

# Sociology and family perspectives: care in contemporary society



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Sociology and Family Perspectives: Care in Contemporary Society

Sociology is the study of human social life, groups and societies (Giddens, 2008) . To grasp the understanding of sociology we are encouraged by sociologists to develop a sociological imagination. Every individual will have some knowledge and understanding from being a member in society as it can often be common sense views. A common-sense view is a biased opinion without any known knowledge on sociological research (Browne, 2006) . C. Wright Mills who invented the concept defines it as, “ the vivid awareness of the relationship between experience and wider society” . The sociological imagination is the ability to see things socially and how they interact and influence one another therefore expanding your understanding of how today’s society works together (Mills, 2000) . Sociologist’s use sociological perspectives to aid our views of society which focus on freedom and control an individual has to influence society. There are two main approaches - structural and action which describe society. A structural approach, often referred as the macro-sociological perspective tends to overlook society as a whole and how social institutions emphasis the behaviour of an individual. Functionalist theory is a sociological perspective that highlights how social institutions maintain several functions to maintain social stability and benefit society as a whole. On the other hand, an action approach which can be referred to as micro-sociological perspective focuses on an individual’s behaviour in everyday social situations. Symbolic interactionism is an example of a micro-perspective, which suggests that social structures are created and maintained in course of human interaction. Individuals are seen to learn and develop through their daily interactions with others and how to

react in different situations (Marsh et al., 2009). Within the broad spectrum of sociology, we can use our sociological imagination to view the concerns of two different branches – consensus (structure) and conflict (action).

Consensus perspectives like functionalism emphasise the harmony in society and share a value consensus shared agreement on expectations of behaviour relating to individual's norms, values and roles. On the other hand, conflict perspectives like Marxism/Feminism highlight the struggles and tensions within society and do not believe that society is harmonious. These perspectives focus on power differentials like status and roles to arise conflict within social structures. (Giddens, 2008)

Research has shown that there is no description as to what family is. Although traditionally the view of family is labelled as a “nuclear family” made up of a male and female partnership with children. Single parents, lone parents, same sex parents, re-constituted and unmarried relationships are also within contemporary society. Families within society are from all different backgrounds including culture, race, gender and genetic make-up. Sociologists view families in society as the cement that keeps society stable as relationships within the family are seen as more intimate than with other individuals. (Marsh et al., 2009)

Socialisation is the lifelong process to which we learn the norms, values and beliefs to the culture of society to which we belong (Browne, 2006). The culture that we live in is referred to the language, beliefs and values/norms that make up the way of life in society. Culture can be transmitted through individual's through socialisation of children and adults from one generation to another. Primary socialisation is the process by which children learn the

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cultural norms of society into which they are born in. As the children furthers their development and grows into wider society the process of secondary socialisation begins. This includes learning from different institutions - peers, education, wider family relations, jobs.

A sociological concept within contemporary society is "labelling" and how it affects the family role. Labelling is an idea made up of biased, stereotypical and stigmatised opinions. For example, when an individual makes accusations against an individual in society based on their norms, values and beliefs. Through primary socialisation children's identities are shaped by their parents and being to adapt their norms, values and beliefs.

Socialisation creates a foundation for children to grow and to adapt to society developing their personality, growth and confidence (Browne, 2006).

Labelling can have an effect on certain individuals in a negative way which will lower their self-esteem, self-concept and confidence. Sociologists have shown that it is not just individuals that are labelled in society, families can have a stigma attached to them also. These labels could be given in relation to the area they are in, religion, poverty or the way parents have raised their children (Giddens, 2008). Reviewing this concept, labelling an individual or institution is commonly related to negative views and opinions which is done through discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice which can impact an individual's identity and self-worth. In society, every individual should have the freedom to express themselves without being judge and stigmatised.

A theory that focuses on the functionalisms of family and how every individual develops within society through socialisation of family and relationships is Symbolic Interactionist theory. This theory explains society  
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through an understanding of human behaviour in face to face situations and how these situations can define an individual (Browne, 2006). This theory looks at the individual and how they form within society rather than how society reacts to an individual's own values and beliefs. The way society acknowledges an individual's behaviour is shaped by the general public around them. Therefore, when a behaviour or action is performed by the individual, the opinions of the people around them will then emphasise the behaviour opposing it. A main focus within this theory is how it aids individuals holistically to develop in society through the direction from family as this is where our first social interactions are performed. By interacting with other individual's, it allows a person to feel worth to fit within society around them. Being able to communicate with family and form trust builds a positive reinforcement environment for children to learn and develop in society (Symbolic Interactionism, 2016).

