

## Key Ideas

## Diversity

**Changing patterns over time:** Be aware of historical changes in family structure (the "Fit Thesis". The idea of a "close (functional) fit" between structure of the family and industrialisation - Parsons and Goode.

- The process of industrialism (i.e. the change from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial society)
- The difference between: Feudalism and Capitalism (in Marxist terms, the idea of different "Modes of Production").
- Basic theory:

Extended family structures characteristic of feudal, pre-industrial, society  
Nuclear family = characteristic of modern, industrial, society

- Main Reason = Lack of geographic mobility.
- Criticisms of this theory (for example, Laslett and Anderson)
- Empirical evidence - the pre-industrial family in Britain = mainly nuclear, not extended - therefore, Functionalist theory is incorrect (note that Parsons developed his version of the fit thesis without using empirical evidence).
- Did majority live long enough to experience "old age"?

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Families and Households

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- Social class = important variable in relation to family structures and industrialisation: Diversity before, during and after industrialisation:
  - a. Upper classes kept a mainly extended form (Lupton and Wilson)
  - b. Working classes - extended form in first stages of industrialisation.
  - c. Middle class families were predominantly nuclear in form.
- Continuing importance of "modified extended family and kinship structures" in industrialised societies (family groups maintain social and economic contacts. (E.g. Wilmott and Young).
- O'Day: Changes in pre-industrial family life related to Capitalism, not industrialisation.
- Gomm: Continued importance of extended family networks for upper classes in modern society. Use of modified extended family by working class (reciprocal services).
- Nuclear family core in modern society, serviced by extended structures.
- Extended households common in pre-industrial society (all classes).
- Patriarchal nature of pre-modern family life.
- Concepts of symmetry and patriarchy significant here

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**Types of family diversity** (R.and R.Rappoport)

- Organisational (e.g. division of family labour)
- Class (between different social classes)
- Cultural (between different ethnic cultures)
- Life-course (e.g. differences in family relationships at different stages in an individual's life)
- Cohort (e.g. generational differences in family life / experience)
- Is there a "typical family structure" in any society?
- Most societies typified by diversity of family structures and forms.
- General worldwide increase in single-parent family structures: Causes:
- Death; Divorce (where allowed) / Separation / Desertion; Choice (lifestyle choice?); Decline in religion (morality?); Removal of social stigma
- Chester (Neo-conventional Family): Even in diversity, majority spend some of their life in a conventional nuclear family arrangement.
- Single-income and dual-income families - may be nuclear, but involve very different relationships and experiences.

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- Marital status as form of diversity (marriage, common-law marriage, cohabitation)
- Significance of divorce
- Structural alternatives to "Conventional family structures":
- Examples include (see Haralambos):
  - ✓ The Nayer of Malabar (India - but no longer in existence).
  - ✓ Kibbutzim in Israel since 1950's
  - ✓ Communes in America (e.g. Alternative lifestyles in 1960's)
  - ✓ Soviet Communes in the 1920's.
- Household Communities (e.g. group of nuclear families living as "community" in large house).
- Note: with the exception of Household Communities (who may not really qualify as a structural alternative, as such) and Kibbutzim, alternative family structures not long-lived or very successful in long-term. Be aware, also, of changing nature of Kibbutz life.

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