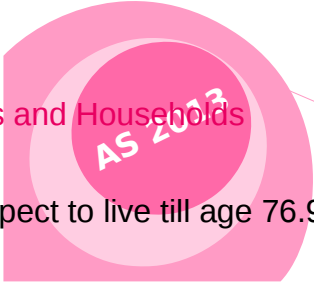
*The decline of more manual occupations such as mining; smaller families reduced the transmission of infection, greater public knowledge of the causes of illness and higher incomes.*

### Life Expectancy

Life expectancy refers to how long on average a person born in a given year can expect to live.

Life expectancy has increased:

- Males born in England in 1900 are can expect to live to age 50 (women 57)



- Males born in England in 2003-5 can expect to live till age 76.9 (81.2 for women)

One reason for lower average life expectancy in 1900 was the fact that so many infants and children did not survive beyond the early years of life. A newborn baby today has a better chance of reaching its 65<sup>th</sup> birthday than a baby born in 1900 had of reaching its first birthday.

There are important class, gender and regional differences:

<b>Class</b>	Working class men in unskilled or routine jobs are nearly 3 times as likely to die before they are 65 compared with men in professional or managerial jobs.
<b>Gender</b>	Women generally live longer than men.
<b>Regional</b>	Those living in the North and Scotland have a lower life expectancy than people in the south.

### The Ageing Population

#### **What are the consequences of an ageing population?**

##### **Public services:**

Older people consume a large population of services such as health care. This is particularly true of old old (75+) as against the young old (64-74). Older people are more dependent. An ageing population may also mean changes to policies and provision of housing, transport or others.

##### **One-person pensioner households:**

The number of pensioners living alone has increased to 14% of all households. Most are female because women generally live longer and they are usually younger than their husbands.

##### **The dependency ratio:**

The non-working old are economically dependent and need to be provided for by those of working age e.g. through taxation/pensions. Number of retired people rises; it increases the dependency ratio and the burden on the working population – this is offset by a declining number of dependent children. It is wrong to assume ‘old’ means ‘economically dependent’ as people retire at different ages – 1 in 5 men retired by age 50, however some work till age 70.

##### **The social construction of ageing as a problem**

Age statuses are socially constructed. This also applies to old age. Much of the way we speak and think about something about old age and ageing is negative and has constructed it as a ‘problem’. Ageism is the negative stereotyping of people on the



basis of their age. This contrasts with the view of the elderly found in traditional societies. In these cultures, the old are revered and respected; ageing is associated with a rising status.

**HIRSCH:**

**Important policies that need to change to tackle the problem of the ageing population:**

How to finance a longer period of old age- this can either be done by paying more from our savings and taxes while we are working, or by continuing to work for longer or a combination of both. Therefore he argues that we need to reverse the trend towards earlier retirement by redistributing educational resources towards older people so they can retain and improve their life skills so they can continue earning. There needs to be changes in housing policy to encourage older people to trade down into smaller houses- this would release wealth to improve their standard of living and free up houses for younger people.

**Effects**

More people are taking early retirement, making the period of retirement even longer.

The average period of retirement has doubled over this period.

The government has recognised that they need to make policies that will deal with this. One option is to raise the age at which people can claim state pensions. Another is to encourage people to provide at least some of their retirement income themselves via private pensions.

**Migration**

<b>Immigration</b>	<b>Refers to movement into an area or society</b>
<b>Emigration</b>	<b>Refers to movement out of area or society</b>
<b>Net migration</b>	<b>The difference between those immigrating and those emigrating</b>

**Immigration**

From 1900, until the Second World War, the bulk of immigrants were Irish (for economic reasons) and Jewish (refugees fleeing persecution).

Black immigrants began to arrive in the UK. South Asian immigrants from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and East African Asians from Kenya and Uganda came to the UK.

**The Consequence**

It produced a more ethnically diverse society. By 2001, minority ethnic groups accounted for 7.9% of the total population. One result of this has been a greater diversity of family patterns in Britain today.



A series of immigration acts 1962-1990 placed severe restriction on non-whites entering the UK; this is because by the end of the 1980s, non-whites accounted for little more than a quarter of all immigrants.

## Emigration

Since 1900, the main countries people have gone to when they leave the UK are the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

They leave because of economic factors (push)- the recession and unemployment in the UK.

