

## SOCIOLOGY

In traditional, pre-industrial societies, the family fulfilled central functions for the survival of society itself and for its individual members. Murdock claims that the family has and had four functions:

Sexual (it contains a controlled outlet for sexual gratification which could otherwise lead to conflict and jealousies).

Reproductive (Allows adult to know the biological parents of children, therefore avoiding incest and delineating lines of descents).

Economic (it functions as a productive and consumption unit, ensuring the survival of the family).

Educational (Passes on the knowledge and skills from one generation to the next).

In pre-industrial societies production largely depended on the amount of family labour accessible to in the land and the extended family was the most appropriate unit.

The extended family is defined as a grouping broader than the nuclear family which is related by descent, marriage or adoption. It existed as a structure of collective responsibility for its members even if they did not all live together in the same household.

One of Young and Wilmot's work showed that the extended family survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century( their thesis fits in with the broad thrust of the functionalist theories) they argue that while the short term consequences of industrialisation may have been the disruption of the family it has created a stronger nuclear family. However it doesn't mean that the extended family has ceased to be important.

Rosser and Harris found out that while the nuclear family became the family focus, the extended family continued to have a role, a modified role. Better communication, such as telephones and better cars means that the contact between extended families over long distances is much easier than in the past.

Some problems that the extended family faced in the pre-industrial society was due to the fact that the development of wage labour broke up the household as a unit of production. With the growth of capitalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, production was carried out not by members of the family but by workers that got paid a wage for their labour. The family became a unit of consumption rather than production; its members no longer worked together but rather used the wages they had earned to buy goods which they consumed as a family unit.

With industrial societies the extended family was a disadvantage because the nuclear family worked as a unit of production. Functions of wider kinship have been taken over by specialised agencies such as welfare state and also the nuclear family was more geographical mobile - able to search for work.

Furthermore, being in an extended family young people couldn't be as independent as they desire to be. They needed to be independent of the families to find their own occupations and social positions. The family is not required to ascribe status.

The advantages of the extended family system were that there is no welfare state. The extended family provides welfare, assistance, training, etc.

Secondly, it helps reduce the level of social conflict. Problems are resolved in the family and not by law and last but not least people develop a strong sense of attachment and identity to a group or an area.

Parson claimed that the industrial revolution weakened the extended family by taking away crucial economic and social functions from the family. However, an alternative approach comes from Anderson who has argued that the early industrial family actually helped to form the extended family.

Anderson in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, using data from the Preston census found that there was an increase in the size of the family at about this time-23% of households contained family members other than the nuclear family. She explains this by saying that the increase in jobs provided by industrialisation meant that more distant relatives were attracted to the town and came to live with their families already there. Additional members of a household lowered the share of the rent paid by each individual and finally someone stayed at home looking after the children and some worked in factories. (It was normal in factory towns for employers to recruit through kin).

The extended family faded away by the industrialisation process and the nuclear family became the predominant family form, this is due to the reduced size of the family, women are not having so many babies and the recent growth in lone parent families. The welfare state has taken responsibility for the ill, the aged and the unemployed but the extended family does often still assist in these areas, particularly in times of crisis, e.g. death.

Increased educational opportunities have led to a wider variety of jobs being available, leading to geographical mobility.

The increased desire for home ownership has led to the disruption of settled communities.

The structure of the family seems remarkably resilient in responding to and shaping economic changes. The evidence suggests that the extended family network still exists and although many families are physically spread over a wide geographical area, communication occurs with the aid of cars and telephones.

The extended family still comes together in times of economic struggle and decline in periods of affluence, and that values percolate down from the higher social classes to the lower ones.