

Dear Candidate, as per theme-based approach, please try to link the topics of Paper I with those of Paper II. This will not only facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the given topic but also enhance your analytical and articulation skills.

Paper I. Topic 5. (c) Gender Paper I. Topic 9. Systems of Kinship
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Paper II. B. (v). Systems of Kinship in India Paper II. C. (v). (b) Women's Movement Paper II. C. (vii). (c) Violence against women

References:

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- *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* by Madan and Majumdar
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Kinship

Kinship is one of the main organizing principles of human society. Kinship includes all forms of social relationships based on consanguineal (related by blood, common descent) and affinal ties (related by marriage).

Sanguine means blood; Consanguine implies common blood.

Consanguinity: A consanguine relationship is a kin relationship based on descent from a common (male or female) ancestor. However, the common ancestor, in fact, may be a social fiction, as is often the case with clans.

Clan: A clan encompasses people who assume shared descent from a common ancestor without being able to enumerate all of these links. For example, among the Pathans of Swat Valley, northern Pakistan, thousands of persons regard themselves as members of patrilineal Yusufzai clan, assuming by general consent that they are the descendants of the mythical Yusuf without being able to prove it. Thus, clans tend to be regarded as larger, less tightly incorporated groups than lineages. Please note that similar to clan is the ‘gotra’ kin group. A ‘gotra’ consists of a large number of cognates supposed to be descended from the same rishi-ancestor.

Lineage: A lineage may be described as a consanguineous unilineal decent group whose members trace themselves from a **known common ancestor**. A lineage is based on more precise and specific genealogy than a clan, of which it may be a subgroup. In other words, a lineage consists of persons who can indicate, by stating all the intermediate links, common descent from a shared ancestor. Thus, lineages are generally historically more shallow, and as a consequence small groups than clans.

Important: In this connection, it is necessary to point out that in determining consanguineous kinship it is not the biological fact that is important but social recognition. According to renowned social anthropologist W.H.R. Rivers, ***‘kinship is the social recognition of biological ties.’***

Dear Candidate, please note that in determining consanguineous kinship social recognition is more important than biological ties. Biological ties, if not socially recognized, then no kinship bond will exist, for example – in the case of illegitimate child. But, if social recognition is given to a relationship where no biological ties exist, even then kinship bond exists, for example – in the case of adopted child.

Among many primitive societies, the role of a father in birth of a child is unknown, as among the Trobriand Islanders of Melanesia for instance. Trobriands are a matrilineal society. They have an easygoing attitude to sex and encourage both men and women to take lovers. Trobriands have a relaxed approach to sex before and even after marriage. Trobriands believe that conception is the result of an ancestral spirit entering the woman's body. Babies are thought to be the result of magic with no link between sex and pregnancy. Even after a child is born, it is the mother's brother, not the father, who presents a harvest of yams to his sister so that her child will be fed with food from its own matrilineage, not the father's. Among them it is the wife's husband (formally accepted at present) who is conventionally accepted as father.

Amongst the polyandrous Todas of Nilgiri, until another brother makes the ceremonial presentation of a bow and arrow to the common wife, all children born to her of several brothers are regarded as the children of that brother who last performed the ceremony, even though he may have been away or dead for a long time. Here is an instance where ignorance of the biological role of fatherhood is not implied; only social recognition is shown to override biological fact. Among some African primitives, in case a husband dies, a woman assumes the role of father to the expected child of the wife of the deceased.

A universal example of the overriding nature of social recognition is the practice of adoption. An adopted child is everywhere treated as if it were one's own biologically produced offspring. So, in kinship, social recognition overrides biological facts.

Important: Lineage and descent are the two important concepts that help us to understand the social structure of a given society.

A **lineage** may be described as a **consanguineous unilineal descent group** whose members trace themselves from a known common ancestor. A lineage is based on more precise and specific genealogy than a clan, of which it may be a sub-group. In other words, a lineage consists of persons who can indicate, by stating all the intermediate links, common descent from shared ancestor. Thus lineages are generally historically more shallow, and as a consequence, smaller groups than clans.

Descent, in kinship terminology, implies a person's family origins. Descent concerns the tracing of relationships through succeeding generations, i.e., who has descended from whom. When social recognition is given to the biological descent, it gives rise to descent groups, for example, lineage, clan, etc.

----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

In a given society, lineage can either be traced unilineally or otherwise. **Unilineal descent** implies that descent is determined exclusively by either the father's line (patrilineal) or by mother's line (matrilineal).

Non-unilineal descent groups are grouped as **cognatic descent**, which are of following types:

❖ **Bilineal (Double Unilineal) descent:**

- both lines (father's as well as mother's lines are recognized but not symmetrically
- some resources are transmitted from the father's lineage, others through the mother's lineage
- the two lineages are kept separate. For example, Yako of Nigeria

❖ **Bilateral descent**

- both lines are recognized equally and symmetrically
- **it is a predominant feature of modern industrial societies**
- both parents transmit to their child

❖ **Ambilineal descent**

- in this case, the individual has a choice to decide which line he/she wants to identify with.
- for example, Samoan Islands in Pacific (studied by Margaret Mead)

❖ **Parallel descent**

- men transmit to their sons and women to their daughters
- for example, Saha tribe of Brazil (studied by James Safer)

❖ **Crossing/ Alternating descent**

- men transmit to their daughters, women transmit to their sons

Significance of lineage and descent in kinship and family:

[Dear Candidate, these points can also be used for explaining the significance or functions of kinship.]

1. Reproduction of society (incest taboo, endogamy, exogamy)

All human societies prohibit sexual relation between persons who are classified as closed blood kin, which includes at least the father-child, mother-child and siblings relationships. This does not of course mean that such relations do not occur, but rather that there is a norm prohibiting it. This universal rule is often spoken of as the **incest taboo**. Please note that the extension of incest taboos differ from society to society, and from religion to religion. Some anthropologists have pointed out the social advantages of the rule, including the expansion of the group through the inclusion of new members and the forging of alliances across kin boundaries. While others have pointed out that widespread incest would lead to biological degeneration through the transmission of inheritable disease.

Further all societies have prescriptions and proscriptions regarding who may or may not marry whom. In some societies, these restrictions are subtle while in others individuals who can or cannot be married are more explicitly and specifically defined. Forms of marriage based on rules governing eligibility/ineligibility of mates is classified as endogamy and exogamy. **Endogamy** requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he is already a member, as for example caste, religion or tribe, etc. Caste and religious endogamy are the most pervasive forms of endogamy. Most religious groups do not permit or like their members to marry individuals of other faiths. Endogamy is also a very important characteristic of the Indian caste system. **Exogamy**, on the other hand, requires the individual to marry outside of his own group. Exogamy refers to the rules of avoidance in marital relationship. Every community prohibits its members from having marital relationship with certain persons. The exogamy in one form or the other is practised in every community. Under this rule, marriage among close relatives especially kins and within the same clan is prohibited. For example, in China, the individuals who bear the same surname may not inter-marry. In Hindu marriage, gotra and sapinda are such exogamous groups.

2. Group membership

Kinship concerns much more than the reproduction of society and the transmission of cultural values and knowledge between the generations,

although these aspects are certainly important. Kinship also facilitates group formation. Thus, marriage assigns each mother a husband, and makes her children his children, thereby creating a special group of father, mother and children, which we call “family”.

3. Political function

Kinship can also be important in politics and in the management of everyday affairs. In many societies, a man needs support from both consanguineal kin (blood kin) and from affines (in-laws) in order to follow a successful political career. In societies, specially stateless ones, the kin group usually forms, along with locality, the basis for political stability and for the promotion of political interests.

4. Economic function

In many societies, family members join forces in economic investments. Among the Hindus of Mauritius, for example, it is common for groups of brothers and cousins to set up a join business. Although there may be no formal rule to the effect that one has to be related to run a business together, kinship can give a practical advantage. One can usually trusts ones relatives, since they are tied to one self through webs of strong normative obligations.

5. Social stability and social control

Inside the kin group, norms specify roughly how one is to behave towards different categories of kin. In other words, kinship usages also govern the role relationships between kin: that is, how one kinsman should behave in a particular kinsman’s presence, or what one kinsman owes to another. Kinship assigns guidelines for interaction between persons. It defines proper acceptable role relationship between father and daughter, between brother and sister, between son-in-law and mother-in-law, between fellow lineage members and clansmen. Kinship thus acts as a regularizer of social life and maintains the solidarity of social system. These norms prevent the dissolution of the group and ensure that people carry out their duties. The entire division of labour may thus be organized on kinship principle.

6. Inheritance and succession

Group membership, politics, reproduction and social stability have been mentioned as important aspects of kinship. A further important dimension of the kinship institution is its connection with inheritance and succession.

Both institutions are to do with the transmission of the resources from one generation to the next. Inheritance concerns the transmission of property, while succession refers to ‘the transmission of office’, transmission of specified rights and duties as ascribed statuses.

All societies have rules regulating who is to inherit what when someone dies, although these rules are often contested or interpreted in varying ways. There is no universal link between the kinship systems and rules of inheritance in societies. There are patrilineal systems of descent where men and women are equals in terms of inheritance, and there are systems which give priority to one of the genders, usually the male. In some societies the eldest son receives a larger part of the inheritance than his siblings (primogeniture); others follow the opposite principle and give priority to the youngest son (ultimogeniture). Whereas the corporate principle functions in an integrating way, inheritance is a source of potential disruption, since it reveals conflict of interests among the relatives. Rules of succession are often closely linked with the principle of descent. In patrilineal systems, a son (or a younger brother) will frequently take over the commitments of the deceased; in matrilineal systems, a man commonly succeeds his mother’s brother.

Important: Kinship serves two important and related purposes. Firstly, it serves to establish and maintain effective social group and secondly, it provides a way of transmitting status and property from one generation to the next.

In most societies where kinship connections are important, the rules of descent affiliate individuals with different sets of kin. Descent concerns the tracing of relationships through succeeding generations, i.e., who has descended from whom. Different societies follow different-different **rules of descent and inheritance**. Some of the important ones are mentioned in the following section in brief.

In most societies a child is regarded as the offspring of both parents, and so has relationships of kinship traced through both. Those kin traced through the father are termed **paternal** or **patrilateral**; those traced through the mother, **maternal** or **matrilateral**. The totality of matrilateral and patrilateral kin recognized by a person within a certain degree is sometimes termed his **kindred**.

Please note that biological descent (relations of consanguinity) can either be direct or shared. Kins related through direct descent (also known as unilineal descent i.e. tracing the descent either through male’s line or female’s line) are

called as lineals. **Lineal** kins are the direct ancestors and direct descendants of an individual (ego). For example, ego's parents, ego's grandparents, ego's great-grandparents, etc., and ego's children, ego's grandchildren, etc. However, when the descent is shared, it gives rise to **collateral** kin group. **Collaterals** are the other descendants of one's lineal kin (ego's parents' siblings, ego's siblings, ego's cousins, etc.).

Please note that kins related through unilineal descent can further be classified into agnate and uterine. An **agnate** is a relative whose relationship is traced through the male line of descent. Agnates constitute all the descendants of a common male ancestor. This system of descent is called as patrilineal system. A **uterine** is a relative whose relationship is traced through the female line of descent. Uterine kins constitute all the descendants of a common female ancestor. This system of descent is called as matrilineal system.

In contrast to unilineal descent, **non-unilineal descent** groups are grouped as **cognatic descent**. The classic way of defining consanguinity is in terms of common descent from ancestor. All the descendants of a common ancestor may be termed as **stock**. Thus an individual is a member of as many stocks as he recognizes ultimate lineal ancestors. Through his parents he is a member of two stocks, through his grandparents of four.... etc. A person is said to be a **cognate** of, or related cognatically to, all those people with whom he shares a common ancestor.

For some purposes, however, the descent criterion may be restricted to males, and only those descendants of a common ancestor in the male line will be recognized as kin. These are known as **agnatic** or **patrilineal** kin. If descent is traced through female exclusively for some purposes, then the descendants would be called **uterine** or **matrilineal** kin. These two modes of tracing descent are called unilineal: that is, they select one 'line' only, either the male or the female. These principles are not necessarily mutually exclusive within a society. It is possible, for example, for an individual to recognize all cognates as kin for some purposes, but to restrict recognition to agnates for some other purposes. Indeed, almost all kinship systems recognize bilateral relationship, i.e relationship to both maternal and paternal kin. Some societies, such as the Yako of Nigeria, utilize matrilineal descent for some purposes and patrilineal for other, thus achieving a system of **double unilineal descent**, known usually as **double-descent** for short.

Rules of inheritance tend to coordinate with the reckoning of descent in most societies, but not necessarily in a one- to- one manner. In fact, it is quite often the case that certain types of property pass from father to son, and other types from mother to daughter. In most parts of India, in the past, immovable property

such as land and housing was inherited only by sons. In the absence of sons, except under rare circumstances, by the nearest male relatives on the father's side. On the other hand, movable property in the form of cash and jewellery was given to the daughter at the time of her marriage, with a certain amount of jewellery also passing from the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law.

Until the passing of the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956**, two systems of inheritance dominated among patrilineal Hindus. In one system (called the **Mitakshara** school, adopted in most regions) a son has a vested interest in his father's ancestral property from the moment of his birth. The father cannot give away any part of this property to the detriment of his son's interest. Under the other system (the **Dayabaga** school, adopted in Bengal and Assam) the father is the absolute owner of his share and has a right to alienate his property the way he wants.

However with the passing of the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, a uniform system of inheritance has been established. The individual property of a male Hindu, dying intestate (having made no will), passes in equal shares between his son, daughter, widow and mother. Male and female heirs have come to be treated as equal in matters of inheritance and succession. Another important feature of the Act is that any property possessed by a female Hindu is held by her as her absolute property and she has full power to deal with it the way she likes. This Act has also given a woman the right to inherit from the father as well as from the husband. However the benefit conferred on a woman is limited when compared to the right of the male members who still have rights to coparcenary ancestral property by birth. Daughters are not part of the coparcenary and have no birthrights.

In addition:

Kinship is one of the main organizing principles of human society. Marriage is a link between the *family of orientation* and the *family of procreation*. This fact of individual membership in two nuclear families gives rise to kinship system. According to **Theodorson**, kinship may be defined as “a social relationship based upon family relatedness”. The relationship which may be **consanguineal** (based on blood) or **affinal** (based on marriage), determines the rights and obligations of related persons.

As such, kinship system is referred to as “a structured system of statuses and roles and of relationship in which the kin (primary, secondary, tertiary and distant) are bound to one-another by complex interlocking ties”. **G.P. Murdock** argues that kinship is merely a structured system or relationship in which individual are bound to one another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties. **Radcliffe-Brown** (*Structure and Function in Primitive Society*) looks at kinship system as a part of social structure and insists upon the study of kinship in terms of the rights and obligations of the individuals involved.

Every kinship system distinguishes between blood relatives (biologically related, actually or by social fiction), who are technically called consanguineal relatives, and relatives by marriage, technically called affinal relatives. Married couples may in some systems be related by blood, but they are always regarded as affinal relatives since the marriage bond is socially the most important bond between them. The various types of family therefore always include some affinal relatives. The only exception we know of is the Nayar *Taravad*, which consists of brothers and sisters, with the children of the sisters and of the women in successive generations. All these consanguineal relatives can live in the same household only because among the Nayars husband and wife do not live together for more than three days.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, ‘Kinship systems establish relationships between individuals and groups on the model of biological relationships between parents and children, between siblings, and between marital partners.’ Relationships established by marriage, which form alliances between groups of person related by blood (or consanguineous ties), are usually referred to as affinal relationship. Some social scientists make a distinction between the study of kinship and the study of affinity. It should be noted that actual biological relationships are not necessary for status within a kinship system to be established. For instance, it may be more important to establish that a child has a social father, who will take responsibility for its welfare and have a right to the product of its labour, than to find out who the biological father might be.

For example, the **Todas** of Nilgiri Hills who practiced fraternal polyandry, used to observe an interesting ceremony called **bow and arrow ceremony** to declare the paternity socially. In this ceremony, all brothers and the common wife used to assemble amidst the rest of the villagers in the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy of the wife and as a result of consensus one of the brothers used to present a set of bow and arrow to the wife. This was taken as declaration that this particular brother would be accepted as father of the coming child. In this way, the ‘social fatherhood’ overrides the ‘biological fatherhood’.

Kinship structure is a commonly used term in both sociological as well as anthropological literature. Structure means a more or less lasting pattern of social relationship. Thus, structure of kin groups refers to those persisting patterns of relations which form the basis of their organisation. **Robin Fox** in his major work *Kinship and Marriage* has identified certain conditions which have to be met by every kinship system in order to survive and sustain itself. He has called these conditions as **structural principles of kinship** because the manner in which these conditions are fulfilled shape the structure of the kinship system. These structural principles of kinship are: (i) men impregnate women, (ii) women bear the children, (iii) men control economic activity and (iv) incest taboo. According to Robin Fox, these four conditions have to be met by all kinship systems. He further argues that the way these conditions are met will determine the structure or pattern of relations in the kinship system.

Kinship Terms and Usages:

Kinship terms are used to designate and address a kin. **A.R. Radcliffe Brown**, the famous anthropologist, has observed that kinship terms indicate, among other things, classification of ego’s rights and duties. Prior to him, **L.H. Morgan**, pointed out that kinship terms provides the context and idiom for our social relationship. Kinship terms are technically classified in different ways, but there are two broad categories of the terms as given by Morgan: (i) Descriptive, and (ii) Classificatory.

The **Descriptive System** refers to a kinship system in which a single term refers to a particular relative and a specific kind of relationship of the ego (the person from whom the relationship is calculated) with her or him. For example, mother’s brother is referred to as *mama*, father’s brother as *chacha* etc. The **Classificatory System** uses kinship terms that merge or equate relatives who are genealogically distinct from one another. Here the same term is used for different kin. For example, in English, the term ‘grandfather’ includes both father’s father and mother’s father, brother-in-law applies to both wife’s and husband’s brother

and also sister's husband and so on. In Hindi, the term '*samdhi*' is used for both, daughter's father –in-law and son's father –in-law.

The North Indian kinship terminology is comparatively descriptive in the sense that it describes elementary relationships starting from the ego. In order to emphasise the patrilineal descent, the terms in the system make a clear-cut distinction between parallel and cross cousins, e.g., *bhatiji* - one's brother's daughter and *bhanji* - one's sister's daughter. In the South Indian kinship terminology there is relative stress on classificatory terminology. Here the same term *mama* includes mother's brother, father's sister's husband and wife's father. However, in most contemporary societies, both terms – descriptive and classificatory – are used.

Within each kin group there are certain reciprocal behavioural patterns. These behaviours, verbal or non-verbal constitute **kinship usages**. Relationships of avoidance, joking relationships and teknonymy are some of the usages which are almost universally practiced. In **relations of avoidance**, we find that certain relationships are of restricted nature. Such kins maintain a distance and avoid free interaction between themselves. A man's relationship with his son's wife or with his younger brother's wife is the example of this category of relationship. Certain other relationships are there in which opposite is the case. Interaction between them is intimate and frank and they have **joking relationship** including use to obscene and vulgar references. Joking relationship between a man and his wife's sister or between a woman and her husband's younger brother are very common. **Teknonymy** is yet another kinship usage. It was used in anthropology for the first time by Tylor. According to this usage, a kin is not referred to directly but he is referred to through another kin. A kin becomes the medium of reference between two kins. Thus, in traditional Hindu family a wife does not utter the name of her husband. She calls him through her son or daughter. For example, he is referred to by her as the father of Bittoo or Gudiya.

Kinship usages accomplish two major tasks. First, they create groups: special groupings of kin. Thus marriage assigns each mother a husband, and makes her children his children, thereby creating a special group of father, mother and children, which we call "family". The second major function of kinship usage is to govern the role relationships between kin: that is, how one kinsman should behave in a particular kinsman's presence, or what one kinsman owes to another. Kinship assigns guidelines for interactions between persons. It defines proper, acceptable role relationship between father and daughter, between brother and sister, between son-in-law and mother-in-law and between fellow lineage members and clansmen. Kinship thus acts as a regularizer of social life and maintains the solidarity of social system.

Dear Candidate, I often suggest to my students that even when a descriptive question is asked in the examination, you must try to make it analytical. For example, if a question is asked on kinship, then you can make it analytical in the following manner.

❖ **Analyze kinship in terms of both, its structure as well as its functions.**

Try to explain the changes taking place in the structure as well as the functions of kin groups (clan, lineages, etc.) in the contemporary context.

❖ **Kinship in simple societies:**

- Broad range kinship – clan, sib, kindred, etc.
- Social organisation is largely based on kinship
- Kinship performed multifarious functions – localized groups (co-residents), socio-economic cooperation, political function (eg., dispute settlement, leader selection, etc.)

❖ **Kinship in modern societies:**

- Narrow range kinship – lineages
- With high social and geographical mobility – mini-lineages (immediate *kins* act as a ‘functional group’)
- Limited functions – because in modern industrial society which is marked by *high division of labour* specialized institutions emerge to perform specialized functions
- Though kinship as a basis of group formation exists but its functional importance is declining – common attitudes, interests, class, etc., are increasingly emerging as the basis of group formation in modern societies – eg., whatsapp groups, facebook groups and other groups via social media

Dear Candidate, to make your answer theoretical, you can use theories of Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Ferdinand Tonnies, etc.

best wishes

The Kinship Map of India: Irawati Karve

Prof. Irawati Karve was the first sociologist who contributed to our understanding of the kinship structure of Indian society. In her monumental work “Kinship Organisation in India”, published in 1953, Irawati Karve found a correlation between the languages spoken in a particular region and the type of kinship system that existed in that region.

Irawati Karve divided India into three major linguistic zones and she found that kinship practices within each of these zones showed high degree of similarity while remarkable differences were to be found between the kinship systems of different zones. Please note that a linguistic region is one in which several languages belonging to one language family are spoken. She distinguished three linguistic regions in India. These regions are:

1. **Indo- European Linguistic Region** (where languages derived from Sanskrit are spoken, for example, Sindhi, Punjabi, Kashmir, Hindi, Bihari, Bengali, Assamese, and Nepalese, etc.)
2. **Dravidian Linguistic Region** (where dravidian languages such as Kannada, Telugu, Tamil, and Malyalam are spoken)
3. **Austro-Asiatic Linguistic Region** (constitutes of Mundari family of languages and Monkhmer family of languages)

* **Mundari family of languages:** those who speak Mundari are found in central and Eastern India, particularly the Chota Nagpur plateau region, for example, Orissa, North-West Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand etc.

* **Monkhmer family of languages:** it is found mostly outside India (except “Khasi” tribe), for example, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.

Based on these linguistic regions, Irawati Karve divided India into four kinship zones viz. (i) Northern Zone (ii) Central Zone, (iii) Southern Zone and (iv) Eastern Zone.

Northern Zone (Zone of Indo-European Languages)

The Northern zone comprises that part of India which lies between the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhya ranges in the south. Linguistically, it is the region where languages derived from Sanskrit are spoken by a large majority of people. The northern zone includes Sindh (part of Pakistan), Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, part of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Nepal. The languages spoken are Sindhi, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Hindi, Bengali, Assami and Nepali.

Features of kinship system in Northern Zone (generally found common among a majority of castes)

- To a large extent the north India kinship organization is characterised by **patrilineal descent, patrilocal residence, and patriarchalism**. In other words, descent is traced through the father (male line), and after marriage, the couple resides with the groom's family. Further, in the patriarchal family, the authority vests in the male head of the family.
- North Indian kinship system is characterised by **extensive kinship practices** on account of various rules of exogamy, for example, **gotra exogamy, village exogamy**, etc. In north India, 'the four gotra rule' is widely prevalent, which states that a man must not marry into
 - i) his father's gotra (i.e. his own gotra)
 - ii) his mother's gotra
 - iii) his father's mother gotra
 - iv) his mother's mother's gotra

Besides this there is also a **taboo on marriage with cousins**. Further in some parts there is **local exogamy** whereby certain caste groups of the same village, even if they are of different gotras, do not intermarry.

- The custom of **local exogamy** divides the women of a local group into two sharp divisions: **the daughters of the village** and **the brides of the village**. The north has separate words for daughters and brides in each regional language.
- North Indian kinship system is characterized by the practices of **hypergamy** and **kulinism**. Hypergamy refers to the practice in which women belonging to lower castes can marry men of higher castes (In Vedic literature, it has

been prescribed and called as *anuloma*: alliance between a lower caste woman and a higher caste man). Similar practice among Brahmins of Bengal is referred to as *kulinism*. In such hypergamous bonds the male enjoys a higher status vis-a-vis female on account of his higher ritual status.

- In northern India, marriage generally takes place at an early age (child marriage). However, the marriage takes place in two stages, viz. *Vivah* and *Gauna*. **Vivah** is nothing but a ceremonial marriage of a boy with a girl of below puberty age. However, the bride is not finally sent to groom's house until she reaches puberty. After the girl has reached puberty, a ceremony called **Gauna** is performed and the groom is called to take away the bride.
- Another key feature of north Indian kinship organisation is the widespread practice of **levirate**, **polygyny** and **remarriage**. Levirate is a custom of marriage of a widow to the husband's brother. Polygyny is that arrangement of marriage where a man can have more than one wife. Irawati Karve in her study found that the most powerful motive for polygyny besides the display of social status and wealth is the desire for male progeny (male child).

Central Zone (Zone of Transition)

The central zone comprises of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Orissa. The salient features of kinship organization of central India are not much different from those of northern India.

- Many castes are divided into exogamous clans.
- Among some castes, the exogamous clans are arranged in a hypergamous hierarchy i.e. a girl in a lower clan can marry a man of a higher clan but a girl in a higher clan may not marry a man in a lower clan.
- It has also been noted that a majority of caste groups practiced one type of cross cousin marriage as a permissive form of marriage i.e. a marriage of a man to his mother's brother's daughter. There is a definite taboo or aversion towards the other type of cross-cousin marriage i.e. marriage of a man to his father's sister's daughter.
- Practice of levirate has also been observed among some groups in central India.

Irawati Karve describes the central zone as a zone of transition from the north to the south. She describes the state of Maharashtra as a region of cultural borrowings and cultural synthesis.

Southern Zone (Zone of Dravidian Languages)

The southern zone comprises those areas where the languages of the Dravidian family are spoken. It comprises of Karnataka, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

The southern zone presents a very complicated pattern of kinship systems and family organization. Though the patrilineal and patrilocal family is the dominant family type for the greater no of castes and communities, there are important sections of the population which are matrilineal and matrilocal. In Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and among certain important castes of Kerala, the predominant form of family organization is patrilineal and patrilocal join family (e.g. Okkaligas of Karnataka, Nambudiri Brahmins of Tamil Nadu). However, among certain other groups in Kerala like Nayars, Tiyans, Moplas, etc., the family is matrilineal and matrilocal.

Further, as in the rest of India, most castes in this zone also allow the practice of polygyny while at the same time there are certain castes who practice both polygyny and polyandry. For example, Nambudiris, Nayars, Asari, etc., practice polygyny while Todas of Nilgiris (Tamil Nadu) practice fraternal polyandry and Nayars of Kerala practice non-fraternal polyandry.

Marriage preferences and taboos in southern zone:

- **Clan exogamy** is the key feature of southern marriages.
- There is a system of **preferential mating** in the south. In a large number of castes, the first preference is given to the elder sister's daughter (a consanguine, who is now affine), second preference is to father's sister's daughter and the third preference to mother's brother's daughter.
- The taboos prescribed for marriage are:
 - i. a man cannot marry his younger sister's daughter.

- ii. though widow remarriage is practiced among almost all castes, a widow is not allowed to marry either the elder or younger brother of her husband (i.e. levirate is not practiced).
- iii. a man cannot marry his mother's sister's daughter. In other words, marriage between maternal parallel cousins is not permissible.

The southern kinship organization is thus fundamentally different from that of northern zone. In the south, there is a definite bias for marriage within a very small kin group which implies that a man does not bring a stranger as a bride to his home. Marriage within a small kin group thus strengthens existing bonds. The emphasis is on knitting families closer together and narrowing the circle of kin group, a policy exactly the opposite of the one followed in the north. **The north represents the principle of extended exchange**, a policy of expansion (gotra and village exogamy) and incorporation of outsiders as wives into the family. **The south, on the other hand, represents the principle of immediate exchange** and a policy of consolidation. The distinction between the father's house and father-in-law's house is not as sharp as in north. The distinction between 'daughter' and 'bride' is not as deep as in north. **Thus, south Indian kinship organization can be called as intensive kinship organization and north Indian kinship organization can be best described as extensive kinship organization.**

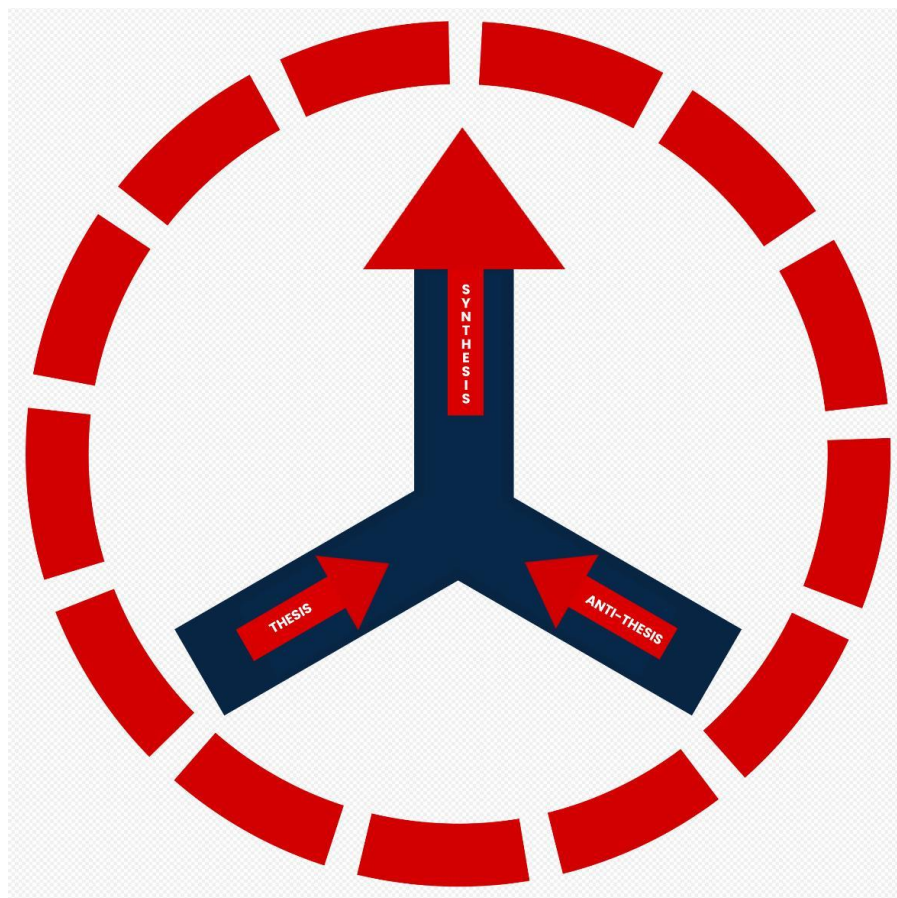
In southern family, there is no clear-cut distinction between the family of birth (*family of orientation*) and family of marriage (*family of procreation*) as found in the northern family. In north, no member from ego's family of orientation (that is, father, mother, brother, sister) can become a member of his family of marriage, but this is possible in south.

The North Indian kinship terminology is comparatively descriptive in the sense that it describes elementary relationships starting from the ego. In order to emphasize the patrilineal descent, the terms in the system make a clear-cut distinction between parallel and cross cousins, e.g., *bhatiji* - one's brother's daughter and *bhanji* - one's sister's daughter. In the South Indian kinship terminology there is relative stress on classificatory terminology. Here the same term *mama* includes mother's brother, father's sister's husband and wife's father. However, in most contemporary societies, both terms – descriptive and classificatory – are used.

Eastern Zone (Zone of Austro - Asiatic Languages)

According to Irawati Karve, eastern zone is the zone of Austro-Asiatic languages. The Austro-Asiatic languages are divided into two groups of languages, the Monkhmer and the Mundari. Of these the people who speak the Monkhmer languages are all, with the exception of Khasi tribe, outside and to the east of India; those who speak Mundari are found in central and eastern India, such as in parts of Orissa, north-west Andhra Pradesh, Chattishgarh, Jharkhand, etc.

