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| **Learning Table 4 – Family Diversity** |
| **Ethnic differences in Family Patterns** | **The Extended Family Today** |
| Immigration into Britain since the 1950’s has helped to create a greater ethnic diversity.The following statistics were revealed from the 2011 census:* 86% of the UK population are white
* 14% belong to an ethnic minority including Asian and Asian British (7.5%), Black and Black British (3.3%) and mixed (2.2%)

This greater ethnic diversity has led to a change in family patterns in the UK.**Black Families**Black Caribbean and Black African people have a higher proportion of lone-parent households. In 2012 over ½ of families with dependent children headed by a black person were lone-parent families.There is a high rate of female-headed, lone-parent black families has sometimes been seen as evidence of family disorganisation that can be traced back to slavery or, more recently to high rates of unemployment among black males.However, Heidi Safia Mirza (1997) argues that the higher rate of lone-parent families among blacks is not the result of disorganisation, but rather reflects the high value that black women place on independence. Tracey Reynolds (2010) argues that the statistics are misleading, in that many ‘apparently ‘lone’ parents are in fact in stable, supportive but non-cohabiting relationships.**Asian Families**Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian households tend to be larger than those of other ethnic groups (4.4, 4.3 and 3 persons respectively versus 2.4 for Black Caribbean ad White British households). These households tend to have three generations but most are in fact nuclear rather than extended. Larger Asian households reflect the value placed on extended families in Asian cultures. However Roger Ballard (1982) found that extended family ties often provide an important source of support among Asian migrants during the 1950s and 1960s which offers an alternative explanation for the extended family prominence. Today, Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus are still more likely than others to live within an extended family. | Nickie Charles’ (2008) study of Swansea found the classic three-generation family all living together under one roof is now “all but extinct”. Peter Willmott (1988) argues that this type of family continues to exist but as a ‘dispersed extended family. This is where relatives are geographically separated but maintain frequent contact through visits and phone calls.Mary Chamberlain’s (1999) study of Caribbean families in Britain found that, despite being geographically dispersed, they continue to provide support. They are described as ‘multiple nuclear families. This suggests the extended family survives because it has performs important functions. Colin Bell found that both working-class (for purposes of emotional support) and middle-class (for purpose of financial support) families had emotional bonds with kin and relied on them for support.**The ‘beanpole’ family**Bell’s findings suggest the importance of the ‘beanpole’ family structure. Julia Brannen describes the beanpole family as ‘long and thin’:* It’s extended vertically (up and down, through three generations)
* But is not extended horizontally (it doesn’t involve aunts, uncles cousins etc.)

Beanpole families may partly be the result of two demographic changes:* Increased life expectancy (grandparents surviving longer)
* Smaller family sizes (fewer siblings, therefore fewer horizontal ties)

**Obligations to relatives** Despite the rise of the beanpole family, may people still feel a sense of obligation to help their wider extended kinJanet Finch and Jenifer Mason (1993) found that over 90% of people had given or received financial help, and about half cared for a sick relative.However, Finch and Mason found there is more expected of females than males. Cheal (2002) argues that when it comes to the household “help should be given first by the spouse, second by the daughter third by a daughter-in-law, fourth by a son, fifth by other relatives and sixth by non-relatives. Cheal notes that where personal care for an elderly woman is needed, a daughter or daughter-in-law is preferred if the husband is not available. Sons are rarely chosen as caregivers for an elderly woman. But on the other hand, daughters are rarely chosen as appropriate people to provide money.Mason (2011) found that it is dependent on the relationship, the obligations the daughters feel they have to other relatives and what other responsibilities they currently hold for the family. **Evaluation**The extended family still exists and plays an important role for many people today, however this is different to Parson’s classic extended family where he states that family live and work together and are bound by strong mutual obligations.  |

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| **Life Course Analysis** |
| **Modernism and the nuclear family** | **Postmodernism and the nuclear family** |
| **Functionalism** Parson’s states there is ‘functional fit’ between the nuclear family and modern society.Parsons states the nuclear family is uniquely suited to meeting the needs of the modern society for geographically and socially mobile workforce performing the two main functions; primary socialisation and the stabilisation of adult personalities.Because the family performs these essential functions, it is suggested that we can generalise about the types of family that we find in modern society i.e. a nuclear family with an equal division of labour between the husband and wife.Therefore other family types can be seen as dysfunctional, abnormal and deviant since they are less able to perform the functions required of the family.**The New Right**They are firmly opposed to family diversity. They have a conservative and anti-feminist perspective on the family.Like functionalists, they believe the nuclear family is the most appropriate and beneficial family type.This family type is seen as ‘natural’ and based on fundamental biological differences between men and women. The New Right oppose the changes to family patterns such as cohabitation, gay marriage and lone parenthood.In particular the concern lies with the growing number of lone-parent families. They argue that:* Lone mothers cannot discipline children properly
* Lone-parent families leave boys without a male role model resulting in academic failure, delinquency and social instability
* Such families are likely to be poorer and thus a burden on taxpayers and the welfare state

*Evaluation of New Right** Ann Oakley (1997) argues that the New Right wrongly assumes husband’s and wive’s roles are determined by biology. Cross-culturally there are many variations in the roles that men and women perform within the family.
* Other feminists argue that favouring the nuclear family is based on the patriarchal oppression of women. The assumptions prevent women working, keeps them financially dependent on me and denies them an equal say in decision making.
* There is no evidence to say that children of lone-parent families will be more delinquent
* Some people see cohabitation as a temporary phase, while others view it as a beneficial permanent alternative to marriage
* Carol Smart (2011) points out it may be poverty that causes the breakdown of relationships, rather than the decision not to marry.

