

Family Key Concepts



- Beanpole Family** A family with a long, thin structure. For example, there might be four generations alive, but each generation hasn't had many children so there are relatively few uncles, aunts and cousins. This is a 21st century example of an extended family, but its members are more likely to live apart than in the past.
- Blended Family** A type of reconstituted or step family where parents with children from previously existing relationship form new relationships come together as one new, blended family.
- Birth Rate** The number of babies born per thousand of the population per year.
- Cereal Packet Family** A critical term for the traditional nuclear family consisting of heterosexual parents and two children which was presented as the norm on cereal packets (and in the media more generally) in the 1950s.
- Civil Partnership** The legally or formally recognised union of a man and a woman (or in some countries two people of the same sex) in a committed relationship.
- Cohabitation** Two people living together in the same household in an emotionally intimate, committed relationship without being officially married.
- Commercialisation of Housework** New technologies lead to new products which people can buy which reduces the amount of domestic labour people have to do at home e.g. hoovers, washing machines, microwaves and microwave meals reduce the amount of time spend cleaning, washing and cooking.
- Death Rate** The number of deaths per thousand members of a population per year.
- Divorce** The formal and legal end to a marriage.
- Dual Burden** Carrying out both paid work and a significant amount of the domestic labour, such as housework at home.
- Economic Factors** Refers to things to do with money, e.g. the amount of wealth and income an individual or family has.



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Emotion Work	Thinking about the emotional well-being of other members of the family and acting in ways which will be of emotional benefit to others, e.g. providing emotional support through relationship issues.
Extended Family	Family beyond the traditional nuclear family, incorporating aunts, uncles, and grandparents. In the traditional extended family, members live in the same household.
Unit of Consumption	A Marxist idea that the primary function of the family in capitalist societies is to consume products to keep capitalism going. Two main ways this is done is through spending on the children, especially at Christmas, and through spending on house and household purchases and improvements.
Functional Fit Theory	The main type of family changes as the structure of society changes so that the former better fits with the later.
Gender Norms	The 'expected' patterns of behaviour associated with masculinity and femininity, e.g. femininity = caring, masculinity = competitive.
Gender Roles	The social positions and occupations we associate with men and women, e.g. we tend to associate the caring role with women, and the 'provider role' with men.
Globalisation	The increasing interconnectedness of societies across the globe.
Ideological Functions	The ways in which the ideas spread through institutions work to maintain the power of dominant groups in society.
Individualisation Thesis	Individuals have more freedom to make life-choices and shape their identities because of a weakening of traditional social structures, norms and values.
Instrumental Role	Instrumental Role The provider or breadwinner role which involves going out to work and earning money for the family - the traditional male role within the family.
Matrifocal Household	A family structure in which mothers are the heads of household and fathers have less power and control in family life and the allocation of resources.



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Migration	Moving from one country or area to another.
Multigenerational Household	At least three generations live together in one household, such as grandparents, parents and children.
Negotiated Families	Adapt according to the wishes and expectations of their members, who decided what is best for them by discussion.
Net Migration	The difference between the numbers of people immigrating to and emigrating from a country.
Nuclear Family	A father and mother with their dependent children, either their own or adopted, living together in one household.
Patriarchy	A society where men hold the power and women are excluded, disadvantaged or oppressed.
Personal Life Perspective	A sociological perspective which believes we should understand family life from the perspective of the individuals who make up the family, focusing on the diverse ways in which different individuals within the family define and perceive their own experiences of family life.
Polygamy	Where one husband legally has many wives. The opposite is Polyandry, where one woman has many husbands.
Postmodernism	The view that social changes (such as globalisation and more consumerism) since the 1950s have resulted in a world in which individuals have choice and freedom.
Primary Socialisation	Primary Socialisation The first stages of learning the norms and values of a society which is primarily done within the family with parents as the main agents of socialisation. This is where children learn the basic skills and norms, such as language, and basic manners.
Promiscuous Horde	Engels' ideas of a tribal group structure which is found in 'primitive societies' in which all members share property and sleep together, such that no one knows who the fathers of the children are. It is lack of private property which 'causes' the promiscuity: there is nothing to pass down to the next generation and so it is not necessary to know who the biological father of a specific child is.

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Pure Relationships

Couples enter an intimate relationship purely for their own mutual benefit, rather than doing so because they feel they should be in a relationship to fit in with social or religious norms or societal or parental pressure.

Reconstituted Families

A reconstituted family is where one parent with a child from a previous relationship starts a new relationship with another partner who may or may not have children themselves and thus a new family is formed. Also known as a step family.

Serial Monogamy

Meaning an individual has a string of committed relationships, one after the other.

Social Construction of Childhood

The idea that the norms and values and social roles associated with childhood are influenced by society, rather than being determined by the biological age of a child.

Stable Satisfaction of the Sex Drive

One of the four essential functions of the nuclear family according to Murdock who believed that the nuclear family provided a long term monogamous relationship in which sexual desires could be met without recourse to frustration and promiscuity.

Stabilisation of Adult Personalities

The nuclear family provides a structure in which both adult partners gain emotional and psychological support from one another.

Symmetrical Family

A family in which the roles of husbands and wives, although not identical are more similar.

Total Fertility Rate

Total Fertility Rate The average number of babies a woman will have during her fertile years (15-44).

Toxic Childhood

Where social changes, especially the invention of new technologies, does increasing amounts of harm to children. For example, the internet and mobile phones results in screen saturation with increases anxiety and reduces attention spans.

Triple Shift

Builds on the idea of the dual burden: women in families have three types of work: paid work, housework and emotion work.

Warm Bath Theory

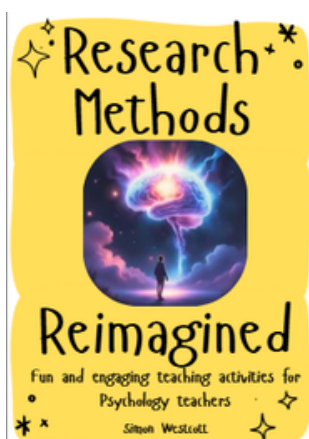
The Functionalist idea that within the nuclear family that the family can act as a de-stressor for family members, particularly men who go to work and can come home to unwind.



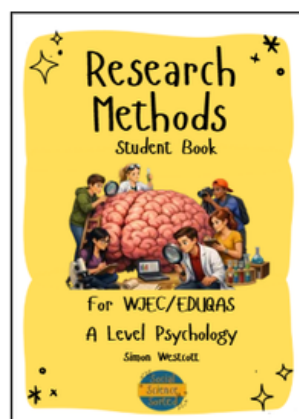


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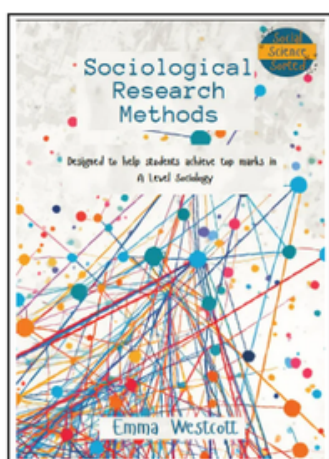


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