**Assisted passage schemes** are when the UK or receiving country's government paid part or all of the costs of migration.

This is important in encouraging emigration to the old commonwealth countries and they were often introduced partly for political or ideological reasons such as to strengthen the ties with the mother country or to boost the white population of the former colonies.

## Recent future migration patterns

Generally young males are immigrating.

Older people emigrate- 40% moved to EU countries to retire.

*Immigration can be seen in a positive light as it helps the population grow- and it can keep the population levels more steady, as there is a decline in the birth rate, so without immigration the population levels would decline.*

## Migration affecting the dependency ratio

Immigrant women tend to have higher fertility rates which in the short term contributed to a higher dependency ratio. It reduces the average age of the population and produces more workers, therefore lowering the dependency ratio.

## Past paper questions on this topic:

*Examine the reasons for, and the effects of, changes in family size over the past 100 years or so (24marks)*

*Examine the reasons for, and the consequences of, the fall in the death rate since 1900.*

# Topic 5: Changing family patterns

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## Divorce

### 3 kinds of changes in the law

1. Equalising the grounds (legal reasons) for divorce between the sexes.
2. Widening the grounds for divorce.
3. Making divorce cheaper

### Other factors that have made divorce easier to obtain are

- Irretrievable breakdown (the agreement between both spouses that the marriage isn't working)
- Introduction of legal aid of divorce

### Other solutions to getting out of an unhappy marriage

Desertion: Where one partner leaves the other but the couple is legally married.

Legal separation: Where a court separates the financial and legal affairs of the couple but where they remain married and are not free to re-marry. **"Empty-shell" marriage** (same roof-married in name only).

- Although changes in the law have given people the freedom to divorce more easily, this does not in itself explain why more people should choose to take advantage of this freedom.

### Declining stigma and changing attitudes

*Stigma is the negative label, social disapproval or shame attached to a person, action or relationship.*

In the past, churches refused to marry divorcees.

The fact that divorce is more common begins to normalise it. This has led to reduces in the stigma attached to divorce. Couples become more socially acceptable, couples become more willing to resort to divorce as a means of saving their marital problems.

### Secularisation

*Secularisation is the decline in the influence of religion in society.*

The 2001 census found that 43% of young people with no religion were cohabiting, as against to only 34% of Christians, 17% of Muslims, 11% of Hindus and 10% of Sikhs.

The church has now softened their views on divorcees, perhaps because they fear losing credibility with large sections of the public and with their own members.

## Rising expectations of marriage

### FLETCHER:

He argues that the higher expectations people place on marriage today is a major cause of rising divorce rates. Higher expectations are linked to the ideology of romantic love. This is the belief that marriage should be based solely on love, and that for each individual there is a Mr or Mrs Right. If love dies, there is no other reason to remain married.

Individuals in the past had little choice in whom they married, and at a time when the family was also a unit of production, marriages were often contracted largely for economic reasons or out of duty to one's family.

## Changes in the position of women

One reasons for women's increased willingness to seek divorce is due to the improvements in their economic position which has made them less financially dependent on their husbands and therefore freer to end an unsatisfactory marriage.

## 4 developments that have enabled women to be more able to support themselves in the event of a divorce

- Women today are much more likely to be in paid work. The proportion of women working rose from 47% in 1959 to 70% in 2005.
- Women are still earning less than men, equal pay and anti-discrimination laws have helped narrow the gap.
- Girls' greater success in education has helped them achieve better jobs than in the past.
- Welfare benefits means women are not financially dependent on men.

Marriage remains patriarchal (according to feminists) because men are benefitting from their wives 'triple shift' or paid work, emotion work and housework.

### SIGLE-RUSHTON

She found that working mothers are more likely to divorce than women in traditional division of labour between the male breadwinner and the female homemaker. However, where the husband of a working wife is actively involved in housework, the likelihood of divorce falls to the same level as that of couples with a traditional division of labour.

## Marriage

There are fewer people marrying.

*Serial monogamy is when an individual gets married, divorced then remarried multiple times.*

One reason for the fall in the number of first marriages is the fear of divorce, this refers to people who are likely to be put off marriage as they see the increased likelihood of marriage ending in divorce.

One other reason for the changing patterns of marriage is the changing attitudes, there is still less pressure to marry and more freedom for individuals to choose the type of relationship they want- leading to the increase in cohabitation.

