

A LEVEL SOCIOLOGY

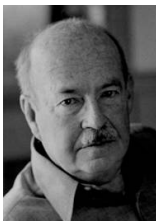
SUMMER TASK - FAMILIES & HOUSEHOLDS

Welcome to A Level Sociology and thank you for choosing this unique subject. We have a lot to learn, so to get you started, we have devised some summer work that will compliment your studies in September. We hope you enjoy completing the tasks, and look forward to your submissions in September.

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY:

Write down a definition of the nuclear family:

MODERNIST/FUNCTIONALIST VIEWS OF THE FAMILY:



Talcott Parson's theory of the nuclear family:

Modernists such as Parson's see the nuclear family as the 'best' family type in order to meet the needs of modern society and create social stability.

He argues that the nuclear family performs 2 functions:

- Socialising children into the shared values and norms of society so they know what is and isn't acceptable.
- To create stability for adults-the nuclear family is where adults can relax and release tensions so they can return to work feeling refreshed which will benefit the economy.

Activity:

Now watch the following clip on YouTube and write down the key arguments of the modernist perspective and answer the following questions:

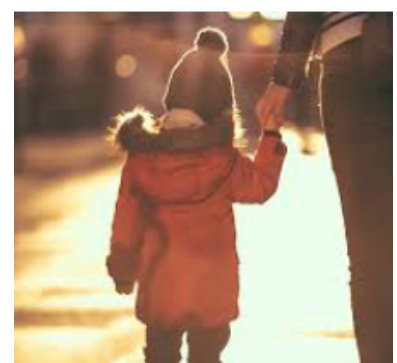
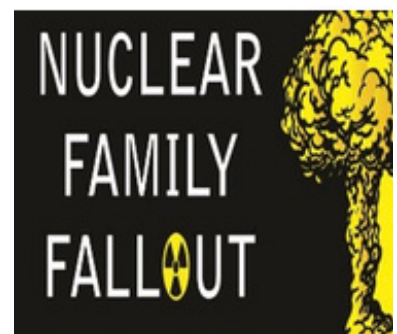
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWPNrxW2sZw>

1. Which 2 types of society did Parson's identify?
2. What does he mean by family being a 'functional fit' in society?
3. Identify and name the features of pre-industrial society.
4. Identify and name the features of modern society.
5. Identify 2 criticisms of this approach.

Key words:

SOCIALISATION, GEOGRAPHICALLY MOBILE, SOCIALLY MOBILE WORKFORCE

Can you look these words up and write down the definitions?



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The New Right:

Charles Murray and the traditional nuclear family:

New Right thinkers like Charles Murray believe the traditional nuclear family consisting of a clear cut division of labour between the breadwinner (husband) and homemaker (wife) is the only normal or 'natural' family type. The nuclear family is the cornerstone of society and a place of contentment and harmony for its members.

They argue that the decline of the nuclear family has created family diversity and along with this, we now have many social problems.

Activity:

Now, watch the following clip on YouTube and answer the following questions based on the New Right approach:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pi0TtvJ2D0U>

1. Identify a comparison between Parson's view of the family and the New Right view of the family.
2. What do New Right thinkers believe the nuclear family is based on in terms of men and women's roles?
3. Name one social problem identified as a cause of the decline in the nuclear family.
4. How does the welfare state contribute to a breakdown of the nuclear family according to the New Right and what is their solution?
5. What other examples do they give of the problems caused by the breakdown of the nuclear family? Can you think of more? E.g lone parents in poverty.

Key words:

DEVIANT, THE WELFARE STATE, DELINQUENT, FEMINISM, OPPRESSIVE

Can you look these words up and write down the definitions?

What do you think of these ideas?

