

Power and control in the family



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Power is defined as the ability to exercise control. Control therefore is not feeling vulnerable and having charge over a thing in order to get things done. Power is to act, think, behave, feel and believe. Control is the expression of commands, demands, directives, orders and requests, as to how I am to act, think, behave, feel and believe.

THE POWER AND CONTROL THEORY.

Power-control theory begins with the assumption that mothers constitute the primary agents of socialization in the family. In households in which the mother and father have relatively similar levels of power at work, "balanced households," mothers will be less likely to differentially exert control upon their Daughters. Thus, in balanced households, both sons and daughters will have similar levels of control placed upon them, leading them to develop similar attitudes regarding the risks and benefits of engaging in deviant behaviour. This line of reasoning suggests that balanced households will experience fewer gender differences in deviant behaviour. Power-control theorists further assume that households in which mothers and fathers have dissimilar levels of power in the work place, so-called "unbalanced households," are more "patriarchal" in their attitudes regarding gender roles. Power-control theory states that relative power in the workplace conditions patterns of parental control of children in two-parent families, resulting in gender differences in rates of no serious delinquency.

INEQUALITIES IN THE FAMILY

In 1973, Young and Wilmott claimed that the traditional segregated division of labour in the home is breaking down. The conjugal relationship in the

middle class is becoming either joint or symmetrical which is leading to egalitarian marriage. There are many ways by which there is inequality in power and control family that should be looked at but following was stated as the major ways by which the division of labour in the house is breaking down.

Household task and childcare in the family is the duty of the mother. Feminist argue that this task is not supposed to be the major duty of the wife, they believe that this task should be shared among the wife and husband as they both own the child and they both live in the same house. Survey on housework and child care suggest that men today are more involved in domestic task than their fathers and grandfathers, women also have to do the majority of the housework and child care even when they have a full time job that cannot be neglected because of the society view on power and control in the family as women being the ones to do the work and men been the breadwinner. Time survey 2005 by et al.(2006)discovered that the women in paid work spend 21hours of their time doing household chores compared to men who spend 12hours of their time doing the same thing. Some British Household Panel Survey (2001) suggested that some household chores are still done by the women as the males find it really threatening to engage in household chores because they believe that doing it risks their role as the head and breadwinner of the family. Women are also responsible for the physical and emotional well being of their family at the expense of their own.

Decision making is another aspect of inequality in power and control in the family, in the middle class families where there is a patriarchal view on the <https://assignbuster.com/power-and-control-in-the-family/>

family, major decision making such as where to live, what house to buy are mostly shouldered on the husband this is because the traditional view on the power and control in such families still exist there where the husband is the head of the family and he has to be the one to make major decisions in the family. Some men believe that major decision making such as if they are ready to have children or if the wife should stay at home should be made by them as they are the bread winner of the family.

Fatherhood is another area of power and control in the family. Most families today are single families where there is only one person to do the housework and childcare. The new right critique of one parent families is that they lack fathers, suggested that children that grow up in such way are less likely to be socialized into the culture of discipline and compromise found in nuclear families and they may end up been less successful parents. This is because such children lack an authoritative figure and there is nobody to turn to in time of crisis. This lack of authoritative figure or someone to watch over them increases social problems such as teenage pregnancy, drug use because they have been influenced by their peer groups. Furthermore, the difference between the fathers of 1990's and 1960's cannot be underestimated. This is so because the fathers of 1990's are more involved in teh life of their children than their fathers and are taking active roles un the emotional development of their children. Beck (1992)notes that in the post modern age men no longer look to their jobs to give them a sense of identity and purpose but they now look up to their children to give them that. In this study of fatherhood, teenage children, fathers and mothers agreed that fathers should still be the breadwinner of the family despite the

employment and family life changes and that women are experts at parenting. However, it is important not to overweight the importance of men role in child care this is because it is the main responsibility of the mother to look after the child rather than jointly shared with the father, most fathers would like to spend more time with their children but due to the work pressure and long working hours are unable to do so.

Women's participation in the labour market has been limited by their domestic responsibility. Due to their various domestic responsibility, only very few women have careers. Feminist also went further by saying that it is only the males that have careers but a lot of women only have jobs as a result of this, most employers find women unreliable because of the family commitments and they are unable to get same access to promotion and work training like the men. Modern marriages do not appear as equal as the functionalist see it rather women are at a great disadvantage, based on the criteria so far.

Who has more power and control in the family?

