

Unit 1

Families & Households



Topic One
"Couples"

Key Questions

Sociologists are interested in how far couples have a more equal relationship nowadays.

Questions to explore are:

1. Do men and women share housework and childcare equally ?
2. Do men and women have an equal say in family decisions and do they get equal shares of household income ?

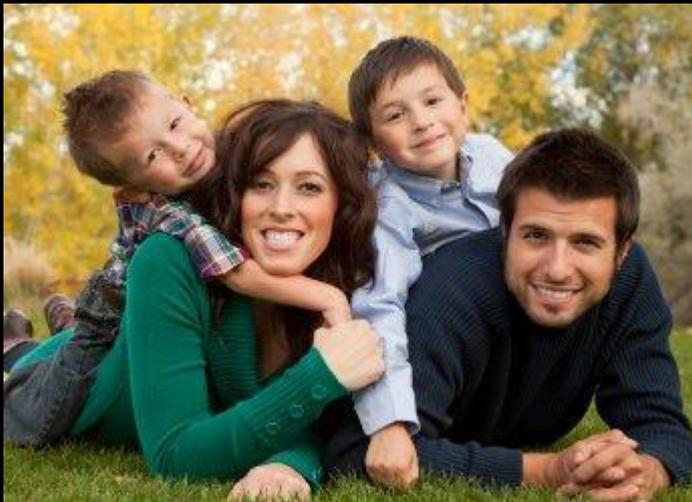
Identify the family type

1



2

3



4

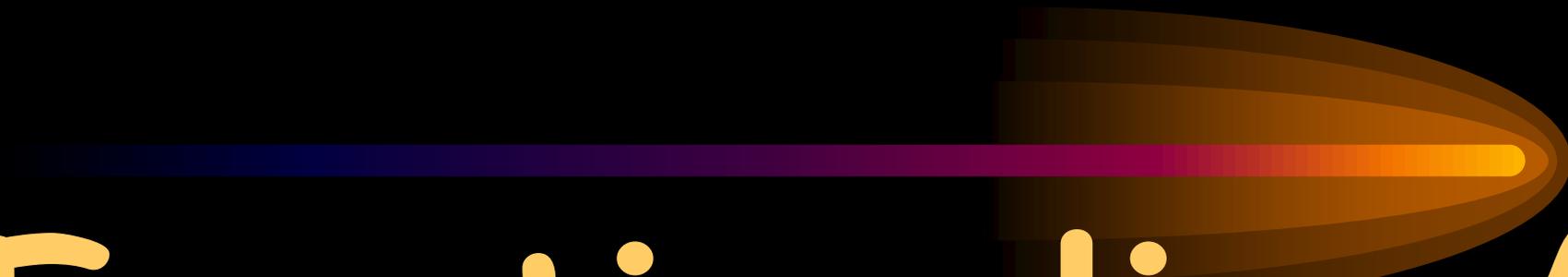
Couples

- In the 19th century the Victorian family was very **PATRIARCHAL**:
 - **The Man is the head of household**, women's property became her husbands
- Grounds for divorce very unequal - man could gain a divorce on the grounds of his wife's adultery.
- However, woman had to "prove" an offence **AS WELL AS** adultery

The Domestic Division of Labour



- Roles that men and women play in relation to housework, childcare and paid work
- Sociologists are interested in who does what and whether this is equal ?



Functionalism/
March of
progress

Parsons - Instrumental and Expressive Roles

- Traditional **nuclear family** - roles of the husband and wife are segregated - separate and distinct from one another
 - Husband- **instrumental role** - success at work to provide financially for the family
 - Wife- **expressive role** - primary socialisation of children and meeting family's emotional needs - full time housewife rather than wage earner
- According to Parsons this is based on **BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE** -
- Benefits both sexes, the children and wider society

Criticisms



- Young and Wilmott argue that men are now taking a greater share of domestic tasks and more wives are becoming wage earners
- Feminists reject the division of labour is natural. They argue that it only benefits men.

Joint & Segregated Conjugal Roles



- Conjugal roles - are the roles of husband and wife in marriage
- Bott (1957) distinguishes between two types:
 - **SEGREGATED** - where the couple have separate roles and leisure activities also. Eg. Nuclear family. Male - Breadwinner, Female - homemaker.
 - **JOINT** - share tasks such as housework and childcare and spend leisure time together

Joint & Segregated Conjugal Roles

Young and Wilmott

- Identified a pattern of SEGREGATED conjugal roles in traditional working families in east London in 1950s.
- Men were breadwinners (working in the docks), played little part in home life and spent leisure time with workmates in pubs and working mens' clubs.
- Women were full time housewives an responsible solely for childcare, helped by female relatives. Their leisure time was limited.