The kinship organization in the eastern zone has no one pattern. There are more tribes than caste Hindus in eastern India. The important tribes are Khasi, Birhor, Ho, Munda and Oraon. People speaking Mundari languages have patrilineal- patrilocal families, while **Khasi and Garo tribes have matrilineal joint family system.** Practice of bride-price is common in various tribes. Institution of youth-dormitories have also been reported from various tribal groups. Tribal endogamy and clan exogamy is the general rule observed in marital relations.



DIALECTICS IAS

Marriage

Marriage is an important and universal social institution of society. As a social institution, it provides a recognized form for entering into a relatively enduring heterosexual relationship for the bearing and rearing of children. It is thus primarily a way of regulating human reproduction. This reproduction, however, also has a sociological dimension. The right of sexual relationship, that universally accompanies marriage, provides legitimization to the children born in wedlock; this legitimacy is of great importance in the matter of inheritance and succession. Besides, through marriage there comes into existence the family, a relatively stable social group that is responsible for the care and training of children. In all these respects, then, marriage has historically provided the institutional mechanisms necessary for replacement of social members and thereby has been meeting the important prerequisites of human survival and society's continuance.

According to **Horton and Hunt**, "Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family." **Edward Westermarck** defined marriage as "more or less durable connection between male and female, lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring." **Malinowski** defined marriage as "a contract for the production and maintenance of children." Various anthropologists have attempted to trace the history of this institution of marriage but there is no consensus among them. For example, **Lewis Morgan** in his evolutionary theory concludes that in the earlier form of groupings of people, sex was absolutely un-regulated and the institution of family was not known. Believing that human societies have evolved from lower to higher types, Morgan set forth certain hypothetical stages in the evolution of marriage. Accordingly, as he thought, from the hypothetical state of promiscuity society must have evolved into group marriage, then polygamy and lastly monogamy. **Westermarck** on the other hand, is of the opinion that the history of marriage began with its monogamous form. He concludes this on the basis of his assumption that the male has by nature been an acquisitive and possessive creature. Another anthropologist **Robert Briffault** claims that at the initial stage of marital relationship, mother had the supreme authority. He rejects patriarchy as claimed by Morgan and monogamy as claimed by Westermarck to be the initial forms of marriage and family.

All societies have prescriptions and proscriptions regarding who may or may not marry whom. In some societies these restrictions are subtle, while in some others, individuals who can or cannot be married are more explicitly and specifically defined. Forms of marriage based on rules governing eligibility/ineligibility of mates is classified as endogamy and exogamy. **Endogamy** requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he is already a member, as for example caste, religion or tribe, etc. Caste

and religious endogamy are the most pervasive forms of endogamy. Most religious groups do not permit or like their members to marry individuals of other faiths. Endogamy is also a very important characteristic of the Indian caste system. **Exogamy**, on the other hand, requires the individual to marry outside of his own group. Exogamy refers to the rules of avoidance in marital relationship. Every community prohibits its members from having marital relationship with certain persons. The exogamy in one form or the other is practised in every community. Under this rule, marriage among close relative especially kins and same clan is prohibited. For example, in China, the individuals who bear the same surname may not inter-marry. In Hindu marriage, Gotra and Sapinda are such exogamous groups. Gotra refers to a group of families which trace their origin from a common mythical ancestor. Sapinda means that persons of seven generations on the father's side and five on the mother's side cannot inter-marry.

Incest taboo is perhaps the most prominent feature of exogamic rule of mate-selection in almost every society. Marriage of father-daughter, mother-son, brother-sister is unknown the world over. Prohibition of sex relationship between such primary kins is called incest taboo. There are sociological, psychological and also scientific reasons for the institution of incest taboo. The exogamic rules are designed to restrict free marriage relationship. The incest taboos, according to **Kingsley Davis**, confine sexual relations and sentiments to the married pairs alone excluding such relationships as between parent and child, brother and sister etc. In this way the possibility of confusion in the organization of kinship is prevented and the family organization is maintained. Quite often, a scientific justification is also provided for keeping restrictions of incest taboo. Eugenically, there is a fear of a possibility that certain physiological inadequacies present among close kins such as cousins may be perpetuated and transferred to their off-springs in case the former inter-marry.

Generally, there are two forms of marriage prevalent in different parts of world: (i) monogamy and (ii) polygamy. **Monogamy** restricts the individual to one spouse at a time. Under this system, at any given time a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband. Monogamy is prevalent in all societies and is almost the universal form in all modern industrial societies. In many societies, individuals are permitted to marry again often on the death of the first spouse or after divorce; but they cannot have more than one spouse at one and the same time. Such monogamy marriage is termed as **serial monogamy**. A society may also practice **straight monogamy**, in which remarriage is not allowed. Most upper caste Hindu females were obliged to follow the norm of straight monogamy prior to the enactment of **Widow Remarriage Act of 1856**, as until then widows were not allowed to marry again. With further modernisation societies are likely to

move towards the conditions of serial monogamy, rather than maintain straight monogamy.

Polygamy is that arrangement of marriage in which either a woman has more than one husband or a man has more than one wife. The former arrangement is called **polyandry** and the latter **polygyny**. Of the two forms of polygamy, polygyny is much more prevalent than polyandry the world over. **Murdock's** research, based on an analysis of 283 societies, revealed that 193 of these were characterised by polygyny, 43 were monogamous and only 2 practiced polyandry.

The **Hindu Marriage Act of 1955** established monogamy for all Hindus and others who came to be governed by this Act. Some of the 'other' communities covered by this Act are the **Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists**. Strict monogamy is also prescribed in Christian and Parsi communities. Islam, on the other hand, has allowed polygyny. A Muslim man can have as many as four wives at a time, provided all are treated as equals. However, it seems that even among the Muslims, polygynous unions are now restricted only to a small section of society. In India, polygyny is also found among the Naga tribes, the Gond, the Baiga, the Toda, the Lushei clans and most of the other Proto-Australoid tribes of Middle India. The Khasi, the Santhal and the Kadar are among those that are monogamous. Excessively high bride prices have forced monogamy on many, as e.g., on the Ho.

Polyandry is much restricted in distribution in comparison to other forms of marriage. Some argue that it is because polyandry leads to fewer children to every woman, more male children and a high incidence of sterility among women. Polyandry has two forms, **fraternal** or **adelphic polyandry** and **non-fraternal polyandry**. In fraternal polyandry, the woman is wife to all the brothers and in the non-fraternal one, the wife has several husbands who are not brothers. The paternity in case of polyandrous societies is more legal and social than biological. Ogburn and Nimkoff are of the opinion that the chief factor responsible for polyandry would seem to be the extreme poverty of the people. Fraternal polyandry is reported among the Todas of the Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu and Khasas of Jaunsar Bawar in Dehradun district of Uttar Pradesh while non-fraternal polyandry was practised by Nayars of Kerala. Please note that the **Khasas of Jaunsar Bawar** have evolved a very practical mode of polyandrous matrimony. Among them, when the eldest brother marries a girl, she automatically becomes the common wife of the rest of the brothers. If a brother is minor, he may, on becoming adult, marry another girl to match his age. Hence this leads to a situation where a number of brothers have more than one wife which is not the classical mode of polyandry. Observing polygyny-polyandry mixed up, **Majumdar** has coined an interesting phrase, **Polygynandry**, to describe this situation.

In some polygamous societies certain preferential rules for the choice of wives/husbands are followed. In certain societies males marry the wife's sisters, and females their husband's brothers. Such marriages are termed as **sororal polygyny** and **fraternal polyandry**, respectively. In other words, while sororal polygyny implies the marriage of one man with several sisters, fraternal polyandry on the other hand implies the marriage of one woman with several brothers. Levirate, sororate, cross-cousin marriage and parallel-cousin marriage are some other forms of preferential marriages. **Levirate** is a custom in certain societies in which a widow marries one of her husband's brothers. **Sororate**, on the other hand, refers to the custom of a widower marrying the sister of his deceased wife. Often it is a younger sister who marries her deceased older sister's husband.

Cross-cousin marriage refers to the marriage of the children of siblings of the opposite sex, that is, the children of a brother and sister. Cross-cousin marriage in certain societies is often explained to be a device for avoiding payment of a high bride price, and also for maintaining property in the household. The Gonds of Madhya Pradesh call this form of marriage *dudhlautawa* ('return of milk'), implying thereby that the bride-price a person pays for his wife will be returned when his daughter marries her mother's brother's son. **Parallel cousin marriage** refers to the marriage of the children of siblings of the same sex, that is, two or more brother's children, or two or more sisters' children.

Marriage among Hindus is a sacred bond, a religious sacrament. This means that a Hindu marriage cannot be dissolved. It is a union for life. This is also reflected in the marital rites. Some of the essential rites are **kanyadan** (the giving off of the bride to the groom by the father), **vivaha-homa** (the lighting of fire as divine witness and sanctifier of the ceremony), **panigrahana** (the clasping of the bride's hand by the groom), **agniparinaya** (going around the sacred fire by the bride and the groom), **lajahoma** (offering of the parched grain to the sacrificial fire) and **saptapadi** (walking seven steps by the bride and the groom). Then the bride is carried away; **vivaha**, the Hindi word for marriage means 'carrying away'.

In Hinduism the aim of marriage is not only to secure physical pleasure for the individuals but also to advance their spiritual development. **K.M. Kapadia** says that "Hindu marriage is a socially approved union of man and woman aiming at dharma, procreation, sexual pleasure, and observance of certain obligation. As a sacrament, Hindu marriage aims to fulfil certain religious obligations. A traditional Hindu passes through four Ashramas or stages of life called **Brahamacharya** (student life), **Grihastha** (family life), **Vanaprastha** (retired life) and **Sannyasa** (renunciation). At the commencement of each such Ashrama, a Hindu undergoes a sacrament and takes a vow. As a result of this, one becomes purified in body and mind. Marriage is a gateway to Grihastha Ashrama. Ancient Hindu texts point out

three main aims of marriage. These are **dharma** (duty), **praja** (progeny) and **rati** (sensual pleasure).

The Hindus consider marriage as one of the *Sarir Samskara* or sacraments sanctifying the body. It is doubly essential for a woman because marriage is the first major and the only significant samskara (life cycle ritual) for her. Hindus believe in a concept of three religious debts or *Rinas*. These are *Pitr Rin*, *Daiv Rin* and *Guru Rin*. Marriage is essential for repaying *Pitr Rin* and the individual repays it by being the father of a son. Marriage is significant in that it provides children especially sons who would not only carry on the family name but also perform periodic rituals including the annual “shraddha” to propitiate the dead ancestors. Role of a wife is essential for the completion of Grihastha Dharma and performing religious rites.

Endogamy is a very important characteristic of the Indian caste system. Among Hindus, there are over three hundred castes and sub-castes and each one of them is endogamous. Thus caste endogamy is the central feature of traditional Hindu marriage. Although the norms of caste endogamy were widely prevalent, Hindu scriptures by allowing **anuloma** and **pratiloma** marriages, institutionalized, to a limited extent, inter-caste marital alliances. The anuloma marriage permits an alliance between a lower class woman and higher caste man, while the pratiloma marriage is an alliance between higher caste woman and a lower caste man. The former is referred to by the sociologists as **hypergamy** and the latter as **hypogamy**. In other words, hypergamy or anuloma is that form of marriage in which the ritual status of a man is higher than that of his prospective wife, while hypogamy or pratiloma is that form of marriage in which the ritual status of a woman is higher than that of her prospective husband. Please note that in the context of South Indian or Dravidian system, **Dumont** has used the term ‘**isogamy**’, i.e., the marriage between two equals. He argues that in south India, the principal marriage (usually a person’s first marriage) links the persons of equal status.

However, rules of exogamy among Hindus are very specific. Hindus are traditionally prohibited from marrying in their own **gotra**, **pravara** and **sapinda** (gotra, pravara and sapinda refer to a group of individuals assumed to have descended from a paternal or maternal ancestor and are variously termed as clan, sib or lineage). *Sagotra exogamy* applies to those who trace descent from a common ancestor, usually a rishi or a sage. All these people cannot intermarry. The term gotra is commonly used to mean an exogamous category within a jati. One of its principal uses is to regulate marriage alliance. All members of a gotra are supposed to be descendants of or associated with the same ancestral figure. A four-clan rule or four gotra exogamous rule prevails among Hindu castes in North India. In accordance with this four clan (gotra) rule, a man cannot marry a girl

from (i) his father's gotra or clan, (ii) his mother's gotra or clan, (iii) his dadi's, i.e. his father's mother's gotra or clan, and (iv) his nani's, i.e., his mother's mother's gotra or clan. In almost all castes in the northern zone, according to Karve (1953), the marriage between cousins is prohibited.

Sapinda exogamy indicates the prohibition placed on the inter-marriage between certain sets of relatives. Sapinda represents the relationship between the living member and their dead ancestors. The term sapinda means (i) those who share the particles of the same body, (ii) people who are united by offering 'pinda' or balls of cooked rice to the same dead ancestor. Hindu lawgivers do not give a uniform definition regarding the kinship groups within which marriage cannot take place. Some prohibit marriage of members within seven generations on the father's side and five generations of members from the mother's side. Some others have restricted the prohibited generations to five on the father's and three on the mother's side. Several others have permitted the marriage of cross-cousins (marriage of a person with his father's sister's children or mother's brother's children). The **Hindu Marriage Act of 1955** does not allow marriage within five generations on the father's side and three on the mother's side. However, it permits the marriage of cross- cousins where this is customary.

In Hindu scriptures eight forms of marriage have been described. When a father gifts his daughter to a learned man of good character, it is called **brahma** marriage. If it is a priest to whom the daughter is gifted, it is called **daiva** marriage. When a prospective son-in-law makes the gift of a bull and cow to the girl's father before receiving her as gift it is called **arsha** marriage. This should not be confused with marriage by purchase which is called **asura** and has been declared unlawful by Manu. Marriage based on mutual love is called **gandharva** and need not be based on the acceptance of the match by the kinsmen of the couple directly involved. When a father gifts his daughter to a man, after duly honouring him, and exhorts the couple to perform their dharma together, it is called **prajapatya** marriage. Marriage by capture or abduction is called **rakhasa** and regarded as lawful, but the seduction of a girl who is asleep, intoxicated or of unsound mind is unlawful: it is called **paisacha** marriage. However, these traditional forms of marriages are no more in practice.

Muslim marriage, on the other hand, is not a religious sacrament, but a secular bond. It is a social or civil contract, which can be terminated. Muslim marriage is called **Nikah**. The ceremony is performed by the priest or the **kazi**. The nikah is considered to be complete only when the consent of both the groom and the bride has been obtained. A formal document known as **nikahnama** bears the signatures of the couple. Among certain sections, the signatures of two witnesses are also included in the document and the document may also contain details of the

payment to be made to the bride by the groom. This payment is called the **Mehr** which is a stipulated sum of money or other assets paid to the wife either immediately after the wedding or postponed till some future date.

Among the Muslims prohibited degrees of alliance are few and limited. Thus, marriage between even half-siblings and first parallel cousins can take place. Muslim men can be polygynous under the condition that two sisters or an aunt and niece cannot be taken as co-wives and one cannot have more than four wives at a time. A Muslim can marry his deceased wife's sister and also the parent-in-law of his/her children. A Muslim man can marry a non-Muslim but only a non-idolatrous woman like a Jew or a Christian; but a Muslim woman does not enjoy a similar right.

Marriage is solemnized by signing a legal document and can be dissolved. But divorce is almost only the husband's privilege; and he can have it even without assigning a cause. Divorce can be obtained by merely repeating three times the formula of repudiation (**talaq**) in the presence of at least two witnesses. But a husband has to pay '**dower**', which is a settlement made on the wife out of her husband's property, to compensate her in the event of death and divorce. A wife can obtain **khula** (release) from her marriage by giving consideration to the husband whose consent is essential. If wife and husband separate by mutual consent, it is called **mubarat**. Under certain circumstances, Islamic law does give a wife the permission of unilateral action. Widow remarriage is commonly practised by Indian Muslims.

In theory Hindu marriage is a sacrament and thus irrevocable. However, in post-independent India several laws have been passed permitting divorce for Hindus as well as other communities. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 introduced and clarified the grounds for divorce. It has been available to all Indians who have chosen to register their marriages under this Act. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 was amended several times since 1955 to incorporate a wide range of grounds for divorce available to both men and women coming under the purview of this Act. Some of the important grounds for divorce outlined by law are: (i) impotency, (ii) lunacy (for a specified time period), (iii) disappearance for seven years, (iv) contagious disease, (v) rape, (vi) homo-sexuality, and (vii) bestiality (sexual relationship between a human being and a lower animal). Now adultery and cruelty have also become the grounds on which divorce may be sought. The condition that one can apply for divorce after three years of marriage has been reduced to one year. The waiting period of divorce by mutual consent is now only 6 months. The word 'Hindu' under the Act includes a Buddhist, Jain or Sikh by religion and any other person who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew.

It is worth noting that as early as in the nineteenth century, social reformers like **Raja Ram Mohan Roy**, **Pandit Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar**, **Jyotiba Phule** and others fought against the evil practices of sati, exploitation of widows and child marriage. As a result **Prevention of Sati Act, 1829** was passed and it made the burning or burying alive of widows culpable homicide, punishable with fine or imprisonment or both. Further, in 1856, the **Hindu Widows Remarriage Act, 1856** was passed and it legalised the marriage of widows of all castes. Later, in 1929, the **Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929** was passed (popularly known as the **Sarda Act**) and the minimum age for marriage for girls and boys was fixed at 14 years and 17 years respectively. The Act was made applicable to all Indians. The latest amendment (in 1978) has raised the minimum age for marriage for girls and boys to 18 years and 21 years, respectively.

In contemporary India, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are recognised by law and take place on a larger scale than before. However such marriages constitute only a very small proportion of the total number of marriages taking place. They are increasing at a slow rate. The inter-caste marriage have however, been legalised by legislations such as Special Marriage Act 1954, Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Hindu Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act 1976, etc. The **Special Marriage Act of 1954** provides for secular and civil marriage before a registrar. This Act applies to all Indian citizens who chose to make use of its provisions, irrespective of their caste or religious affiliations. Prior to this act, there was **Civil Marriage Act, 1872** which treated Hindu marriage as a ‘civil marriage’ – and provided legal permission for inter-caste, inter-religious and even ‘registered’ marriage. This Act was later repealed by the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The Government of India has also passed the **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**. In 1984 and again in 1986, the Act was amended to make the law more stringent and effective. For instance, today, the husband and his family can be penalised for demanding dowry if his bride dies within seven years of the marriage in other than normal circumstances.

Sociology is Simple
Sociology is Scoring
provided that you
Study Sociology Systematically

(Final Draft – unedited)

Marriage:

As discussed earlier, kinship is a combination of two types of relations:

1. Consanguinity (i.e. relations by blood (lineage and descent))
2. Affinity (i.e. relations by sexual relations (marriage))

These two together constitute a family.

Relations of affinity arise out of the social recognition of sexuality, i.e. sexual behaviour. Sexual behaviour is governed by the institution of marriage. So, when we talk about relations of affinity, we are actually talking of the relations arising out of marriage. Marriage is a universal institution, however its forms vary from society to society.

Before we move on to the various forms of marriage, let us talk about the institution of marriage a little more. Human beings, like all mammals, mate, copulate, and have children. However, humans, unlike animals, mate and procreate in some orderly way to which they have given the name ‘marriage’. Marriage is the basis of human society. Marriage forms society as our social forms are reinforced by marriage. It is a basic institution found in almost all human societies because no other union of men and women meets all the requirements of mating, home-making, love and personality development at the level of biological, psychological, social, ethical and spiritual evolution. To regard marriage as mere means of sexual satisfaction is to reduce it to a sub-rational level of instinctive mating.

In almost all societies, marriage is understood as a legally and socially recognized sexual relationship, always between a man and woman (or more than one woman or one man) and usually with other restrictions of race, ethnicity, religion, caste, etc., implicitly specified. Depending on the society, marriage may require religious or civil sanction (or both), although some couples may be considered married simply by living together for a prescribed period.

Westermarck (1891) defines marriage ‘as a relation of one or more men to one or more women, which is recognized by custom or law, and involves rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and in the case of children born of it’. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (1994) defines it as, ‘marriage is traditionally conceived to be legally recognized relationship between an adult male and female that carries certain rights and obligations’. Giddens (1997) states, ‘marriage can be defined as a socially recognized

relationship and approved sexual union between an adult male and female, that carries certain rights and obligations’.

In the above definitions it is stipulated that marriage is a relationship between adult members but there are societies like India where child marriages are also allowed by the custom of the society, though it is banned by law. Not only this even in so-called modern societies like Britain where age at marriage is falling dramatically, adolescent marriages are on the rise. Marriage bond not only connects two individuals but also a wider range of kin people. Parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives of one partner become relatives of other partner through marriage. Many new statuses and roles, such as mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, etc., come into existence after marriage.

Although in most societies marriage is defined in heterosexual terms (between male and female), marriage involving partners of the same sex is not unknown and is becoming increasingly acceptable in some so-called modern societies. For example, gay (male homosexuality) and lesbian (female homosexuality) marriages are legal in Denmark and in some parts of USA. According to Adrienne Rich, heterosexuality is not so much the natural form of sexual preference but is imposed upon individuals by social constraints. In many Western countries and America, movements by homosexuals have started to get legalize their marriages.

Forms of Marriage:

Just as biological descent, sexuality can also be understood in terms of ‘direct sexuality’ and ‘shared sexuality’.

The form of marriage that results from ‘direct sexuality’ is called ‘monogamy’. **Monogamy** restricts the individual to one spouse at a time. Under this system, at any given time a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband. Monogamy is prevalent in all societies and is almost the universal form in all modern industrial societies. In many societies, individuals are permitted to marry again often on the death of the first spouse or after divorce; but they cannot have more than one spouse at one and the same time. Such monogamy marriage is termed as **serial monogamy**. A society may also practice **straight monogamy**, in which remarriage is not allowed. Most upper caste Hindu females were obliged to follow the norm of straight monogamy prior to the enactment of **Widow Remarriage Act of 1856**, as until then widows were not allowed to marry again. With further modernisation societies are likely to move towards the conditions of serial monogamy, rather than maintain straight monogamy.

The form of marriage that results from 'shared sexuality' is called 'polygamy'. **Polygamy** is that arrangement of marriage in which either a woman has more than one husband or a man has more than one wife. The former arrangement is called **polyandry** and the latter **polygyny**. Of the two forms of polygamy, polygyny is much more prevalent than polyandry the world over. **Murdock's** research, based on an analysis of 283 societies, revealed that 193 of these were characterised by polygyny, 43 were monogamous and only 2 practiced polyandry.

Polyandry is much restricted in distribution in comparison to other forms of marriage. Some argue that it is because polyandry leads to fewer children to every woman, more male children and a high incidence of sterility among women. Polyandry has two forms, **fraternal** or **adelphic polyandry** and **non-fraternal polyandry**. In fraternal polyandry, the woman is wife to all the brothers and in the non-fraternal one, the wife has several husbands who are not brothers. The paternity in case of polyandrous societies is more legal and social than biological. Ogburn and Nimkoff are of the opinion that the chief factor responsible for polyandry would seem to be the extreme poverty of the people. Fraternal polyandry is reported among the Todas of the Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu and Khasas of Jaunsar Bawar in Dehradun district of Uttar Pradesh while non-fraternal polyandry was practised by Nayars of Kerala. Please note that the **Khasas of Jaunsar Bawar** have evolved a very practical mode of polyandrous matrimony. Among them, when the eldest brother marries a girl, she automatically becomes the common wife of the rest of the brothers. If a brother is minor, he may, on becoming adult, marry another girl to match his age. Hence this leads to a situation where a number of brothers have more than one wife which is not the classical mode of polyandry. Observing polygyny-polyandry mixed up, **Majumdar** has coined an interesting phrase, **Polygynandry**, to describe this situation.

In some polygamous societies certain preferential rules for the choice of wives/husbands are followed. In certain societies males marry the wife's sisters, and females their husband's brothers. Such marriages are termed as **sororal polygyny** and **fraternal polyandry**, respectively. In other words, while sororal polygyny implies the marriage of one man with several sisters, fraternal polyandry on the other hand implies the marriage of one woman with several brothers.

Levirate, sororate, cross-cousin marriage and parallel-cousin marriage are some other forms of preferential marriages. **Levirate** is a custom in certain societies in which a widow marries one of her husband's brothers. **Sororate**, on the other hand, refers to the custom of a widower marrying the sister of his deceased wife. Often it is a younger sister who marries her deceased older sister's husband.

Cross-cousin marriage refers to the marriage of the children of siblings of the opposite sex, that is, the children of a brother and sister. Cross-cousin marriage in certain societies is often explained to be a device for avoiding payment of a high bride price, and also for maintaining property in the household. The Gonds of Madhya Pradesh call this form of marriage *dudhlautawa* ('return of milk'), implying thereby that the bride-price a person pays for his wife will be returned when his daughter marries her mother's brother's son. **Parallel cousin marriage** refers to the marriage of the children of siblings of the same sex, that is, two or more brother's children, or two or more sisters' children.

Concluding remark:

Every society has certain forms of pairing arrangements to which we call marriage but remaining single or pairing without marriage (living together) is fast emerging as an acceptable form of lifestyle in the modern world. The trend towards maintaining an unmarried lifestyle is related to the growing economic independence of young people. Singleness is an attractive option for those who do not want to limit their sexual intimacy to one lifetime partner or do not want the burden of children. Living alone has become one of the most rapidly increasing social trends. The single life – for both men and women – is not viewed as a social taboo anymore. **Eric Klinenberg**, professor of sociology at New York University, in his recently published book *Going Solo* (2012) revealed that there is a fascinating rise in the numbers of 'singletons' (people who live alone). Such people regard solitary living as a sign of accomplishment. This is appealing to millions of people around the world. India, along with China and Brazil, has recorded the fastest growth of single person households. This change has affected families, communities, cities and personal lives.

Norms of mate selection:

All societies have prescriptions and proscriptions regarding who may or may not marry whom. In some societies these restrictions are subtle, while in some others, individuals who can or cannot be married are more explicitly and specifically defined. Thus, while the family is universal, the rules regarding marriage and the rules governing relationships between relatives – called kinsmen – are very different.

Forms of marriage based on rules governing eligibility/ineligibility of mates is classified as endogamy and exogamy. **Endogamy** requires an individual to marry within a culturally defined group of which he is already a member, as for example caste, religion or tribe, etc. Caste and religious endogamy are the most pervasive forms of endogamy. Most religious groups do not permit or like their

members to marry individuals of other faiths. Endogamy is also a very important characteristic of the Indian caste system. **Exogamy**, on the other hand, requires the individual to marry outside of his own group. Exogamy refers to the rules of avoidance in marital relationship. Every community prohibits its members from having marital relationship with certain persons. The exogamy in one form or the other is practised in every community. Under this rule, marriage among close relative especially kins and same clan is prohibited. For example, in China, the individuals who bear the same surname may not inter-marry. In Hindu marriage, Gotra, Pravara and Sapinda are such exogamous groups. *Gotra* refers to a group of families which trace their origin from a common mythical ancestor. Literally, in Sanskrit, *Pravara* means 'the most excellent'. Pravara is the number of the most excellent rishis who belonged to that that particular gotra to which the wearer of sacred thread belongs. Gotra is the name of the founding father (and in a few exceptional cases, founding mother). *Sapinda* means that persons of seven generations on the father's side and five on the mother's side cannot inter-marry.

Incest taboo is perhaps the most prominent feature of exogamic rule of mate-selection in almost every society. Marriage of father-daughter, mother-son, brother-sister is unknown the world over. Prohibition of sex relationship between such primary kins is called incest taboo. There are sociological, psychological and also scientific reasons for the institution of incest taboo. The exogamic rules are designed to restrict free marriage relationship. The incest taboos, according to **Kingsley Davis**, confine sexual relations and sentiments to the married pairs alone excluding such relationships as between parent and child, brother and sister etc. In this way the possibility of confusion in the organization of kinship is prevented and the family organization is maintained. Quite often, a scientific justification is also provided for keeping restrictions of incest taboo. Eugenically, there is a fear of a possibility that certain physiological inadequacies present among close kins such as cousins may be perpetuated and transferred to their off-springs in case the former inter-marry.

Marriage among Hindus:

Marriage among Hindus is a sacred bond, a religious sacrament. This means that a Hindu marriage cannot be dissolved. It is a union for life. This is also reflected in the marital rites. Some of the essential rites are **kanyadan** (the giving off of the bride to the groom by the father), **vivaha-homa** (the lighting of fire as divine witness and sanctifier of the ceremony), **panigrahana** (the clasping of the bride's hand by the groom), **agniparinaya** (going around the sacred fire by the bride and the groom), **lajahoma** (offering of the parched grain to the sacrificial fire) and **saptapadi** (walking seven steps by the bride and the groom). Then the bride is carried away; **vivaha**, the Hindi word for marriage means 'carrying away'.

In Hinduism the aim of marriage is not only to secure physical pleasure for the individuals but also to advance their spiritual development. **K.M. Kapadia** says that “Hindu marriage is a socially approved union of man and woman aiming at dharma, procreation, sexual pleasure, and observance of certain obligation. As a sacrament, Hindu marriage aims to fulfil certain religious obligations. A traditional Hindu passes through four Ashramas or stages of life called **Brahamacharya** (student life), **Grihasta** (family life), **Vanaprastha** (retired life) and **Sannyasa** (renunciation). At the commencement of each such Ashrama, a Hindu undergoes a sacrament and takes a vow. As a result of this, one becomes purified in body and mind. Marriage is a gateway to Grihasta Ashrama. Ancient Hindu texts point out three main aims of marriage. These are **dharma** (duty), **praja** (progeny) and **rati** (sensual pleasure).

The Hindus consider marriage as one of the *Sarir Samskara* or sacraments sanctifying the body. It is doubly essential for a woman because marriage is the first major and the only significant samskara (life cycle ritual) for her. Hindus believe in a concept of three religious debts or *Rinas*. These are *Pitr Rin*, *Daiv Rin* and *Guru Rin*. Marriage is essential for repaying *Pitr Rin* and the individual repays it by being the father of a son. Marriage is significant in that it provides children especially sons who would not only carry on the family name but also perform periodic rituals including the annual “shraddha” to propitiate the dead ancestors. Role of a wife is essential for the completion of Grihasta Dharma and performing religious rites.

Endogamy is a very important characteristic of the Indian caste system. Among Hindus, there are over three hundred castes and sub-castes and each one of them is endogamous. Thus caste endogamy is the central feature of traditional Hindu marriage. Although the norms of caste endogamy were widely prevalent, Hindu scriptures by allowing **anuloma** and **pratiloma** marriages, institutionalized, to a limited extent, inter-caste marital alliances. The anuloma marriage permits an alliance between a lower class woman and higher caste man, while the pratiloma marriage is an alliance between higher caste woman and a lower caste man. The former is referred to by the sociologists as **hypergamy** and the latter as **hypogamy**. In other words, hypergamy or anuloma is that form of marriage in which the ritual status of a man is higher than that of his prospective wife, while hypogamy or pratiloma is that form of marriage in which the ritual status of a woman is higher than that of her prospective husband. Please note that in the context of South Indian or Dravidian system, **Dumont** has used the term ‘**isogamy**’, i.e., the marriage between two equals. He argues that in south India, the principal marriage (usually a person’s first marriage) links the persons of equal status.

Please note that caste endogamy which was functional in early society because:

- it made marital adjustment easier.
- it preserved the occupational secrets of the caste.
- it maintained the solidarity of the caste.
- it checked the decrease in the membership of the caste.

In the modern times, caste endogamy has been reduced to be functional only in the sense of marital adjustment and nothing else, instead it has given rise to certain negative effects – the inter-caste tensions which adversely affect the political unity of the country, the problem of even marital adjustment as the field of selection remains limited and circumscribed, and problems of child marriage, dowry and so forth.