Write down your thoughts of these 2 approaches and whether you agree with their arguments and why:

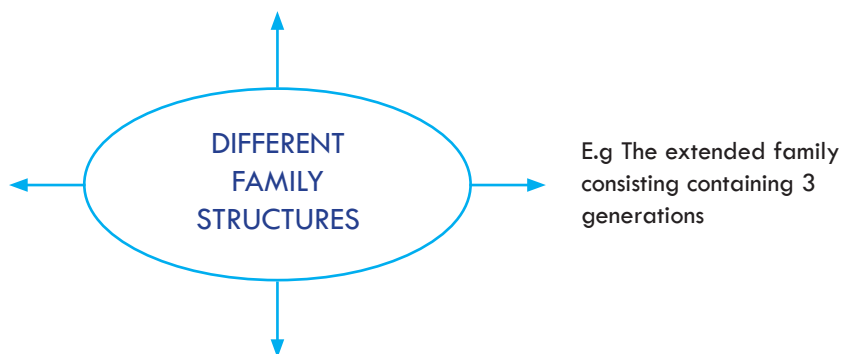
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THE POSTMODERNIST APPROACH TO THE FAMILY:

- Postmodernist sociologists believe we live in a new era of 'Postmodernity'
- The key feature of our society now is that we are no longer dictated to by the gender, social class, ethnic background we have
- We can choose and make our own identity and family structures so we can no longer generalise people's experiences of the family. We have more freedom and laws to give us choice!

Activity:

1. Create a mind map of all the different types of family structures you can think of:



2. Now complete the grid, listing all the different family structures you have identified and write down their definitions and give some reasons as to why they have become popular:

FAMILY TYPE	DEFINITION	REASON
Lone Parent family	Families containing only one parent with his/her child(ren)	

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LAWS THAT HAVE INCREASED FAMILY DIVERSITY:

- The Divorce Reform Act
- The Sex Discrimination Act
- The Equal Pay Act
- Same-Sex Marriages Act
- Civil-Partnership Act
- Adoption Law

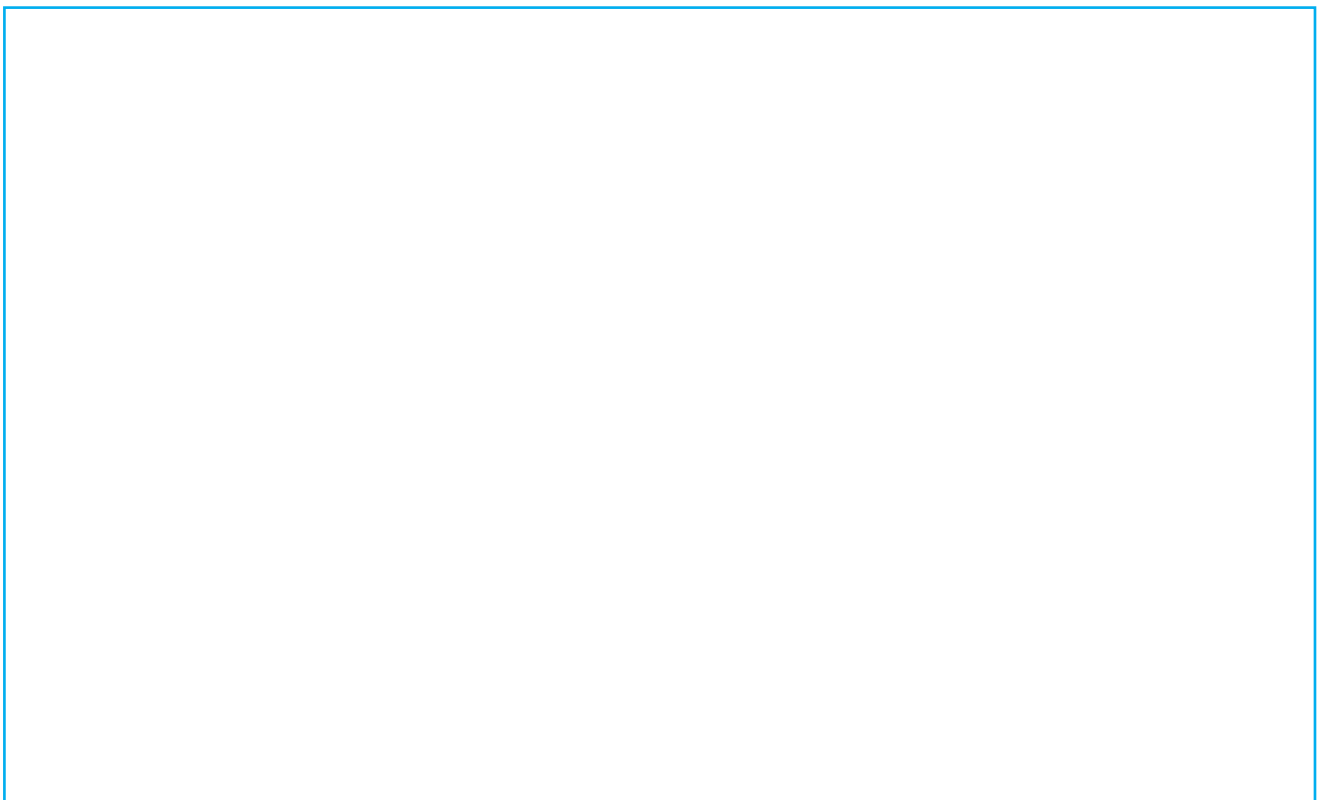
OTHER CHANGES INCLUDE:

