

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

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Notes

THE FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

Family is the most basic and elementary form of a society. Family as an institution is universal and most pervasive. It is a primary group that provides a child his first social environment that will make him or her a human being. It is limited in size, involves deep emotions and has a formative influence on its members.

The organization of family may vary from society to society but the institution exists everywhere. It has a nuclear position in the social structure or society and is responsible for transforming individuals into members of the society through socialization.

DEFINITIONS

According to **M.F. Nimkoff** - 'Family is a more or less durable association of husband and wife; with or without a child; or a man or woman alone with children.'

Robert M. Maclver- 'Family is a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children'.

Burgess and Locke define family as- 'Family is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister; creating a common culture'.

In other words, family is a set of people related by blood, marriage or adoption; who share the primary responsibility for reproduction and caring for members of the society.

TYPES OF FAMILY

There are different criteria based on which one can classify families. They are divided on the basis of

1. Marriage
2. Residence
3. Authority
4. Size or structure
5. Ancestry or descent
6. Nature of relations

1. On the basis of type of marriage:

Depending on the number of partners or spouses in marriage, families can be classified into monogamous families and polygamous families. When one man and one woman are married only to each other, they are a **monogamous family**. But when an individual has several husbands or wives (multiple spouses) simultaneously, it is a **polygamous** family. Polygamous marriages are further divided into polyandry and polygyny. When a woman has several husbands at the same time it is called **polyandry**. If her husbands are brothers it is called **fraternal polyandry**; and if they are not brothers it is known as **non-fraternal polyandry**.

When a man has several wives at the same time it is called **polygyny**. If his wives are sisters it is called **sororal polygyny**; and if they are not sisters it is known as **non-sororal polygyny**.

2. On the basis of nature of residence:

Families can be classified into patrilocal, matrilineal or neolocal families based on the residence of the family. When a married couple lives with the husband's parents, it is a **patrilocal or virilocal** family. But when a married couple lives with the wife's parents, it is **matrilocal or uxorilocal** family. Sometimes the married couple establish a separate residence and such families are **neolocal** families.

3. On the basis of nature of authority: Families can be classified into patriarchal, matriarchal or equalitarian (egalitarian) families depending on who has the decision making powers in the family. A family in which women dominate in family decision making is known as a **matriarchal family** while a family in which men dominate in family decision making is a **patriarchal family**. However, a family with an authority pattern in which both the adult members (male & female) are regarded as equal is known as an **equalitarian or egalitarian family**.

4. On the basis of size or structure: Based on the number or depth of number of generations living together, families can be classified into nuclear or single families and joint, extended or undivided families. **Nuclear or single families** consist of a married couple and their unmarried children living together. On the other hand in **joint, extended or undivided families** in addition to parents and children, other relatives such as grandparents, uncles or aunts; live in the same house.

5. On the basis of ancestry or descent: Families are classified into patrilineal, matrilineal or bilateral families on the basis of how descent or ancestry is traced. In **Patrilineal family** descent is traced through the male line and the kinship system favours the relatives of the male. In **Matrilineal family** descent is traced through the female line and the kinship system favours the relatives of the female. A kinship system in which both sides of a person's family are regarded as equally important is known as **Bilateral descent**.

6. On the basis of nature of relations: Based on nature of relations families are either conjugal or consanguine. A family based on marriage relationship is known as a **conjugal family** or a **family of procreation**. A family based on blood relations is known as a **consanguine family** or a **family of orientation**.

FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY

Family plays a very important role in the propagation of the human race. Its functions can be divided into primary or essential functions and secondary or non-essential functions. We shall discuss only a few indispensable functions.

1. Stable satisfaction of sex needs:

Humans are susceptible to sexual stimulation and this need motivates individuals to seek sexual gratification. The family provides an individual with a lawful system of marriage, within which the person can fulfil his or her desires, thus regulating sexual behaviour.

2. Reproduction or procreation of children:

The process of reproduction is institutionalised in the family. Thus, ensuring the propagation of the species and the perpetuation of the human race.

3. Rearing of a child:

Unlike other species, the human child requires careful nurturing. It is the family that gives an individual a chance to survive. It takes care of the child till it becomes independent.

4. Provision of a home:

Home is a place where a person receives comfort, protection and peace. The family provides a home for its members making life experiences enjoyable.

5. Agent of socialization:

Alongwith the biological continuity of the human race, the family also ensures cultural continuity of the society. A family indoctrinates a child with the values, morals, belief system and ideals of its society. It imparts knowledge and necessary skills to the child, preparing it for participation in the larger world. It moulds the personality of the child.

In addition to the above, the family is also responsible for ascribing a status to an individual and meeting his or her emotional, economic, spiritual and recreational needs.

CHANGING FAMILY PATTERNS

Families are in transition. We find distinctive changes in family patterns, particularly changes in the functions of family.

Sexual Regulation Function

Families played an important role in regulation of sexual needs. Sexual activity was approved of within the institution of marriage. However, we find that this has undergone change and we find increasing incidence of pre-marital and extra – marital affairs.

Reproductive Function

Children were expected to be born within wedlock and in every marriage it was expected that there would be children. Today there are many individuals who choose to be single parents and many couples who wish to be childless.

Parental & Educational functions

Rearing of children was a serious parental responsibility. Nursing the children, educating them and supervising their overall being was in the hands of the family. We find these responsibilities have been effectively taken over by other institutions such as hospitals, baby clinics, nurseries, kindergartens and others.

Protective function:

The orphaned, sick, elderly and disabled were under the protection of the family. They were cared for by the family in the past. Today, we have other agencies such as orphanages, old age homes, hospitals, mental health institutions and others, that take over the responsibility of the vulnerable family members.

Size of family

The size of the family is consistently growing smaller. Even if families were nuclear, the number of members was large in the form of children. Today the numbers are reduced.

CONCLUSION

Family is still a very important social institution. It has the potential to be a powerful instrument of social change. It can bring about the much needed positive changes in our society.