### **Two reasons why young people are postponing marriage:**

1. Many women want to spend longer in full time education in order to establish themselves in a career before they settle down.
2. Many people are cohabiting before they marry as a test-run to see if they are able to live together and act as a married couple before they make it official.

### **Cohabitation**

*Cohabitation is where an unmarried couple in a sexual relationship live together.*

The main reason for the increase in cohabitation is the decline in stigma attached to sex outside marriage.

Although cohabitation is increasing as marriage is decreasing, this relationship is not clear cut because for some couples, cohabitation is just a step on the way to marriage, whereas for others it is a permanent alternative to marriage.

### **Same-sex relationships**

#### **STONEWALL:**

Found that 5-7% of the adult population today are in same-sex relationships.

It is impossible to judge whether this figure represents an increase because in the past, stigma and illegality meant that such relationships were hidden.

There is many evidence of increased social acceptance of same-sex relationships in recent years, e.g. male homosexual acts were decriminalised in 1967 for consenting adults over 21. The age of consent has been equalised with heterosexuals.

The Civil Partnership Act (2004) states that same sex couples have similar legal rights to married couples in respect of pensions, inheritance, tenancies and properties.

According to **ALLAN + CROW** in the absence of the Civil Partnership Act, there were many problems that arose for same sex partners:

- They had to negotiate their commitment and responsibilities more than married couples.

However, although many gays and lesbians welcome the opportunity to have their partnerships legally recognised, some homosexuals see this as a problem because it may limit the flexibility and negotiability of relationships.



**One person households**

There has been an increase in the number of people living alone. In 2006, 2.8million people lived by themselves. People of a pensionable age are likely to be living alone.

Increase in separation and divorce has created more one-person households among men aged below 65 because any children are more likely to live with their mother; their father is likely to leave the family home.

*Creative singlehood refers to the deliberate choice to live alone.*

*Living apart together is where people in a significant relationship but not married or cohabiting.*

The reason for people living apart together may be that they can't afford to live together or they choose to live apart-wanting their own home.

**Parents and Children**

<b>Childbearing:</b>	<b>Lone-parent families</b>	<b>Stepfamilies</b>
4 official statistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Over 4 in 10 are born out of marriage, 5x more than in 1971.</li> <li>- Women's average age at the birth of their first child rose to 27.3 yrs.</li> <li>- The average number of children per woman fell from 2.95 in 1965 to 1.63 in 2001.</li> <li>- 1 out of 4 of those born in 1973 will be childless at age 40.</li> </ul>	Lone parent families make up 24% of all families. 1 in 4 children live in a lone parent family. 3 official statistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Over 90% of lone parent families are female-headed.</li> <li>- Until the early 90s, divorced women were the biggest group of lone mothers, from early 90s, single (never married) women became the biggest group.</li> <li>- A child living in a lone-parent family is 2x more likely to be in poverty than those living with 2 parents.</li> </ul>	Stepfamilies (reconstituted families) account for over 10% of all families with dependent children in Britain. <p><b>Ferri + Smith</b> found that stepfamilies are similar to first families- the involvement of stepparents in childcare and child-rearing is positive. In general, stepfamilies are at a greater risk.</p> <p><b>Allan + Crow</b> found that stepfamilies may face particular problems of divided loyalties and issues such as contact with the non-resident parent can cause tensions.</p>

**Reasons for the changes in childbearing**

Reasons for the increase in births outside marriage include a decline in stigma and an increase in cohabitation. For example, 1/3 of 18-24year old now think marriage should come before parenthood.

The later age at which women are having children, smaller family sizes and the fact that more women are now remaining childless, all reflect the fact that women now have more options than just motherhood. Many want an established career before starting a family.

### Reasons for the patterns of lone parent families

The number of lone parent families has increased due to the increase in divorce and separation, and the increase in the number of never-married women having children, with help from reproduction technology and adoption.

Lone parent families tend to be female-headed because of the belief that women are suited to an 'expressive' role, divorce courts usually give custody of children to the mother. Men may be less willing than women to give up work to care for their children.

### Lone parenthood and the welfare state and poverty

**Charles Murray** (New Right) sees the growth of lone parent families as resulting from an over-generous welfare state providing benefits for unmarried mothers and their children.