The Symmetrical Family

- Young and Wilmott (1973) take a "march of progress" view
- They see Family life as gradually improving for all its members becoming more equal and democratic
- Long term trend away from SEGREGATED roles to joint roles in a SYMMETRICAL FAMILY

The Symmetrical Family

- Roles, whilst not identical, are much more similar
 - Women now go out to work - although this might be part time
 - Men now help with housework and childcare
 - Couples now spend leisure time together instead of separate - home centred and privatised
- In London more common among younger couples, those who were geographically and socially isolated, and the better off

Rise of the Symmetrical Family

- This is due to social changes :-
 - **Changes in women's position** - married women going to work
 - **Geographical mobility** - couples moving away from the communities in which they grew up
 - **New technology** - and labour saving devices
 - **Higher standards of living**
- Factors are Interlinked - married women bring in a second wage, this raises standards of living. Home becomes more attractive and encourages the man to spend time at home. Housework is split and the couple can afford more labour saving devices.



Feminism

A Feminist View of Housework

- Feminists reject the march of progress view
- They argue little has changed - women still do housework - family and society are **PATRIARCHAL**
- Women are subordinate and dependent in family as well as society.
- Oakley (1974) criticises Young and Willmotts' view, She said evidence of male help with childcare might be minimal (occasional making breakfast)
 - Help yes but symmetry no - 15% did more housework than wife, 25% did more childcare than wife - then childcare might be the "take them off hands" play etc

Other Feminist Research

- Boulton (1983) found that fewer than 20% of husbands played major roles in childcare. Young and Willmotts have exaggerated men's contribution looking at the tasks involved rather than responsibilities (men may do specific task, women always responsible for child security).
- Warde and Herrington (1993) sex-typing of domestic tasks remains (women 30 times likely to have done the washing up, men 4 times likely to wash car)

Other Feminist Research

- Is a change in attitudes though - 60% of men do more than fathers had done, 75% of women do less than mothers (Future Foundation 2000)
- However, car maintenance and DIY are only chores men do more on. Men have an extra half hour free time per day than women. Clear that women still do more on domestic labour.

Oakley - The Rise of the Housewife Role

- Oakley describes how the housewife role has become the dominant role for married women.
- Industrialisation and rise of factory production led to separation of paid work from home.
- Women became confined to home and this meant they became dependent on male breadwinner.
- Even with increase in women working Oakley believes housewife is still primary role - also jobs that are extension of role eg nurse, secretary, childcare etc.

The Impact of Paid Work

- Today 3/4 of married or cohabitating women in the UK are economically active, fewer than $\frac{1}{2}$ in 1971
- Has this led to more equal division of labour and "new man" or is it now a "dual burden" for women
- Kan (2001) found that better paid, younger and better educated women did less housework.
 - E.g. for every £10,000 increase in the womans annual income reduces her weekly housework time by 2 hours.

Gershuny - The Trend Towards Equality

- Full time work leads to more equal division of labour.
- Gradual change in values and parental role models, adapting to the fact that women are now working F-T.
- Men doing more now but still on different tasks (DIY, Gardening and Pet care)

The Commercialisation of Housework

- Silver (1987) and Schor (1993) identify two important developments
 - **Housework has become commercialised** - goods and services are now mass produced to help - freezers, microwaves, fast food, ready meals etc. to reduce domestic labour.
 - **Women working** - means they can afford these goods and services
- Based on the above, Schor argues "the death of the housewife role"

The Dual Burden

- Feminists argue that despite women working there is little evidence of a "new man" who does equal share of domestic work
- Now women have DUAL burden of paid work and unpaid housework.
 - Feminist view: Men benefit from women's earnings and their domestic labour.
- Even when man is unemployed Morris (1990) found men saw domestic work as women's work and avoided it

Now the Triple Shift

- Seen as "Labour Love" - Work that involves managing own and others emotions, suit for women.
- Morgan - applies to family - eg looking after a sick child - more likely to be mum
- Duncombe and Marsden (1995) argue a third element to add to dual burden so that it becomes a TRIPLE SHIFT - paid work, housework AND emotion work.

GENDER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE 1960s

- Young and Willmott (1973) argued that the 'symmetrical family' was now typical in Britain and conjugal roles were more shared
- Young and Willmott (1973) also found that financial decisions were shared more equally
- Pahl (1989) found that compared with 30 years ago, more couples shared financial household income decisions
- Gatrell (2008) found that many fathers in dual-earning couples today play a bigger role in their children's' lives compared with those of the past
- Reasons for these changes can include: Rise of feminism, availability of effective contraception, women's increased participation in full-time paid employment and the increase in home-based leisure activities.

GENDER ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN FAMILIES HAVE NOT CHANGED MARKEDLY SINCE THE 1960s

- Feminists reject the idea of symmetry. Oakley (1974) found little evidence of symmetry. Women in paid employment still had the responsibility for housework.
- Crompton and Lyonette (2008) argue that men's involvement in household work has increased less than women's involvement in paid work. The gap between men's and women's contribution to domestic work narrowed between the 1960s and '80s because women spent less time on it rather than because men did more of it.
- Crompton and Lyonette (2008) also argue that attitudes to gender roles have changed a lot but men's participation in household tasks haven't. Women still usually do the laundry and ironing.
- Some feminists argue that family life is still patriarchal.

Answer the following Quick Check Questions



1. ??

Answers



1. Instrumental
2. Joint
3. (a) working full time
4. Freezers, microwave ovens, ready meals
5. The different roles that men and women in heterosexual couples are expected to play
6. Kempson; Barrett and McIntosh; Graham.
7. They earn more.