- Decline in stigma and a change in people's attitudes towards alternatives to marriage and the nuclear family
- Declined influence of religion (secularisation)
- Impact of feminism

Activity:

Create a political poster from a 'New Right' perspective highlighting the dangers of increasing family diversity. Look at the social issues linked with families further in this booklet and use this link to get ideas:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/families-new-right>



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Activity:

Read the following articles from the BBC news and The Guardian and highlight the key statistics and points:

BBC NEWS

THIRD OF FAMILIES NON-TRADITIONAL

About five million parents in the UK live in a non-traditional family set-up, a survey has suggested.

Two-thirds of parents are married and cohabiting and live with children only from that relationship. The other third are single parents or live with a partner and children from a previous relationship, Mintel found.

The non-traditional set-up is more common among younger parents, at 48% of those aged 16-24. Single mothers make up 51% of that age group.

“Family structures can be very complicated, with children from several relationships being involved”

Angela Hughes
Mintel



MONEY WORRIES

Among young parents, 10% live with a partner and have children from a previous relationship. The Marketing to Families report also found a link between family set-up and financial and social position.

Of the more affluent AB socio-economic group, 18% live in a non-traditional family.

In the E group, dependent on state benefits, the corresponding figure is 70%.

Bills worry 16% of those in traditional families and 27% of non-traditional.

Mintel said family life had changed dramatically, with some changes causing extra stress and strain.

Spokeswoman Angela Hughes said:

“The rising divorce rate, coupled with the growing trend for serial monogamy can mean that family structures can be very complicated, with children from several relationships being involved in step-families,”

The study was based on a survey in May of 1,151 parents with children under 18 who lived with them.

NUMBER OF COHABITING COUPLES RISES, ONS FIGURES SUGGEST

Couples living together without being married is the fastest-growing type of family in the UK, official figures show.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data suggests the number of people who cohabit has doubled to 2.9 million since 1996.

This includes both heterosexual partners and same-sex couples who have not had a civil partnership ceremony.

There are 12.2 million married couples, down 457,000 over the same period. The statistics were contained in the Labour Force Survey - a study of households in the UK - which encompassed 102,421 individuals in 43,642 homes between April and June 2012.

Key words:

SERIAL MONOGAMY

Write down a definition of this word

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MARRIAGE AGE

The number of people aged 35 to 44 who cohabit increased from 7% to 15%.

“This may be related to the increasing age at marriage,” the report stated.

Its findings included:

- About 7.6 million people live alone in the UK, 4.2 million of them working age adults
- There were 18.2 million families in the UK in 2012
- England and Wales has one of highest rates of childless women in the EU at 19% compared to 10% in France, 12% in Spain, 5% in Portugal and 15% in both Sweden and Greece
- The number of 45- to 64-year-olds living alone has increased from 1.59 million to 2.42 million. Most are men

LONE PARENTS

Some 38% of married couples have dependent children, and 39% of cohabiting different-sex couples have dependent children.