"Perverse incentives" which rewards negative behaviour, such as having children without being able to provide for them- the welfare state creates a dependency culture as more people will assume that the state will support them and their children. The New Right believe they should abolish the welfare benefits to reduce the dependency culture.

Critics argue that the welfare benefits are far from generous and lone-parent families are more likely to be in poverty: reasons for this include-

- Lack of affordable childcare prevents lone parents from working – 60% of them are unemployed.
- Inadequate welfare benefits
- Most lone parents are women, who generally earn less than men.
- Failure of father's pay maintenance especially if they have formed a second family that they have to support.

### Reasons for the patterns of stepfamilies

Stepfamilies are formed when lone parents form new partnerships. Thus, the factors causing an increase in the number of lone parents, such as divorce and separation, are also responsible for the creation of stepfamilies.

3 reasons for the patterns are:

- More children are from the woman's previous relationship than the mans.

- Step parents are at greater risk of poverty because there are often more children and step father may have to support children from previous relationship.
- Tension- result of a lack of clear social norms about how individuals should behave in such families.

## Topic 6: Family Diversity

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There are now fewer households containing a nuclear family and more lone-parent families and one-person households than there were in the 1970s.

### Modernism and the Nuclear Family

The modern society has a fairly fixed, clear-cut and predictable structure. They see one 'best' family type- which is the nuclear family- as slotting into this structure and helping to maintain it by performing certain essential functions.

According to Functionalists, a nuclear family with a traditional division of labour between husband and wife is the 'norm'. Other families are seen as abnormal, inadequate, or even deviant, since they are less able to perform the functions required of the family.

### The New Right

The New Right have a conservative and anti-feminism perspective on the family. They are firmly opposed to family diversity. Like functionalists, the New Right hold the view that there is only one correct or normal family type. This is the traditional or conventional patriarchal nuclear family consisting of a married couple and their dependent children, with a clear-cut division of labour between the breadwinner husband and the homemaker wife. The New Right see this family as 'natural' and based upon biological differences between men and women.

The New Right argue that the decline of the traditional nuclear family and the growth of family diversity are the cause of social problems such as higher crime rates and educational failures.

The New Right oppose most of the changes in family patterns we have looked at over the past few weeks.

### **3 things they disapprove of:**

1. They see lone-parent families as unnatural and harmful. Lone parent mothers cannot discipline their children properly, they are a burden on the welfare state and they leave boys without a male role model- which could lead to higher rates of delinquency and threatening social stability.

2. They disapprove of mothers going out to work- they believe mothers should make caring for their family their first priority.
3. Marriage is an essential basis for creating a stable environment in which to bring up children – cohabitation and divorce as a family instability by making it easier to avoid commitment and responsibility.

### **BENSON:**

He found that nearly 3000 mothers had become lone parents during the 1<sup>st</sup> 3years of their child's life. However, the rate of family breakdown was much lower among married couples.

The New Right argue that family breakdown increases the risks to children. **Amato's** finding support this; he found that children in these families face greater risks of poverty, educational failure, crime and health problems, as well as an increased chance of future family breakdown when they become adults themselves.

Critics argue that it may not be marriage as such that provides protection against family breakdown, but the degree of commitment- those who are more committed at the beginning may be more likely to marry and stay together.

The New Right argue that family breakdown and the increase in number of lone parents have led to more spending on welfare benefits. As this has to be paid for out of public funds, it places a bigger tax burden on us and acts as perverse incentives.

### **3 other criticisms**

1. Feminist **Anne Oakley** argues that the New Right wrongly assume that husbands and wives roles are fixed by biology.
2. Feminists also argue that the nuclear family favoured by the New Right is based on the patriarchal oppression of women and is a cause of greater inequality.
  - a. It prevents women working, keeps them financially dependent on men, and denies them an equal say in decision-making.
3. There is little or no evidence that lone parent families are part of a 'dependency culture', nor that their children are more likely to be delinquent than those brought up in a 2 parent family of the same social class.

### **CHESTER- THE NEO CONVENTIONAL FAMILY**

Chester argues that the only important change in family diversity is a move from the dominance of the traditional or conventional nuclear family, to the neo-conventional family.

*The conventional family is the type of nuclear family described by New Right + Parsons (the male breadwinner and female homemaker)*





*The neo-conventional family is a dual earner family in which both spouses go out to work*

Chester argues that most people are not choosing to live in alternatives to the nuclear family on a long-term basis, and the nuclear family remains the ideal to which most people aspire.

