

# Family and Intimate Relationship

Dr Samina Luthfa

Department of Sociology

University of Dhaka

# Outline

- Definitions
- Types of family
- Inequalities in families
- Theories of family
  - Functionalists
  - Feminists
  - Historical Changes in intimacy

# Family

- A **family** is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections (blood and marriage), the adult members of whom assume responsibility to care for children.
- **Kinship** ties are connection established between individuals through either marriage or lines of descent that connects blood lines.
- **Marriage is** socially approved and acknowledged sexual union between two adult individuals.
- **Households** are single individuals or groups of people who share a common housing unit, common living rooms and the essentials for living, such as food.

# Types of Family

- Based on Structure: Nuclear and Extended
- Based on marriage: Monogamous and Polygamous, Polygynous and Polyandrous
- Marriage partner: Endogamous and exogamous
- Residence: Patrilocal, Matrilocal, Neolocal
- Lineage: Matrilineal and patrilineal

# Changing Types

- Two-parent and single or lone parent families
- Step- families or reconstituted families
- Cohabiting families
- Same-sex families
- Adoptive families
- Singlehood

# Global Pattern of Change

- Clans and other kin-based groups are declining in influence.
- There is a widespread trend towards the free selection of a spouse.
- The rights of women are becoming more widely recognized, in respect to both the initiation of marriage and decision making within the family.
- Higher levels of sexual freedom, for men and women, are developing in some societies that were previously very restrictive.
- There is a general trend towards the extension of children's rights.
- There is an increased acceptance of same-sex partnerships, though this is unevenly distributed across the world's societies.

# Inequality within the family

- Balancing work and family care
  - Perception of males about females at work
  - Wage discrimination against females
- Housework
  - Why is it still women's responsibility?
    - Wage differentials or Gender role
- Intimate violence
- Divorce

# Intimate Violence

- Sexual Abuse is defined as 'sexual contact between a child and adult for the purpose of the adult's sexual gratification'
- Domestic Violence is physical abuse directed by one member of the family against another or others
- Social Class
- Why is domestic violence so commonplace??



# Divorce

- High rate of divorce and separation
- Changing family types
- Absent fathers
- Changing attitudes about families

# Theories of Family and Intimacy

- Functionalist theories
- Feminist Approaches
- Theories of Love and intimacy

# Functionalism

- The family performs important tasks that contribute to society's basic needs and helps to perpetuate social order.
- Functionalists have regarded the nuclear family as fulfilling certain specialized roles in modern societies.
- With the advent of industrialization, the family became less important as a unit of economic production and more focused on reproduction, childrearing and socialization

# Feminism

- Family is not only caring unit but also a locus for exploitation, loneliness and profound inequality.
- Feminists challenged the vision of the family as a harmonious and egalitarian realm in stead they showed that the presence of unequal power relationships within the family means that certain family members tend to benefit more than others.
  - Domestic division of labour
  - Unequal Power relationship within family
  - Caring activities

# Theories of Love and intimacy

- The formation and dissolution of families and households, and the evolving expectations within individuals' personal relationships
  - Transformation of intimacy
    - Romantic Love, Plastic sexuality (sex untied from reproduction) and Confluent Love
  - Normal Chaos of Love
    - Battle between the sexes
    - Endless Cycle of hope of finding 'love'
  - Liquid Love?
    - Frailty of human bonds
    - Tossed between sense of security and freedom
    - Constant urge to keep 'in touch'

# Transformation of intimacy:

## Romantic Love

- Romantic Love: The strong emotional attachment between two or more people, typically used to describe people in a sexual relationship.
- Romantic love, as distinct from the more or less universal compulsions of passionate love, developed in the late eighteenth century. Despite its promise of an equal relationship based on mutual attraction, romantic love has in practice tended to lead to the dominance of men over women (Evans 2002). For many men, the tensions between the respectability of romantic love and the compulsions of passionate love were dealt with by separating the comfort of the wife and home from the sexuality of the mistress or prostitute. The double standard here was that a woman should remain a virgin until the right man arrives – whereas no such norm applied to the men.

# Transformation of intimacy: Plastic Sexuality

- Plastic sexuality is that which can be shaped according to individual erotic needs and wants. It can also serve as a marker of individual identity and/or as the means by which to make radical sexual demands.
- Plastic sexuality, for people in modern societies there is a much greater choice over when, how often and with whom they have sex than ever before.
- With plastic sexuality, sex can be untied from reproduction. This is partly due to **improved methods of contraception**, which have largely freed women from the fear of repetitive pregnancies and childbirths, but the **development of a sense of the self** that could be actively chosen (a social reflexivity) has also contributed to the emergence of plastic sexuality .

# Transformation of intimacy: Confluent Love

- Confluent love is active and contingent. It jars with the forever, one-and-only qualities of romantic love.
- The emergence of confluent love goes some way towards explaining **the rise of separation and divorce**. Romantic love meant that once people had married they were usually stuck with one another, no matter how the relationship developed. **Now people have more choice**: whereas divorce was previously difficult or impossible to obtain, married people are now no longer bound to stay together if the relationship does not work.



# Normal Chaos of Love

- In *The Normal Chaos of Love* (1995), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim examine the tumultuous (উত্তাল) nature of personal relationships, marriages and family patterns against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world.
  - Battle between the sexes
  - Hunger for love
  - Endless Cycle of hope of finding 'true love' and fulfilment

# Liquid Love

'liquid' to describe modern society, which he sees characterized by constant change and a lack of lasting bonds.

Frailty of human bonds-

Tossed between sense of security and freedom.

Constant urge to keep in touch.