However, rules of exogamy among Hindus are very specific. Hindus are traditionally prohibited from marrying in their own **gotra**, **pravara** and **sapinda** (gotra, pravara and sapinda refer to a group of individuals assumed to have descended from a paternal or maternal ancestor and are variously termed as clan, sib or lineage). *Sagotra exogamy* applies to those who trace descent from a common ancestor, usually a rishi or a sage. All these people cannot intermarry. The term gotra is commonly used to mean an exogamous category within a jati. One of its principal uses is to regulate marriage alliance. All members of a gotra are supposed to be descendants of or associated with the same ancestral figure. A four-clan rule or four gotra exogamous rule prevails among Hindu castes in North India. In accordance with this four clan (gotra) rule, a man cannot marry a girl from (i) his father's gotra or clan, (ii) his mother's gotra or clan, (iii) his dadi's, i.e. his father's mother's gotra or clan, and (iv) his nani's, i.e., his mother's mother's gotra or clan. In almost all castes in the northern zone, according to Karve (1953), the marriage between cousins is prohibited.

Sapinda exogamy indicates the prohibition placed on the inter-marriage between certain sets of relatives. Sapinda represents the relationship between the living member and their dead ancestors. The term sapinda means (i) those who share the particles of the same body, (ii) people who are united by offering 'pinda' or balls of cooked rice to the same dead ancestor. Hindu lawgivers do not give a uniform definition regarding the kinship groups within which marriage cannot take place. Some prohibit marriage of members within seven generations on the father's side and five generations of members from the mother's side. Some others have restricted the prohibited generations to five on the father's and three on the mother's side. Several others have permitted the marriage of cross-cousins (marriage of a person with his father's sister's children or mother's brother's children). The **Hindu Marriage Act of 1955** does not allow marriage within five

generations on the father's side and three on the mother's side. However, it permits the marriage of cross- cousins where this is customary.

Please note that along with gotra, pravara and sapinda exogamy, in traditional India, village exogamy was also widely practiced. According to **Kane** (1930), there are primarily two main reasons for these exogamous prescriptions – firstly, if near relatives marry, their defects will be transmitted with aggravation to their offspring; and secondly, the fear that there may be clandestine love affairs and consequent loss of morals.

Please note that Manu has condemned both parallel and cross cousin marriages. But there are societies where either parallel cousin marriage or cross cousin marriage or both is accepted. For example, Iravati Karve made a mention of South Indian marriages where it is important to marry to a girl who is not a stranger, thus approving cousin marriages.

In Hindu scriptures eight forms of marriage have been described. When a father gifts his daughter to a learned man of good character, it is called **brahma** marriage. If it is a priest to whom the daughter is gifted, it is called **daiva** marriage. When a prospective son-in-law makes the gift of a bull and cow to the girl's father before receiving her as gift it is called **arsha** marriage. This should not be confused with marriage by purchase which is called **asura** and has been declared unlawful by Manu. Marriage based on mutual love is called **gandharva** and need not be based on the acceptance of the match by the kinsmen of the couple directly involved. When a father gifts his daughter to a man, after duly honouring him, and exhorts the couple to perform their dharma together, it is called **prajapatya** marriage. Marriage by capture or abduction is called **rakshasa** and regarded as lawful, but the seduction of a girl who is asleep, intoxicated or of unsound mind is unlawful: it is called **paisacha** marriage. However, these traditional forms of marriages are no more in practice.

The changes in the marriage system of Hindus may be analyzed in seven areas:

1. Change in the object of marriage, i.e. from *dharma* as the chief object to 'companionship' as the main object.
2. Change in the form of marriage, that is, from plurality of partners (polygamy) to one partner (monogamy).
3. Change in the process of mate selection, i.e. inter-caste marriages are allowed, parental selection has changed to joint or individual selection, and change in family and individual considerations (i.e. change in selection criteria).

4. Change in the age of marriage from pre-puberty to post-puberty.
5. Change in the stability of marriage as divorce is both socially recognized as well as legally permissible.
6. Change in the economic aspect of marriage i.e. in the dowry system.
7. Widow remarriage and abolition of social evils like *Sati* system.

Marriages among Muslims: (refer handout)

Marriage among Christians: (refer handout)

Emerging Patterns of Marriage and Family: (refer handout)

Family and marriage patterns are becoming more and more varied in contemporary societies. When we look at the trends in family patterns, we find it has gone from joint families (extended) to nuclear (conjugal) ones, from nuclear to live-in-relationship and what more live-in-relationship to just lovers. All over the world, monogamy still remains the only legally permitted form of marriage, but many other forms of associational living have dramatically emerged during the last few decades, especially in Europe and the US. There is tremendous increase in couples who choose to live together without marriage.

The virus of this trend has also entered the Indian metropolitan cities as reported by two popular magazines – India Today (2006) and Outlook (2007). From their accounts, it was observed that the popularity of marriage had begun to plummet down as that of ‘cohabitation’ increased. This phenomenon has affected the family also. Not only familial relations are becoming weak but also limited to just one generation. The present generation does not want to have any relation with the members of the earlier generations, even their grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Some emerging trends in marital and family lifestyles may be summed up as under:

Consensual Unions

As said above, there is an increasing trend in Western countries in which the partners live together without being legally united by a formal marriage. It is commonly called cohabitation. This is linked to greater acceptance of pre-marital sex and delayed entry into marriage and beginning of the family life. People who are wary of marriage and its legal and emotional commitments, opt for ‘living together arrangement’ without legal marriage. For some people living together may

represent a kind of ‘trial marriage’ or ‘sexual experimentation’. Actually, words like ‘intimacy’ and ‘commitment’ in one’s personal life or social life have become obsolete in such pairs or even conjugal family. Studies show that such arrangements are generally found in working couples. In Western countries including the US, it is also seen among college students. One report notes that in Sweden, it is almost universal for couples to live together before marriage. In Denmark, this practice of living together is called ‘marriage without paper’ and in Australia, these couples are known as ‘de facto couples’. This trend has also entered into India through some metropolitan IT centres like Bangalore, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi.

In such arrangements, in place of legal marriage contract, unmarried couples enter into a private conjugal (informal/unwritten) contract, defining rights and obligations of both. Such contracts are only binding and cannot be upheld in a court of law. Recently, the Maharashtra government has taken step to legalize live-in-relationship to protect women from cheating and harassment by the male partner. It is learnt that such proposal is underway in the parliament. Under this proposal, if a man and a woman live together as husband and wife for a reasonable long period, the man shall be deemed to have married the woman according to customary rights of either party.

The introduction of such private conjugal contracts is but one effort in the present time to find new ways of associational living. It seems that we are redefining the meaning of marital relationship – a matter very relevant concerning the future of marriage and the family. Such relationships are giving rise to childless marriages or reproduction of children without formal marriage. Such children will possibly have to be content with parents who never entered into wedlock at all. After all, the cost of getting divorce far exceeds the expenses we incur in getting married. Not only this, such arrangements are skirting around the issue of morality altogether. Many a time, couples in live-in-relationships face social humiliation and rejection by their relatives and friends in India but this is not the case in Western societies where this arrangement has become well established.

Single-Parent Families

The pressing exigencies of the modern life have given rise to one-parent or single-parent families. In many cases, this is the result of the death of a spouse or divorce or sometimes because of the developing new custom of live-in-relationship. But, in many cases, it is the result of deliberate choice because of some or other reasons. The rising divorce rate is one of the main reasons for this developing trend. It has become a significant phenomenon in many developed and developing countries. According to one estimate, in US alone, almost four in ten

marriages end in divorce. After divorce, generally children live with their mother who goes out to work and takes on the roles of both parents. An increasing number of men in the West divorced or widowed are choosing to bring up their kids single-handed. Single dads do not mind double roles. What does it mean is a change in the dynamics and rhythm of relationship for both child and the father?

Teenage Marriages

Studies show that there has also been a trend towards teenage marriages in the Western societies, including USA and Canada. There was news that a 17 years old girl was to be married to the 18 years old father of the baby. Recently, Barack Obama, president of USA, expressed serious concern about the rising number of early pregnancies among teenagers in America. Many teenage marriages involve a pregnancy at the time of the marriage. Teenage marriages generally take place during studying which forces them for dropout. The main cause of teenage sex is the higher exposure to sexual content in movies, TV, music and magazines along with the extreme openness and liberal norms and values about sex and also disintegration of family. Recently, it was reported in the newspapers that in Britain during sex education session in schools contraceptives were distributed for safer sex. Most of these marriages end in divorce because people marrying young are generally unprepared for the process of selecting a mate and assuming a marital role, so they derive little satisfaction from marriage and this situation leads them to divorce.

This trend has affected the median age at first marriage in these countries. It is dropping and moving backward towards the younger ages possibly because of the maturity of the young and partly because of the general breakdown in family controls. Now, the movement is towards individualism and away from family and community controls. British sociologists have shown concern that the traditional system of marriage first and then reproduction is on the brink of end. Astonishingly, the studies report that the cases of unmarried mothers are rare among British Indians who are living there for one or two generations.

Contrary to this trend (lowering of age at marriage), the age at marriage is rising in India, the Arab countries and in sub-Saharan Africa. In India, there is a reverse trend regarding the age at marriage. In past few years, the age at marriage is rising in urban areas, especially in metropolitan cities. Nowadays, there is a trend of postponing marriage and remaining single until they are older, which reflects a decision on part of young people to live independently as they pursue higher education or job opportunities. Not only this, there are instances where people opt to remain single throughout their lives. The trend towards maintaining an unmarried lifestyle is related to the growing of economic independence of

young people. Such people neither want to produce children nor do they like to burden themselves with the responsibilities of the family. Moreover, from a financial point of view, it is often no longer necessary for a woman to marry in order to enjoy a satisfying life. Recent economic liberalization has enhanced the pay packages of both male and female workers. This has given liberty to enjoy sex without wedlock.

Homosexual Marriages

Lately there has been a trend towards homosexual marriages in many countries. Gay and lesbian couples are living together though their number is very meagre. Since 1970s homosexuals, both male and female, began to claim the right for the homosexual marriages in many Western countries including America. In these countries, they have started a sort of movement for the approval of such relationships. Denmark is the first country to formally recognize homosexual marriages. Techniques of artificial insemination and surrogacy have helped homosexual couples to have children and become parents. Demands of legalizing homosexual marriages and live-in-relationships are threatening the existence of traditional marriage and family system. This forces either to broaden the concept of family or dismantle the marriage altogether or relegate it one way of living rather than only one. It is recently reported that fourteen nations in the world have legalized homosexual marriages and France is the last nation which has enacted law to legalize such marriages in May 2013. Netherlands was the first country to legalize same-sex marriages, with the first marriage being performed in 2001 in the Amsterdam city. Same-sex civil marriages are legally recognized in the other parts of Europe viz. Belgium, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, Iceland, France, UK, etc. Canada was the fourth country in the world and the first one in the Americas to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide with the enactment of the Civil Marriage Act which provided a gender neutral marriage definition. Most legal benefits commonly associated with marriage had been extended to cohabiting same-sex couples since 1999.

In India, homosexual intercourse was made a criminal offense under **Section 377** of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. This made it an offence for a person to voluntarily have “carnal intercourse against the order of nature”. In 2009, Delhi High Court’s decision in Naz Foundation vs. Government of NCT of Delhi found Section 377 and other legal prohibitions against private, adult, consensual, and non-commercial same-sex conduct to be in direct violation of fundamental rights provided by the Indian Constitution. Please note that rulings of High Court on the constitutionality of any law apply throughout India. But the High Court ruling on decriminalization of Section 377 was overturned by the Supreme Court on 11th December, 2013. On 2nd February, 2016, however, Supreme Court agreed to

reconsider its judgement, stating it would refer petitions to abolish Section 377 to a five member constitutional bench, which would conduct a comprehensive hearing of the issue.

Future of the Institution of Marriage:

With increasing marital breakdown and subsequent divorce, especially in Western developed societies, there are growing fears that marriage as an institution is in decline. Compromise, sacrifice and adjustment are no more the ideals of modern marriage. Self-sufficiency and individuality are best aspirations of modern couples. Living together but feeling to be alone has become the ideals of modern couples without marriage. The controls regarding pre-marital and even extra-marital sex relations have loosened. Now, the marriage vow 'till death do us part' has become anachronistic in the same manner as did a few years back, not to go long in the past when marriage was regarded as a holy sacrament. The ideas of sacramental union or even of expected life-time monogamy have now been abolished in many parts of the Western world.

In recent years, cohabitation before marrying has virtually become a norm in Western countries. Marriage is going out of fashion with an increasing number of people cohabiting and even rearing children outside matrimony. Marriage is sometimes interpreted more liberally and the phrases like 'living as married' or 'live-in-relationship' are used in place of the term marriage. **Some feminists who see marriage as an oppressive, authoritarian, and capitalistic institution have urged women not to marry. In their opinion, the inequalities of marriage are reflections of the inequalities of the sexes in society. The trend is towards what is called 'factual familism' or social relations between the sexes considered to have no fundamental meaning beyond present company and the present moment.** This is the question which the sociologists of today are facing. Will we continue in the same age-old virtues of mother's love, parental obligation, and spouse loyalty?

Looking at these conditions one might easily say that the future of marriage looks bleak. Marriage has ceased to be the condition for regular sexual experience for either sex. It is no longer the basis of economic activity and rearing and caring of the young. Moreover, some couples choose not to have children and regard themselves child-free. They do not believe having children automatically follows from marriage, nor do they feel that reproduction is the duty of all married couples. In spite of all these problems of marriage and changed attitude towards associational living, marriage still remains the preferred way of life for the vast majority of the world population. Despite the dire statistics of divorce, marriage seems to be rather resilient institution. We agree with Giddens (1997) when he

says, ‘marriage and family remained firmly established institutions, yet are undergoing major stress and strains’. Or, in other words, both the institutions are passing through a critical stage of transition.

Childless Marriages

Childlessness is no more viewed as unacceptable rather it is a contemporary and growing trend. Since procreation is stereotyped as one of the primary function of marriage, this role impacts the meaning of marriage to couples who are parents. But the meaning of marriage for those couples who are voluntarily childless is different. With the increased awareness of women and the impact of the feminist movement on women, women have become more ambitious for their professional life than their stereotypical role of being a mother.

Changes in the nature of economy and work culture are largely associated with this development. Various reasons behind this changing trend could be shift from agriculture based to industrial society (i.e. not many hands are needed to plough the land), technological advancement (i.e. household chores are being done with the help of vacuum cleaners, washing machines, etc.), increase of women education and women empowerment that has led to increasing desires of higher education and of careers, concern among young people with the population explosion may provide a reason for remaining childless. Some of the major effects of becoming a mother such as being tied down, becoming more matured, having more responsibility makes it difficult for professional women to choose motherhood.

The Family

Family is one of the most important social institutions. It is the very basic unit of the social structure in any society. It is a universal social institution and has existed throughout the history of human society in some form or the other. This is as true among simple societies as within the complex modern societies. However, it varies in its internal organisation, in its degree of autonomy and in the sanctions and taboos by which it is protected and perpetuated. Horton and Hunt argue that sociologically family may be defined as ‘a kinship grouping which provides for the rearing of children and for certain other human needs.’ According to MacIver and Page, family is by far the most important primary group in society. They describe family as ‘a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the production and upbringing of children.’ According to Kingsley Davis, family is ‘a group of persons whose relations to one another are based upon consanguinity and who are, therefore, kin to another.’ Eliott and Merrill define family as ‘the biological social unit composed of husband wife and children.’ According to Green, ‘family is the institutionalized social group charged with duty of population replacement.’

In a study entitled *Social Structure*, **George Peter Murdock** examined the institution of the family in a wide range of societies. Murdock took a sample of 250 societies ranging from small hunting and gathering bands to large-scale industrial societies. He claimed that some form of family existed in every society and concluded, on the evidence of his sample, that the family is universal. Murdock defines the family as follows, ‘The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation 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 co-habiting adults’. The parent-child relationship is not necessarily a biological one. Its importance is primarily social, children being recognized as members of a particular family whether or not the adult spouses have biologically produced them.

Either on its own or as the basic unit within an extended family, Murdock found that the nuclear family was present in every society in his sample. This led him to conclude that, ‘The nuclear family is a universal human social grouping. Either as the sole prevailing form of the family or as the basic unit from which more complex forms are compounded, it exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society.’

Another scholar R. H. Lowie in his work *Primitive Society* argues that, 'It does not matter whether marital relations are permanent or temporary; whether there is polygyny or polyandry or sexual license; whether conditions are complicated by the addition of members not included in our family circle; the one fact stands out beyond all others that everywhere the husband, wife, and immature children constitute a unit apart from the remainder of the community.'

Much anthropological research and speculation has gone into examining the historical origins of the family. Some authors have put forward the theory that the 'original state of mankind' was one of sexual promiscuity. It is also popularly known as the theory of early sex communism or primitive promiscuism. The theory of primeval promiscuity appears, for example, in L.H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* and R. Briffault's *The Mothers*. But this doctrine has been weakened by the weight of anthropological evidence. In fact, among the primates and other non-human species, family life is often found to be highly developed.

Morgan in his evolutionary theory concludes that in the earlier form of groupings of people, sex was absolutely un-regulated and the institution of family was not known. His picture of primitive society was one of atomistic existence, the only form of groupings existent being sibs. He further held that due to free sex relations and ignorance of the role of paternity, fathers were unimportant, and mother-sibs were the earliest groupings. His conclusions, however, were more logical and academic than actual and historical. He postulated a sequential growth of the institution of the family. Morgan listed five different and successive forms of family, each being associated with a corresponding and distinctive type of marriage. They were, in succession, as follows:

1. The **consanguine** family, consisted of a group which was founded upon the intermarriage, in a group, of siblings, own and collateral, i.e. of brothers and sisters and of cousins.
2. The **punaluan** family was founded upon the intermarriage of several sisters, own and collateral, with each other's husbands in a group. The joint husbands were not necessarily related to each other. Such a family was also founded upon the intermarriage of several brothers, own and collateral, with each other's wives, in a group, these wives not being necessarily related to each other. However, in actual practice, the husbands as a group, and the wives as a group, must have been kin of each other. In each case, one group was conjointly married to another such group of members of the opposite sex.

3. The **syndyasmian** or pairing family was founded upon marriage between single pairs, without giving the right of exclusive cohabitation to any person over another. Consequently such a marriage continued during the pleasure of the parties.
4. The **patriarchal** family was founded upon the marriage of one man with several wives, each wife being secluded from every other.
5. The **monogamian** family was founded upon marriage between single pairs, with the married couple having exclusive cohabitation with one another.

The first significant denial of Morgan's scheme, and its basis particularly, came from Westermarck. On the basis of a detailed study of the institution of marriage, Westermarck, in his famous work *History of Human Marriage*, concluded that the family was the outcome of male possessiveness and jealousy, and a growth in property and of the sense of property. So man, and not woman, becomes the central figure in the scheme of development here. He traced monogamy back to mammals and birds, and opined the man had inherited it from the earlier stages of the ladder of evolution. Any further evolution which had taken place was essentially in moral ideas evolved by man with regard to marriage and not in the institution itself. However, it is also true that Morgan also dated the origin of the family only after man's role in begetting children became known, and the right of passing property to his own, rather than to his sister's or mother's children, had been recognized and accepted.

Briffault in his famous work *The Mothers* has challenged Westermarck's position. Briffault argues that man originally lived in a state of social promiscuity and that the earliest human family consisted of a mother and her child. It was only after the mother began realizing the economic advantages of having a man attached to her that she tried to turn the casual attachment of the male into a more permanent relationship. He roots the institution of the family in yet another institution, viz., the *mother-right*, that is, the supreme authority of the mothers. Consequently he argues that the earliest form of the family was matriarchal and that only with the development of higher agriculture and the economic dominance of men could the patriarchal type emerge. Thus, the patriarchal and monogamian families are regarded by him as later in point of time and development.

Various sociologists and social anthropologists have identified various types and forms of families based on different-different criteria. Firstly, **on the basis of marriage**, family may be classified into monogamous and polygamous family. In **monogamous family**, at any given time a man can have only one wife and a woman can have only one husband. The married couple has the exclusive right of cohabitation with one another. Monogamy is prevalent in all societies and is almost the universal form in all modern industrial societies. Polygamy is that arrangement of marriage in which either a man or woman can have more than one spouse. A **polygamous family** could be of two types, polygynous and polyandrous. When a man marries more than one wife, the family organization which is formed is of **polygynous** type. On the other hand, a **polyandrous** family is one in which a woman has more than one husbands.

Secondly, **on the basis of descent or ancestry**, family can be classified into two types, viz., patrilineal and matrilineal family. In **patrilineal** family the descent (and sometimes inheritance) is traced unilaterally through the father and the male line, while in **matrilineal** family, it is traced unilaterally through the mother and the female line. In India, Khasi and Garo tribes of north-east and the Nayars of Kerala are the matrilineal groups. The Khasi follow the rule of ultimogeniture and thus being a matrilineal society the youngest daughter inherits the property. Please note that **Ultimogeniture** refers to the rule of inheritance or succession which favours the 'last born' or the youngest child (son in patrilineal societies and daughter in matrilineal societies). **Primogeniture**, on the other hand, is the rule of inheritance or succession which favours the 'first born' or the eldest child. The principle of primogeniture was widely prevalent among the Nambudri brahmans. Please also note that among the Sema Naga tribe there is a practice of inheritance of widows. Among the Sema Naga, one is often obliged to marry one's father's widows, other than one's own mother. The reason for this lies in the fact that on a person's death his property goes to his widow(s) and if his son(s) want/wants that property he (they) can get it only if he (they) marries/marry the widow(s), other than his (their) own mother.

Thirdly, **on the basis of nature of authority**, a family may be either patriarchal or matriarchal. Under the **patriarchal** family the male head of the family is possessed of inclusive powers. He is the owner and administrator of the family property and rights. He presides over the religious rites of the family. In short, the family father or the eldest male descendant is the protector and ruler of the family enjoying full authority over the family members. In **matriarchal** family, the authority vests in the woman head of the family with the males being subordinate. She is the owner of the family property and rules over the family.

Fourthly, **on the basis of rules of residence**, family can be classified into various forms. The term '**Virilocal**' is used to denote a residence pattern or rule in which after marriage a couple resides with or near the man's family or kin group. In Latin it means 'in the man's place'. The term Virilocal is usually preferred in modern anthropology to Patrilocal or Patrivirilocal. In sociological and anthropological literature these terms have been used interchangeably. In this residence pattern, it is worth making a reference to Avunculocal and Amitalocal. In **Avunculocal** residence, the custom prescribes that a married couple reside with or in the locality of the husband's maternal uncle, while in **Amitalocal** residence, the custom prescribes that a married couple reside with or in the locality of the husband's paternal aunt (husband's father's sister). The term 'amitate' however refers to a pattern of special relationships between a child and his or her paternal aunt (the child's father's sister) found in certain societies. Another related term is **Matri-patrilocal** residence. It is a type of patrilocal residence distinguished by **George P. Murdock**, in which the bride and groom first live with the bride's family, with the groom contributing his services to her family for specified period of time. Later, the couple moves and stays permanently at the groom's parental home or community.

On the other hand, the term '**Uxorilocal**' is used to denote a residence pattern or rule whereby on marriage the couple goes to live with or near the woman's family or kin group. In Latin it means 'in the woman's place'. It is generally preferred in modern anthropology to the term Matrilocal. Both these terms are often used interchangeably in sociological and anthropological literature. Other related terms are Unilocal residence, Ambilocal or Bilocal residence. **Unilocal** residence refers to a custom prescribing that married couple reside in or near the household of one of the spouse's relatives. Tradition dictates whether within a particular culture the pair live with the husband's or the wife's family. **Ambilocal** or **Bilocal** residence implies a residence pattern which allows a choice of Virilocal or Uxorilocal residence. In other words, it refers to a custom that allows married couples to have the choice to living with or in the locality of either the husband's or the wife's family. While on the other hand, in **Neolocal** residence, the married couple are normally expected not to live with either of the family of origin, but to establish a new residence for themselves. In other words, the married couple neither stays at groom's house nor in bride's house, but settles a new house for themselves. In some societies **Duolocal** residence has also been reported. Duolocal residence implies that the husband and the wife reside separately. In this context it means that the husband visits his wife's home at night. Duolocal residence has been reported among the matrilineal Muslim community of Lakshadweep.

Fifthly, **on the basis of nature of relations (kinship ties) among the family members**, the family can be classified into two main types, viz., conjugal family and consanguine family. **Conjugal family** is a type of family organization in which primary emphasis is placed upon the husband-wife relationship (marital bond), rather than upon the blood relationships. The conjugal family centres about a husband and wife and their unmarried children. The conjugal family usually does not form an extended family. **Consanguine family**, on the other hand, refers to a type of family organization in which the primary emphasis is upon the blood relationship of parents and children or brother and sister's, rather than upon the marital relationship of husband and wife. Thus the position of blood relatives is central while the position of spouses tends to be peripheral. The consanguine family normally forms an extended family, usually with two or three generations living together.

Sixthly, **on the basis of membership**, family can be classified in terms of family of orientation and family of procreation. **Family of orientation** is the family into which an individual is born and in which he is socialized. It includes his father, mother, brothers and sisters. **Family of procreation**, on the other hand, is one which an individual establishes by his marriage and which includes his or her spouse and children.

Further, **Carle C. Zimmerman** in his work *Family and Civilization* has described three types of family viz., atomistic family, domestic family and trusteeship family. **Atomistic family** is a type of family which is characterized by a higher degree of individuation than either the domestic family or trusteeship family. Individual family members have more freedom from family control, and the welfare of the individual is considered more important than the welfare of the family as a whole. The atomistic family typically is small in size, and centre about a husband, wife, and unmarried children. Usually parents do not live with their married children. **Domestic family** is intermediate between the atomistic family and the trusteeship family. The domestic family has more group unity and less individuation than the atomistic family. Considerable emphasis is placed on the relationship between parents and children even after the children are married, and close contact is maintained between parents and married children and among families of married brothers and sisters. **Trusteeship family**, on the other hand, is a type of family characterized by a higher degree of group unity than either the atomistic family or domestic family. In the trusteeship family the individual's self-interests are subordinated to the welfare of the family as whole. Living members are regarded as trustees of the family's "blood, rights, property, name and position for their lifetimes". The trusteeship family is usually an extended family (including several living generation) and is typically found in rural cultures where the family forms an economic unit.

Burgess and **Locke** have classified family on the basis of the behaviour of the individual members in terms of **institutional** and **companionship** families. In the former family, the behaviour of the members is controlled by mores and public opinion, while in the latter family, behaviour arises from mutual affection and consensus. **K.P. Chattopadhyay** has identified three types of family: **simple** (man, wife, and unmarried children), **compound** (two simple families, say, ego, his wife and unmarried children, and ego's parents and unmarried brothers and sisters), and **composite** (i.e. lineal and collateral joint families).

Finally, forms of family have also been distinguished on the basis of its size and structure. As stated earlier the structure of the family varies from society to society. The smallest family unit is known as the **nuclear family** and consists of a husband and wife and their immature or unmarried offspring. **Pauline Kolenda**, while discussing the nature of nuclear family in India, has identified various forms of the nuclear family structure which may be summarised as follows:

- i) **nuclear family** refers to a couple with or without children
- ii) **supplemented nuclear family** indicates a nuclear family plus one or more unmarried, separated, or widowed relatives of the parents, other than their unmarried children
- iii) **sub-nuclear family** is identified as a fragment of a former nuclear family, for instance, a widow/widower with his/her unmarried children or siblings (unmarried or widowed or separated or divorced) living together
- iv) **single person household**
- v) **supplemented sub-nuclear family** refers to a group of relatives, members of a formerly complete nuclear family along with some other unmarried, divorced or widowed relative who was not a member of the nuclear family. For instance, a widow and her unmarried children may be living together with her widowed mother-in-law.

Talcott Parsons argues that the '**isolated nuclear family**' is the typical family form in modern industrial society. It is 'structurally isolated' because it does not form an integral part of a wider system of kinship relationships. Parsons concludes that given the universalistic, achievement oriented values of industrial society, the isolated nuclear family is the most suitable family structure.

Units larger than the nuclear family are usually known as ***extended families***. Such families can be seen as extension of the basic nuclear unit, either vertical or horizontal. Vertically extended family is based on the extension of the parent-child relationship. Thus, the patrilineally extended family is based on an extension of the father-son relationship, while the matrilineally extended family is based on the mother-daughter relationship. The extended family may also be extended horizontally to include a group consisting of two or more brothers, their wives and children. This horizontally extended family is called as the fraternal or collateral family. **Bell** and **Vogel** define the extended family as ‘any grouping broader than the nuclear family which is related by descent, marriage or adoption’. These extended families across the globe are known by different-different names. For example, in Europe, the Yugoslav form of the extended family is known as ***zadruga***. In India, the patrilineal extended families among Coorgs of south India is popularly known as ***okka***, while among Nambudiri Brahmins it is known as ***illom***. Further, the matrilineal extended family among the Nayars of Kerala is known as ***taravad***.

In India, the family whether extended vertically and/or horizontally is called the joint family, which is strictly speaking also a property-sharing unit. The term ‘**joint family**’ was coined by **Sir Henry Maine** to describe the patrilineal type of extended family in India where all the male members of the family hold joint ownership rights in the family property. It is largely patrilineal, patriarchal and **patrivirilocal** (residence of the couple after marriage in husband’s father’s home) in nature with a few exceptions. Joint family, which is a typical feature of Indian society is characterised by commensality, common residence, coparcenary (joint ownership of property among the male members of the family in a patrilineal society), co-operation sentiment and ritual bonds. Please note that in case of Hindu joint family the authority to take decision and maintain peace and discipline in the family lies in the hand of the *Karta*. All the earning members keep their earnings with him and the entire property is kept under his control. Family ceremonies and celebrations are held under his guidance and direction. He also settles the disputes within the household. In a nutshell, the *Karta* is the trustee of the family and enjoys unquestionable authority.

According to **Iravati Karve**, the joint family may be defined as “a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common, and who participate in common family worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred.” Scholars like **I.P. Desai** emphasise that the number of generations present in a family is important for identifying a joint family. According to him, ‘we call that household a joint family which has greater generation depth than the nuclear family and members of which are related to one another by property, income and mutual right and authority.’ A

joint family is commonly defined as a three generational family. For instance a man, his married son and his grand children constitute a joint family. I.P. Desai suggested that there are five types of family life in India which may be summarised as follows:

- i) **Nuclear Family:** The smallest family which consists of wife, husband and their unmarried children.
- ii) **Functional Joint Family:** When two families having blood relationship are living separately but function under one common authority, it is called functional joint family.
- iii) **Functional and Substantial Joint Family:** When a functional joint family is also joint in terms of property it is called functional and substantial joint family.
- iv) **Marginal Joint Family:** When two generations of family members live together functionally and substantially it is called marginal joint family.
- v) **Traditional Joint Family:** It consists of three or more generations of people living together in one household, own property in one commonly and participate in the family rituals.

Researchers, like **F.G. Bailey** and **T.N. Madan**, on the other hand have advocated the limitation of the term joint family to a group of relatives who form a property owning group, the coparcenary family. **M.S. Gore**, for instance, defines a joint family as a group consisting of adult male coparceners and their dependants. The wives and young children of these male members are the dependents.

Pauline Kolenda presents the following types of joint family on the basis of the relatives who are its members:

- i) **Collateral joint family:** It comprises two or more married couples between whom there is a sibling bond. In this type, usually a brother and his wife and another brother and his wife live together with unmarried children.
- ii) **Supplemented collateral joint family:** It is a collateral joint family along with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives. The supplemented relatives are generally the widowed mother of the married brothers or the widower father, or an unmarried sibling.

- iii) **Lineal joint family:** Two couples, between whom there is a lineal link, like between a parent and his married son or some times between a parent and his married daughter, live together.
- iv) **Supplemented lineal joint family:** It is a lineal joint family together with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives who do not belong to either of the lineally linked nuclear families. For example, the father's widower brother or the son's wife's unmarried brother or sister.
- v) **Lineal collateral joint family:** In this type three or more couples are linked lineally and collaterally. For instance we can have a family consisting of parents and their two or more married sons together with the unmarried children of the couples.
- vi) **Supplemented lineal-collateral joint family:** In this type are found a lineal collateral joint family plus unmarried, widowed, separated relatives who belong to none of the nuclear families (lineally and collaterally linked). For example, the father's widowed sister or brother or an unmarried nephew of the father.