Before we can discuss this it is important to know that it is not a very definite thing to say who has more control in the family but we have to look at the family or marriage system. For example if the family is egalitarian in nature or not. Therefore we will be able to decide who has more power and control based on the nature of the family

The following can be seen as the three major family natures. It can be an egalitarian family where both partners share the same responsibilities, or a patriarchal family where the traditional view on who holds power in the

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family still exist and a lone parent family that is either the father or the mother as the head.

EGALITARIAN FAMILIES.

The power and control in these families are usually a shared responsibility, so child care and house care are the responsibility of both partners as they both have full time jobs. Therefore major decision making is also what they both decide to do. In this type of family, Households in which husbands and wives share equal levels of power are considered “ balanced” and therefore less patriarchal. Therefore, it can be concluded that in families like this , the two partners have equal right and duties in both child care and housework and other aspect of the family life where there is possible division of labour.

PARTRIACHAL FAMILIES

There is the traditional view of power and control in this type of family. This family can be majorly seen among the middle class family. The power and control of the family lies in the hand of the father as the breadwinner and he is the one that tackles any necessary decision that needs to be taken. The major responsibility of the wife/mother is to do the house work and it is therefore very important for her to do her duties. Feminists argues that this type of structure is not equal as the mother ends up doing the most work especially if she has a full time job.

LONE-PARENTS FAMILIES

The issue of power and control in this type of family is solely in the hand of who is has the child custody. Therefore it is the duty of the single father or

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mother to see to the affairs of the household and childcare in every way possible. Single mothers (and fathers for that matter) must contend with a variety of power struggles in their daily lives, such as the continued existence of the noncustodial parent in child-rearing and decision making [i. e., single parents who must rely on child-support payments or are limited in decision-making power because the non-custodial parent has partial custody], the potential involvement of the state [i. e., single mothers or single fathers who are jobless and must rely on the state for monies], as well as power differentials at work.

VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY.

One of the most important aspects of power in the family is also domestic violence. This type of violence is one done behind closed doors where the man exercises his power over the woman through the use of physical power by either beating or harassing. This is the most common type of violence as it is done behind closed doors and it has no witness of it taking place apart from the victim. In the year 2008/09, the British Crime Survey recorded a total of 293, 000 recorded domestic violence. In any one year, there are 13 million separate incidents of physical violence or threats of violence against women from partners or

Former partners. (Walby and Allen, 2004). Also the British Crime Survey said women are more likely to suffer domestic violence rather than the men, this figures might be underestimated because not all crimes are reported by the victims majorly because they are afraid of the repercussion or they feel they may not be taken seriously better still they feel they can change their

partners and they continue to suffer in silence. It is not only the women that do suffer domestic violence even the men do but out of 90% of recorded domestic violence, 10% are does suffered by the men.

Feminist suggest that domestic violence is as a result of patriarchy. This indicates that because of this, men tend to exercise their power over the women probably out of frustration or their anxiety over maintaining their role as the head of the family.

THEORITICAL EXPLANATION ON THE INEQUALITIES OF POWER AND CONTROL IN THE FAMILY.

FUNCTIONALIST see the sexual division of labour in the family as biologically inevitable. They see it has been in the gene of a woman to be more caring than the man and are more emotional than the man.

FEMINIST this particular set of theorists see the power of men in the family as declining why because women have made a really progress in term of equality and they believe that men are already adapting to this change although they believe that women are not strong enough in terms of attitudes and behaviour, the future hold a movement of domestic and economic equality.

MARXISTS. See the housewife roles as serving the needs of capitalism as this maintains the present workforce and produces labour power for the future

However, these theories have been criticised based on the fact that most of them did not look at every society that women roles vary in all societies.

Feminist underestimate the degree of power that some women enjoy, the

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women ability to make rational choices have been underestimated by the feminist point of view.

CONCLUSION.

For long power in the family has been seen as a very large topic that has been argued and debated over time, but before the conclusion can be made that either the male or female has more power or control in the family. We have taken a look at the inequalities in the family and can conclude the female gender is at a great disadvantage when it comes to this. Not only have we looked at this, we have also looked at who has more power in the family based on the different family structures. Family domestic violence has also been looked at and we can see from the above analysis that domestic violence is also a way by which power is exercised in the family.

Furthermore, different theoretical view on the inequalities in the family has been looked at and also how these theories have also been criticized. Power and control therefore is a topic that has helped to understand how the family structure is like and the level of equality in the family.