The report notes: ***“Although married couples are more likely to have children than cohabiting couples, they tend to be older on average than their cohabiting counterparts so children may be older and have left home.”***

“Cohabiting couples are more likely to be in the right age groups for childbearing.

“These two competing factors of age and likelihood of childbearing mean that a very similar percentage of married couples and opposite-sex cohabiting couples have dependent children.”

There are now two million lone parents in the UK, up from 1.6 million, the survey suggests.

Some 29% of households are made up of only one person, while almost 20% are families of four or more people.

CRITICS HAVE ALSO DISCOVERED THE FOLLOWING SOCIAL PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FAMILY:

- The lack of male role models for young boys growing up in mother headed lone parent families
- The poor quality of parenting, as parents lack the skills to bring up their children properly
- The rise of cohabitation, with more couples choosing to live together without getting married, raising concerns over the long-term security of children
- The growing numbers of elderly, and the strains this puts on the family
- The way the poorest families pass on a culture of dependency, bringing up their children in a culture where living off welfare benefits provides an acceptable way of life
- The high level of teenage pregnancies in the UK- the highest in Europe
- Child poverty, with 4 million children around 30 percent of all children in the UK living in poverty in 2008-9

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THE GUARDIAN

MODERN FAMILY:

CAN MARKETERS CATCH UP WITH CULTURE?

While television shows celebrate the diversity of modern families, marketers are yet to embrace the broader landscape



Whether you look to population polls or popular TV for your socio-cultural trends, one thing is clear: the nuclear family has been nuked.

Around the globe, we're witnessing an explosion of new family structures. In the US, cohabitation has doubled since 1990 and 41% of births are to unmarried women. Twice as many Britons have mixed-ethnic parentage compared with a single ethnic background. And in Australia, nearly half of same-sex couples are raising two or more children. As USA Today said:

"Whatever a traditional family used to be, it is no longer."

Global TV culture deserves a lot of credit for reflecting the changing face of family. From Modern Family in the US to Em Familia ("In Family") in Brazil, TV has brought the diversity and quirkiness of modern families to centre stage.

This much is clear – we're finally forming the family units we want, instead of the ones we've been told to. Yet, advertisers are among the last to embrace a broader family landscape. The global research and advisory company Stylus said:

"Brands still have some way to go in showcasing the diversity of the modern family."

Brands that depict non-traditional families earn higher equity marks

Acknowledging modern families is more than nice sentiment. The media group NBCUniversal's Brand Power Index, which measures consumer perception of 500 brands, found that brands that most accurately depict non-traditional families – like Dove, Oscar Mayer, Microsoft, and Samsung – have higher equity marks than brands that don't.

Activity:

Watch the following adverts and decide whether you think the nuclear family or diverse family structures are portrayed in the media today:

- Big Day Weetabix commercial
- McCain we are family advert

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJo9vnrnss>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ9fjN1az9g>



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Activity:

Can you find any other examples of the representation of the nuclear family and family diversity? E.g adverts, magazines, school books, billboards, TV programmes? Which type of family structure do you see more of?

Make a list:

Activity:

Now find an article from the following newspapers based on families in the UK and highlight the key points, trends/patterns and arguments presented and summarise your findings:

- 'The Guardian'
- 'BBC News'

Summary of key trend/patterns:

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Activity:

Producing a questionnaire.

Compile a short questionnaire aimed at people in your community to test the following hypothesis:

'THE NUCLEAR FAMILY IS NO LONGER THE NORM'

(please note: you are not expected to carry out the research, you are simply compiling 10 questions that you could ask)

Example:

1. How many individuals live in your household?

Activity:

Your final task is to produce a short presentation on whether you think the nuclear family is still the most dominant family structure today. Use all of the information from the tasks you have completed to draw your conclusions.

look forward to receiving your work in September!