Another type of extended family found in India is the matrilineal family among the Nayars of Kerala. The Nayars called this matrilineal extended family as '*Taravad*'. Among the Nayars, the term *Taravad* was applied for the clan, and the lineage. It also referred to the property group. *Taravad* was an exogamous unit, i.e., its members marry outside the *Taravad*. The composition of this matrilineal joint family was entirely different from the patrilineal joint family. All members of this family were consanguinely related men and women only. In relation to the male ego, the members of such a family included his mother and her sisters and brothers, his own brothers and sisters, mother's sister's sons and daughters and the children of the ego's sisters. Thus, there was no relation by marriage in *Taravad*. The married women with their children lived with their mothers and other siblings. The men in the family were only occasional visitors to their wives in other *Taravad* at night but permanently resided with their own mother. That is why this system is also popularly known as the '*visiting husband system*'.

Please note that since the Nayars practiced non-fraternal polyandry, a Nayar woman had a number of husbands at a time. The children born of such unions belonged to woman's *Taravad* only and were looked after by their mother's brother. The property is inherited by women and managed by their brothers. Though theoretically woman is the nominal head of the family but it is the eldest male member of the family, known as **Karnavan**, who looks after the affairs of the family. He is the custodian of property and the manager of family matters. He also

played the role of the social father for the children born in the *Taravad*. In this system the bond between brother and sister was strongly emphasized, and the bond between husband and wife correspondingly de-emphasized, the more so because Nayar women could legitimately have a number of visiting husbands, provided they were of higher status (hypergamy) i.e., higher caste Nayars or Namboodiri Brahmins. Also, Nayar men too could have a number of wives (polygyny). In fact, the marital bond was so minimised among the Nayars that anthropologists have debated endlessly whether Nayar society has the institution of marriage at all. Anthropologists have also cited that the Nayar system disproves the proposition that the elementary or nuclear family is a 'universal' human institution. Please note that the emphasis being on the solidarity of the lineage group, marriage was the weakest institution among the Nayars. The strong descent ties and weak affinal links in this case are related to the kind of private ownership of land in Kerala.

When *Taravad* becomes too large in size it is divided into '*Tavazhis*', whereby one of the women members of the *Taravad* is given a share of the property and provided with a house to start a new *Taravad*. A *Tavazhi* in relation to a woman is 'a group of persons consisting of a female, her children, and all her descendants in the female line'. In a *Taravad* there is always a potential conflict between a mother's sons and her brother. Mother's sons suspect their maternal uncle of diverting the *Taravad* property to his own children. This often leads to conflict and tension. Of late these *Taravads* have further started breaking down into smaller familial units known as the '*Veedus*'.

Similarly, among the Coorgs of south India, the patrilineal and patrilocal joint family is called as '*okka*'. Eminent sociologist **M.N. Srinivas** in his study '*Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*' found the *okka* as the basic group among Coorgs. It is impossible to imagine a Coorg apart from the *okka* of which he is a member. People who do not belong to an *okka* have no social existence at all, and the elders always bring pressure on the parties concerned to see that children born out of wedlock obtain membership in their father's or mother's *okka*. Member of an *okka* is acquired by birth, and the outside world always identifies a man with his *okka*. His association with his *okka* does not cease even after death, because he then becomes one of a body of apotheosized ancestors (*karanava*) who are believed to look after the *okka* of which they were members when alive. The ancestors are worshipped, and offerings of food and drink (*bharani*) are occasionally made to them.

Membership of an *okka* determines to a very large extent the choice of a spouse. First of all, marital relations are forbidden between members of the same *okka*. Where agnation overflows the *okka*, the taboo extends to agnatic relatives who are not members of the *okka*. Again, children of sisters may not intermarry.

In recent times the importance of the joint family has gradually declined. As Srinivas points out, the Coorg *okka* 'is a very much stronger institution than the joint family of the higher castes of south India. The theory of the impartibility of its traditional property and preference for leviratic unions buttress it strongly against fission. Add to this the fact that a cross cousin is commonly chosen for marriage and it becomes almost impregnable'. Even here, however, the joint family is said to be weakening.

In yet another example from south India, there is Nambudiri joint family. Nambudiri Brahmins lived in patrilineages or patrilineal families which were called '*Illom*'. The Nambudiris were landowners. Land was considered indivisible, and indivisibility was ensured by the rule of primogeniture. Primogeniture refers to the rule of inheritance according to which only the eldest son is entitled to inherit the ancestral property of the family. Only the eldest son was permitted to marry a Nambudiri girl and the younger sons had "liaison" (*sambandham*) with girls belonging to the higher Nayar castes. The younger sons visited their life partners at night and the children born of the union become members of their mother's *taravads*. Such a Nambudiri Brahmin, who forms *sambandham* with a Nayar woman, is called her 'ritual husband'. Since the children from these unions always belonged to the lineage of Nayar women only, thus, in this way the Nambudiri men could check their children by Nayar women from claiming a share in their lineage property. Here we find that both the Nambudiri patrilineal group and the Nayar matrilineal group insist on maintaining their autonomy. Further, kinship relationships within respective lineages remain strong. The result is that affinal relationships arising out of *sambandham* alliances are quite weak. The strong descent ties and weak affinal links in this case are related to the kind of private ownership of land in Kerala. The Nambudiri *Illom* consisted of a man, his wife or wives, his children and his younger brothers. Sometimes, the *Illom* included his old parents or his eldest son's children. Please note that with the rapid advancement of the forces of modernisation these traditional forms of extended families are rapidly undergoing change.

The family institution in the whole world is undergoing change. In the developed societies of the West, this change is quite fundamental in nature, so that the very existence of family is threatened. Industrialization and development of material culture have mainly led to this change. In India too drastic changes in the family are taking place though slowly. Contemporary western society is characterized, among other things, by the declining importance of all primary groups, including the family, and their supersession by secondary groups. Most of those functions which the family used to satisfy are now fulfilled by various commercial and state operated institutions like crèches, kindergartens, schools, trade unions, clubs, hotels, and restaurants. The disintegration of the family has

been hastened by freer sex relations made possible by changing notions about morals and by birth control techniques. With the decline of religion, the religious sanctions behind family and marriage have also vanished, making dissolution easier to obtain. The changed notions about the status and role of women have also aided this break up. Individualism is the basis of all contemporary Western culture. Individual happiness is often possible only at the cost of the family as a whole.

In India, generally the factors leading to changes in the family are discussed in the context of the issue of disintegration of the joint family. A host of interrelated factors, economic, educational, legal, demographic, have affected the family in India. Among the economic factors, industrialization and urbanization have significantly affected the structure and composition of the traditional family system. The family which was a principle unit of production has been transformed into a consumption unit. Industrialisation has also separated the place of work from home. Due to diversification of occupational opportunities members of a family are no more dependent on the traditional family occupation. Further, the processes of industrialization and urbanization, particularly in India, have led to a demographic change in terms of heavy migration of rural people to cities. Residential separation due to mobility of members from one place to another affects the size and composition of the family. A man may take his wife and children along with him to establish a nuclear family in the city. There have been many studies, which show that migration to cities from villages and small towns has contributed to the rapid disintegration of large size family units. In the city, with problems of finding accommodation and limited space available for living, it becomes difficult for an average urbanite to maintain and support a large family.

Modern system of education has also brought about a significant change in the attitudes, beliefs and values of the young generation. Due to increasing literacy child marriages are lessening in number leading to marriage between mature individuals. Further, educated women tend to be more liberal, autonomous and economically independent. Couples are not interested in having more than two or three children. As a result of which the family size is getting smaller and the number of nuclear families is fast increasing.

Legislations regarding education, marriage, employment, and property, have also affected the family system in many ways. For example, Constitution of India has made 'right to free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of six to fourteen years' a fundamental right under **Article 21A** which was introduced by Eighty Sixth Amendment Act, 2002. Similarly, labour laws passed for the benefit of employees like the **Indian Workmen Compensation Act, 1923** and the **Minimum Wages Act, 1948**, helped to reduce the economic reliance of members on the joint family for economic support. Further, **Hindu Gains of**

Learning Act, 1930 declared that the property acquired by a Hindu out of his education was his personal property though his education was paid for by the joint family. The distinction between self-acquired property and joint family property was drawn. After Independence, the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956** was passed which gave a daughter and son equal rights to the father's property. These legislations challenged the inheritance patterns that prevailed in joint families prior to the passing of this Act and the dependent position of women within the family.

Some other important legislations in this regard have been discussed in brief in the following section:

The Married Women's Property Act, 1874: This Act confers ownership right to women not only on their '*Streedhan*' but also on the property which they have personally earned.

Gains of Learning Act, 1930: As a result of this Act, member of a joint family secures individual right over income or property which he or she has been able to earn by means of his or her educational attainment. This Act has made the individual members of family to develop personal interest in the property and this tendency has damaged the collective interest of the family.

The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937: This Act enables a woman to have equal share to that of a son in the property of her deceased husband. If the property was joint and unseparated at the time of her husband's death, she is entitled to have the same interest therein as her deceased husband was entitled.

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956: This Act confers on women right to property. As per this Act, not only a daughter is given a right in her father's property equal to her brothers, but also gets a share in her deceased husband's property equal to her sons and daughters. The legislation has removed the distinction between Stridhan and non-Stridhan. This Act, in course of time, led to the changes in the position of women in the family.

The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956: This Act permits the wife deserted by her husband to claim maintenance allowance from her husband; and it also permits women to adopt a child.

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic of Women and Girls' Act, 1956: This Act gives protection to women against kidnapping and pushing them to brothel homes to do prostitution.

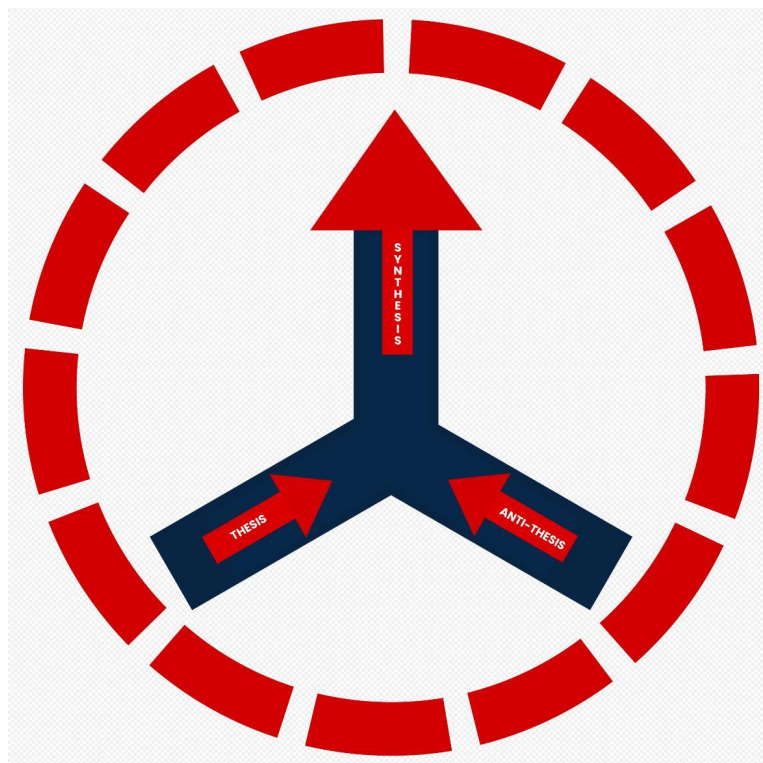
The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961: This Act provides maternity benefits (2 months maternity leave with salary) to married women.

Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971: This Act permits the termination of pregnancy by a registered doctor if it does not exceed 12 weeks on certain grounds (such as pregnancy causing risk to the life of pregnant woman, pregnancy caused by rape or failure of contraceptive device, etc.)

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 does not permit wage discrimination between male and female workers.]

The Family Court Act, 1984 assures women justice in family dispute and at the same time, preserves the secrecy of family matters.

Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994: An Act to provide for regulation of the use of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for the purpose of detecting genetic or metabolic disorders, chromosomal abnormalities or certain congenital malformations or sex-linked disorders and for the prevention of misuse of such techniques for the purpose of prenatal sex determination leading female foeticide and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.



Many sociologists have regarded the family as the cornerstone of society. In pre-modern and modern societies alike it has been seen as the most basic unit of social organization and one which carries out vital tasks such as socializing children. It is difficult to imagine how human society could function without it. The composition of the family may vary from society to society. In general, therefore, the family has been seen as a universal social institution, as an inevitable part of human society. On balance, it has been regarded as a good thing, both for the individual and society as whole. This view has tended to divert attention from interesting and important questions. For example, it has discouraged serious and detailed consideration of alternatives to the family.

Until the 1960s few sociologists questioned the importance or the benefits of family life. Most sociologists assumed that family life was evolving as modernity progressed, and the changes involved made the family better-suited to meeting the needs of society and of family members. A particular type of family, the nuclear family (based around a two-generation household of parents and their children), was seen as well-adapted to the demands of modern societies. From the 1960s, an increasing number of critical thinkers began to question the assumption that the family was necessarily a beneficial institution. These new perspectives on the family have questioned many of the assumptions of the more traditional view. These approaches have not assumed that the family is inevitable. Often, they have been openly critical of the institution of the family. During the late 1960s the Women's Liberation Movement began shaking the foundations of the family by attacking the role of women within it. This attack was developed by some feminist writers into a condemnation of the family as an institution. Feminists, Marxists and critical psychologists began to highlight what they saw as some of the negative effects and the 'dark side' of family life.

In the following decades the family was not just under attack from academic writers – social changes also seemed to be undermining traditional families. Rising divorce rates, cohabitation before marriage, increasing numbers of single-parent families and single-person households, and other trends have all suggested that individuals may be basing their lives less and less around conventional families.

Some have seen these changes as a symptom of greater individualism within modern societies. They have welcomed what appears to be an increasing choice for individuals. People no longer have to base their lives around what may be outmoded and, for many, unsuitable, conventional family structures. Others, however, have lamented the changes and worried about their effect on society. Such changes were seen as both a symptom and a cause of instability and insecurity in people's lives and in society as a whole. This view was advocated by

traditionalists who wanted a return to the ideal of the nuclear family. For them, many of society's problems were a result of the increased family instability.

Some postmodernists have begun to argue that there has been a fundamental break between the modern family and the postmodern family. They deny that any one type of family can be held up as the norm to which other family types can be compared. While modern societies might have had one central, dominant family type, this is no longer the case. As a result, it is no longer possible to produce a theory of 'the family'. Different explanations are needed for different types of family.

In short, the family has come to be seen as more problematic than it was in the past. The controversies that have come to surround families and households have been discussed subsequently. This chapter begins by examining the assumption of the universality of the family.

Is the family universal?

George Peter Murdock: the family – a universal social institution

In a study entitled *Social structure*, **George Peter Murdock** examined the institution of the family in wide range of societies. Murdock took a sample of 250 societies ranging from small hunting and gathering bands to large-scale industrial societies. He claimed that some form of family existed in every society and concluded, on the evidence of his sample, that the family is universal. Murdock defined the family as follows, 'The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation 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 co-habiting adults'. Thus the family lives together, pools its resources and works together and produces offspring. At least two of the adult members conduct a sexual relationship according to the norms of their particular society. Such norms vary from society to society. For example, among the Banaro of New Guinea, the husband does not have sexual relations with his wife until she has borne a child by a friend of his father. The parent-child relationship is not necessarily a biological one. Its importance is primarily social, children being recognized as members of a particular family whether or not the adult spouses have biologically produced them.

The structure of the family varies from society to society. The smallest family unit is known as the nuclear family and consists of a husband and wife and their immature offspring. Units larger than the nuclear family are usually known as

extended families. Such families can be seen as extension of the basic nuclear unit, either vertical extensions – for example the addition of members of a third generation such as the spouses’ parents – and/or horizontal extensions – for example the addition of members of the same generation as the spouses such as the husband’s brother or an additional wife. Thus **Bell** and **Vogel** define the extended family as ‘any grouping broader than the nuclear family which is related by descent, marriage or adoption’.

Either on its own or as the basic unit within an extended family, Murdock found that the nuclear family was present in every society in his sample. This led him to conclude that, ‘The nuclear family is a universal human social grouping. Either as the sole prevailing form of the family or as the basic unit from which more complex forms are compounded, it exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society’. However, as the following sections will indicate, Murdock’s conclusions might not be well founded.

Kathleen Gough – the Nayar

Some societies have sets of relationships between kin which are quite different from those which are common in Britain. One such society was that of the Nayar of Kerala in southern India, prior to British rule being established in 1792. Sociologists disagree about whether this society had a family system or not, and thus whether or not it disproves Murdock’s claim that the family is universal.

Kathleen Gough provided a detailed description of Nayar society. Before puberty all Nayar girls were ritually married to a suitable Nayar man in the *tali*-rite. After the ritual marriage had taken place, however, the *tali* husband did not live with wife, and was under no obligation to have any contact with her whatsoever. The wife owed only one duty to her *tali* husband: she had to attend his funeral to mourn his death.

Once a Nayar girl reached or neared puberty she began to take a number of visiting husbands, or ‘*sambandham*’ husbands. The Nayar men were usually professional warriors who spent long periods of time away from their villages acting as mercenaries. During their time in the villages they were allowed to visit any number of Nayar women who had undergone the *tali*-rite and who were members of the same caste as themselves, or a lower caste. With the agreement of the woman involved, the *sambandham* husband arrived at the home of one of his wives after supper, had sexual intercourse with her, and left before breakfast the next morning. During his stay he placed his weapons outside the building to show the other *sambandham* husbands that he was there. If they arrived too late, then they were free to sleep on the veranda, but could not stay the night with their wife.

Men could have unlimited numbers of *sambandham* wives, although women seem to have been limited to no more than 12 visiting husbands.

An exception to the family?

Sambandham relationships were unlike marriages in most societies in a number of ways:

1. They were not a lifelong union: either party could terminate the relationship at any time.
2. *Sambandham* husband had no duty towards the offspring of their wives. When a woman became pregnant, it was essential according to Nayar custom that a man of appropriate caste declared himself to be the father of the child by paying a fee of cloth and vegetables to the midwife who attended the birth. However, it mattered little whether he was the biological parent or not, so long as someone claimed to be the father, because he did not help to maintain or socialize the child.
3. Husbands and wives did not form an economic unit. Although husbands might give wives token gifts, they were not expected to maintain them – indeed it was frowned upon if they attempted to. Instead, the economic unit consisted of a number of brothers and sisters, sisters' children, and their daughters' children. The eldest male was the leader of each group of kin.

Nayar society, then, was a matrilineal society. Kinship groupings were based on female biological relatives and marriage played no significant part in the formation of households, in the socializing of children, or in the way that the economic needs of the members of society were met.

In terms of Murdock's definition, no family existed in Nayar society, since those who maintained 'a sexually approved adult relationship' did not live together and cooperate economically. Only the women lived with the children. Murdock's definition of the family included at least one adult of each sex. But the Nayars of Kerala, a matrilineal society, are an exception to this rule. The Nayars called their matrilineal extended family as '*Taravad*'. All members of this family were consanguinely related men and women only. In relation to the male ego, the members of such a family included his mother and her sisters and brothers, his own brothers and sisters, mother's sister's sons and daughters and the children of the ego's sisters. Thus, there was no relation by marriage in *Taravad*. The married

women with their children lived with their mothers and other siblings. The men in the family were only occasional visitors to their wives in other *Tarvad* at night but permanently resided with their own mother. That is why this system is also popularly known as the '**visiting husband system**'.

Therefore, either Murdock's definition of the family is too narrow, or the family is not universal. Gough claimed that marriage, and by implication the family, existed in Nayar society. In order to make this claim, though, she had to broaden her definition of marriage beyond that implied in Murdock's definition of the family. She defined marriage as a relationship between a woman and one or more persons in which a child born to the woman 'is given full birth-status rights' common to the normal members of the society.

Matrifocal families – an exception to the rule?

Murdock's definition of the family includes at least one adult of each sex. However, both today and in the past, some children have been raised in households that do not contain adults of both sexes. Usually these households have been headed by women.

A significant proportion of black families in the islands of the West Indies, parts of Central America such as Guyana, and the USA do not include adult males. The 'family unit' often consists of a woman and her dependent children, sometimes with the addition of her mother. This may indicate that family is not universal as Murdock suggests, or that it is necessary to redefine the family and state that the minimal family unit consists of a woman and her dependent children, own or adopted, and that all other family types are additions to this unit.

Female-headed families are sometimes known as matriarchal families and sometimes as matrifocal families, although both of these terms have been used in a number of senses. We will use the term matrifocal family here to refer to female-headed families. Various scholars support the view that matrifocal family should be recognized as an alternative to the nuclear family.

The kibbutz – the abolition of the family?

The family in the Israeli kibbutz presents another possible exception to Murdock's claim for the universality of the nuclear family. About 4% of Israel's population live in some 240 kibbutzim settlements. Capital and property are collectively owned by kibbutzim members and the main economy is agriculture plus some light industry. The 'family' in the kibbutzim has been shaped by a number of ideological and economic factors. Particularly during the early days, all

able-bodied adults were needed to get the settlements off the ground which left little time for intimate relationships between mothers and children. Kibbutzim ideology emphasized sexual equality and rejected the Western pattern of parental roles, specially the mother role. In particular there was a reaction against the traditional 'Jewish mamma', the supposedly overprotective Jewish mother, a well-known figure in American folklore and humour.

Although there are differences between kibbutzim, the general pattern of family life can be described as follows. Marriage is monogamous (one spouse of each sex), the married couple sharing a single bedroom cum living room. Common residence does not extend to their children live in communal dormitories where they are raised by child 'crackers' or 'educators'. They eat and sleep in the dormitories spending most of the day and all of the night away from their parents. They usually see their parents for an hour or two each day, often visiting them in their apartment. These visits are viewed as 'fun time' rather than occasions for specialization and child training. Bruno Bettelheim, who studied children caring practices in a kibbutz, states that 'parents have transferred their power to the community. All children are viewed and cared for as "children of the kibbutz"'. The collective method of childrearing represents a rejection of the family, with particular reference to parental roles'.

Economic cooperation between the married couple as such hardly exists. Neither works for the family but rather for the kibbutz as a whole. They receive the goods and services they require from the kibbutz as do their children. They eat in the communal dining room, food is cooked in communal kitchen and services such as laundering are provided for an entire kibbutz rather than being the responsibility of the family. Economic cooperation is on a community rather than a family level, each working for the kibbutz as a whole and receiving his or her share of the goods and services produced. In terms of Murdock's definition, the family does not exist in the kibbutz on two counts. Firstly, family members do not share a common residence. Secondly, their relationship is not characterized by economic operation.

In terms of Murdock's definition, it can be argued that the family is not universal. The case of '*Taravad*', among the Nayars of Kerala, does not satisfy Murdock's criterion of at least one spouse of each sex. The kibbutz case does not satisfy the criteria of common residence and economic cooperation.

Gay families

Another type of household that may contradict Murdock's claims about the universality of the family, as defined by him, is gay and lesbian households. By definition, such households will not contain 'adults of both sexes, at least two of

whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship' (Murdock, 1949). Such households may, however, include children who are cared for by two adult females or two adult males. The children may have been adopted, be the result of a previous heterosexual relationship, or they may have been produced using new reproductive technologies involving sperm donation or surrogate motherhood. A lesbian may have sex with a man in order to conceive a child to be raised by her and her female partner.

Most children of gay couples result from a previous heterosexual relationship. Lesbian mothers are rather more common than gay fathers, due to the difficulties gay men are likely to have in being granted custody or given adopted children. However, **Mukti Jain Campion** quotes a study which claimed that over 1,000 children were born to gay or lesbian couples in San Francisco between 1985 and 1990, and that there were many more people living with gay partners who had conceived children in heterosexual relationships. Thus, while households consisting of gay partners and one or more children may not be very common, they do exist. This raises the question of whether such households should be regarded as families.

Rather like lone-parent families, households with gay parents are seen by some as not being 'proper' families. In most Western societies the gay couple will not be able to marry and any children will have a genetic connection with only one of the partners. However, **Sidney Callahan** (1997) argues that such households should still be seen as families. He argues that, if marriage were available, many gay and lesbian couples would marry. Furthermore, he believes that the relationships involved are no different in any fundamental way from those in heterosexual households. Callahan therefore claims that gay and lesbian households with children should be regarded as a type of family, at least where the gay or lesbian relationship is intended to be permanent. He concludes, 'I would argue that gay or lesbian households that consist of intimate communities of mutual support and that display permanent shared commitments to intergenerational nurturing share the kinship bonding we observe and name as family'(Callahan, 1997)

The universality of the family – conclusion

Whether the family is regarded as universal ultimately depends on how the family is defined. Clearly, though, a wide variety of domestic arrangements have been devised by human beings which are quite distinctive from the 'conventional' families of modern industrial societies. As Diana Gittins puts it 'Relationships are universal, so is some form of co-residence, of intimacy, sexuality and emotional

bonds. But the *forms* these can take are infinitely variable and can be changed and challenged as well as embraced’.

It may be a somewhat pointless exercise to try to find a single definition that embraces all the types of household and relationship which can reasonably be called families.

Having examined whether the family is universal, we will now examine various perspectives on the role of families in society.

The family – a functionalist perspective

The analysis of the family from a functionalist perspective involves three main questions. Firstly, ‘What are the functions of the family?’ Answers to this question deal with the contributions made by the family to the maintenance of the social system. It is assumed that society has certain functional prerequisites or basic needs that must be met if it is to survive and operate efficiently. The family is examined in terms of the degree to which it meets these functional prerequisites. A second and related question asks, ‘What are the functional relationships between the family and other parts of the social system?’ It is assumed that there must be a certain degree of fit, integration and harmony between the parts of the social system if society is going to function efficiently. For example, the family must be integrated to some extent with the economic system. This question will be examined in detail in a later section when the relationships between the family and industrialization will be considered. The third question is concerned with the functions performed by an institution or a part of society for the individual. In the case of the family, this question considers the functions of the family for its individual members.

George Peter Murdock – the universal functions of the family

From his analysis of 250 societies, Murdock argues that the family performs four basic functions in all societies. These universal functions he terms the **sexual, reproductive, economic** and **educational**. They are essential for social life since without the sexual and reproductive functions there would be no members of society, without the economic function, for example the provision and preparation of food, life would cease, and without education, a term Murdock uses for socialization, there would be no culture. Human society without culture could not function.

In Murdock’s scheme, the family is seen as a multi-functional institution which is indispensable to society. Its ‘many-sided utility’ accounts for its universality and its inevitability. In his enthusiasm for the family, however, Murdock does not seriously consider whether its functions could be performed by other social institutions. He does not examine alternatives to the family. Furthermore, Murdock’s emphasis on harmony and integration is not shared by some researchers.

Talcott Parsons – the ‘basic and irreducible’ functions of the family

Parsons concentrates his analysis on the family in modern American society. However, his ideas have a more general application since he argues that the American family retains two ‘basic and irreducible functions’ which are common to the family in all societies. These are the ‘**primary socialization of children**’ and the ‘**stabilization of the adult personalities of the population of the society**’.

Primary socialization refers to socialization during the early years of childhood which takes place mainly within the family. Secondary socialization occurs during the later years when the family is less involved and other agencies such as the peer group and the school exert increasing influence. There are two basic processes involved in primary socialization: the internalization of society’s culture and the structuring of the personality. Unless culture is internalized, society would cease to exist since without shared norms and values, social life would not be possible. However, culture is not simply learned, it is ‘internalized as part of the personality structure’. The child’s personality is moulded in terms of the central values of the culture to the point where they become a part of him. In the case of American society, his personality is shaped in terms of independence and achievement motivation which are two of the central values of American culture. Parsons argues that families ‘are “factories” which produce human personalities’. He believes they are essential for this purpose since primary socialization requires a context which provides warmth, security and mutual support. He can conceive of no institution other than the family which could provide this context.

Once produced, the personality must be kept stable. This is the second basic function of the family, the ‘stabilization of adult personalities’. The emphasis here is on the marriage relationship and the emotional security the couple provide for each other. This acts as a counterweight to the stresses and strains of everyday life which tend to make the personality unstable. This function is particularly important in Western industrial society since the nuclear family is largely isolated from kin. It does not have the security once provided by the close-knit extended family. Thus the married couple increasingly look to each other for emotional support. Adult personalities are also stabilized by the parents’ role in the socialization process. This allows them to act out “childish” elements of their own personalities which they have retained from childhood but which cannot be indulged in adult society. For example, father is ‘kept on the rails’ by playing with his son’s train set. The family therefore provides a context in which husband and wife can express their childish whims, give and receive emotional support, recharge their batteries and so stabilize their personalities.

As with Murdock, Parsons has been accused of idealizing the family with his picture of well-adjusted children and sympathetic spouses caring for each other's every need. Secondly, his picture is based largely on the American middle class family which he treats as representative of American families in general. As D.H.J. Morgan states, 'there are no classes, no regions, no religious, ethnic or status groups, no communities' in Parsons's analysis of the family. For example, he fails to explore possible differences between middle and working-class families. Thirdly, like Murdock, Parsons largely fails to explore functional alternatives to the family. He does recognize that some functions are not necessarily tied to the family. For example he notes that the family's economic function has largely been taken over by other agencies in modern industrial society. However, his belief that its remaining functions are 'basic and irreducible' prevents him from examining alternatives to the family. Finally, Parsons's view of the socialization process may be criticized. He sees it as a one-way process with the child being pumped full of culture and its personality moulded by powerful parents. He tends to ignore the two-way interaction process between parents and children. There is no place in his scheme for the child who twists its parents round its little finger.

Ezra F. Vogel and Norman W. Bell – functions and dysfunctions of the family

In an article entitled, *The Emotionally Disturbed Child as the Family Scapegoat*, Vogel and Bell present a functional analysis of certain families which avoids the tendency of many functionalists to concentrate solely on the positive aspects of the family. When examining the functional significance of the family, they ask functional 'for whom?' and 'for what?' Vogel and Bell base their findings on an intensive study of a small number of American families containing an 'emotionally disturbed child'. They argue that the tension and hostility of unresolved conflicts between the parents are projected on the child. The child is thus used as an emotional scapegoat by the parents to relieve their tension. For example, in one case a son was criticized by his mother for all the characteristics she disliked in her husband. Clearly, the process of scapegoating is dysfunctional for the child. He becomes 'emotionally disturbed'. He is unable to adjust to life at school and in the neighbourhood. However, what is dysfunctional for the child can be seen as functional for the parents, for the family unit and for society as a whole. The parents release their tension and so control the conflict between them. As a result the family as a whole is stabilized and strengthened. Vogel and Bell argue that the cost to the child is 'low relative to the functional gains of the whole family'. Scapegoating the child serves as a 'personality-stabilizing process' for the parents which allows them to effectively perform their roles in the wider society as 'steady workers and relatively respectable community members'.

Whether the costs to the child are indeed low, compared to the gains of family solidarity and effective role performance by the adults outside the family, is a matter of opinion. To some extent this judgment reflects the functionalist view of the vital importance of the family to society. However, Vogel and Bell's analysis does have the merit of dealing with dysfunctional aspects of the family within a functionalist framework.

Critical views of the family

Even Vogel and Bell's analysis suggests that, all things considered, the family is functional both for its members and society as a whole. Increasingly, this picture of the family is coming under strong criticism. Some observers are suggesting that, on balance, the family may well be dysfunctional both for society and its individual members. This criticism has mainly been directed at the family in Western industrial society.

Edmund Leach – A Runaway World?

In a study entitled *A Runaway World?* Edmund Leach presents a pessimistic view of the family in industrial society. Leach, an anthropologist, has spent many years studying small-scale pre-industrial societies. In such societies the family often forms a part of a wider kinship unit. An extensive network of social relationships between a large number of kin provides practical and psychological support for the individual. This support is reinforced by the closely-knit texture of relationships in the small-scale community as a whole. By comparison, in modern industrial society, the nuclear family is largely isolated from kin and the wider community. Leach summarizes this situation and its consequences as follows, 'In the past kinsfolk and neighbours gave the individual continuous moral support throughout his life. Today the domestic household is isolated. The family looks inward upon itself; there is an intensification of emotional stress between husband and wife and parents and children. The strain is greater than most of us can bear'. Thrown back almost entirely on its own resources, the nuclear family becomes like an overloaded electrical circuit. The demands made upon it are too great and fuses below. In their isolation, family members expect and demand too much from each other. The result is conflict. In Leach's words, 'The parents and children huddled together in their loneliness take too much out of each other. The parents fight; the children rebel'.

