



example, note '16% of all violent incidents were incidents of domestic violence'. They also report just over two-thirds (67 per cent) of the victims of domestic violence were women.

Postmodern perspectives, on the other hand, tend to view family groups in **individualistic** terms – as arenas in which people play out their personal narratives, as it were. In this sense, we can identify two basic forms of individualistic experience:

- **Choice**, in the individual sense of the word, whereby people are increasingly able to make decisions about their behaviour – from the basic choice of whether or not to form a family group to the variety of extended choices now available in terms of how people express their 'lived experiences' in family relationships. Think, for example, about the multitude of different family forms and relationships in our society – from childless couples, through step-families, to gay couples with children and beyond. This notion of choice links into the idea of:
- **Pluralism** as the defining feature of postmodern societies. In other words, such societies are increasingly characterised by a plurality of family forms and groups which coexist – sometimes happily and sometimes uneasily. Within this context of family pluralism, therefore, Postmodernists argue it's pointless to make judgements about family forms (in the way we've seen other sociological perspectives make such judgements about the form and function of family groups). From this perspective therefore, each family unit is, in its own way unique and involves people working

out their personal choices and lifestyles in the best ways they can.

As **Judith Stacey** ('Fellow Families?', 2002) puts it when discussing same-sex relationships, 'Under the postmodern family condition, every family is an alternative family.' Because of this uniqueness, as we have seen in the previous section, one of the problems we encounter when discussing families is the difficulty involved in trying to precisely define this group; exclusive definitions appear much too narrow and restrictive, in the sense they generally fail to account for all types of family structures, whereas inclusive definitions may be so widely drawn in terms of what they include as a family as to be somewhat less than useful for students of AS Sociology (and their teachers, come to that). In this respect, **David Elkind** ('Waaah, Why Kids Have a Lot to Cry About', 1992) has suggested the transition from modern to postmodern society has produced what he terms the **permeable family** which, he notes, 'encompasses many different family forms: traditional or nuclear, two-parent working, single-parent, blended, adopted child, test-tube, surrogate mother, and co-parent families. Each of these is valuable and a potentially successful family form'. In this respect he argues: 'The Modern Family spoke to our need to belong at the expense, particularly for women, of the need to become. The Permeable Family, in contrast, celebrates the need to become at the expense of the need to belong.'

While Elkind doesn't necessarily see this latter state – the idea individual needs and desires override our sense of responsibility to others (and, in some respects, the 'denial of