



Prifysgol
Y Drindod
Univers
Trinity Saint



ECAY6005 Relationships, Communication and Families in Contemporary Society

Key Concepts – Families & Households

2024

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



www.uwtsd.ac.uk

Representations of what Constitutes 'Family' in 21st Century

- Involves an understanding of;
 - Politics
 - Society
 - Culture
 - Religion
 - Sexual orientation
 - Age
 - Class

Equalities Act 2010

Group Task – 21st Century 'Happy Families'

- Think of the 'traditional' game Happy Families



Group Task – 21st Century 'Happy Families'

- Think of the 'traditional' game Happy Families



Group Task – 21st Century 'Happy Families'

- You have been asked to modernise this game.
- What changes would you need to make to make the game representative of the 21st Century family?

Definitions of a family



Definitions of Family: 1949

- The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction.
- It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting couple
- (Murdock, 1949)

Definitions of Family: 1987

- A network of related kin
- (Goldthorpe, 1987)

Definitions of Family: 1992

- The family is the building block of society. It's nursery, a school, a hospital, a leisure place, a place of refuge and a place of rest
- It's the preparation for the rest of our life and women run it
- (Margaret Thatcher, 1992 cited in Steel, Kidd & Brown, 2011)

Definitions of Family: 1993

- A group of persons directly linked by kin connections, adult members of which assume responsibility of caring for children
- (Gittens, 1993).

Definitions of Family: 2009

- All the people we are related to by blood or marriage, the family of origin is the family we are born into
- (Lawson and Garrod, 2009)

Definitions of Family: 2011

- All the members of the family under one roof
- (Farlax, 2011)

Definitions of Family: 2011

- A set of parents and children, or of relations, living together or not
- (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2011)

What is the difference between a family and a household?



Definitions of Household: 2007

- A person living alone or a group of people who share the same address and share one meal a day and/or the living accommodation
- (Lawson and Garrod, 2001)
- Others might describe the above as being a 'family'

Definition of Household: 2011

- A household is a physical structure that can contain an individual or a social group that may or may not be considered a family, who co-reside, usually involving sleeping under the same roof and typically sharing a range of domestic activities.
- Thus, the concept of household directs attention towards everyday practical living arrangements.
- (Ribbens McCarthy & Edwards, 2011)

Family versus Household

- Family
 - A social group of some form
- Household
 - a group of people who share same address or living accommodation
- Again, these terms are politically charged and will be explored in more detail in later lectures

(Steel, Kidd & Brown, 2012)

Common Family Characteristics: Common Identity

- Separate individuals but part of a family group
- Continues despite distance and time
- Participation in family gatherings and family focused celebrations
- Family memories recalled, discussed and forged through new experiences, such memories are critical to identities
- (McKie & Callan, 2012, p. 21)

Common Family Characteristics: Economic Co-operation and Ownership

- Creation and allocation of resources across families, including:
 - Sharing money - earned income
 - Sharing money - from investment
 - Sharing money - benefits from governments
 - Goods, services, gifts of furniture, no cost care
-
- Economic cooperation is core to most families and interweaves members across generations and locations through everyday exchanges and legacies on the death of members
 - (McKie & Callan, 2012, p. 21)

Common Family Characteristics: Reproduction of the Next Generation

- Birth of children – usually a cause for celebration
- Responsible for health and well-being of children
- Major investment in the development and futures of children whether born, adopted or the joining of two families through marriage
- Relatives and friends play their part, child care etc.
 - Babysitting, transportation, support with homework, sports activities, listening ear
- Today, many more people are childless out of choice in comparison with a century ago.
- Households are also becoming childless as a result of children growing up, moving away or being estranged

(McKie & Callan, 2012, p. 21)

Common Family Characteristics: Care Work and Domestic Labour

- Individuals need provision of food, accommodation, place to sleep and basic hygiene
- Illness and wellbeing supported through interdependency
- Predominately, even in the 21st century
 - Still considered to be adult women and female children's work
 - Men may feel that they are being 'edged out' of the care of their families/children
- The sometimes blurred identities of, for example, man/father and women/mother lead to tensions and struggles between the individual and the myriad of roles they can inhabit

(McKie & Callan, 2012, p. 21)

Common Family Characteristics: Co-residence

- Living under the same roof is a qualification for immediate family membership, but the next generation of family members grow up and move out and then move back in
- In European middle-class households the concept of the 'Boomerang Generation' has been recognised
 - (Parker, 2012)
 - See: Parker, K (2012) The Boomerang Generation: Feeling OK about Living with Mom and Dad <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2012/03/PewSocialTrends-2012-BoomerangGeneration.pdf>

Changing Nature of Family: A Few Challenges

- The transition to parenthood being postponed as women pursue careers;
- Child-bearing more likely to be compressed into a small number of years and at a later age, especially among well-educated women;
- First births occurring as women approach the age of 30, and increasingly among middle-class women aged 40;
- Fertility rates declining in several countries*;
- Cohabitation rates increasing;
- Children increasingly experience transitions between different family living arrangements living with one parent or step-parents;
- More people are living alone

[ONS Conception and Fertility Rates](#) (No Date)

(Steel, Kidd and Brown, 2012)

Challenges to the Ideal Family Form

- 'The Case against perfection' (Sandel, 2004).
- Not just referring to physical perfection but also living 'perfect' lives
- Each era 'legitimises' a particular and often different 'version' of family which includes;
- The Identity of members
- And Rights and responsibilities
 - Towards children
 - Towards each other

(Coltrane & Collins, 2001)

The 'Ideal' Family?