Chester also argues that many people are not part of a nuclear family and this is due to the life cycle, people who are not in a nuclear family were either part of one in the past, or will be in the future.

Statistics on household composition are a misleading snapshot of where everyone is in that moment of time, it doesn't show us the fact that most people will spend a majority of their lives in a nuclear family.

The difference between Chester's view and the Functionalist view is that Chester sees a change from a conventional to a neo-conventional nuclear family- where both spouses play the instrumental or breadwinner role.

### THE RAPOPORTS

They identified 5 different types of family diversity today:

1. **Organisational diversity:** The differences in the way family roles are organised, e.g. some couples joint conjugal roles and some separated.
2. **Cultural diversity:** Different cultural, religious, ethnic groups have different family structures e.g. high proportion of female-headed families among African-Caribbean households.
3. **Social class diversity:** Differences in family structure are partly the result of income differences between households.
4. **Life stage diversity:** Differ according to the stage reached in the lifecycle e.g. newlyweds, couples with children, retired couples etc.
5. **Generational diversity:** Older and younger generations have different attitudes and experiences that reflect the historical periods in which they have lived.

### Postmodernity and the life course

Life course analysis	Family practices	Postmodernism + diversity
The idea that there is flexibility and variation in people's lives. Life course analysis focuses on individual family members and how they make their choices. Hareven uncovers these meanings to understand people's	<b>Morgan</b> uses the concept of 'family practises' to describe the routine actions through which we create our sense of 'being a family member' such as feeding the children. Family practises are influenced by the beliefs we have about our rights +	Postmodernists argue that we no longer live in the modern world with ordinary structures; we have entered the 'chaotic postmodern stage'. In postmodern society, family structures are fragmented and individuals have much

<p>choices about family life and relationships by using in-depth, unstructured interviews with family members.</p> <p>The life course analysis has two strengths which are that it focuses on what family members consider important rather than what sociologists may regard as important. It is also suitable in studying families today as there is more choice about personal relationships and more family diversity.</p>	<p>obligations in family e.g. some men may see feeding the kids as the wife's job.</p> <p>The concept of family practises thus allows us to see why conflict may exist within families- because different members may hold different beliefs or expectations about each other's responsibilities. Morgan argues that the idea of family practises gets us 'closer to the realities of everyday experience' of family life than structural approaches such as functionalism. Individuals are much freer to choose how they organise their relationships.</p>	<p>more choice in their lifestyles, personal relationships and family arrangements.</p> <p>Advantages and disadvantages are: Individuals have greater freedom to plot their own life course- to choose the kind of family and personal relationships to meet their needs.</p> <p>There is greater freedom of choice in relationships means a greater risk of instability, since these relationships are more likely to break up.</p>
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The difference between the functionalist view and Morgan's view is that functionalists see the family as a clear-cut distinct structure separate from other aspects of society whereas Morgan argues that today's society becomes more fragmented, networks family, e.g. friendship and other kinds of relationships become less clear cut and boundaries between them become blurred.

**Morgan** does not reject structural theories altogether. Life courses and family practises are the actions of individuals; they take place in the context of wider social structures and norms.

These may still exert an influence over family members expectations and actions e.g. gender norms and differences in job opportunities in wider society may dictate that males must be the breadwinners and women the homemakers, and this will influence individuals expectations of each other within the family.

### Giddens: Choice and Equality

The family and marriage have been transformed by greater choice and a more equal relationship between men and women.

2 reasons that have made this transformation occur are:

1. Contraception has allowed sex and intimacy rather than reproduction to be main reason of relationships.

2. Women have gained independence as a result of feminism and cos of opportunities in work and education.

The basis of marriage and the family has changed into one in which the couple are free to define their relationship themselves, rather than simply acting our roles that have been defined in advance by laws or tradition, e.g. a couple nowadays can choose to cohabit rather than marry.

**Giddens** describes this relationship as the pure relationship.

Couples stay together compared to the past because of love, happiness and sexual attraction, rather than because of tradition, a sense of duty and for the sake of the kids.

Giddens is aware that with more choice, personal relationships become less stable.

### Weeks

Weeks identifies a long-term shift in attitudes since the 1950s, sexual morality has become largely a matter of personal choice. The church and state have lost much of their power to influence morality.