Problems are not confined to the family. The tension and hostility produced within the family find expression throughout society. Leach argues that the 'isolation and the close-knit nature of contemporary family life incubates hate which finds expression in conflict in the wider community'. The families in which

people huddle together create barriers between them and the wider society. The privatized family breeds suspicion and fear of the outside world. Leach argues that, 'Privacy is the source of fear and violence. The violence in the world comes about because we human beings are forever creating barriers between men who are like us and men who are not like us'. Only when individuals can break out of the prison of the nuclear family, rejoin their fellows, and give and receive support will the ills of society begin to diminish. Leach's conclusion is diametrically opposed to the functionalist view of the family. He states, 'Far from being the basis of the good society, the family, with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets is the source of all our discontents'.

R.D. Laing – The politics of the family

In *The Politics of the Family* and a number of other publications, R.D. Laing presents a radical alternative to the functionalist picture of the 'happy family'. Laing is a phenomenological psychiatrist. He is concerned with interaction within the family and the meanings which develop in that context. His work is largely based on the study of families in which one member has been defined as schizophrenic. Laing argues that the behavior of so-called schizophrenics can only be understood in terms of relationships within the family. Far from viewing schizophrenia as madness, he argues that it makes sense in terms of the meanings and interactions which develop within the family. As such it can be seen as reasonable behaviour. Laing maintains that the difference between so-called 'normal' and 'abnormal' families is small. It therefore follows that a lot can be learned about families in general by studying those labeled as abnormal.

Laing views the family in terms of sets of interactions. Individuals form alliances, adopt various strategies and play one or more individuals off against others in a complex tactical game. Laing is preoccupied with interaction situations which he regards as harmful and destructive. Throughout his work he concentrates on exploitive aspects of family relationships.

Laing refers to the family group as a 'nexus'. He argues that 'the highest concern of the nexus is reciprocal concern. Each partner is concerned about what the other thinks, feels, does'. Within the nexus there is a constant, unrelenting demand for mutual concern and attention. As a result there is considerable potential for harm; family members are in an extremely vulnerable position. Thus if a father is ashamed of his son, given the nature of the nexus, his son is deeply affected. As he is emotionally locked into the nexus, he is concerned about his father's opinion and cannot brush it off lightly. In self-defence he may run to his mother who offers protection. In this way Laing argues that, 'A family can act as gangsters, offering each other mutual protection against each other's violence.'

From interaction within the nexus, 'reciprocal interiorization' develops. Family members become a part of each other and the family as a whole. They interiorize or internalize the family. Laing argues that, 'To be in the same family is to feel the same "family" inside'. Laing regards the process of interiorization as psychologically damaging since it restricts the development of the self. The individual carries the blueprint of his family with him for the rest of his life. This prevents any real autonomy or freedom of self, it prevents the development of the individual in his own right. Self-awareness is smothered under the blanket of the family.

Like Leach, Laing argues that problems in the family create problems in society. Due to the nature of the nexus and the process of interiorization, a boundary or even a defensive barrier is drawn between the family and the world outside. This can reach the point where, 'some families live in perpetual anxiety of what, to them, is an external persecuting world. The members of the family live in a family ghetto as it were'. The barrier erected between the family and the world outside may have important consequences. According to Laing it leads family members, particularly children, to see the world in terms of 'us and them'. From this basic division stem the harmful and dangerous distinctions between Gentile and Jew, Black and White and the separation of others into 'people like us' and 'people like them'.

Within the family children learn to obey their parents. Laing regards this as the primary link in a dangerous chain. Patterns of obedience laid down in early childhood form the basis for obedience to authority in later life. They lead to soldiers and officials blindly and unquestioningly following orders. Laing implies that without family obedience training, people would question orders, follow their own judgment and make their own decisions. If this were so, American soldiers might not have marched off to fight what Laing regards as a senseless war in Vietnam.

David Cooper – The Death of the Family

David Cooper is a phenomenological psychiatrist who has worked closely with Laing. His book, *The Death of the Family* is an outright condemnation of the family as an institution. Like Laing, he sees the family as a stultifying institution which stunts the self and largely denies people the freedom to develop their own individuality. To develop an autonomous self, the child must be free to be alone, free from the constant demands made upon him in the family, free from the 'imprisoning and ambiguous love' which engulfs him. Like Laing, Cooper argues that individuals interiorize the family. Because of this the self can never be free since it is made up of other family members. In the process of interiorization, 'one

glues bits of other people onto oneself' and for most people, this results in 'the chronic murder of their selves'.

Cooper develops his ideas along Marxian lines. He argues that the family operates 'as an ideological conditioning device in an exploitive society – slave society, feudal society, capitalist society. The behaviour patterns and controls laid down within the family produce the 'well-conditioned, endlessly obedient citizen' who is easily manipulated by ruling classes. As a result of the social controls implanted into the child by family socialization, 'The child is in fact primarily taught not how to survive in society but how to submit to it'. Each child has the potential to be an artist, a visionary and a revolutionary but this potential is crushed in the family. Artists, visionaries and revolutionaries tend to think for themselves and to see through ruling class ideologies. However, the opportunity to develop in this way is stifled by the submission of the self to the demands of the family.

Cooper argues that 'the family specializes in the formation of roles for its members rather than laying down conditions for the free assumption of identity'. Thus children are taught to play the roles of son and daughter, male and female. Such roles are constricting. They confine behaviour within narrow limits and restrict the development of self. They lay the groundwork for 'indoctrination' into roles at school, work and in society generally. The family prepares the individual for his induction into the role he is to play in an exploitive society, the role of 'the endlessly obedient citizen'. Cooper's view of the relationship between the family and society is summarized in the following quotation, 'So the family goes on and is externally reflected in all our relationships'. An exploitive family produces an exploitive society.

Leach, Laing and Cooper in their different ways have presented a radical alternative to the functionalist perspective on the family. Their work is open to a number of criticisms. None have conducted detailed field work on the family in contemporary industrial society. Laing and Cooper's research is limited to investigations of families in which one member has been defined as schizophrenic. All talk about 'the family' with little reference to its position in the social structure.

For example, there is no reference to social class in either Laing or Cooper's work and therefore no indication of the relationship between class and family life. Leach examines the family over time, but apart from vague references to capitalism and previous eras in Cooper's writings, the work of both Cooper and Laing lacks any historical perspective. All three authors examine the Western family from their particular specialized knowledge, Leach from his work on family and kinship in small-scale non-western societies, Laing and Cooper from their

studies of schizophrenia and family life. This inevitably colours their views. In itself, this is not a criticism, but it is important to be aware of the source of their perspectives. To some degree Leach, Laing and Cooper begin with a picture of a society out of control or even gone mad. Leach in *A Runaway World?* implies that society has got out of hand, Laing and Cooper go even further by suggesting that many aspects of contemporary society are insane. Such views of society will produce what many consider to be an extreme and unbalanced picture of the family. However, it is possible to accuse the functionalists of the opposite bias. For example, Parsons gives the impression of an immensely reasonable society ticking over like clock-work. In this context a well adjusted, contented family is to be expected.

Leach, Laing and Cooper have provided a balance to the functionalist view which has dominated sociological thinking on the family for many years. Laing in particular, has given important insights into interaction patterns within the family.

The family – a Marxian perspective

Marxian sociologists have tended to bypass the family in their preoccupation with social class. Apart from **Friedrich Engels**, who wrote an important work on the origin and evolution of the family entitled *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, (first published in 1984), until the late 1960s few writers attempted to apply Marxian theory to the family.

Like many nineteenth-century scholars, Engels took an evolutionary view of the family, attempting to trace its origin and evolution through time. He combined an evolutionary approach with Marxian theory arguing that as the mode of production changed, so did the family. During the early stages of human evolution, Engels believed that the forces of production were communally owned and the family as such did not exist. This era of ‘primitive communism’ was characterized by promiscuity. There were no rules limiting sexual relationships and society was, in effect, the family. Although Engels has been criticized for this type of speculation, the anthropologist Kathleen Gough argues that his picture may not be that far from the truth. She notes that man’s nearest relatives, the chimpanzees, live in ‘promiscuous hordes’ and this may have been the pattern for early man.

Engels argued that throughout man’s history, more and more restrictions were placed on sexual relationships and the production of children. He speculated that from the promiscuous horde, marriage and the family evolved through a series of stages which included polygyny to its present stage, the monogamous nuclear family. Each successive stage placed greater restrictions on the number of mates available to the individual. The monogamous nuclear family developed with the emergence of private property, in particular the private ownership of the forces of production, and the advent of the state. The state instituted laws to protect the system of private property and to enforce the rules of monogamous marriage. This form of marriage and the family developed to solve the problems of the inheritance of private property. Property was owned by males and in order for them to pass it on to their heirs, they must be certain of the legitimacy of those heirs. They therefore needed greater control over women so there would be no doubt about the paternity of their offspring. The monogamous family provided the most efficient device for this purpose. In Engels’s words, ‘It is based on the supremacy of the man, the express purpose being to produce children of undisputed paternity; such paternity is demanded because these children are later to come into their father’s property as his natural heirs’.

Engels’s scheme of the evolution of the family is much more elaborate than the brief outline described above. It was largely based on *Ancient Society*, an erroneous interpretation of the evolution of the family by the nineteenth century

American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan. Modern research has suggested that many of its details are incorrect. For example, monogamous marriage and the nuclear family are often found in hunting and gathering bands. Since humanity has lived in hunting and gathering bands for the vast majority of its existence, the various forms of group marriage postulated by Engels, such as the promiscuous horde, may well be figments of his imagination. However, Kathleen Gough argues that 'the general trend of Engels's argument still appears sound'. Although nuclear families and monogamous marriage exist in small-scale societies, they form a part of a larger kinship group. When individuals marry they take on a series of duties and obligations to their spouse's kin. Communities are united by kinship ties and the result is like a large extended family. Gough argues that, 'It is true that although it is not a group marriage in Engels's sense, marriage has a group character in many hunting bands and in most of the more complex tribal societies that have developed with the domestication of plants and animals. With the development of privately owned, heritable property, and especially with the rise of the state, this group character gradually disappears'.

Eli Zaretsky – personal life and capitalism

Eli Zaretsky has analysed more recent developments in the family from a Marxist perspective. He argues that the family in modern capitalist society creates the illusion that the 'private life' of the family is quite separate from the economy. Before the early nineteenth century the family was the basic unit of production. For example, in the early capitalist textile industry, production of cloth took place in the home and involved all family members. Only with the development of factory-based production were work and family life separated.

In a society in which work was alienating, Zaretsky claims that the family was put on a pedestal because it apparently 'stood in opposition to the terrible anonymous world of commerce and industry'. The private life of the family provided opportunities for satisfactions that were unavailable outside the walls of the home.

Zaretsky welcomes the increased possibilities for a personal life for the proletariat offered by the reduction in working hours since the nineteenth century. However, he believes that the family is unable to provide for the psychological and personal needs of individuals. He says 'it simply cannot meet the pressures of being the only refuge in a brutal society'. The family artificially separates and isolates personal life from other aspects of life. It might cushion the effects of capitalism but it perpetuates the system and cannot compensate for the general alienation produced by such a society.

Furthermore, Zaretsky sees the family as major prop to the capitalist economy. The capitalist system is based upon the domestic labour of housewives who reproduce future generations of workers. He also believes that the family has become a vital unit of consumption. The family consumes the products of capitalism and this allows the bourgeoisie to continue producing surplus value. To Zaretsky, only socialism will end the artificial separation of family private life and public life, and produce the possibility of personal fulfillment.

Next we will examine the family from a feminist viewpoint.

Feminist perspectives on the family

The influence of feminism

In recent decades feminism has probably had more influence on the study of the family than any other approach to understanding society. Like Laing, Leach and Marxists, feminists have been highly critical of the family. However, unlike other critics, they have tended to emphasize the harmful effects of family life upon women. In doing so they have developed new perspectives and highlighted new issues.

Feminists have, for example, introduced the study of areas of family life such as housework and domestic violence into sociology. They have challenged some widely-held views about the inevitability of male dominance in families and have questioned the view that family life is becoming more egalitarian. Feminists have also highlighted the economic contribution to society made by women's domestic labour within the family. Above all, feminist theory has encouraged sociologists to see the family as an institution involving power relationships. It has challenged the image of family life as being based upon cooperation, shared interests and love, and has tried to show that some family members, in particular men, obtain greater benefits from families than others.

Recently, some feminists have questioned the tendency of other feminists to make blanket condemnations of family life and have emphasized the different experiences of women in families. Some have rejected the idea that there is such a thing as 'the family' rather than simply different domestic arrangements. They have, however, continued to identify ways in which domestic life can disadvantage women.

In later sections of this chapter we will consider the impact of feminism on the study of conjugal roles, domestic labour, social policy and marriage. In the next

section, however, we will examine some of the feminist theoretical approaches to understanding the family.

Marxist feminist perspectives on the family

Marxian analysis of the family in capitalist society developed mainly in the late 1960s and 1970s, when several feminist writers employed Marxian concepts in their criticism of the family. From this perspective, the family is seen as a unit which produces one of the basic commodities of capitalism, labour. It produces it cheaply from the point of view of the capitalists, since they do not have to pay for the production of children or their upkeep. In particular, the wife is not paid for producing and rearing children.

Please note that Marxists such as Engels and Zaretsky have acknowledged that women are exploited in marriage and family life but they have emphasized the relationship between capitalism and the family, rather than the family's effects on women. Marxists feminists use Marxist concepts but see the exploitation of women as a key feature of family life. The next few sections will examine how these theories have been applied to the family.

The production of labour power

Margaret Benston (1972) states that 'the amount of unpaid labour performed by women is very large and very profitable to those who own the means of production. To pay women for their work, even at minimum wage scales, would involve a massive redistribution of wealth. At present, the support of the family is a hidden tax on the wage earner – his wage buys the labour power of two people'. The fact that the husband must pay for the production and upkeep of future labour acts as a strong discipline on his behaviour at work. He cannot easily withdraw his labour with a wife and children to support. These responsibilities weaken his bargaining power and commit him to wage labour. Benston argues that, 'As an economic unit, the nuclear family is a valuable stabilizing force in capitalist society. Since the production which is done in the home is paid for by the husband – father's earnings, his ability to withhold labour from the market is much reduced'.

Not only does the family produce and rear cheap labour, it also maintains it in good order at no cost to the employer. In her role as housewife, the woman attends to her husband's needs thus keeping him in good running order to perform his role as a wage labourer.

Fran Ansley translates Parsons's view, that the family functions to stabilize adult personalities, into a Marxian framework. She sees the emotional support

provided by the wife as a safety valve for the frustration produced in the husband by working in a capitalist system. Rather than being turned against the system which produced it, this frustration is absorbed by the comforting wife. In this way the system is not threatened. In Ansley's words, 'when wives play their traditional role as takers of shit, they often absorb their husband's legitimate anger and frustration at their own powerlessness and oppression. With every worker provided with a sponge to soak up his possibly revolutionary ire, the bosses rest more secure'. Kathy McAfee and Myrna Wood make a similar point in their discussion of male dominance in the family. They claim that, 'The petty dictatorship which most men exercise over their wives and families enables them to vent their anger and frustration in a way which poses no challenge to the system'.

Ideological conditioning

The social reproduction of labour power does not simply involve producing children and maintaining them in good health. It also involves the reproduction of the attitudes essential for an efficient workforce under the capitalism. Thus **David Cooper** argues that the family is 'an ideological conditioning device in an exploitive society'. Within the family children learn to conform, to submit to authority. The foundation is therefore laid for the obedient and submissive workforce required by capitalism.

A similar point is made by **Diane Feeley** who argues that the structure of family relationships socializes the young to accept their place in a class stratified society. She sees the family as an authoritarian unit dominated by the husband in particular and adults in general. Feeley claims that the family with its 'authoritarian ideology is designed to teach passivity, not rebellion'. Thus children learn to submit to parental authority and emerge from the family pre-conditioned to accept their place in the hierarchy of power and control in capitalist society. Marxian views on the role of the family in capitalist society mirror Marxian analysis of the role of education.

Criticisms

Some of the criticisms of previous views of the family also apply to Marxian approaches. There is a tendency to talk about 'the family' in capitalist society without regard to possible variations in family life between social classes, ethnic groups, heterosexual and gay and lesbian families, lone-parent families, and over time. As D.H.J. Morgan notes in his criticism of both functionalist and Marxian approaches, both 'presuppose a traditional model of the nuclear family where there is a married couple with children, where the husband is the breadwinner and where the wife stays at home to deal with the housework'. Although there is some justice

to this criticism, Marxian views of the family have developed to include families in which the wife is also a wife earner. In other words, this pattern is becoming less common and the critique of this type of family may therefore be becoming less important.

Marxist feminists may therefore exaggerate the harm caused to women by families and may neglect the effects of non-family relationships (apart from class) on exploitation within marriage. Thus, for example they say little about how the experience of racism might influence families. They also tend to portray female family members as the passive victims of capitalist and patriarchal exploitation. They ignore the possibility that women may have fought back against such exploitation and had some success in changing the nature of family relationships. Furthermore, they are not usually prepared to concede that there may be positive elements to family life. As we shall see, **difference feminists** are more prepared to accept that there may be some positive advantages for some women, in some families.

Radical feminist perspectives on the family

There are many varieties of radical feminism. As Valerie Bryson says, ‘the radical feminist label has been applied in recent years to a confusingly diverse range of theories’. She says ‘it is the site for far ranging disagreements at all levels of theory and practice’. However, Bryson does identify some key characteristics which distinguish radical feminists from other feminists:

1. ‘It is essentially a theory of, by and for women’ and therefore ‘sees no need to compromise with existing perspectives and agenda’. Radical feminist ideas tend to be novel rather than adaptations of other theories such as Marxism.
2. ‘It sees the oppression of women as the most fundamental and universal form of domination’. Society is seen as patriarchal, or male-dominated, rather than capitalist, and women are held to have different interests to those of men.

Radical feminists do not agree on the source of male domination, but most do see the family as important in maintaining male power. We will now analyse one major radical feminist theory of the family.

Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard – Familial Exploitation

Delphy and Leonard (1992) are unlike most radical feminists in that they attach considerable importance to material factors in causing women's oppression. In this respect they have some similarity with Marxist feminist theories. In particular, Delphy and Leonard attach special importance to work and say that their approach 'uses Marxist methodology'. Nevertheless, they see themselves as radical feminists since they believe that it is men, rather than capitalists or capitalism, who are the primary beneficiaries of the exploitation of women's labour. To them, the family has a central role in maintaining patriarchy. They say:

*We see the familial basis of domestic groups
as an important element in continuing
the patriarchal nature of our society:
that is, in the continuance of men's dominance
over women and children.*

The family as an economic system

Delphy and Leonard see the family as an economic system. It involves a particular set of 'labour relations in which men benefit from, and exploit, the work of women'. The key to this explanation is that family members work not for themselves but for the head of the household. Women in particular are oppressed, not because they are socialized into being passive, nor because they are ideologically conditioned into subservience, but because their work is appropriated within the family. Delphy and Leonard argue that 'It is primarily the *work* women do, the uses to which our bodies can be put, which constitutes the reason for our oppression'.

Delphy and Leonard argue that every family-based household has a social structure that involves two types of role. These are head of household and their dependents. Family households have members who are connected by kinship or marriage. Female heads of household are uncommon. Where a male adult relative is present it is usually he who takes over as head of household. He holds the ultimate authority and makes the final decisions in the household. Further, the type and amount of work family members have to do are related to sex and marital status. Female relatives have to do unpaid domestic work; wives in addition have to carry out 'sexual and reproductive work'. Although the precise allocation of tasks varies from household to household, domestic work remains a female responsibility. Moreover, the relations of production within the family often, therefore, involve payment in kind (such as a new coat or a holiday) rather than payment in money.

To conclude Delphy and Leonard believe that the family is a patriarchal and hierarchical institution through which men dominate and exploit women. Men are usually the head of household, and it is the head who benefits from the work that gets done. Women provide '57 varieties of unpaid service' for men, including providing them with a 'pliant sexual partner and children if he wants them'. Wives do sometimes resist their husband's dominance – they are not always passive victims – but 'economic and social constraints' make it difficult for women to escape from the patriarchal family.

Delphy and Leonard do not think that there are simple solutions to the problems created by the family. Individual men may love their wives, but that does not stop them from exploiting them. Single mothers cannot escape from patriarchy 'because they are often poor and their situation is always difficult'. Lesbians 'may be downright ostracized and physically attacked'. In the end, they admit that they do not know what strategy feminists should use to change the family, but they believe that women should continue to struggle to improve their lives, both inside and outside family life.

Evaluation

Delphy and Leonard provide a comprehensive analysis of the family from a radical feminist perspective. They highlight many ways in which the family can reinforce inequalities between women and men. However, their work can be criticized both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, Delphy and Leonard do not succeed in demonstrating that inequality is built into the structure of the family. Their argument is based upon the assumption that *all* families have a head, usually a man, and it is the head who ultimately benefits from family life. However, they do not show theoretically or empirically that all families have a head who has more power than other family members. They fail to acknowledge that there may be some families in which power is shared. It may well be possible to find inequalities in every household, but that does not necessarily mean that one person is dominant. Ironically, they make similar, false assumptions to those found in the work of the functionalist George Peter Murdock. Empirically, their work is based upon unrepresentative data. The three British studies used are all of manual workers. Most researchers have found less gender inequality in middle-class families than in working-class families, so these studies may have an in-built bias towards supporting their theory.

Delphy and Leonard tend to make rather sweeping statements about inequality which may not apply equally to all families. In doing so they perhaps overstate their case by denying the possibility of exceptions.

Laura M. Purdy – ‘Babystrike !’

Feminism and motherhood

Like Delphy and Leonard, Laura M. Purdy (1997) believes that women are disadvantaged and exploited in family relationships. Unlike Delphy and Leonard, she believes that these disadvantages largely result from childcare responsibilities rather than from material inequalities. Purdy argues that in recent years feminists have placed less emphasis on criticisms of families and marriage, while issues such as pornography and sexual harassment have come to be seen as more important. She says, ‘critiques of marriage and family seem almost forgotten as feminists, like society at large, now seem generally to assume that all women – including lesbians – will pair up and have children’. Some recent accounts of the family in the popular media suggest that it is possible for women to ‘have it all’. They can combine a successful career with a rewarding family life and successful and satisfying child-rearing. Purdy question whether it is really possible to ‘have it all’ and whether family life in general, and child-rearing in particular, are really the paths to female self-fulfilment.

Purdy suggest that it is generally assumed that women should want to form couples (whether heterosexual or lesbian) and have children. Couples who choose not to have children are thought of as eccentric and selfish. Young women never ‘hear that some people shouldn’t have children, either because they do not really want them, because they are not able to care for them well, or because they have other projects that are incompatible with good child-rearing’. Purdy believes that feminism should try to counter the assumption that having children is necessarily desirable.

The disadvantages of motherhood

According to Purdy, there are a number of disadvantages for women in having children. Having children is extremely expensive and can increase the burden of poverty on women who are already poor. Having children represents a commitment for women for the rest of their lives, and a particularly onerous commitment during first 18 years. According to an American study quoted by Purdy, men still do only 20 per cent of domestic work, despite big increases in female employment. This makes it very difficult for women to compete on equal terms in the labour market or to try to fight for greater equality. She asks, ‘How can women energetically fight the entrenched sexism in society and pursue positions of power and prestige if their time and energy is mostly taken up with children’s needs, needs that cannot and ought not be ignored?’

Purdy believes that society in general takes it for granted that women will have children and therefore perform the vital function of reproducing the species. The only way to bring home to men the sacrifices of child-rearing is for women to stop having children. In other words, Purdy advocates a babystrike. Only then would men take women's demands for equality within families seriously. Only then would social arrangements change so that women were able to combine having children with successful careers.

Evaluation

The idea of a babystrike is a novel suggestion for focusing male attention on the disadvantages suffered by women. Purdy makes an important point in drawing attention to the particular problems posed for women by the responsibilities of childcare. However, she places perhaps too much emphasis on one factor – that of child-rearing – in creating and perpetuating women's disadvantages in families. Other feminists, perhaps with some justification, would not accept that children are the only, or even the main, reason for women being unequal within families. They certainly would not accept that women only start to suffer inequality once they have children. Like a number of other theorists of the family, Purdy may exaggerate the effects of one particular source of inequality while neglecting others.

Difference feminism

Neither Marxist nor radical feminism is particularly sensitive to variations between families. Both approaches tend to assume that families in general disadvantage women and benefit men (and, in the case of Marxist approaches, benefit capitalism). Both can be criticized for failing to acknowledge the variety of domestic arrangements produced by different groups, and the range of effects that family life can have.

Increasingly, however, feminists have begun to highlight the differences between groups of women in different family situations. Thus, they have argued that women in single-parent families are in a different situation to women in two-parent families; women in lesbian families are in a different position to women in heterosexual families; black women are often in a different family position to white women; poor women are in a different position to middle-class women, and so on. Feminists who analyse the family in these terms have sometimes been referred to as ‘**difference feminists**’. Difference feminists have been influenced by a range of feminist theories including liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and radical feminism. Their work often has affinities with postmodern theories of the family and with ideas relating to family diversity. However, they share a sufficiently distinctive approach to be considered a separate feminist perspective on the family.

Michelle Barrett and Mary McIntosh – The Anti-social Family

One of the earliest examples of a theory of the family put forward by difference feminists is provided by the work of Michelle Barrett and Mary McIntosh (1982). Their work was influenced by Marxist feminism but moves beyond the kinds of Marxist views discussed earlier. Barrett and McIntosh believe that **the idea of ‘the family’ is misleading**, given the wide variations that exist in life within families and varieties of household types in which people live. (Family and household diversity is discussed later). If there is no one normal or typical family type, then it may be impossible to claim that the family always performs particular functions either for men or for capitalism.

The ‘anti-social’ family

Barrett and McIntosh do believe that there is a very strong ideology supporting family life. To them ‘the family’ is ‘anti-social’ not just because it exploits women, and benefits capitalists, but also because the ideology of the family destroys life outside the family. They say ‘the family ideal makes everything else seem pale and unsatisfactory’. People outside families suffer as a consequence. Family members are so wrapped up in family life that they neglect

social contact with others. ‘Couples mix with other couples, finding it difficult to fit single people in’.

Life in other institutions (such as children’s homes, old people’s homes and students’ residences) comes to be seen as shallow and lacking in meaning. Barrett and McIntosh argue that homes for the handicapped could be far more stimulating for, say, Down’s syndrome sufferers, if it were not for life in institution being devalued by the ideology of the family.

Like other feminists, they point out that the image of the family as involving love and mutual care tends to ignore the amount of violent and sexual crime that takes place within a family context. They note that 25 percent of reported violent crimes consist of assaults by husbands on their wives, and many rapes take place within marriage.

They do not deny that there can be caring relationships within families, but equally they do not think that families are the only places in which such relationships can develop. In their view, the ideology that idealizes family life:

*has made the outside world cold and friendless,
and made it harder to maintain relationships of
security and trust except with kin. Caring,
sharing and loving would be more
widespread if the family did not claim them
for its own.*

Linda Nicholson – ‘The myth of the traditional family’

Like Barrett and McIntosh, Linda Nicholson (1997) believes that there is a powerful ideology which gives support to a positive image of family life. She argues that this ideology only supports certain types of family while devaluing other types. Nicholson contrasts what she calls the ‘traditional’ family with ‘alternative’ families. She is an American feminist and her comments largely refer to the USA, but they may be applicable more generally to Western societies.

The ‘traditional’ family

Nicholson defines the traditional family as ‘the unit of parents with children who live together’. The bond between husband and wife is seen as particularly important, and the family feels itself to be separate from other kin. This family group is often referred to as the nuclear family. When conservative social commentators express concern about the decline of the family, it is this sort of

family they are concerned about. They tend to be less worried about any decline of wider kinship links involving grandparents, aunts, uncles and so on.

According to Nicholson, the nuclear family is a comparatively recent phenomenon. It first developed among upper classes in the eighteenth century. For middle-class groups this type of family only became popular in the nineteenth century. Working class people often aspired to form nuclear families in the nineteenth century, but their low income usually prevented them from doing so. They frequently had to share accommodation with others from outside the nuclear family. Indeed, it was not really until the 1950s and the post-Second World War boom that nuclear family households became the norm for working class families. Thus Nicholson argues that the conventional family is actually a very recent phenomenon for most people.

However, even in the 1950s, some groups lacked the resources to form nuclear families. This was the case for people with few or outdated skills and for many African Americans who were the victims of racism in the labour market.

Alternative families

Alternative family forms were already developing even before the traditional family reached its zenith. Nicholson says that:

even as certain ideal of family was coming to define 'the American way of life', such trends as a rising divorce rate, increased participation of married women in the labour force, and the growth of female-headed households were making this way of life increasingly atypical. In all cases such trends preceded the 1950s.

Nicholson, 1997

Some of these changes actually altered what was perceived as a 'traditional' family. For example, it came to be seen as 'normal' for married women to work, even if they and their partners had small children. Other changes, though, were seen as producing alternative families. Alternatives to traditional families included, 'Not only gays and lesbians but heterosexuals living alone; married couples with husbands at home caring for children', as well as stepfamilies, single parents, heterosexual couples living together outside marriage, and gay or lesbians couples with or without children.

The merits of different family types

Alternative families, or alternatives to traditional families, tend to be devalued. They are seen as less worthy than traditional families. However, Nicholson rejects this view. Alternative families are often better than traditional ones for the women who live in them. For example, poor black women in the USA derive some benefits when they live in mother-centred families, often without men. They develop strong support networks with other friends and kin, who act as a kind of social insurance system. They help out the families who are most in need at a particular time if they are in a position to do so. Such families do have disadvantages. If they have some good fortune and come into money, each family is expected to share resources. This makes it difficult for individual families to escape poverty. Furthermore, the lack of stable heterosexual partnerships means that 'children frequently do not have the type of long-term relationships with father figures which is normative within middle-class households'.

Traditional families also have advantages and disadvantages. Because both partners now tend to work, they have tremendous time pressures, making it difficult to carry out satisfactory and rewarding childcare. Children who are the victims of abuse by parents have relatively little opportunity to turn to other relatives for help. Traditional families place a heavy burden of expectation on the partners, and, with work and childcare commitments, it may be difficult for them to provide the love and companionship each partner expects. The traditional family also precludes and excludes gay and lesbian relationships.

However, traditional families do have some advantages. Their small size tends to encourage intimacy between family members, and when the relationships work, they can be rewarding and long-lasting. Traditional families can be economically successful because they are not under strong requirements to share their resources with others.

Conclusion

The fact that they have some advantages does not mean that traditional families are better than alternative types. From Nicholson's point of view, different types of family suit different women in different circumstances. She believes that the distinction between traditional and alternative families should be abandoned. The distinction implies that traditional families are better, when this is often not true. In any case, the idea of the traditional family misleadingly implies that such families have long been the norm, when in fact they have only become popular in recent times, and have never been totally dominant. By the late 1990s so many people live in alternatives to traditional families that the idea of the traditional

family had become totally outdated. Nicholson therefore concludes that all types of family and household should be acknowledged and accepted because they could suit women in different circumstances. She advocates the celebration of greater choice for people in deciding on their own living arrangements.

Cheshire Calhoun – lesbian as family outlaws

Like Linda Nicholson, Cheshire Calhoun develops a type of difference feminism influenced by postmodernism (Calhoun, 1997). Unlike Nicholson, she focuses on lesbian families rather than looking at the merits of a variety of family forms for women. Calhoun is a postmodern, difference feminist from the United States.

Calhoun argues that feminist theories have generally neglected sexual orientation as a source of oppression distinct from gender oppression. However, Nicholson believes that sexual orientation can be an important source of oppression and that family ideology contributes to that oppression.