Another sociological concept is patriarchy. Patriarchy is the domination of women by men in some or all social institutions. Research shows that women take the majority of responsibilities within the family roles for managing the emotional side which includes talking, listening, supporting and understanding the family members. Women are often the mediator when arguments take place within the household which can be distressing. In society, women are being exploited through typical burden of domestic and emotional labour which disadvantages them and benefits the men. When young girls are being raised within a traditional family they interpret the role of house-wife as they are socialised to this role by their mothers, whilst socialising younger boys to believe they are more superior by not having to

pursue any domestic labour. However, in today's society the structure of family has developed and more women are working as well as their partners and both share an equal amount of domestic labour and work as a team. Children are now socialised in society to believing that there is gender equality and a man or women can do any job. (Browne, 2006)

Another sociological theory is the Feminist theory. Feminist's view society structurally and believe that it is unequal as men who maintain more power than women. It is the social movement of governmental practice which strive for equality between men and women (Marsh et al., 2009). There are various perspectives and themes regarding Feministic perspectives some being Liberal, Radical and Marxist. Liberal feminists believe that women will transform within society to create personal collaborations with men. The main aim of this group is equality between both genders. They don't agree that men should receive more rights than a woman based on their gender. Radical Feminist's blame the exploitation that women receive on men within society. They believe that men are the individuals who benefit from the subordination of women. Women are seen to be exploited as they tackle unpaid labour for men by carrying out childcare and housework. (Haralmbos and Holburn, 2000)

A factor that impacts today's society modern family roles and family structures is the diversity with traditional families. Same-sex marriages are now accepted into contemporary society and was bought into the law in Scotland in 2014 under the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014. This made it easier for same sex partnerships to adopt and begin a family of their own with new legislation in place. Gender is a social concept <https://assignbuster.com/sociology-and-family-perspectives-care-in-contemporary-society/>

that differentiates between men and women gender roles within the family. Men's roles are more highly valued and rewarded rather than the women's roles. Men are more reliant on providing for the family's livelihood whereas the women have more domesticated, emotional roles within the household (Giddens, 2008). It is also common for a single parent household, as well as reconstituted families through the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006. Family structure and legislation has become more open to diversity within society and continues to evolve in today's contemporary society as accepting individuals as 'gender neutral'. Today's family is a lot different to the familiar 'nuclear family' in previous centuries. (Haralmbos and Holburn, 2000)

Another factor in society that has changed family structure and development is deindustrialization. The perception of the roles of family in previous years, women maintained the 'house-wife' which meant they were responsible for all jobs related to the family - cooking, cleaning, washing and childcare. The views of contemporary society women are finally becoming more equal to men and men are becoming more maternal. In today's society, women are more likely to be working as well as their partner which means there is less time for raising children and maintain domestic chores around the household. Domestic tasks are now shared equally to men and women in the family. Industrialisation created a change in society in relation to family development roles by placing these duties onto institutions. Schools and childcare setting are now encouraged to teach children basic life skills that would previously been passed on and taught from their families. (Fulcher, J and Scott, J 2011)

The third factor that has developed societies families structure and development is new research for technological devices. Culture and technology in contemporary society has had an impact on families and contributed to a growing divide between traditional roles that children and their parents may play. The role of the expressive house-wife is being reduced by domestic saving devices such as dish washers, washing machines and robot vacuum cleaners. These devices are continuously growing and the market is developing, making it easier for household duties to be carried out. The increasing use of mobile phones, laptop and iPad devices also decrease the family social interaction. This can also impact the children's socialisation when developing as they are not interacting with their parents and being raised without these devices. Instead of the members of family communicating with one another, they can use technology. In previous society, to keep children and families entertained they would interact with one another, making up stories or putting on a show for the family; in today's society, the child is sat down with a mobile phone engaging with social network to be entertained.

A similarity in sociological perspective through the traditional family is the support from family. There is an increased number of children going into childcare so both parents can afford to work. Modern families use family members from outside the household to care for the child whilst they work, this cuts down costs for the family. Through the years the foundation of family support has stayed in place. Functionalist's believe that the immediate family must play an important role in socialising the children to develop cultural values, norms and beliefs (The Family, it's Roles,



Composition and Structure). Another similarity would be the role on how to raise children with the goal of the child being brought up healthy and a positive family home. In contemporary society, the role of the carer is equal to both parents the goal of raising the child has stayed the same. In relation to the family structure, whether it is same-sex family, a nuclear or a re-constituted family the intention is to ensure the child is brought up into a safe environment and be a respectful citizen (The Family, it's Roles, Composition and Structure).

A difference in sociological perspectives between contemporary ideas of family is the use of media and technology. The children of today's generation would find it hard to go without a mobile phone and rely on social media to communicate with one another. Social communication is decreasing and young children prefer to text message or facetime rather than engage in face to face social interaction. This can result in unhealthy relationships due to the lack of face to face interaction and can lead to poor health and wellbeing of the younger generation. Another generation between the older generation of the traditional family compared to the contemporary family is family structure. Families now are becoming more diverse than the traditional family. The size of families has fallen as the average would have 4-6 members in the household, now there are commonly 3-4. Also, there has been an increase on lone parent families as in previous years it was difficult to get a divorce or uncommon. Normally in contemporary society, partners would live together with only their children. However previously, several generations would live in the one household. Looking at this through a symbolic perspective, due to having less members in the family home, less

social interaction is being engaged. This could have an impact on a child's social development as behavioural norms and values are limited. This could cause individuals to pass judgement and cause a wider perspective on society. (Giddens, 2008)

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