There is a growing acceptance of sexual and family diversity, especially by under 35s.

Weeks is still aware that despite changing attitudes, family patterns continue to be fairly traditional.

### Becks

He argues that we live in a 'risk society' where tradition has less influence and people have more choice. Today's risk society contrasts with an earlier time when roles were more fixed and people had less choice in how to live their lives.

This traditional patriarchal family was unequal and oppressive, it provides a stable and predictable basis for family life by defining each member's role and responsibilities.

The patriarchal family has been undermined by:

- Greater gender equality:
  - Challenged male domination in all spheres of life. Women expect equality in work and marriage.
- Greater individualism:
  - Where peoples actions are influenced more by calculations of their own self interest than by a sense of obligation to others.

These trends have led to the negotiated family. These families do not conform to the traditional family norm, but vary according to the wishes and expectations of their members who decide what is best for them by negotiation.

The **negotiated** family is less stable because individuals are free to leave if their needs are not met.

People turn to the family as a haven of security.

### Stacey

Stacey argues that greater choice has benefitted women by enabling them to free themselves from patriarchal oppression and shape their family arrangements to meet their needs.

Stacey found that women rather than men have been the main agents of changes in the family. Many women she interviewed had rejected the traditional housewife role.

### The divorce-extended family:

Stacey founded the divorce-extended family, which is where members are connected by divorce rather than marriage. The key members are usually female and may include former in-laws such as mother and daughter-in-law.

Thus as Morgan argues it is pointless trying to make large-scale generalisations about 'the family' as if it were a single thing, as functionalists do. Instead, sociologists ought to give more attention to how people create their own diverse family lives and practises.

## Topic 7: Social Policies

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Social policy refers to the plans and actions of government agencies, such as the health and social services, the welfare benefits system, schools etc.

Laws and policies can have both direct and indirect effects on the family:

- Direct effects:
  - Some policies are aimed specifically at family life e.g. laws on marriage, divorce, child protection etc.
- Indirect effects:
  - Policies on other social or economic issues also affect the family e.g. compulsory schooling provides childcare for working parents but also keeps children dependent financially for longer.

### Functionalism

Functionalists see society as built on harmony and consensus and free from major conflicts. They see the state as acting in the interests of society as a whole and its social policies as being for the good of all. Functionalists see policies as helping families to perform their functions more effectively and make life better for their members.

Fletcher supports this as he argues that the introduction of health, education and housing policies in the years since the industrial revolution has gradually led to the development of a welfare state that supports the family in performing its functions more effectively.

Functionalists have been criticised in two ways:

1. It assumes that all members of the family benefit from social policies, whereas **feminists** argue that policies often benefit men at the expense of women.
2. It assumes that there is 'march of progress', with social policies steadily making family life better whereas **Marxists** argue that policies can also turn the clock back and reverse progress previously made e.g. by cutting welfare benefits.

### New Labour

New Labour politicians have made statements supporting the traditional family, e.g. New Labour favours strengthening the institution of marriage and regards a family headed by a married couple as normally the best place in which to bring up children.

The New Labour takes a more positive view of the social policy than the New Right and believes that certain kinds of state intervention can improve life for families.

Two policies that New Labour has introduced that are at odds with the New Right view:

1. New Labour changed the law on adoption to give unmarried cohabiting couples, including gay couples, the right to adopt on the same basis as married couples.
2. New Labour's welfare, taxation and minimum wage policies have been partly aimed at lifting children out of poverty by redistributing income to the poor through higher benefits, whereas the New Right disapprove of income redistribution through increased benefits.

The New Labour's views have been criticised- many of New Labour's main anti-poverty benefits such as Working Families Tax Credit, are means tested rather than being universal benefits available to everyone like child benefits.

### The New Right

They see the traditional nuclear family, with its division of labour between a male provider and a female homemaker, as self-reliant and capable of caring for its members. In their view, social policies should therefore avoid doing anything that might undermine this 'natural' self-reliant family.

- The New Right criticise many existing government policies for undermining the family. In particular, they argue that governments often weaken the family's self-reliance by providing generous welfare benefits; including providing

council housing for unmarried teenage mothers and cash payments to support lone-parent families.