Conventional feminist views

Calhoun starts by noting conventional feminist views on the family. Such views see the family as an important source of female oppression for a variety of reasons. These include the ways in which families make women financially dependent upon men, the way family ideology encourages women to put the family before their own interests, inequalities in the amount of domestic work done by men and women, and the way in which family ideology ‘often masks gender injustice within the family including battery, rape and child abuse’.

Calhoun accepts that this sort of feminist analysis is accurate but says that ‘This picture.....is not, in fact, a picture of *women’s* relation to the family, but is more narrowly a picture of *heterosexual* women’s relation to the family, marriage and mothering’. Lesbians who live outside heterosexual families can hardly be directly exploited by relationships within such families. Indeed lesbian are uniquely placed to avoid dependence on men within families. However, Calhoun does believe that they are disadvantaged by the ideology of the heterosexual family.

Some lesbian feminists have argued that lesbians should avoid forming families. They have argued that, because women are exploited in heterosexual marriages, marriage and family life are inevitably patriarchal. Similarly they have argued that, because mothering disadvantages heterosexual women - by, for example, limiting their opportunities in the labour market - lesbian women should

also avoid becoming mothers. Calhoun disagrees. She believes that it is not family life itself that leads to the exploitation of women, rather it is family life within patriarchal, heterosexual marriages that is the problem. Lesbian marriage and mothering can avoid the exploitative relationships typical of heterosexual marriage. Indeed, lesbian partners may be able to develop forms of marriage and family life which can point the way to creating more egalitarian domestic relationships.

This view is in stark contrast to a more conventional view that lesbians and gay cannot develop proper marriages or construct genuine families. According to Calhoun, gays and lesbian have historically been portrayed as ‘family outlaws’. Their sexuality has been seen as threatening to the family. They have been portrayed as ‘outsiders to the family and as displaying the most virulent forms of family-disrupting behaviour’. However, Calhoun believes that the anxiety among heterosexuals about gays and lesbian has in fact been caused by anxiety about the state of the heterosexual nuclear family. Rather than recognizing and acknowledging the problems with such families, heterosexuals have tried to attribute the problems to corrupting outsiders or outlaws: that is, gay and lesbians.

Calhoun further argues that extended kinship networks have become increasingly important for the urban poor, and the idea of the family headed by a heterosexual couple with their offspring has been undermined by new reproductive technology. Calhoun says:

Increasingly sophisticated birth control methods and technologically assisted reproduction using in-vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, contract pregnancy, fertility therapies, and the like undermine cultural understandings of the marital couple as a naturally reproductive unit, introduce nonrelated others into the reproductive process, and make it possible for women and men to have children without a heterosexual partner.

Calhoun, 1997

According to Calhoun, modern family life is essentially characterized by choice. Lesbians and gays introduced the idea of chosen families. You can choose who to include in your family without the restrictions of blood ties or the expectation of settling down with and marrying an opposite-sex partner. Now, however, heterosexuals also construct ‘chosen families’ as they divorce, remarry, separate, choose new partners, adopt children, gain stepchildren and so on.

Rather than seeing the above changes in a positive light, many commentators have seen them as a threat to families and the institution of marriage. This time there have been two main types of family outlaw who have been scapegoated and blamed for the changes. These are ‘the unwed welfare mother and....the lesbian or gay whose mere public visibility threatens to undermine family values and destroy the family’. In Britain, for example, the Local Government Act of the late 1980s made illegal ‘the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as pretended family relationship’. Similarly, in 1990, the US Congress passed a law prohibiting the federal government from using funds to promote homosexuality.

Conclusion

Calhoun concludes that such scapegoating of lesbians and gays is used to disguise the increasingly frequent departures from the norms of family life by heterosexuals. She says:

claiming that gay and lesbian families are (or should be) distinctively queer and distinctively deviant helps conceal the deviancy in heterosexual families, and thereby helps to sustain the illusion that heterosexuals are specially entitled to access to a protective private sphere because they, unlike their gay and lesbian counterparts are, supporters of the family.

Calhoun, 1997

Thus the ideology of the heterosexual family has played an important part in encouraging discrimination and prejudice against gays and lesbian.

To Calhoun, gay and lesbian relationships, with or without children, are just as much family relationships as those of heterosexual couples. She does not believe that arguing for them to be accepted as such in any way legitimates the heterosexual, patriarchal family that has been so criticized by radical and Marxist feminists. In the contemporary world, heterosexual families engage in ‘multiple deviations from norms governing the family’. A wide variety of behaviours and family forms have become common and widely accepted. Accepting gays and lesbians as forming families involves the acceptance of just one more variation from traditional conventional families. It has the potential benefit of reducing the anti-gay and anti-lesbian prejudice that has been promoted in the name of preserving the family.

Difference feminism – conclusion

The feminists in this section all avoid the mistake of making sweeping generalizations about the effects of family life on women. They tend to be sensitive to the different experiences of family life experienced by women of different sexual orientations, ethnic groups, classes and so on (although each writer does not necessarily discuss all the sources of difference that affect how families influence women's lives). In these respects they can be seen as representing theoretical advances upon some of the Marxist and radical theories discussed earlier.

However, *some* difference feminists do sometimes lose sight of the inequalities between men and women in families by stressing the range of choices open to people when they are forming families. By stressing the different experiences of women they tend to neglect the common experiences shared by most women in families. Nevertheless, this general approach may be right to suggest that it is possible (if not common) for both men and women to develop rewarding and fulfilling family relationships.

This section has examined the family from a variety of perspectives. The focus now changes to various themes that are significant to our understanding of the family as a unit of social organization. The first theme is the effect of industrialization and modernization the family.

Sociology is Simple
Sociology is Scoring
provided that you
Study Sociology Systematically

The family, industrialization and modernization

A major theme in sociological studies of the family is the relationship between the structure of the family and the related processes of industrialization and modernization. Industrialization refers to the mass production of goods in a factory system which involves some degree of mechanized production technology. Modernization refers to the development of social, cultural, economic and political practices and institutions which are thought to be typical of modern societies. Such developments include the replacement of religious belief systems with scientific and rational ones, the growth of bureaucratic institutions, and the replacement of monarchies with representative democracies.

Some sociologists regard industrialization as the central process involved in changes in Western societies since the eighteenth century; others attach more importance to broader processes of modernization. However, there are a number of problems which arise from relating the family to industrialization or modernization:

1. The processes of industrialization and modernization do not follow the same course in every society.
2. Industrialization and modernization are not fixed states but developing processes. Thus the industrial system in nineteenth-century Britain was different in important respects from that of today. Similarly, British culture, society and politics are very different at the turn of the millennium from how they were two hundred years earlier.
3. Some writers dispute that we still live in modern industrial societies and believe that we have moved into a phase of postmodernity. The issue of the family and postmodernity will be examined later.

Further difficulties arise from the fact that there is not one form of pre-industrial, or pre-modern, family, but many. Much of the research on the family, industrialization and modernization has led to considerable confusion because it is not always clear what the family in industrial society is being compared to. In addition, within modern industrial society there are variations in family structure. As a starting point, therefore, it is necessary for us to examine the family in pre-modern, pre-industrial societies in order to establish a standard for comparison.

The family in non-literate societies

In many small-scale, non-literate societies, the family and kinship relationships in general are the basic organizing principles of social life. Societies are often divided into a number of kinship groups, such as **lineages**, which are groups descended from a common ancestor. The family is embedded in a web of kinship relationships. Kinship groups are responsible for the production of important goods and services. For example, a lineage may own agricultural land which is worked, and its produce shared, by members of the lineage.

Members of kinship groups are united by a network of mutual rights and obligations. In some cases, if individuals are insulted or injured by someone from outside the group, they have the right to call on the support of members of the group in seeking reparation or revenge. Many areas of an individual's behaviour are shaped by his or her status as kin. An uncle, for example, may have binding obligations to be involved with aspects of his nephew's socialization and may be responsible for the welfare of his nieces and nephews should their father die.

In this brief description of the family in small-scale, pre-industrial society we have glossed over the wide variations in family and kinship patterns which are found in such societies. Even so, it does serve to highlight some of the more important differences between the family in kinship-based society and the family in industrial society.

The 'classic' extended family

A second form of pre-industrial, pre-modern family, sometimes known as the classic extended family, is found in some traditional peasant societies. This family type has been made famous by C.M. Arensberg and S.T. Kimball's study of Irish farmers, entitled *Family and Community in Ireland* (1968).

As in kinship-based societies, kinship ties dominate life, but in this case the basic unit is the extended family rather than the wider kinship grouping. The traditional Irish farming family is a patriarchal extended family, so-called because of the considerable authority of the male head. It is also patrilineal because property is passed down through the male line. Within the family, social and economic roles are welded together, status being ascribed by family membership.

Typically, the classic extended family consists of the male head, his wife and children, his ageing parents, and any unmarried brothers and sisters. Together they work as a 'production unit', producing the goods necessary for the family's survival.

Some people have argued that, as industrialization and modernization proceed, kinship-based society and the classic extended family tend to break up, and the nuclear family – or some form of modified extended family – emerges as the predominant family form.

Talcott Parsons – the ‘isolated nuclear family’

Talcott Parsons argues that the ‘isolated nuclear family’ is the typical family form in modern industrial society. It is ‘structurally isolated’ because it does not form an integral part of a wider system of kinship relationships. Obviously there are social relationships between members of nuclear families and their kin but these relationships are more a matter of choice than binding obligations. Parsons sees the emergence of the isolated nuclear family in terms of his theory of social evolution. The evolution of society involves a process of ‘structural differentiation’. This means that institutions evolve which specialize in fewer functions. In this sense, no longer do the family and kinship groups perform a wide range of functions. Instead specialist institutions such as business firms, schools, hospitals, police forces and churches take over many of their functions. This process of differentiation and specialization involves the ‘transfer of a variety of functions from the nuclear family to other structures of the society’. Thus in industrial society, with the transfer of the production of goods to factories, specialized economic institutions became differentiated from the family. The family ceases to be an economic unit of production.

Functionalist analysis emphasizes the importance of integration and harmony between the parts of society. An efficient social system requires the parts to fit smoothly rather than abrade. The parts of society are functionally related when they contribute to the integration and harmony of the social system. Parsons argues that there is a functional relationship between the isolated nuclear family and the economic system in industrial society. In particular, the isolated nuclear family is shaped to meet the requirements of the economic system. A modern industrial system with a specialized division of labour demands considerable geographical mobility from its labour force. Individuals with specialized skills are required to move to places where those skills are in demand. The isolated nuclear family is suited to the need for geographical mobility. It is not tied down by binding obligations to a wide range of kin, and compared to the pre-industrial families, it is a small, streamlined unit.

Status in industrial society is achieved rather than ascribed. An individual’s occupational status is not automatically fixed by his ascribed status in the family or kinship group. Parsons argues that the isolated nuclear family is the best form of family structure for a society based on achieved status. In industrial society,

individuals are judged in terms of the status they achieve. Such judgements are based on what Parsons terms 'universalistic values', that is values that are universally applied to all members of society. However, within the family, status is ascribed and, as such, based on particularistic values', that is values that are applied only to particular individuals. Thus a son's relationship with his father is conducted primarily in terms of their ascribed statuses of father and son. The father's achieved status as bricklayer, schoolteacher or lawyer has relatively little influence on their relationship since his son does not judge him primarily in terms of universalistic values. Parson argues that in a society based on achieved status conflict would tend to arise in a family unit larger than the isolated nuclear family. In a three generation extended family in which the children remained as part of the family unit, the following situation could produce conflict. If the son became a doctor and the father was a labourer, the particularistic values of family life would give the father a higher status than his son. Yet the universalistic values of society as a whole would award his son higher social status. Conflict may result from this situation which could undermine the authority of the father and threaten the solidarity of the family. The same conflict of values may occur if the nuclear family were extended horizontally. Relationships between a man and his brother may be problematic if they held jobs of widely differing prestige.

The isolated nuclear family largely prevents these problems from arising. There is one main breadwinner, the husband-father. His wife is mainly responsible for raising the children and the latter have yet to achieve their status in the world of work. No member of the family is in a position to threaten the ascribed authority structure by achieving a status outside the family which is higher than the achieved status of the family head. These problems do not occur in pre-industrial society. There, occupational status is largely ascribed since an individual's position in the family and kinship group usually determines his job. Parsons concludes that given the universalistic, achievement oriented values of industrial society, the isolated nuclear family is the most suitable family structure. Any extension of this basic unit may well create conflict which would threaten the solidarity of the family.

As a consequence of the structural isolation of the nuclear family, the conjugal bond – the relationship between husband and wife – is strengthened. Without the support of kin beyond the nuclear family, spouses are increasingly depended on each other, particularly for emotional support. As outlined in a previous section, Parsons argues that the stabilization of adult personalities is a major function of the family in industrial society. This is largely accomplished in terms of the husband-wife relationship.

William J. Goode

In *World Revolution and the Family* William J. Goode surveys the relationship between family structure and industrialization in various parts of the world. Like Parsons, he argues that industrialization tends to undermine the extended family and larger kinship groupings. Goode offers the following explanations for this process. The high rate of geographical mobility in industrial society decreases 'the frequency and intimacy of contact among members of the kin network'. The relatively high level of social mobility also tends to weaken kinship ties. For example, if a member of a working-class family becomes upwardly mobile, he may adopt the life style, attitudes and values of his new social class. This would tend to cut him off from his working-class kin. Many of the functions once performed by the family have been taken over by outside agencies such as schools, business and welfare organizations. This reduces the dependency of the individual on his family and kin. The importance of achieved status in industrial society means that the family and kinship group have less to offer their members. The family cannot guarantee its members a job or directly provide the necessary education and training to obtain one. The highly specialized division of labour in industrial society makes it even more difficult for an individual to obtain a job for a relative. As Goode states, 'He may not be in a suitable sector of the occupational sphere, or at a level where his influence is useful'.

However, Goode does not regard the pressures of industrialization as the only reason for the breakdown of extended family ties. He argues that the move to nuclear families has been 'far more rapid than could be supposed or predicted from the degree of industrialization alone'. Goode believes that the ideology of the nuclear family has encouraged its growth, particularly in non-Western societies. This is due partly to the prestige of Western ideas and life styles. Since the nuclear family is found 'in many areas where the rate of industrialization is slight' Goode recognizes 'the independent power of *ideological* variables'. He also argues that the spread of the nuclear family is due in part to the freedom it affords its members. Kenneth Little supports this point in his study of migration from rural kinship based societies to urban industrial centers in West Africa. Many migrants welcomed the freedom from obligations to their kinsmen which they experienced in the towns.

Goode applies the concept of role bargaining to his study of the family. This means that the individual attempts to obtain the best possible 'bargain' in his relationships with others. He will attempt to maximize his gains. In terms of family relationships, this means he will maintain relationships with kin and submit to their control if he feels he is getting a good return on his investment of time, energy and emotion. With respect to the extended family and industrialization, Goode argues

that, 'It is not so much that the new system is incompatible, as it offers an alternative pattern of payments'. In other words, extended family patterns can operate in industrial society. Although it costs time and money, the rapid transport system in modern society means that 'the individual can maintain an extended kin network if he *wishes* to do so'. However, the 'alternative pattern of payments' offered by industrial society provides a better bargain for many people. They gain more by rejecting close and frequent contacts with kin beyond the nuclear family than by retaining them.

Goode uses the concept of role bargaining to explain social class differences in family structure. From his world survey, Goode finds that extended family patterns are most likely to occur in the upper classes. Since members of ruling class and elites have an important influence on appointments to top jobs, the retention of family ties makes economic sense. In Goode's terms it is an effective role bargain. Lupton and Wilson's study of the kinship connections of 'top decision makers' gives some indication of the importance of family connections in the British upper class. By comparison, members of the lower strata 'have little to offer the younger generation to counteract their normal tendency to independence'. Goode concludes that extended kinship ties are retained if individuals feel they have more to gain than to lose by maintaining them.

Peter Laslett - the family in pre-industrial England

The family in kinship based society and the classic extended family represent only two possible forms of family structure in pre-industrial society. Historical research in Britain and America suggests that neither was typical of those countries in pre-industrial era. Peter Laslett, a Cambridge historian, has studied family size and composition in pre-industrial England. From 1564 to 1821 he found that only about 10% of households contained kin beyond the nuclear family. This percentage is the same as for England in 1966. Evidence from America presents a similar picture. This surprisingly low figure may be due in part to the fact that people in pre-industrial England and America married relatively late in life and life expectancy was short. On average, there were only a few years between the marriage of a couple and the death of their parents. However, Laslett found no evidence to support the formerly accepted view that the classic extended family was widespread in pre-industrial England. He states that, 'There is no sign of the large, extended coresidential family group of the traditional peasant world giving way to the small, nuclear conjugal household of modern industrial society'.

It is now possible to suggest that it was not industrialization that produced the nuclear family but rather the reverse. The nuclear family may have been one of the factors encouraging the development of the industrial

revolution in England. As the predominant form of family structure, it was pre-adapted to the requirements of industrial society.

Michael Anderson – Household Structure and the Industrial Revolution

Further historical evidence suggests that far from encouraging the formation of nuclear families, the early stages of industrialization in England may well have strengthened kinship ties beyond the nuclear family. Using data from the 1851 census of Preston, Michael Anderson found that some 23% of households contained kin other than the nuclear family, a large increase over Laslett's figures and those for today. The bulk of this 'co-residence' occurred among the poor. Anderson argues that co-residence occurs when the parties involved received net gains from the arrangement.

Preston in 1851 was largely dependent on the cotton industry. Life for many working-class families was characterized by severe hardship resulting from low wages, periods of high unemployment, large families, a high death rate and overcrowded housing. In these circumstances, the maintenance of a large kinship network could be advantageous to all concerned. In the absence of a welfare state, individuals were largely dependent on kin in times of hardship and need. Aging parents often lived with their married children, a situation which benefitted both parties. It provided support for the aged and allowed the mother to work in the factory since grandparents could care for the dependent children. The high death rate led to a large number of orphans, many of whom found a home with relatives. Again the situation benefitted both parties. It provided support for the children who would soon, in a age of child labour, make an important contribution to household income. A high rate of sickness and unemployment encouraged a wide network of kin as a means of mutual support. In the absence of sickness and unemployment benefits, individuals were forced to rely on their kin in times of hardship. Co-residence also provided direct economic advantage to those concerned. Additional members of the household would lower the share of the rent paid by each individual. Finally, the practice of recruiting for jobs through kin encouraged the establishment of a wide kinship network. Anderson notes that the system of "Asking for" a job for kin was normal in the factory towns, and the employers used the kinship system to recruit labour from the country.

Anderson's study of Preston indicates that in the mid nineteenth century, the working-class family functioned as a mutual aid organization. It provided an insurance policy against hardship and crisis. This function encouraged the extension of kinship bonds beyond the nuclear family. Such links would be retained as long as they provided net gains to those involved. **Anderson concludes**

that the early stages of industrialization increased rather than decreased the extension of the working-class family.

Michael Young and Peter Willmott – four stages of family life

Michael Young and Peter Willmott have been conducting studies of family life in London for over twenty years. In their latest book, *The Symmetrical family*, they attempt to trace the development of the family from pre-industrial England to the present day. Using a combination of historical research and social surveys – large-scale surveys based on random samples within a particular area – they suggest that the family is moving through four main stages. This section will concentrate on their analysis of the working class family.

Stage 1 is represented by the pre-industrial family. The family is a unit of production, the husband, wife and unmarried children working as a team, typically in agriculture or textiles. This type of family was gradually supplanted by the industrial revolution. However, it continued well into the nineteenth century and is still represented in a small minority of families today.

The Stage 2 family began with the industrial revolution, developed throughout the nineteenth century and reached its peak in the early years of the twentieth. The family ceased to be a unit of production since individual members were employed as wage earners. Throughout the nineteenth century working-class poverty was widespread, wages were low and unemployment high. Like Anderson, Young and Willmott argue that the family responded to this situation by extending its network to include relatives beyond the nuclear family. This provided an insurance policy against the insecurity and hardship of poverty. The extension of the nuclear family was largely conducted by women who ‘eventually built up an organization in their own defence and in defence of their children’. The basic tie was between a mother and her married daughter and in comparison, the conjugal bond – the husband-wife relationship – was weak. Women created an ‘informal trade union’ which largely excluded men. Young and Willmott claim that, ‘Husbands were often squeezed out of the warmth of the female circle and took to the pub as their defence’. Compared to later stages, the stage 2 family was often headed by a female.

The Stage 2 family began to decline in the early years of the twentieth century but it is still found in many low-income, long established working-class areas. Its survival is documented in Young and Willmott’s famous study entitled *Family and Kinship in East London*. The study was conducted in the mid 1950s in **Bethnal Green**, a low-income borough in London’s East End. Bethnal Green is a long settled, traditional working-class area. Children usually remain in the same

locality on marriage. At the time of the research, two out of three married people had parents living within two to three miles of their residence. There was a close tie between female relatives. Over 50% of the married women in the sample had seen their mothers during the previous day, over 80% within the previous week. There was a constant exchange of services such as washing, shopping and babysitting, between female relatives. Young and Willmott argue that in many families, the households of mother and married daughter are 'to some extent merged'. As such they can be termed **extended families** which Young and Willmott define as 'a combination of families who to some degree form one domestic unit'. Although many aspects of the state 2 family were present in Bethnal Green, there were also indications of a transition to Stage 3. For example, fathers were increasingly involved in the rearing of their children.

In the early 1970s, Young and Willmott conducted a large-scale social survey in which 1,928 people were interviewed in Greater London and the outer Metropolitan area. The results formed the basis of their book, *The Symmetrical Family*. Young and Willmott argue that the Stage 2 family has largely disappeared. **For all social classes, but particularly the working class, the Stage 3 family predominates.** This family is characterized by 'the separation of the immediate, or nuclear family from the extended family'. The trade union of women is disbanded and the husband returns to the family circle.

Life for the Stage 3 nuclear family is largely home-centred, particularly when the children are young. Free time is spent doing chores and odd jobs around the house and leisure is mainly 'home-based', for example watching television. The conjugal bond is strong and relationships between husband and wife are increasingly 'companionate'. In the home, 'They shared their work; they shared their time'. The nuclear family has become a largely self-contained, self-reliant unit. **The stage 3 family is very similar to the privatized home-centered affluent worker family described by Goldthorpe and Lockwood and the isolated nuclear family which Talcott Parsons sees as typical of modern industrial society.**

Young and Willmott use the term 'symmetrical family' to describe the nuclear family of Stage 3. Symmetry refers to an arrangement in which the opposite parts are similar in shape and size. With respect to the symmetrical family, conjugal roles, although not the same - wives still have the main responsibility for raising the children, although husbands help - are similar in terms of the contribution made by each spouse to the running of the household. They share many of the chores, they share decisions, they work together, yet there is still men's work and women's work. Conjugal roles are not interchangeable but they are symmetrical in important respects.

Young and Willmott give the following reasons for the rise of symmetrical family.

1. A number of factors have reduced the need for kinship-based mutual aid groups. They include an increase in the real wages of the male breadwinner, a decrease in unemployment and the male mortality rate, and increased employment opportunities for women. Various provisions of the welfare state such as family allowances, sickness and unemployment benefits and old age pensions have reduced the need for dependence on the kinship network.
2. Increasing geographical mobility has tended to sever kinship ties. In their study of Bethnal Green (London), Young and Willmott showed how the extended kinship network largely ceased to operate when young couples with children moved some 20 miles away to a new council housing estate.
3. The reduction in the number of children, from an average of five or six per family in the nineteenth century to just over two in 1970s, provided greater opportunities for wives to work. This in turn leads to greater symmetry within the family since both spouses are more likely to be wage earners and to share financial responsibility for the household.
4. As living standards rose, the husband was drawn more closely into the family circle since the home was a more attractive place. It became more comfortable with better amenities and a greater range of home entertainments.

To the above points can be added Goldthorpe and Lockwood's conclusions from the affluent worker study. They argue that the privatized nuclear family stems largely from the values placed by the affluent worker on home-centredness and materialism. The major concern of the affluent worker was to raise the living standards of himself and his immediate family, a concern that largely shapes his family structure and domestic life.

Young and Willmott found that the home-centered symmetrical family was more typical of the working class than the middle class. They argue that members of the working class are 'more fully home-centered because they are less fully work-centered'. Partly as compensation for boring and uninvolved work, and partly because relatively little interest and energy are expended at work, manual workers tend to focus their attention on family life. Young and Willmott therefore see the nature of work as a major influence on family life.

In *The Symmetrical Family*, Young and Willmott devise a general theory which they term the 'Principle of Stratified Diffusion'. They claim that this theory explains much of the change in family life in industrial society. Put simply, the theory states that what the top of the stratification system does today, the bottom will do tomorrow. Life styles, patterns of consumption, attitudes and expectations will diffuse from the top of the stratification system downwards. They argue that industrialization is the 'source of momentum', it provides the opportunities for higher living standards and so on. However, industrialization alone cannot account for the changes in family life. For example it cannot fully explain why the mass of the population has chosen to adopt the life style of Stage 3 families. To complete the explanation, Young and Willmott maintain that the Principle of Stratified Diffusion is required. Industrialization provides the opportunity for a certain degree of choice for the mass of the population. This choice will be largely determined by the behavior of those at the top of the stratification system. Values, attitudes and expectations permeate down the class system; those at the bottom copy those at the top. There are a number of problems with this theory. In particular, it largely ignores the possibility that working-class subculture can direct behaviour. In the Luton study, Goldthorpe and Lockwood argue that behaviour of the affluent worker can be understood in terms of the adaptation of working-class norms and values to a new situation. They reject the view that the affluent worker simply absorbs the norms and values of higher social strata and acts accordingly.

Applying the Principle of Stratified Diffusion to the future, Young and Willmott postulate a possible Stage 4 family. They examine in detail the family life of managing directors, which in terms of their theory, should diffuse downwards in years to come. Managing directors are work-centred rather than home-centred, 'my business is my life' being a typical quote from those in the sample. Their leisure activities are less home-centred and less likely to involve their wives than those of Stage 3 families. Sport was an important area of recreation, particularly swimming and golf. The wife's role was to look after the children and the home. As such the managing director's family was more asymmetrical than the Stage 3 family. Young and Willmott suggest that changes in production technology may provide the opportunity for the Stage 4 family to diffuse throughout the stratification system. As technology reduces routine work, larger numbers of people may have more interesting and involving jobs and become increasingly work-centered. Young and Willmott admit that, 'We cannot claim that our 190 managing directors were representative of managing directors generally'. However, given the evidence available, they predict that the asymmetrical Stage 4 family represents the next major development.

A number of features of Willmott and Young's work are open to criticism. Many feminists have attacked the concept of the 'symmetrical family', arguing that

there has been little progress towards equality between husband and wife. There is also little evidence that the 'Principle of Stratified Diffusion' has led to the 'Stage 4 family' becoming typical of all strata. Married women have continued to take paid employment and few working-class families can afford to adopt the lifestyle and family arrangements of managing directors. Later research by Peter Willmott also has not used or supported the concept of the 'Stage 4 family'. Further, several studies indicate that changes in production technology have done little, if anything, to increase work involvement for manual workers. For example, Duncan Gallie's study of workers in automated industry, which employs the most advanced form of production technology, shows that the typical attitude towards work was one of indifference.

The middle-class family

Many of the arguments examined in preceding sections suggest that the middle-class family should be less attached to kin beyond the nuclear unit than its working-class counterpart. Given the nature of the middle class job market, it is more geographically mobile. It is also more financially secure. There is therefore less opportunity and less need to maintain a wide kinship network. However, a number of studies have shown that middle class families maintain close contacts with kin beyond the family. Research conducted in the late 1950s by **Willmott and Young** in **Woodford**, a largely middle-class London suburb, shows that, despite the fact that kin were more geographically dispersed compared to Bethnal Green, fairly regular contacts were maintained. In Bethnal Green 43% of husbands and wives had seen their mothers in the previous twenty-four hours, compared to 30% in Woodford. Although in Woodford there was less frequent contact with parents while the latter were employed, the frequency of contact was much the same as Bethnal Green when parents retired. On retirement, middle-class parents often moved to Woodford to live near their married children.

In their study of **Swansea**, conducted in the early 1960s, **Rosser and Harris** found that levels of contact between parents and married children were similar to those in Bethnal Green. The applied both to middle and working class families. Despite the wider dispersal of kin in Swansea, improved transportation facilities, particularly the family car, made frequent contact possible. Rosser and Harris state that, 'The picture that emerges, then, is of a vigorous kinship grouping wider than the elementary (nuclear) family, similar to the described in the Bethnal Green studies'. As in Bethnal Green, the Swansea families exchanged services with kin beyond the nuclear family and provided each other with support in times of need. Rosser and Harris conclude that, 'In Swansea, a high level of industrialization, social mobility and a wider dispersal of the family has not prevented the

maintenance of high levels of contact and the interchange of services between related households’.

Quantity and quality of contacts

A major problem in studies of the family is the difficulty of measuring the importance of kin beyond the nuclear family. In a study of middle-class family life in Swansea, **Colin Bell** questions whether the frequency of actual face-to-face contacts between kin provides an accurate assessment. Bell points to the importance of contact by telephone and mail. He also distinguished between the quantity and quality of contacts. For example, bumping into mum on a street corner in Bethnal Green may have far less significance than a formal visit to mother by her middle-class daughter.

In his study, Bell found a lower level of direct face-to-face contact with kin beyond the nuclear family than in either the Woodford sample or Rosser and Harris’s middle class sample. Despite this relatively low level of contact, he argues that compared with the working class, ‘Middle-class kin network may have fewer day-to-day demands but I think that there is little evidence to suggest that they necessarily show any different affective quality’. Thus direct contact may be less frequent but the emotional bonds are the same.

Bell makes a similar point about the provision of services for kin beyond the nuclear family. They may not be as numerous as those provided in the working class, but they may be just as significant. He found that aid from parents, especially the son’s father, was particularly important during the early years of marriage. It often took the form of loans or gifts to help with the deposit on a house or the expenses of the first baby. Bell concludes that kin beyond the nuclear family still play an important part in the lives of many middle-class families.

Similar conclusions were reached by **Graham Allan** in research conducted in a commuter village in East Anglia in the early 1970s (Allan, 1985). He found that relationships were characterized by a ‘positive concern’ for the welfare of the kin regardless of the frequency of face-to-face contacts.

Evidence from America provides a similar picture. Studies from a number of cities in the USA show that for middle and working classes, the degree of contact and the exchange of services with kin beyond the nuclear family is similar to the British pattern.

Contemporary family networks

Peter Willmott – networks in London

As stated earlier, Young and Willmott had suggested that changes in production technology may provide the opportunity for the Stage 4 family to diffuse throughout the stratification system. However, in a later research conducted during the 1980s in a north London suburb, **Peter Willmott found that contacts with kin remained important in both the middle and working class.** In the area he studied, about a third of the couples had moved to the district in the previous five years. Only a third of all the couples had parents or parents-in-law living within ten minutes travelling distance. **However, despite the distance between their homes, two thirds of the couples saw relatives at least weekly.** Working class couples saw relatives more frequently than middle class couples, but the difference were not great. Maintaining contact was relatively easy for most families because so many had access to cars. Most also had homes that were sufficiently spacious for relatives to come and stay. Some 90 percent had telephones which enables them to keep in touch with relatives even if they did not meet face-to-face. **Peter Willmott also found that ‘relatives continue to be the main source of informal support and care, and that again the class differences are not marked’.** For example, nearly 75 percent had relatives who sometimes helped with babysitting and 80 percent looked to relatives to help them when they needed to borrow money.

Margaret O’Brien and Deborah Jones – families and kinship in East London

Margaret O’Brien and Deborah Jones conducted research in Barking and Dagenham, East London, in the early 1990s. They collected survey data on 600 young people and their parents in this predominantly working-class area. They compared their findings with a 1950s study of the same area conducted by Peter Willmott. They found that, compared with the 1950s, this area had developed **a greater variety of types of family and household.** Of the young people surveyed, 14 percent lived with a step-parent, and 14 percent lived in lone-parent families. According to census statistics, over one-third of births in the area took place outside marriage. There were many dual-earner families, with 62 percent of women in their sample working in paid employment, and 79 percent of men. In Willmott’s 1950s study, family life was much more homogeneous. Then, 78 percent of people were married, and just 1 percent were divorced. Most single people were young and lived with their parents.