**Chester: The Neo-Conventional Family**Chester recognises that there has been a change in family diversity in recent years but he doesn’t view it in a negative light. He argues that the only important change is a move from the dominance of the nuclear family, to what he describes as the ‘neo-conventional family’.By this he means the nuclear family but with a division of labour between a male breadwinner and a female homemaker. He calls this the dual-earner family, similar to the idea of the symmetrical family (Young and Willmott).Chester states that people are not choosing not to be in a nuclear family, but that it’s simply part of the life cycle. Many people who currently live in a one-person household have been or eventually will be part of a nuclear family. Statistics are therefore misleading because they only offer a snapshot of the current situation.There is evidence that little view has changed and he identifies a number of patterns:* Most people live in a household headed by a married couple
* Most adults marry and have children
* Most marriages continue until death
* Cohabitation has increased, but for most couples it is a temporary phase on the way to marriage
* Although births outside marriage have increased, most are jointly registered

**The Rapoports: five types of family**Rhona and Robert Rapoports (1982) identified five types of family diversity today in Britain:* Organisational diversity e.g. joint conjugal roles and two-wage earners while others have segregated conjugal roles and one-wage earners
* Cultural diversity e.g. African Caribbean lone-parent families headed by females, extended families among Asian households
* Social class diversity i.e. income differences mean there is a difference in family structures between social classes, and also differences in child-rearing
* Life-stage diversity i.e. the stage at which they are at in the life cycle e.g. newlyweds, couples with dependent children, retired couples whose children have grown up and left home, widows who are living alone
* Generational diversity i.e. younger and older generations have different attitudes and experiences e.g. different attitudes towards morality of divorce or cohabitation
 | **Stacey: postmodern families**Stacey (1998) argues that greater freedom of choice has benefitted women. Women shape their family arrangements to meet their needs. She used life history interviews to construct a series of case studies of pomo families in Silicon Valley, California. She found that women rather than men have been the main agents of changes in the family. She found that many of the women had rejected the traditional housewife-mother role. Stacey describes in one of her reports that Pam Gamma created a divorce-extended family. Pam married young, then then divorced and cohabited for several years before re-marrying. The re-marriages of both partners from the original marriage meant that there was a divorce-extended family that helped each other financially and emotionally. Cases like this show that pomo families are diverse and their shape depends on the active choices people choose to make about how to live their life. David Morgan (1996 & 2011) argue it is therefore pointless to make generalisations about the family as if it were a single thing, like functionalists do.**The individualisation thesis: Giddens and Beck*****Giddens*** Anthony Giddens (1992) argues that family and marriage have been transformed by greater choice and a more equal relationship between men and women, reasons for which include:* Contraception allowing for sex an intimacy rather than reproduction
* Women gaining independence as a result of feminism

The ***‘pure relationship’*** exists purely to satisfy each partner’s needs. Couples stay together because of love, happiness and sexual attraction.Giddens sees same-sex relationships as leading the way towards new family types and creating more democratic and equal relationships. This is because same-sex couples have been able to develop a relationship based on choice rather than traditional roles.Weston (1992) found that same-sex couples created supportive ‘families of choice’ from among friends, former lovers and biological kin while Weeks (2000) found that friendship networks functioned as kinship networks for gay men and lesbians.***Beck***Beck (1992) argues that we live in a ‘risk society’ where people have more choice and tradition has less of an influence. Therefore we are more aware of risks because we weigh them up.Although the traditional family was unequal and oppressive, it did provide a stable and predictable basis for family life. However, the patriarchal family has been undermined by two trends:* Greater gender equality
* Greater individualism

These trends have led to the development of the ‘negotiated family’ who do not conform to traditional family roles, but vary according to the wishes and expectations of their members. They enter the relationship on an equal basis.**Criticism of the individualisation thesis** ***Smart (2007)*** and ***May (2013)*** agree there is more family diversity, but they disagree with Gidden’s and Beck’s description of it.* The individualisation thesis exaggerates how much choice people have about family relationships today
* The thesis wrongly sees people as disembedded, ‘free-floating, independent individuals and ignores the facts that decisions are made regarding relationships in a social context
* The thesis ignores the importance of structural factors such as social class inequalities and patriarchal gender norms in limiting and shaping our relationship choices

**The Connectedness Thesis**The alternative to the individualisation thesis is the connectedness thesis:* We make choices within a web of connectedness. We live within networks of existing relationships and interwoven personal histories, and these strongly influence our range of options ad choices in relationships.
* Gender and class still influence our choices due to better pay for particular groups (middle-class, men), less stigma attached to men starting a new relationship after divorce, powerlessness of women having to stay in abusive relationships.
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