

# Diversity in Families and Households

## Functionalist accounts of family change

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Name and date begun:

### **Time allocation:**

3 lessons

### **Learning objectives:**

- Students should understand that families are changing form
- Functionalism offers us a view of families changing to 'fit' society.
- This view has been the subject of debate and has been rejected by other theorists.

### **Key Concepts and vocabulary**

See your lesson notes for a list of the key terms. These must be learned in addition to the following:

- Functionalism
- The 'fit' thesis
- British empiricism
- Dual career families
- Domestic labour
- Symmetrical family debate
- Cohabitation
- Single person households
- Reconstituted families

### **Additional reading and references**

Haralambos and Holbourn (1995) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* p 340 - 357

Taylor *et al.* (1996) *Sociology in Focus* p 247 - 69

Jorgensen *et al.* (1997) *Sociology: An interactive approach* p 102 - 121

Marcus and Ducklin (1997) *Success in Sociology* p 131 - 52

**Make a note of any additional sources that you have used below**

### **Personal Development ideas**

- Ask some of your friends how significant they feel marriage to be in their future lives.
- Do people aspire to unconventional family arrangements?
- Ask married couples you know if they would choose to marry again if they had the choice.
- Consider what advantages there are in being married or unmarried.

### **Overview of the debate**

- What is the fit thesis?
- Why do many writers reject Young and Willmott?
- What possible family arrangements do people actually choose in our society?
- Does change in family form mean that marriage and families are outmoded institutions?

### **Revision tips**

- Be sure that you fully understand Parsons and the fit thesis
- Be sure that you understand the rejections of fit thesis.
- Revise Young and Willmott regularly.
- Why are Young and Willmott controversial?

### **What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:**

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- Evidence that you have looked at least two textbooks and made notes on the functions of the family.
- Evidence that you have shared notes with a friend
- Revision notes on functionalism and Talcott Parsons
- Rough notes on the various forms of family structure in modern society.
- Articles cut from women's gossip magazines such as Hello and Chat which illustrate unconventional family arrangements.