Despite the move towards a greater plurality of family and household types, O’Brien and Jones did not find that there had been any major erosion

in the importance attached to kinship. In both Willmott's and O'Brien and Jones's research, over 40 percent of the sample had grandparents living locally. In the 1990s, 72 percent of those studied had been visited by a relative in the previous week, and over half the sample saw their maternal grandparent at least weekly. Twenty percent had large network of local kin numbering over ten relatives.

O'Brien and Jones conclude that there has been a pluralisation of lifestyles, an increase in marital breakdowns and a big rise in dual-earner households. However, they also found that kin contact and association do not appear to have changed significantly since Willmott's study of the borough in the 1950s. This suggests a greater continuity in kin relationships, at least among the working class in London, than that implied by some other studies.

All the above studies have been based upon specific geographical areas at a particular point in time. However, in 1980s and 1990s, **British Social Attitude Surveys** were conducted at national level. The surveys used large representative samples of the British population. The results of these surveys have been analysed by Francis McGlone, Alison Park and Kate Smith (1998).

McGlone et al. conclude that family members remain the most important source of practical help. While people tend to turn first to a spouse or partner, after that they turn to other relatives, with friends of neighbours being less important. McGlone et al. found that 'the majority of the adult population are very family-centred'. The vast majority thought that parents should continue to help children after they had left home, and around 70 percent thought that people should keep in touch with close family members. A majority thought that you should try to keep in touch with relatives like aunts, uncles and cousins, even if you did not have much in common with them.

McGlone et al. found that families remain very important to people in contemporary Britain. They argue that their study confirms the results of earlier research showing that families remain an important source of help and support, and that family contacts are still maintained even though family members tend to live further apart. Their research suggests that the 'core' of the family does not just include parents and children - in most households grandparents are part of the core as well. They also found that differences between social classes remained significant, with the working class still more likely to have frequent contacts than the middle class. **Despite all the social changes affecting families between 1986 and 1995, kinship networks beyond the nuclear family remain important to people.**

Similarly **Janet Finch** too argues that although the circumstances in which family relationships are made have changes enormously since pre-industrial times, there is no evidence that in general there is less sense of obligation to kin than there was in the past.

The isolated nuclear family?

The evidence so far presented under the heading of ‘The family and industrialization’ provides a somewhat confusing picture. On the one hand there is Talcott Parson’s isolated nuclear family, on the other a large body of evidence suggesting that kin beyond the nuclear family play an important part in family life. To make matters more confusing, Young and Willmott do not provide sufficient data to allow an assessment of the importance of kin to the Stage 3 family. In America a number of researchers have rejected Parson’s concept of the isolated nuclear family. For example, Sussman and Burchinal argue that the weight of evidence from a large body of research indicates that the modern American family is far from isolated. They maintain that the family can only be properly understood ‘by rejection of the isolated nuclear family concept’.

Parsons replied to his critics in an article entitled *The Normal American Family*. He argues that close relationship with kin outside the nuclear family are in no way inconsistent with the concept of the isolated nuclear family. Parsons states that ‘the very psychological importance for the individual of the nuclear family in which he was born and brought up would make any such conception impossible’. However, he maintains that the nuclear family is structurally isolated. It is isolated from other parts of the social structure such as the economic system. For example, it does not form an integral part of the economic system as in the case of the peasant farming family in traditional Ireland. In addition, the so-called ‘extended families’ of modern industrial society ‘do not form firmly structured units of the social system’. Relationships with kin beyond the nuclear family are not obligatory; they are a matter of individual choice. In this sense, ‘extended kin constitute a resource which may be selectively taken advantage of within considerable limits’. Thus extended families do not form ‘firmly structured units’ as in the case of the classic extended family or the family in kinship based societies. **Evidence from Rosser and Harris’s Swansea research supports Parson’s arguments.** Rosser and Harris maintain that the nuclear family is ‘a basic structural unit of the society’ and though kinship relationships beyond the nuclear family are important to individuals, in terms of the social structure as a whole they are ‘not of major and critical importance’. The Swansea study revealed a ‘vast variation’ in kinship relationships. Members of some families were in daily contact with kin beyond the nuclear family, members of other families rarely saw their relatives. This is the expected finding in view of Parson’s emphasis upon

individual choice. It supports his claim that extended families are not ‘firmly structured units of the social system’.

The ‘modified extended family’

In order to clear up the confusion surrounding the term ‘isolated nuclear family’, **Eugene Litwak** argues that a new term, the ‘**modified extended family**’ should be introduced to describe the typical family in modern industrial society. Litwak defines the modified extended family as ‘**a coalition of nuclear families in a state of partial dependence. Such partial dependence means that nuclear family members exchange significant services with each other, thus differing from the isolated nuclear family, as well as retain considerable autonomy (that is not bound economically or geographically) therefore differing from the classical extended family**’.

The ‘modified elementary family’

Graham Allan accepts Litwak’s view that kin outside the nuclear family continue to be important in industrial society. On the basis of his own research in a commuter village in East Anglia, he argues that in normal circumstances non-nuclear kin do not rely on each other. In many families there may be little exchange of significant services most of the time. However, in most families the members do feel an obligation to keep in touch. For example, very few married children break off relationships with their parents altogether, and brothers and sisters usually maintain contact. Although significant services are not usually exchanged as a matter of course, kin frequently recognize an obligation to help each other in times of difficulty or crisis.

Unlike Litwak, Allan believes that these kinds of relationships are confined to an inner or ‘elementary’ family, consisting of wives and husbands, their parents, children, brothers and sisters. The obligations do not extend to uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins or more distant kin. Allan therefore prefers the term **modified elementary family** to ‘modified extended family’, since to him it more accurately describes the range of kin who are important to an individual.

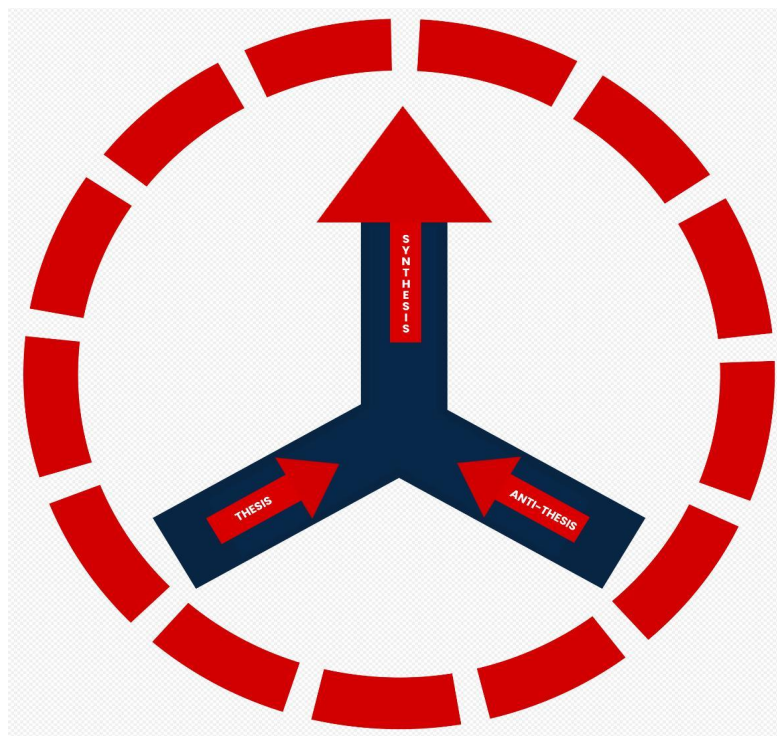
The ‘dispersed extended family’

On the basis of research carried out in London in the 1980s, **Peter Willmott** reached broadly similar conclusions to Litwak and Allan. He claims that the **dispersed extended family** is becoming dominant in Britain. It consists of two or more related families who cooperate with each other even though they live some

distance apart. Contacts are fairly frequent, taking place on average perhaps once a week, but less frequent than they were amongst extended families who lived close together. Cars, public transport and telephones make it possible for dispersed extended families to keep in touch. Members of dispersed extended families do not rely on each other on a day-to-day basis.

Like Litwak, Willmott sees each nuclear family unit as only partially dependent upon extended kin. Much of the time the nuclear family is fairly self-sufficient but in times of emergency the existence of extended kin might prove invaluable. Thus Willmott argues that, in modern Britain, ‘although kinship is largely chosen, it not only survives but most of the time flourishes’.

The research discussed by **McGlone *et al.*** reaches broadly similar conclusions. Kinship networks outside the nuclear family are still important. Indeed they argue that the core families with dependent children include not just the nuclear family but also grandparents. Despite all the social changes that could have weakened kinship, people still value kinship ties and for the most part try to retain them even when they live some distance from their relatives. In this section we have focused on the changes in household composition and kinship networks that have accompanied industrialization in Britain. We will now examine the extent to which the idea of a ‘typical family’ is accurate.



Family diversity

Although some historians such as Michael Anderson have pointed to a variety of household types in pre-industrial times and during industrialization, it has generally been assumed that a single type of family is dominant in any particular era. Whether the modern family is regarded as nuclear, modified extended, modified elementary or dispersed extended, the assumption has been that this type of family is central to people's experiences in modern industrial societies. **However, recent research has suggested that such societies are characterized by a plurality of household and family types, and that the idea of a typical family is misleading.**

The 'cereal packet image' of the family

Ann Oakley (1982) has described the image of the typical or 'conventional' family. She says, 'conventional families are nuclear families composed of legally married couples, voluntarily choosing the parenthood of one or more (but not too many) children'.

Leach called this the 'cereal packet image of the family'. The image of the happily married couple with two children is prominent in advertising, and the 'family-sized' packets of cereals and their types of product are aimed at just this type of grouping. It tends also to be taken for granted that this type of family has its material needs met by the male breadwinner, while the wife has a predominantly domestic role.

The monolithic image of the family

The American feminist **Barrie Thorne** has attacked the image of the 'monolithic family'. She argues that 'Feminists have challenged the ideology of "the monolithic family", which has elevated the nuclear family with a breadwinner husband and a full-time wife and mother as the only legitimate family form'. She argues that the focus on the family unit neglects structures of society that lead to variations in families. She says, 'Structures of gender, generation, race and class result in widely varying experiences of family life, which are obscured by the glorification of the nuclear family, motherhood, and the family as a loving refuge'. The idea of 'The Family' involves 'falsifying the actual variety of household forms'. In fact, according to Thorne, 'Households have always varied in composition, even in the 1950s and early 1960s when the ideology of The Family was at its peak'. By the 1990s, such an ideology was more obviously inappropriate since changes in society had resulted in ever more diverse family forms.

Households in Britain

The view that such images equate with reality has been attacked by **Robert and Rhona Rapoport** (1982). They drew attention to the fact that in 1978, for example, just 20 percent of families consisted of married couples with children in which there was a single breadwinner. Rapoport found that there has been a steady decline in the proportion of households in Great Britain consisting of married couples, with dependent children, from 38 percent in 1961 to just 23 percent in 1998. There has been a corresponding increase in single-person households in the same period, with the proportion of households of this type rising from 11 percent in 1961 to 28 percent in 1998. Furthermore, the proportion of households that were single-parent households with dependent children more than tripled, from 2 percent in 1961 to 7 percent in 1998. The total number of lone-parent households rose from 6 percent to 10 percent over the same period. Single-parent families are discussed in more detail later.

Types of diversity

The fact that the ‘conventional family’ no longer makes up a majority of households or families is only one aspect of diversity identified by the **Rapoports**. In their survey, they found a variety of family forms that are emerging in Britain. The findings of their survey have been summarized below:

- that there has been a steady decline in the proportion of ‘conventional families’ consisting of married heterosexual couples and their dependent children.
- that there is a rising trend towards ‘organizational diversity’. By this, they mean there are variations in family structure, household type, patterns of kinship network, and differences in the division of labour within home. For example, there are the differences between conventional families, one-parent families, and dual-worker families, in which husband and wife both work.
- that there are also increasing numbers of ‘reconstituted families’. These families are formed after divorce and remarriage. This situation can lead to a variety of family forms. The children from the previous marriages of the new spouses may live together in the newly reconstituted family, or they may live with the original spouses of the new couple.
- that the variety of family forms is also influenced by ‘cultural diversity’. There are differences in the lifestyles of families of different ethnic origins

and different religious beliefs. Differences in lifestyle between Catholic and Protestant families may also be an important element of diversity.

- that there are differences between middle- and working-class families in terms of relationships between adults and the way in which children are socialized.
- that the variety of family forms is also influenced by ‘regional diversity’. For example, in what they term ‘the sun belt’ (the affluent southern parts of England) Rapoport found two-parent upwardly mobile families are typical. On the other hand, in rural regions, the family-based farm tends to produce strong kinship networks.
- that there is an increasing trend towards cohabitation without marriage (live-in relationships).
- that ‘gay and lesbian households’ have become more common. Many sociologists believe that such households, where they incorporate long-term gay or lesbian relationships, should be seen as constituting families.

New reproductive technologies

New reproductive technologies have added an entirely new dimension to family diversity. It was not until 1978 that the first ‘test-tube baby’, Louise Brown, was born. The process is called *in vitro* fertilization and involves fertilizing an egg with a sperm in a test-tube, before implanting in a woman’s womb. The woman may or may not be the woman who produced the egg.

Surrogate motherhood involves one woman carrying a foetus produced by the egg of another woman. This raises question about who the parents of a child are, and questions about what constitutes a family. Calhoun sees this as undermining the centrality of the reproductive couple as the core of the family, and it introduces a greater range of choices into families than was previously available. John Macionis and Ken Plummer show how new reproductive technologies can create previously impossible sets of family relationships. They quote the case of Arlette Schweitzer, who in 1991 gave birth in South Dakota in the USA to her own grandchild. Her daughter was unable to carry a baby and Arlette Schweitzer acted as a surrogate mother. She gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. Macionis and Plummer ask, ‘is Arlette Schweitzer the mother of the twins she bore? Grandmother? Both?’ Such examples, they say, ‘force us to consider the adequacy of conventional kinship terms’. They note that such technologies have largely been

made available to heterosexual couples of normal child-rearing age, but they have also been used by lesbian, homosexual, and single and older women. The implication of new reproductive technologies is that biology will no longer restrict the possibilities for forming or enlarging families by having children. They therefore add considerably to the range of potential family types and thus contribute to growing diversity.

A global trend

According to Rhona Rapoport, the decline of conventional family forms and the increasing diversity are part of a global trend. She quotes figures showing movement toward diverse family structure in very different European countries. In Finland, the percentage of household consisting of a nuclear family declined from 63.8 per cent in 1950 to 60 per cent in 1980. In Sweden, the decline was from 52.4 per cent in 1960 to 42.6 percent in 1980, in East Germany from 56.7 per cent in 1957 to 48.7 per cent in 1977. She also points to an enormous increase throughout Europe in the proportion of married women who have paid employment, which suggests that men's and women's roles within marriage are changing and consequently new family forms are developing. These conclusions are broadly shared by a study of diversity in Europe.

Diversity and European family life

At the end of the 1980s the European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences organized a cross-cultural study of family life in 14 European nations (Boh, 1989). These were Belgium, Finland, France, the German Democratic Republic and Federal Republic of Germany (the study was carried out before re-unification), Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the then Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

The findings of individual national studies were analysed and compared by **Katja Boh**. She tried to 'trace the tendencies in changes of family patterns' and found that although most of the evidence showed that family life was very different in different European countries, some evidence did point to certain trends being widespread. All European countries had experienced rising divorce rates and many had made it easier to get divorced. Cohabitation appeared to have become more common in most countries, and the birth rate had declined everywhere.

Further, Boh argues that the existence of diverse patterns of family life in Europe, but with some common trends, seems at first sight to be contradictory. However, together, they produce a consistent pattern of **convergence in diversity**. While family life retains considerable variations from country to country,

throughout Europe a greater range of family types is being accepted as legitimate and normal. This has been caused by increasing gender symmetry in work patterns, more freedom in conjugal choice and a more hedonistic view of marriage and love, premarital and experimental sexuality, higher marriage instability and alternative forms of 'living together', decreasing fertility and change in forms of parenting.

Boh concludes that whatever the existing patterns are, they are characterized by the acceptance of diversity that has given men and women the possibility to choose inside the boundaries of available options the life pattern that is best adapted to their own needs and aspirations (Boh, 1989).

The increase in single parenthood

As mentioned earlier, single-parent families have become increasingly common in Britain. According to government statistics, in 1961, 2 percent of the population lived in households consisting of a lone parent with dependent children, but by 1998 this had more than tripled to 7 per cent. Between 1972 and 1997 the percentage of children living in single-parent families increased from 7 per cent to 19 per cent. According to Hantrais and Letablier (1996), Britain has the second highest rate of lone parenthood in Europe. It is exceeded only by Denmark, and rates in countries such as Greece, Portugal and France are much lower than those in Britain. Nevertheless, throughout Europe and in advanced industrial countries such as Japan and the USA, the proportions have generally been increasing since at least the 1980s. Further, as per the *General Household Survey* (1996) it was found that only 1 percent of the family households were headed by lone fathers, compared to 18 percent that were headed by lone mothers.

Clearly, then, the rise in lone motherhood is closely related both to increase in the divorce rate and to an increase in births outside marriage. The causes of the rise in divorces are discussed later. The increase in single lone mothers may partly result from a reduction in the number of 'shotgun weddings' – that is, getting married to legitimate a pregnancy. Mark Brown suggests that in previous eras it was more common for parents to get married, rather than simply cohabiting, if they discovered that the woman was pregnant. Marriages that resulted from pregnancy were often unstable and could end up producing lone motherhood through an eventual divorce or separation. Now, the partners may choose to cohabit rather than marry and, if their relationship breaks up, they end up appearing in the statistics as a single, never-married, parent.

Some writers see the rise of single parenthood as a symptom of increased tolerance of diverse family forms. For example, the Rapoports claim that the single-parent family is an important 'emerging form' of the family which is

becoming accepted as a legitimate alternative to other family structures.

However, there is little evidence that a large number of single-parents see their situation as ideal and actively choose it as an alternative to dual parenthood. Burghes and Brown conducted research into 31 lone mothers and found that only a minority of the pregnancies were planned. None of the mothers had actively set out to become lone mothers and all of them attributed the break-up of their relationship to 'violence in the relationship or the father's unwillingness to settle down'. In this small sample, all aspired to forming a two-parent households, but they had failed to achieve it despite their preference.

David Morgan (1994) suggests that the rise in lone parenthood could partly be due to changing relationships between men and women. He says important factors causing the rise could include 'the expectations that women and men have of marriage and the growing opportunities for women to develop a life for themselves outside marriage or long-term cohabitations'.

A longer-term trend that helps to account for the increase could be a decline in the stigma attached to single parenthood. This is reflected in the decreasing use of terms such as 'illegitimate children' and 'unmarried mothers', which seems to imply some deviation from the norms of family life, and their replacement by concepts such as 'single-parent families' and 'lone-parent families', which do not carry such negative connotations. The reduction in the stigma of single parenthood could relate to 'the weakening of religious or community controls over women' (Morgan, 1994).

The consequences of single parenthood

Single parenthood has increasingly become a contentious issue, with some arguing that it has become a serious problem for society. For example, in a letter to *The Times* in 1985, Lady Scott said:

"A vast majority of the population would still agree, I think, that the normal family is an influence for good in society and that one-parent families are bad news. Since not many single parents can both earn a living and give children the love and care they need, society has to support them; the children suffer through lacking one parent."

Sociologists such as Charles Murray have even gone so far as to claim that single parenthood has contributed to creating a whole new stratum of society, the underclass. Mary McIntosh says that 'over recent years, the media in the United Kingdom have been reflecting a concern about lone mothers that amounts to a

moral panic'. She claim that, as a group, lone mothers have been stigmatized and blamed for problems such as youth crime, high taxation to pay for welfare benefits, encouraging a culture of dependency on the state, and producing children who grow up to be unemployable. She says, 'perhaps the most serious charge is that they are ineffective in bringing up their children'.

However, while most commentators agree that single parenthood can create problems for individual parent, many sociologists do not see it as social problem, and some believe that it is a sign of social progress. As Sarah McLanahan and Karen Booth have said:

"Some view the mother-only family as an indicator of social disorganization, signaling the 'demise of the family'. Others regard it as an alternative family form consistent with the emerging economic independence of women".

Single parenthood and living standards

Single parenthood tends to be associated with low living standards. The *General Household Survey* of 1996 found that single-parent families were disadvantaged in comparison to other British families.

More controversial than the low average living standards of lone parents is the question of the psychological and social effects on children raised in such families. McLanahan and Booth have listed the findings of a number of American studies which seem to indicate that children are harmed by single-parenthood. These studies have claimed that such children have lower earnings and experience more poverty as adults; children of mother-only families are more likely to become lone parents themselves; and they are more likely to become delinquent and engage in drug abuse.

The findings of such studies must be treated with caution. As McLanahan and Booth themselves point out, the differences outlined above stem partly from the low income of lone-parent families and not directly from the absence of the second parent from the household.

In a review of research on lone parenthood, Louie Burghes notes that some research into the relationship between educational attainment and divorce suggests that children in families where the parents divorce start to do more poorly in education before the divorce takes place. Burghes argues that this implies that 'it is the quality of the family relationships, of which the divorce is only a part, that are influential' (Burghes, 1996).

The more sophisticated research into the effects of lone parenthood tries to take account of factors such as social class and low income. These studies find that 'the gap in outcomes between children who have and have not experienced family change narrows. In some cases they disappear; in others, statistically significant differences may remain. Some of these differences are small'.

E.E Cashmore has questioned the assumption that children brought up by one parent are worse off than those brought up by two. Cashmore argue that it is often preferable for a child to live with one caring parent than with one caring and one uncaring parent, particularly if the parents are constantly quarrelling and the marriage has all but broken down.

Cashmore also suggests that single parenthood can have attractions for the parent, particularly for mothers, since conventional family life may benefit men more than women. He says:

Given the 'darker side of family life' and the unseen ways in which the nuclear unit serves 'male power' rather than the interests of women, the idea of parents breaking free of marriage and raising children single-handed has its appeals.

It can give women greater independence than they have in other family situations. However, Cashmore does acknowledge that many lone mothers who are freed from dependence on a male partner end up becoming dependent on the state and facing financial hardship. He concludes that 'Lone parents do not need a partner so much as a partner's income'.

David Morgan does believe that the evidence suggests that the children of single parents fare less well than those from two-parent households. He qualifies this by saying that 'we still do not know enough about what causes these differences'. As with the effects of financial hardship, the children could be affected by the stigma attached to coming from a single-parent family. Morgan argues that 'it is possible, for example, that school teacher may be more likely to label a child as difficult if they have the knowledge that a particular child comes from a single-parent household'. For Morgan, it is very difficult to disentangle the direct and indirect effects on children of being brought up in a single-parent household, and therefore dangerous to make generalizations about such effects.

Ethnicity and family diversity

Ethnicity can be seen as one of the most important sources of family diversity in Britain. Ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds may introduce family forms that differ significantly from those of the ethnic majority. Statistical evidence does suggest that there are some differences in the prevalence of different household types in different ethnic groups.

The general picture, provided by various empirical studies, suggests that immigrants and their descendants have adapted their family life to fit British circumstances, but have not fundamentally altered the relationships on which their traditional family life was based. This would suggest that the existence of a variety of ethnic groups has indeed contributed to the diversity of family types to be found in Britain. These ethnic minorities have succeeded in retaining many of the culturally distinctive features of their family life.

Nevertheless, there is also evidence of changes taking place in the families of ethnic minorities, and British culture may have more effect on future generations. Each ethnic group contains a variety of different family types, which are influenced by factors such as class and stage in the life cycle, which relate to diversity in white families. Thus ethnic minorities families have not just contributed to family diversity through each group having its own distinctive family pattern, they have also contributed to it through developing diverse family patterns within each ethnic group.

Robert Chester – the British neo-conventional family

In a strong attack upon the idea that fundamental changes are taking place in British family life, Robert Chester (1985) argued that the changes had been only minor. He claimed that the evidence advanced by writers such as the Rapoport was misleading, and that the basic features of family life had remained largely unchanged for the vast majority of the British population since the Second World War. He argued:

*Most adults still marry and have children.
Most children are reared by their natural parents.
Most people live in a household headed by a married couple.
Most marriages continue until parted by death.
No great change seems currently in prospect.*

Chester, 1985

Percentage of people versus percentage of households

Chester believed that a snapshot of household types at a particular time does not provide a valid picture of the British family. The first point that Chester made is that a very different picture is produced if the percentage of people in various types of households is calculated, instead of the percentage of households of various types. Households containing parents and children contain greater percentage of the population than the percentage of households they make up. This is because family households tend to have more members than other types of household.

Chester's arguments were based upon figures from 1981. It was noted that the way the figures are calculated does make a difference. In 1981, 40 per cent of households were made up of two parents and children, but over 59 per cent of people lived in such households. In 1998, 30 per cent of households consisted of two parents plus children, but 49 per cent of people lived in such households. Despite the decline, very nearly half were still living in nuclear, two-generation households, with a further 24 per cent living in couple households.

The nuclear family and the life cycle

The second point made by Chester was that life cycles make it inevitable that at any one time some people will not be a member of a nuclear family household. Many of those who lived in other types of household would either have experienced living in a nuclear family in the past, or would do so in the future. He said, 'The 8 per cent living alone are mostly the elderly widowed, or else younger people who are likely to marry'. He described the parents-children household as 'one which is normal and still experienced by the vast majority'.

The 'neo-conventional family'

According to Chester, there was little evidence that people were choosing to live on a long-term basis in alternatives to the nuclear family. However, he did accept that some changes were taking place in family life. In particular, many families were no longer 'conventional' in the sense that the husband is the sole breadwinner. He accepted that women were increasingly making a contribution to household finances by taking paid employment outside the home.

However, he argued that, although 58 per cent of wives, according to his figures, worked, often they only did so for part of their married lives, and frequently on a part-time basis. Many gave up work for the period when their children were young; a minority of married mothers (49 per cent) were employed,

and only 14 per cent of working married mothers had full-time jobs. Because of such figures he argued that ‘The pattern is of married women withdrawing from the labour force to become mothers, and some of them taking (mostly part-time) work as their children mature.’

Although he recognized that this was an important change in family life compared to the past, he did not see it as a fundamental alteration in the family. He called this new family form – in which wives have some involvement in the labour market – the neo-conventional family. It was little different from the conventional family apart from the increasing numbers of wives working for at least part of their married lives.

Family diversity – conclusion

While Chester makes an important point in stressing that nuclear families remained very common and feature in most people’s lives, he perhaps overstated his case. Empirical evidence suggests that there has been a continuing reduction in the proportion of people living in parents-and-children households, from 59 per cent in 1981 to 49 per cent in 1998. The percentages of people living alone or in lone-parent households have increased. Thus, since Chester was writing, there has been a slow but steady drift away from living in nuclear families in Britain.

In 1990, the position was summed up by Kathleen Kiernan and Malcolm Wicks who said that ‘Although still the most prominent form, the nuclear family is for increasing numbers of individuals only one of several possible family types that they experience during their lives’. Similarly, in 1999, Elizabeth Silva and Carol Smart argue that fairly traditional family forms remain important. They note that:

in 1996, 73 per cent of households were composed of heterosexual couples (with just under 90 per cent of these being married), 50 per cent of these households had children, and 40 per cent had dependent children.... only 9 per cent of households with dependent children were headed by lone parents.

Silva and Smart, 1999

Nevertheless, they argue that ‘personal choices appear as increasingly autonomous and fluid’. The idea that family diversity indicates a new era of choice was first advanced by Rapoport in 1982. They argued that it was increasingly acceptable to form alternative households and families to conventional nuclear ones. They said:

Families in Britain today are in a transition from coping in a society in which there was a single overriding norm of what family life should be like to a society in which a plurality of norms are recognized as legitimate, indeed, desirable.

Rapoport and Rapoport, 1982

The passage of time does not seem to have made their argument less valid. Indeed, a growing number of sociologists have tried to link ideas of choice and diversity with their particular views on modernity and postmodernity. These views will be examined later.

Dear Candidate, having surveyed the ways in which the structure of the family may have changed over years, we will now investigate whether the functions of the family have also changed.

The changing functions of the family

Many sociologists argue that the family has lost a numbers of its functions in modern industrial society. Institutions such as businesses, political parties, schools, and welfare organizations now specialize in functions formerly performed by the family. Talcott Parsons argued that the family has become:

on the 'macroscopic' levels, almost completely functionless. It does not itself, except here and there, engage in much economic production; it is not a significant unit in the political power system; it is not a major direct agency of integration of the larger society. Its individual members participate in all these functions, but they do so as individuals, not in their roles as family members.

Parsons, 1955

However, this does not mean that the family is declining in importance – it has simply become more specialized. Parsons maintained that its role is still vital. By structuring the personalities of the young and stabilizing the personalities of adults, the family provides its members with the psychological training and support necessary to meet the requirements of the social system. Parsons concluded that, 'the family is more specialized than before, but not in any general sense less important, because society is dependent more exclusively on it for the performance of certain of its vital functions'. Thus the loss of certain functions by the family has made its remaining functions more important.

This view is supported by N. Dennis (1975) who argues that impersonal bureaucratic agencies have taken over many of the family's functions. As a result, the warmth and close supportive relationships which existed when the family performed a large range of functions have largely disappeared. Dennis argues that in the impersonal setting of modern industrial society, the family provides the only opportunity 'to participate in a relationship where people are perceived and valued as whole persons'. Outside the family, individuals must often interact with strangers in terms of a number of roles. Adopting roles such as employee, customer, teacher and student, they are unable to express many aspects of themselves or develop deep and supportive relationships. Dennis argues that:

'marriage has become the only institution in which the individual can expect esteem and love. Adults have no one on whom they have the right to lean for this sort of support at all comparable with their right to lean on their spouse'.

Young and Willmott (1973) make a similar point arguing that the emotional support provided by family relationships grows in importance as the family loses many of its functions. They claim that the family:

*can provide some sense of wholeness and permanence
to set against the more restricted and transitory roles
imposed by the specialized institutions which have flourished
outside the home. The upshot is that, as the disadvantages of the new
industrial and impersonal societies have become more pronounced,
so the family has become more prized for its power to counteract them.*

The maintenance and improvement of functions

Not all sociologists would agree, however, that the family has lost many of its functions in modern industrial society. Ronald Fletcher, a British sociologist and a staunch supporter of the family, maintained that just the opposite has happened. In *The Family and Marriage in Britain* (1966), Fletcher argued that not only has the family retained its functions but those functions have ‘increased in detail and importance’. Specialized institutions such as schools and hospitals have added to and improved the family’s functions, rather than superseded them.

1. Fletcher maintained that the family’s responsibility for socializing the young is as important as it ever was. State education has added to, rather than removed, this responsibility since ‘Parents are expected to do their best to guide, encourage and support their children in their educational and occupational choices and careers’.
2. In the same way, the state has not removed the family’s responsibility for the physical welfare of its members. Fletcher argued that, ‘The family is still centrally concerned with maintaining the health of its members, but it is now aided by wider provisions which have been added to the family’s situation since pre-industrial times’.

Rather than removing this function from the family, state provision of health services has served to expand and improve it. Compared to the past, parents are preoccupied with their children’s health. State health and welfare provision has provided additional support for the family and made its members more aware of the importance of health and hygiene in the home.

3. Even though Fletcher admitted that the family has largely lost its function as a unit of production, he argues that it still maintains a vital economic function as a unit of consumption. Particularly in the case of the modern home-centered family, money is spent on, and in the name of, the family rather than the individual. Thus the modern family demands fitted carpets, three-piece suits, washing machines, television sets and 'family' cars.

Young and Willmott make a similar point with respect to their symmetrical Stage 3 family. They argue that, 'In its capacity as a consumer the family has also made a crucial alliance with technology'. Industry needs both a market for its goods and a motivated workforce. The symmetrical family provides both. Workers are motivated to work by their desire for consumer durables. This desire stems from the high value they place on the family and a privatized lifestyle in the family home. This provides a ready market for the products of industry.