- As recently as 2010 80% of Canadians considered that:
- 2 heterosexual parents plus children equals the ideal family
- Similar statistics in the USA
 - Husband, wife and children are the ideal family

(Ipsos Reid Poll, 2010)

Outside the Ideal

- Fewer considered that the following representations constituted a 'family':
 - Single-parent families
 - Married couples without children
 - Cohabiting couples with children

(Ipsos Reid Poll, 2010)

Families in the UK

- Families have undoubtedly changed
- The last 100 years have seen changes in legislation, technology, attitudes and expectations that have led to:
 - a massive feminisation of the workforce since the second world war;
 - widespread contraception leading to deferred decisions about the start of families; and
 - divorce, remarriage and cohabitation becoming much more acceptable.

(Roantree & Vira, No Date)

Family and Social Attitudes

- We have seen a relaxation of societal attitudes
- For example, it is no longer seen as unusual to be involved in a 'complicated' family structure
- Families no longer made up of married parents living with their children
- 7 in 10 households are still headed up by married couples
- But this is now declining

(ONS, No Date)

Families in the UK 21st Century

- Families are now a mix of;

Married/Civil
Partnership

- 2019 61.3%

Cohabiting parents

- 1960 2%
- 2019 16.3%

Stepfamilies

- 2 in 5 of all families

Single parent families

- 2019 22.3%

(ONS, No Date)

Assumptions Underlying the 'Ideal Family' Form versus Alternative Family Forms

Ideal Family Form	Alternative Family Forms	
Two parents	One parent; No parents;	Multiple parents
Married	Cohabiting; Planning to marry;	Staying single; Divorced
Heterosexual	Homosexual; Bisexual;	Non-sexual; Transsexual
Two biological parents	One or more social parent(s) through artificial insemination; Surrogacy;	Adoption; Foster care; Kinship (related headed household)
Co-resident	Part-time resident; Shared custody;	Visitation access to children
One (male) breadwinner	Dual earner couple; Job cycling in/out reverse role families Female as breadwinner; Male as primary caregiver	
Child care only by parents	Childcare by parents and/or relatives; Staff in child care centres or family day care homes;	Siblings; Neighbours; Members of the childcare cooperatives; Members of a collective community

Future Sessions

- Changing Parental Roles
- Divorce, Remarriage, Single parenthood and Cohabitation
- Same-Gender Families
- How Many 'Parents' are Too Many?
- Many Mothers, Many Fathers, Many Others: Insight into Other Cultures
- All About Relatives and Fictive Relatives
- Multiple Caregivers
- Depictions of Family in the Media: Beyond the 'Ideal' Family Form

Representations of What Constitutes 'Family' in 21st Century

- Family versus Household
- Politically charged
- 'family at the heart of policy agendas' since 2010
- Who is supported as a 'family'?
- Who is not supported as a 'family'?
- The positioning of Political Parties on 'families' linked to votes

(Steel, Kidd & Brown, 2012)

Task for Next Session

- Included below are the two web links to the Labour & Conservative manifestos; please take time to read through and consider how each party considers 'family'?
- What is considered a 'good' family?
- What is considered a 'bad' family?
- Bring your comments to the next session

<https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Real-Change-Labour-Manifesto-2019.pdf>

https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conervative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf

Reference List

- Coltrane, S. & Collins, R (2001) Sociology of Marriage & the Family: Gender, Love, and Property Wadsworth: Thomson Learning
- Conservative Party (2019) Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's Potential, Millbank, London: Conservative Party Available at: https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf [Accessed 08/09/2021]
- Equality Act (2010) Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf [Accessed 08/09/2021]
- Gittens, D (1993) The Family in Question: Changing Households and Familiar Ideologies, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Goldthorpe, JH (1987) Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Ipsos Reid (2010) All in the Family Available at: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/all-family> [Accessed: 08/09/2021]
- Labour Party (2010) It's Time for a Real Change London: Labour Party. Available at: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Real-Change-Labour-Manifesto-2019.pdf> [Accessed 08/09/2021]
- Lawson, T & Garrod, J (2001) Dictionary of Sociology, Chicago, Illinois: Hodder & Stoughton Educational.
- Lawson, T & Garrod, J (2009) A-Z Sociology Handbook, Deddington, Oxon: Philip Allan Updates.
- McKie, L & Callan, S (2012) Understanding Families: A Global Introduction, London: Sage.

Reference List

- Murdock, GP (1949) Social Structure, New York: Macmillan.
- OUP (2011) Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford: OUP.
- Parke, R.D. (2013) Future Families: Diverse Forms, Rich Possibilities, Chichester, Sussex: Wiley Blackwell.
- Parker, K (2012) The Boomerang Generation: Feeling OK about Living with Mom and Dad
<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2012/03/PewSocialTrends-2012-BoomerangGeneration.pdf> [Accessed 08/09/2021]
- ONS (No Date) Families Available at:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families> [Accessed 08/09/2021]
- Ribbens McCarthy, J & Edwards, R (2011) Key concepts in Family Studies, London: Sage.
- Roantree, B. & Vira, K (No Date) The rise and rise of women's employment in the UK: IFS Briefing Note BN234 IFS
Available at: <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/BN234.pdf> [Accessed 08/09/2021]
- Sandel, M. J. (2004) 'The Case Against Perfection' in The Atlantic April 2004 Issue. Available at:
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2004/04/the-case-against-perfection/302927/> [Accessed 08/09/2021]
- Steel, L, Kidd, W & Brown, A (2012) The Family, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.