- Charles Murray feels these benefits offer perverse incentives.
- A second reason is that providing council housing for young unmarried mothers may encourage teenage girls to become pregnant.
- The third reason is that more boys grow up without a male role model, they may be responsible for rising crime rates among young males.
- Social policy has a major impact on family roles and relationships as it can encourage a dependency culture.
- The New rights solutions? They argue that the policy must be changed, with cuts in welfare spending and tighter restrictions on who is eligible for benefits. This would have advantages:
  - Cutting benefits would mean that taxes could also be reduced, and both these changes would give fathers more incentive to work and provide for their families.
  - Denying council housing to unmarried teenage mothers would remove one incentive to become pregnant young.

## Feminism

Feminists take a conflict view.

They see society as patriarchal/male dominated, benefiting men at women's expense. They argue that all institutions, including the state and its policies, help to maintain women's subordinate position and the unequal gender division of labour in the family.

If normal families are based on marriage and offers benefits and tax incentives to married couples and not cohabiting couples, it would encourage marriage and discourage cohabitation.

This creates a 'self-fulfilling' prophecy, making it more difficult for people to live in other family types than the one that policy-makers assume they live in.

### LAND

She argues that social policies often assume that the ideal family is the patriarchal nuclear family with a male provider and female homemaker, along with their dependent children.

### LEACH

Leach calls this the 'cereal packet norm' because it is the kind of family that often appears in advertisements for breakfast cereals.

These policies reinforce existing patriarchal roles and relationship e.g. tax and benefits policies may assume that husbands are the main wage earners and that wives are their financial dependents. This can make it impossible for wives to claim social security benefits, since their husbands are expected to provide reinforces

dependence, also, courts may assume that women should have custody of children in divorce cases because they are seen as the 'natural' carers.

### **LEONARD**

Leonard argues that even when policies appear to support women, they may still reinforce the patriarchal family and act as a form of social control over women.

Maternity leave policies benefit women and reinforce patriarchy. Maternity leave is more generous than paternity leave. This encourages the assumption that the care of infants is the responsibility of mothers rather than fathers. Child benefit is paid to mother – assumes child welfare is her responsibility; but allows women not to be dependent on the man.

The feminist view of social policy has been criticised as not all policies are directed at maintaining patriarchy, e.g. equal pay and sex discrimination laws, benefits for lone parents, refuges for women escaping domestic violence and equal rights to divorce could all challenge the patriarchal family.

### **DREW**

She uses the concept of gender regimes to describe how social policies in different countries can either encourage or discourage gender equality in the family and at work, she identifies two types of gender regime following different types of family policies, which are familistic gender regimes and individualistic gender regimes.

## **Marxism**

Capitalist society contains two classes- capitalists and workers. The dominant capitalist class owns the means of production, such as factories, machinery etc, while the working class owns nothing but its labour power. The workers must sell their labour to the capitalists in return for wages. This enables the capitalists to exploit the workers, making profits by paying them less than the value of what they produce.

Marxists do not see social policies as benefiting all members of society equally. They see the state and its policies as serving capitalism, e.g. they see the low level of state pensions as evidence that once workers are too old to produce profits, they are maintained at the lowest possible cost.

Improvements in policies for the working-class have been won through class struggle to extract concessions from the capitalist ruling class.

These improvements have been lost, when Mrs Thatchers government made major cuts to public services.

Marxists also argue that some policies affecting families have also come about because of the needs of capitalism- during the second world war when large numbers of male workers went to war, women were needed as a reserve army of

labour to fill the vacant jobs in the factories. When the men returned, women were no longer needed so nurseries were closed.

### **Donzelot**

He argues that social workers, health visitors and doctors use their knowledge to control and change families. Poor/working class families are watched more closely as they are seen as a 'problem' in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Donzelot rejects the 'march of progress' view that social policy and the professionals who carry it out have created a better, freer or more humane society. Instead he agrees with other conflict theorists that social policy is a form of state control of the family.

### **Condry**

The state may seek control and regulate family life by imposing compulsory parenting orders through the courts. Parents of badly behaved children may be forced to attend parenting classes to learn the correct way to bring up their children.

He has been criticised in many ways. Marxists and Feminists criticise Donzalot for failing to identify clearly who benefits from such policies of surveillance. Marxists argue that social policies generally operate in the interests of the capitalist class, while feminists argue that men are the main beneficiaries.