In this way the family performs an important economic function and is functionally related to the economic system. In Young and Willmott's words, 'The family and technology have achieved a mutual adaptation'.

Neo-Marxist views

This economic function looks rather different from a neo-Marxist perspective. Writers such as Marcuse (1972) and Gorz (1965) argue that alienation at work leads to a search for fulfillment outside work. However, the capitalist controlled mass media, with its advertisements that proclaim the virtues of family life and associate the products of industry with those virtues, simply creates 'false needs'. With pictures of the 'Persil mum' and the happy family in the midst of its consumer durables, the myth that material possessions bring happiness and fulfillment is promoted. This myth produces the obedient, motivated worker and the receptive consumer that capitalism requires. The family man or woman is therefore ideal material for exploitation.

Feminism and economic functions

Feminist writers have tended to disagree with the view shared by many sociologists of the family that the family has lost its economic role as a unit of production and has become simply a unit of consumption. They tend to argue that much of the work that takes place in the family is productive but it is not recognized as such because it is unpaid and it is usually done by women. The contribution to economic life made by women is frequently underestimated.

The radical feminists Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard (1992) accept that industrialization created new units of production such as factories, but deny that it removed the productive function from the family. Some productive functions have been lost, but others are performed to a much higher standard than in the past. They cite as examples 'warm and tidy rooms with attention to décor, and more complex meals with a variety of forms of cooking'. The family has taken on some new productive functions, such as giving pre-school reading tuition to children, and functions such as washing clothes and freezing food have been reintroduced to the household with the advent of new consumer products. They also point out that there are still a fair number of families which continue to act as an economic unit producing goods for the market. French farming families, which have been studied by Christine Delphy, are a case in point.

Summary and conclusions

In summary, most sociologists who adopt a functionalist perspective argue that the family has lost several of its functions in modern industrial society but they maintain that the importance of the family has not declined. Rather, the family has adapted and is adapting to a developing industrial society. It remains a vital and basic institution in society.

Others dispute the claim that some of these functions have been lost, or argue that new functions have replaced the old ones. From all these viewpoints the family remains a key institution.

All the writers examined here have a tendency to think in terms of 'the family' without differentiating between different types of family. They may not, therefore, appreciate the range of effects family life can have or the range of functions it may perform. Postmodernists and difference feminists certainly reject the view that there is any single type of family which always performs certain functions.

The writers discussed also tend to assume that families reproduce the existing social structure, whether this is seen as a functioning mechanism, an exploitative capitalist system, or as a patriarchal society. Yet families are not necessarily supportive of or instrumental in reproducing existing societies. With increasing family diversity, some individual families and even some types of family may be radical forces in society. For example, gay and lesbian families sometimes see themselves as challenging the inegalitarian relationships in heterosexual families.

Short Note

Women's Movements

The status of women has been the central concern of many reform movements before and after independence. Leaders of the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj were concerned with issues like sati, remarriage, divorce, female education, purdah system, polygamy, and dowry. Justice Ranade criticised child marriage, polygyny, restrictions on remarriage of widows, and non-access to education. Raja Ram Mohan Roy played an important role in getting the sati system abolished. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahrishi Karve pleaded for remarriage of widows. Gandhiji took interest in collective mobilisation of women to fight for political freedom as well as for their social and political rights. It may be said that women's participation in movements has been in four major forms: (i) for social, economic and political rights of specific categories of people like tribals, peasants and industrial workers, (ii) for improvement in conditions of work and autonomy to women, (iii) for equal remuneration for work, (iv) in general social movements on issues affecting men and children like abortions, adoption of children, sexual exploitation, etc.

The liberal egalitarian ideology under the British Raj created conditions for a social awakening among Indian women. Several women's associations came into existence both at regional and national levels. Banga Mahila Samaj and the Ladies Theosophical Society functioned at local levels to promote modern ideals for women. The important national organisations were: Bharat Mahila Parishad (1904), Bharat Stri Mahamandal (1909), Women's Indian Association (1917) National Council of Women in India (1925), and All India Women's Conference (1927) and Kastruba Gandhi National Memorial Trust. These organisations took up issues like women's education, abolition of evil social customs (purdah, child marriage), equality of rights and opportunities and women's suffrage. Some women leaders with the support of the Congress party, demanded right of franchise and representation in legislatures. It could be said that Indian women's movements worked for two goals: one, liberation or uplift of women, i.e., reforming social practices so as to enable women to play a more important and constructive role in society; and two, equal rights for men and women, i.e., extension of civil rights enjoyed by men in the political, economic and familial spheres to women also. **Jana Everett** (1979) calls the former as 'corporate feminism' and the latter as 'liberal feminism'. The strategies used by women's bodies were: making demands by organising public meetings, presenting views to government officials, forming committees to investigate conditions and holding conferences to mobilise women.

The factors that provided the required incentive to women's movement were: effect of western education on the male domination on women and on the concept of complementary sex roles, leadership provided by educated elite women, interest of male social reformers in changing social practices sanctioned by religion, changing socio-religious attitudes and philosophies, and decreasing social hostility and opposition of males to women's associations engaged in self-help activities, and benevolent attitude of political national leaders towards fledgling women's movements and their enthusiastic support to women campaigns. The declaring of 1975-85 decade as the International Women's decade also gave impetus to women's movements for removing the notion of inferiority of women and giving them a sense of identity.

Please also refer the following handouts:

Handout: Ch-6 Women's Movements

Book: *Social Movements in India* by Ghanshyam Shah

Handout: Ch-12 Taking Stock: Women's Movement and the State (Lakshmi Lingam) Book: *Social Movements and the State* by Ghanshyam Shah

Handout: IGNOU (MPSE007): Women's Movements

Feminism

The term ‘feminism’ refers to an intense awareness of identity as a woman and interest in feminine problems. Feminist movement aims at understanding the power structures in the society, male domination, social practices and social institutions, which are instrumental in assigning a marginalized position to women. Feminist theory aims at devising strategies to transform the social structures, which can help in women’s emancipation.

Women have been fighting for equality for well over 100 years now. The history of this struggle is often described as in the context of waves. The following is a very brief sense of the key elements in these waves of activism:

First Wave Feminism (1860s to 1920s) – Liberal Feminism

First wave feminism refers to a period of feminist activity during the 19th and early 20th century in the UK, Canada, Netherlands and USA. It emerged out of an environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. The wave formally began at the Seneca Falls Convention (New York) in 1848 when 300 men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women. It focused on *de jure* (as per law; legal) inequalities. It primarily emphasized on gaining political and legal rights such as women’s right to vote and property rights.

Mary Wollstonecraft is regarded as the ‘Mother of British Feminism’, and her ideas largely shaped the thinking of first wave feminists. In her work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) she advocated the social and moral equality of the sexes. The majority of the first wave feminists were more moderate and conservative than radical or revolutionary.

Second Wave Feminism (1960s to 1990s) – Socialist-Marxist Feminism

The second wave feminism began in 1960s and continued into 1990s. This wave unfolded in the context of the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movement and the growing self conscious of a variety of minority groups around the world. Since the resurgence of feminism in the late 1960s and 1970s, Marxism provided a framework for major theoretical debates.

The New-Left was on the rise and the voice of the second wave was increasingly radical. Second wave feminists focused on broad range of issues including discrimination in work place and in broader society. In this phase sexuality and reproductive rights were dominant issues. Their main objective was to have women’s control over their bodies especially the right to abortion. The

fight for reproductive choices included a fight to have information about, and access to, birth control as well as the struggle to decriminalize abortion. The other issues included – removal of sexual division of labour and equal co-operation of men in bringing up of children, demands of the rights of lesbians to raise children, affirmative action, pay equity, domestic violence, sexual harassment, pornography and sexism in the media.

This phase began with protests against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City in 1968 and 1969. Feminists parodied or disapproved what they held to be degrading ‘cattle parade’ that reduced women to objects of beauty, dominated by a patriarchy that sought to keep them in the home or in dull, low paying jobs. Feminists founded several women only organizations such as National Organization for Women (NOW) and various consciousness raising groups to advocate their ideology.

The second wave was increasingly theoretical, based on a fusion of neo-Marxism and psycho-analytic theory and began to associate the subjugation of women with broader critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative sexuality and the women’s role as wife and mother. Sex and gender were differentiated, the former being biological and the latter being a social construct that varies from culture to culture and over time.

Second wave of feminism saw a more radical edge in feminist movement, than was present in theories of earlier period. Radical feminists not only demanded equal rights but asserted superiority of women over men. Instead of a redistribution of rights and resources, they proposed a ‘revolutionary political shake up of society’. They considered sexist subordination of women as the fundamental form of oppression. They argued that the concept of family was a central means of oppression through ‘sexual slavery and forced motherhood’.

Third Wave Feminism (1990s to present)

The third phase of feminism began in mid-1990s and is informed by post-colonial and post-modern thinking. The third wave feminism is a term identified with several diverse strings of feminist activity and study. The movement arose as a response to the perceived failures and backlash against initiatives and the movement created by second wave of feminism during 1960s to 1980s and the realization that women are of many colours, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural background. The third wave embraces diversity and change. In this wave, there is no all-encompassing single feminist idea. In this phase, many constructs have been destabilized, including the notions of “universal womanhood”, body,

gender and sexuality. The movement of third wave feminism focuses less on laws and political processes and more on individual identity.

Where feminism will go from here is unclear, but the point is that feminism, by whatever name, is alive and well established both in academia and outside of it.

Household Dimension of Family

As seen earlier studies on family are marked by the lack of uniform operational definitions of the concepts of 'joint', 'extended' and 'nuclear' family. Sociologists, in particular A.M. Shah and Pauline Kolenda, have contributed significantly to clarifying the conceptual issues related to assessment of trends in the composition of the Indian families.

A.M. Shah in his famous work *The Household Dimension of Family in India* emphasizes the field work approach in the study of family instead of the Indological or legal approach that had earlier prevailed. Please note that the Indological approach described the Hindu Joint Family in terms of coparcenership and ritual corporateness. Instead of the vague and imprecise term 'family', Shah emphasizes on the study of the household dimension of the family.

Shah describes household as a strictly commensal (eat together) and co-resident group. Hence the question 'Is the joint family disintegrating?' is rephrased as 'Is the joint household disintegrating?' For Shah, 'family' is a concept and 'household' is an empirically experienced entity.

Several household classification schemes has been devised by sociologists to enable them to capture with great precision the multiple forms of household composition and the dynamics of household change in India. Of these, the twelve-type classificatory scheme proposed by Pauline Kolenda in her comparative study of the Indian family are most popular. These are:

- i. Nuclear Family – a couple with or without unmarried children
- ii. Supplemented Nuclear Family – Nuclear family with unmarried or separated or widowed relative/relatives of the parents other than their children
- iii. Sub-Nuclear Family – it is defined as a fragment of the former nuclear family. For example, a widow or widower with his or her children or siblings
- iv. Single Person Household
- v. Supplemented Sub-Nuclear Family – Sub-Nuclear Family with living with unmarried or separated or widowed relative/relatives of the parents without their children
- vi. Collateral Joint Family – comprised of two or more married couples between whom there is a sibling bond
- vii. Supplemented Collateral Joint Family – it is a collateral joint family along with unmarried, divorced and widowed relative/relatives

- viii. Lineal Joint Family – consists of two couples between whom there is a lineal link like in case of parents staying with their married son or daughter
- ix. Supplemented Lineal Joint Family – Lineal Joint Family along with unmarried, divorced and widowed relative/relatives
- x. Lineal Collateral Joint Family – consists of three or more couples linked lineally and collaterally. For example, family consisting of parents with their two or more married children along with their unmarried children
- xi. Supplemented Lineal Collateral Joint Family – consists of the members of a lineal collateral joint family along with unmarried, divorced and widowed relative/relatives
- xii. Residual Class

This classification is useful in understanding the continuum between variations of joint and nuclear family forms over a life cycle.

Observations and Trends:

1. The joint household is rarely the statistically predominant form of household; nuclear households are usually more numerous. However, even with the majority of households being nuclear in compositions, the majority of persons in a population might still reside in joint or supplemented nuclear families.
2. Overall the proportion of joint over nuclear households does not appear to be decreasing. The average size of the household has actually been increasing over the last century and a half. As indicated by the studies of Shah and Orenstein various factors can be cited for this: increase in population, increase in longevity or life expectancy, greater pressure on land and housing, the preponderant rule of patri(viri)local residence, the absence of state-run social services, etc.
3. Despite the predominance of nuclear households, many people would experience living in several different type of households. Households, like individuals, have a 'life-cycle' of development with trajectories of household expansion, fission and replacement, and it is also influenced by wider socio-economic forces, for example, urbanization. This is the phenomenon that anthropologists have termed '**the developmental cycle of the domestic group**'.

4. A 'stem family' form (of parents residing with a married child), structurally if not developmentally similar to the classic pattern of Europe or Japan, may be an emerging pattern of family organization and an important social mechanism for care of the elderly.
5. Rural households on average tend to be larger than urban households (5.59 to 5.33 members respectively in 1991 as per the study conducted by Shah). Parallely, joint households are more numerous in rural than urban areas. However, it would be premature to accept these findings as supporting the proposition that urbanization leads to nuclearization, at least not without a careful monitoring of longitudinal trends. Such composite figures may only conceal the complexity and heterogeneity of the processes involved. For instance, India has a long history of urbanism and probably a relatively higher proportion of persons in the old cities live in joint households. On the other hand, while new migrants to the town and cities may come initially as individual workers and then establish nuclear families, the passage of time combined with the governing principles of household formation and the pressures of urban living may well encourage the development of joint households in due course. Similarly, while the life styles and occupational mobility of the professional middle classes may discourage joint-household living, another section of the urban middle class (for instance those engaged in business enterprise) may prefer to maintain joint households along with their joint business and property interests as highlighted by M.S. Gore's study (1968) of families of the Aggarwal business community in and around Delhi.
6. There appear to be significant regional differences in the prevalence of joint households. Pauline Kolenda has shown that the joint household is the strongest through a contiguous belt across north India, and weakest in south India. A detailed analysis of the Census 2011 data shows that 27 per cent of the households in Uttar Pradesh still had two or more married couples living together — far more than the national average of 18 per cent for such families. In Rajasthan, 25 per cent of the households were found to be joint families, while in Haryana the corresponding figure was 24.6 per cent, Punjab 23.9 per cent, Gujarat 22.9 per cent, Bihar and Jharkhand 20.9 per cent and Himachal Pradesh 20 per cent. In contrast, in south India, in Andhra Pradesh only 10.7 per cent of the households were joint families, in

Tamil Nadu 11.2 per cent, in Pondicherry 11.4 per cent, in Karnataka 16.2 per cent and Kerala 16.6 per cent. In sum, Kolenda's work suggested that regional patterns may be more consistent than some of the other factors that have been hypothesized to correlate with preference for joint or nuclear households, for instance caste status or landownership.

7. Notwithstanding nuclear household residence, there is strong and generalized commitment to joint-family values and norms of kinship behaviour (study by I.P. Desai, 1964).

While the work of Kolenda, Shah, and others have succeeded in nailing the myth of the ongoing 'disintegration' of the Indian joint household, an enormous amount of research still remains to be done to chart the dynamics of the household life cycle and the complex processes of family change in the South Asian Region. Privileging the concept of household over that of family has no doubt introduced a scholarly discussion on the Indian family and has enabled more rigorous comparative studies of household across cultures and over time.

UPSC: Previous Years' Questions

Paper I	Topic 5. Gender
Paper I	Topic 9. Systems of Kinship
Paper II	B. (v) Systems of Kinship in India.
	C. (v). (b) Women's movement
	C. (vii). (c) Violence against women

Q. What is kinship? Briefly explain G. P. Murdock's contribution to the study of the kinship system. (2025/10)

Q. In what way does queer kinship challenge the traditional kinship system? Substantiate by giving illustrations. (2025/10)

Q. What do you understand by gender-based domestic division of labour? Is it undergoing a change in the wake of increasing participation of women in formal employment? Clarify your answer with illustrations. (2025/20)

Q. Give an account of the recent trends of marriage in the Indian context. How are these different from traditional practices? (2025/20)

Q. To what extent have the legal provisions been effective in curbing violence against women in India? Give your argument. (2024/20)

Q. Why is the study of marriage important in Sociology? Analyse the implications of changing marriage patterns for Indian society. (2024/20)

Q. Is patriarchy a key to understanding different forms of inequalities in Indian society? Elaborate. (2024/10)

Q. Do you think that family bondings are being affected by the changing kinship patterns in India? Comment. (2024/10)

Q. Modern families have not just become nuclear and neo-local, but also filiocentric. How do you explain this trend? (2024/20)

Q. What are the 'basic and irreducible' functions of the family as proposed by Talcott Parsons? Explain. (2024/10)

Q. Marriage as an institution has undergone a radical transformation from 'ritual' to 'commercial' in its outlook. Explain the factors behind this change. (2024/10)

Q. Explain the thematic linkages between 'Patriarchy' and 'Honour killing' in India, citing some recent cases. (2023/20)

Q. Discuss the nature of regional variations in sex-ratio in India, stating reasons thereof. (2023/10)

----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

- Q. Define the concepts of 'Descent' and 'Alliance'. Differentiate between North Indian and South Indian Kinship systems with examples. (2023/20)
- Q. Analyse the role of market and modern forces in understanding the changing trends in marriage systems in India. (2023/10)
- Q. How do you assess the changing patterns in kinship relations in societies today? (2023/20)
- Q. Analyze critically David Morgan's views on family practices. (2023/10)
- Q. Does women's education help to eradicate patriarchal discriminations? Reflect with illustrations (2023/10)
- Q. Discuss law as an important instrument for women's empowerment. (2022/10)
- Q. Discuss the material basis of patriarchy as an ideological system. (2022/20)
- Q. Explain Leela Dube's concept of "Seed and Earth". (2022/10)
- Q. How do you understand the relationship between patriarchy and social development? (2022/10)
- Q. Discuss various theoretical perspectives on the family. (2022/10)
- Q. How do sociologists construct gender in their analysis on social inequality? (2022/10)
- Q. Urban settlements in India tend to replicate its caste-kinship imprints. Discuss the main reasons. (2021/20)
- Q. Does "economic empowerment" automatically bring about "substantive empowerment" for women? Briefly describe the main issues in women empowerment in India? (2021/10)
- Q. Discuss the changing dimensions of family structure in urban India. (2021/10)
- Q. Discuss different forms of kinship system in India. (2021/10)
- Q. Discuss the changing nature of kinship relations in the contemporary world. (2021/20)
- Q. Explain how the pattern of patriarchy is being altered in a family and at the workplace in the present context. (2021/20)
- Q. Analyze household dimensions of family in India. (2020/20)
- Q. Discuss the conceptual issues about lineage and descent in India. Give suitable illustrations. (2020/20)
- Q. What is the impact of gender division of labour on the development of society? (2020/20)
- Q. Does the institution of marriage continue to be sacred in Indian society? Comment. (2020/10)
- Q. Discuss the consequences of Across Region marriage on kinship system in modern Indian society. (2020/10)

----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

Q. In the light of judicial intervention on 'Live-in relationships', discuss the future of marriage and family in India. (2019/20)

Q. Why is gender a dimension of social stratification? How does gender intersect other dimensions of inequality based on caste, class, race and ethnicity? (2019/20)

Q. Feminist scholars argue that 'New media' is masculine and hence reinforces structural hierarchies rather than reconfiguring them. Comment. (2019/20)

Q. What, according to Irawati Karve, are the major difference between North Indian and South Indian Kinship system? (2019/10)

Q. What is 'reserve army of labour'? Present the position of feminist scholars on this. (2019/10)

Q. What is POSH Act? "Identification of tormentor by women at workplace does not come easily even today". Examine the statement with substantive examples from India. (2019/20)

Q. What do you understand by LGBTQ? Comment on the issues concerning their marriage rights. (2019/10)

Q. Define patriarchy. Does it have bearings on women's entitlement in Indian family system? Explain. (2019/20)

Q. Define patriarchy. How does patriarchy manifest in interpersonal relations? (2018/20)

Q. Distinguish between family and household with reference to the concept of development of the household. (2018/20)

Q. What are the new forms of families in developed societies? Discuss. (2018/10)

Q. Write a note on the changing roles of middle-class women in India. (2018/10)

Q. Assess the impact of ban on 'Triple Talak' on marriage and divorce among the Muslim community in India. (2018/10)

Q. Western patriarchy which surrenders feminine principles is the development project in India. Do you agree with this view? Why? (2018/20)

Q. Elaborate the 'Me Too' Movement and its impact in India. (2018/10)

Q. Construct a sociological narrative on the increasing trend of child abuse in India. (2018/10)

Q. Discuss the issues relating to the entitlement of transgender in Indian society. (2018/10)

Q. Illustrate the importance of 'Kanyadan' and 'Kulabadhu' in changing institution of marriage and family. (2018/10)

Q. Examine the 'patriarchal bargain' as gendered division of work in contemporary India. (2017/10)

----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

Q. Clarify the distinction between 'household' and 'family' and evaluate whether joint families have completely disintegrated. (2017/20)

Q. Compare the North Indian Kinship System with the South Indian Kinship System. (2017/10)

Q. What are the reasons for the escalation of violence against women in the public domain? (2017/10)

Q. Examine the relationship between the contemporary trends in marriage and changing forms of family. (2017/20)

Q. Discuss the regional variations of kinship system in Indian society. (2017/20)

Q. Despite gains from the women's movement and state policy of women empowerment, gender equality is far from achieved. Identify two major challenges that prevent this goal from being reached. (2017/20)

Q. To what extent is patriarchy a cause for the problems of women? Discuss. (2016/10)

Q. Discuss the contemporary trends in family as a response to social change in modern society. (2016/20)

Q. Distinguish between family and household as sociological concepts. (2016/10)

Q. Patriarchy as a form of dominance. (2016/10)

Q. Bring out the significance of the difference between family and household. (2016/20)

Q. Comment on the factors behind the changing status of women in urban India? (2016/20)

Q. Examine the impact of industrialization and urbanization on family structure. (2016/20)

Q. Differential sex-ratio and its implications (2016/10)

Q. How serious is the problem of trafficking against women and children in India? (2015/10)

Q. Why is it necessary to implement PCPNDT Act in India? (2015/10)

Q. What is patriarchy? How does it affect the child socialization pattern in India? (2015/20)

Q. Broadly compare the kinship system of North and South India. (2015/10)

Q. Write short note with a sociological perspective (in about 150 words):
Feminization of poverty (2015/10)

Q. Give some of the important studies relating to the structural changes in the Indian family system. (2015/20)

Q. How do the rules of descent and alliance in kinship differ from each other? Illustrate. (2015/10)

----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

- Q. Define Patriarchy. How does it impact the overall entitlement of a girl child in India?
(2015/10)
- Q. Is male authority absent in matrilineal society? Discuss.
(2015/10)
- Q. To what extent the Muslim Personal Law Board is in agreement with Islamic feminist agenda?
(2015/10)
- Q. Discuss the impact of post-1970 feminist movement on Indian middle class. (2015/20)
- Q. How did the emergence of industrial society change the family life in Western Europe?
(2014/10)
- Q. What are the main features of the second wave of Women's movement in the Indian context?
(2014/20)
- Q. According to Marx, capitalism transforms even the personal relationships between men and women. Critically examine with illustrations from the contemporary Indian context.
(2014/10)
- Q. Critically examine the functionalist views on the institution of family. How do those help us in understanding family in the present times?
(2014/20)
- Q. What do you understand by institutionalization of 'live-in-relationship'?
(2014/10)
- Q. How is the increasing use of technology changing the status of women in Indian society?
(2014/20)
- Q. Write short note with a sociological perspective (in about 150 words):
Types of kinship systems in India
(2014/10)
- Q. Discuss the status of women among the emerging urban middle class.
(2014/20)
- Q. Write short note with a sociological perspective (in about 150 words):
Trends of Infant Mortality Rate among females
(2014/10)
- Q. Write short note with a sociological perspective (in about 150 words):
Domestic Violence Act, 2005
(2014/10)
- Q. What are the possible underlying causes of the spurt of increased violence against women in public spaces in the last decade?
(2014/10)
- Q. What do you understand by gender? How does it shape 'male' identity?
(2014/20)
- Q. Analyse the gender bias in the present society with examples.
(2013/10)
- Q. Is patriarchy a universal phenomenon? Critically examine how does patriarchy affects sexual division of labour in societies.
(2013/20)
- Q. Analyse the contemporary trends in family with examples.
(2013/10)
- Q. Examine the emerging trends in marriage and family as a response to the changes in economic and social order.
(2013/20)
- Q. What are the main causes of female mortality in India?
(2013/15)

----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

- Q. Discuss the problems of working women in India. (2013/20)
- Q. Describe the importance of lineage and descent in kinship and family. (2012/20)
- Q. Show how family is distinct from household. (2012/30)
- Q. Describe those social changes which have contributed to increase of violence against women. What are the emerging forms of violence against women? Suggest suitable measures to contain this problem. (2012/30)
- Q. Write short note: The problem of Gender (2011/12)
- Q. Write short note on Lineage and Descent from a sociological perspective (in about 150 words). (2011/12)
- Q. What you mean by marriage and family? Discuss the structural and functional changes in family in modern society. (2011/20)
- Q. Write short note on: Structural factors behind violence against women (2011/15)
- Q. Write short note with a sociological perspective on: Women in the I.T. sector. (2010/20)
- Q. Write short note on Kinship and Social Capital (2010/15)
- Q. Discuss the emerging forms of marriage and family with examples from the West and the East. Can there be family without marriage? Examine. (2009/60)
- Q. Write short note on Industrialization and changes in the family's functions. (2009/20)
- Q. Write short note on: New trends in the types and forms of family in contemporary India. (2008/20)
- Q. Write short note on: Changing structure of family (2007/20)
- Q. Write short note: Problem of dowry (2007/20)
- Q. Write short note: Discrimination against women (2006/20)
- Q. Write short note on: Nuclear family and industrial society (2006/20)
- Q. Elucidate changing structure of family marriage in modern society. (2005/60)
- Q. Write short note on: Role of Family in Social Control (2005/20)
- Q. Write short note on: Gender Roles in Changing Structure of Family (2004/20)
- Q. Discuss the meanings and significance of culture in Human Society. Critically bring out the role of Culture in the Development of personality. (2004/20)
- Q. Write short note: Socio-cultural factors related to foeticide. (2004/20)
- Q. Discuss in detail atrocities on women and suggest annihilative measures for them. (2004/60)

----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

- Q. Elaborate on the concepts of Family and Lineage. Discuss the relationship between Rules of descent and inheritance of property. (2003/60)
- Q. Distinguish between Sex and Gender issues with suitable examples. (2002/60)
- Q. In what way is the process of socialization helpful in the development of personality? Explain with suitable examples. (2002/60)
- Q. Write short note: Nature of atrocities on married women (2002/20)
- Q. Write short note: Incest taboo (2001/20)
- Q. Critically evaluate the existing welfare programmes for women in India. Have they benefited all sections of women in India? (2001/60)
- Q. Discuss the factors responsible for the changing structure of family in modern societies. (2000/60)
- Q. Write short note: Social correlates of prostitution (2000/20)
- Q. Write short note: Dowry as a social problem (1999/20)
- Q. Social control is more a matter of conviction than that of coercion, discuss the role of ideology in social control. (1999/60)
- Q. 'Socialization is a process by which all of us acquire the culture that we transmit to the next generation'. Elaborate the statement and discuss its various stages. (1998/60)
- Q. "Political and economic empowerment of women is necessary but not a sufficient condition for improving social status of women in India". Comment. (1998/60)
- Q. How far has education of women led to an improvement in their social status in the modern Indian society/ which other factors are related to the status of women in India? (1996/60)
- Q. Compare the role of custom as an agency of social control in primitive and modern industrial societies. (1996/60)
- Q. Write short note: Impact of changes in sex-role on family (1996/20)
- Q. What has been the impact of industrialisation on family and kinship organization? Illustrate the significance of kinship organization in the industrial societies. (1995/60)
- Q. Write short note: Primary group (1995/20)
- Q. Write short note: Role of culture (1995/20)
- Q. Explain the view that the nuclear family "fits" the needs of industrial society. Is it that the structure of nuclear family is the same in all industrial societies? (1994/60)
- Q. Give a brief account of the traditional sociological analysis of change in traditional family and kinship systems in the face of industrialisation. (1993/60)

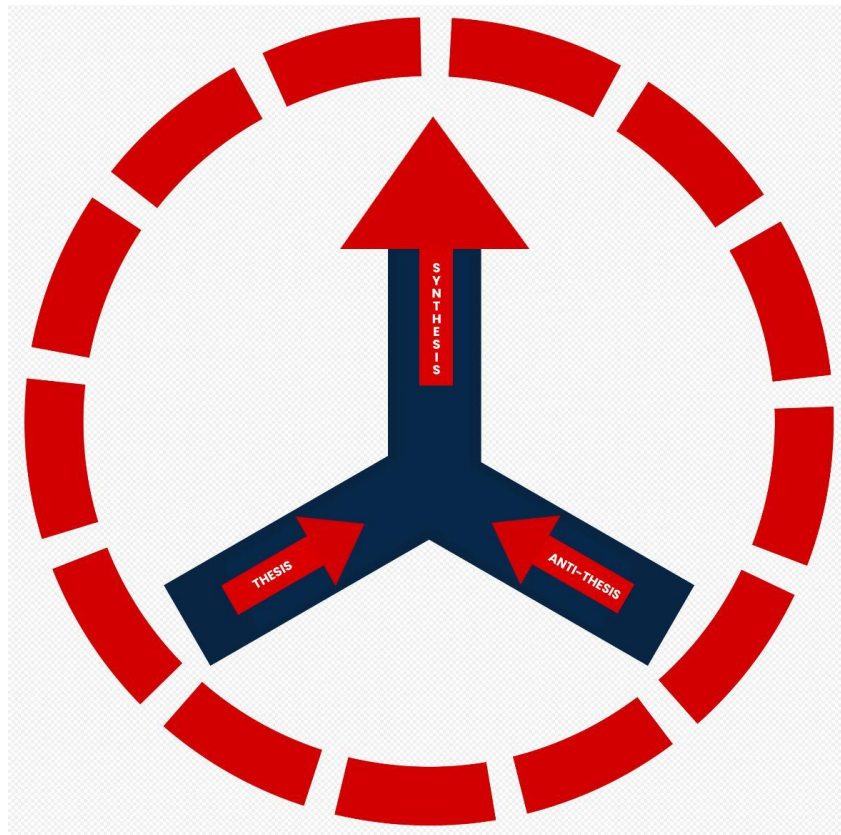
----- **Dialectics IAS (Sociology)** -----

- Q. Write short note: Muslim women and divorce (1993/20)
- Q. Bring out the relationship between culture and personality. Discuss with examples the differences in personalities in the same culture. (1993/60)
- Q. Write short note: Social consequences of increase in the rate of divorce (1992/20)
- Q. Write short note: Educational problem of rural women (1992/20)
- Q. Write short note: Common Civil Code and status of women (1991/20)
- Q. Write short note: Social control (1991/20)
- Q. Write short note: Socialization and personality (1990/60)
- Q. Analyse the socio-economic factors that continue to depress the position of women in Indian society. What steps have been taken to remedy the situation in recent years? (1989/60)
- Q. How do changes in the age and sex roles in the family affect the social structure itself? (1989/60)
- Q. Write short note: Structural principles of kinship (1988/20)
- Q. Write short note: Crimes against women (1987/20)
- Q. Discuss the changing value-orientations of women in the Indian middle class families. (1986/60)
- Q. Write short note: Divorce among the Muslims (1985/20)
- Q. How does culture influence personality? Can personality influence culture? How? (1985/60)
- Q. What are the agencies of social control? Which is the most effective one in a democratic society? (1985/60)
- Q. Analyse scientific theory of culture. Will the crisis in culture in the contemporary society facilitate the emergence of new man? (1984/60)
- Q. Discuss family as a basic and fundamental social institution. Do you think changing sex roles necessitate the replacement of family by another institution? (1984/60)
- Q. Write short note: Change in sex roles and the socialisation of children of children. (1984/20)
- Q. Write short note: The changing status of women (1984/20)

Online Module I: 15 August 2026

Test Series Batches (Online): June, October and January

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