**Seminar 3**

HHS4U Family Theories

**Terms - Minds On  
“normal family”…**in 1941 the most important family form as defined by Stats Canada as – husband and wife living together with or without children

**feminists**… a person who supports feminism, feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men.

**Christian New Right**… is a term used in the United States to describe right-wing Christian political factions that are characterized by their strong support of socially conservative policies.

**the “natural family**”… a term coined by William Gairdner, in the book the War Against the Family, to refers to that immemorial unit of a married man and woman and their dependent children living together in the same house

**the “anti social family”…** a term coined by Michelle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, in the book the Anti-Social Family – where they argue or put forth the idea that the way that the nuclear family has been privileged in our society, it has essentially anti-social in a way that is not good for everyone in a society.

**male privilege** … context –p. 29 a social practice embedded in law re: sex, conception and child birth where men could engage in a variety of sexual relations with little fear of sanction, there were strong conventions about what kind of sexual behavior was acceptable for women.

Privilege, at its core, is the advantages that people benefit from based solely on their social status.

is a term for social, economic, and political advantages or rights that are made available to **men** solely on the basis of their sex. A man's access to these benefits may also depend on other characteristics such as race, sexual orientation and social class.

**task leader**… connected to structural functionalism and Talcott Parsons who looked at the family as a unit that needed a task leader and an emotional leader. He used this division to rationalize gender differences and inequality. Males are the task leaders in charge of relating to society, of providing rationality and earning the money to support the family

**emotional leader**… flip side of the task leader. The emotional leader provides nurturing and takes care of the relationships, provides sensitivity and takes care of the home.

**deviant…** families who didn’t conform to the model put forward by Parsons and supported by the majority were viewed as deviant or inadequate. This could include Native, Black and working class families. These families may have needed the female or mother to be working outside the family as well, and or in some cases they may have been the matriarch or head of the household. In some ways this been seen as a legacy of slavery where men were often taken away from their families and women became the heads of their households.

**boundary confusion**… connected to systems theory, this theory holds that families are relatively closed, boundary maintaining groups. Families need to protect and maintain their boundaries. Those within the boundaries are family and what happens to one affects everyone. When it comes to boundary confusion, this could possibly happen when families redefine themselves through divorce or remarriage.

**sexism**… it is the ism that has been used to describe the inequities that essentially privilege men and discriminate against women.  Technically though, sexism is both discrimination based on gender and the attitudes, stereotypes, and the cultural elements that promote this discrimination. It can be man against woman or woman against man. **misogyny…** is the hatred or dislike of women or girls. **Misogyny** can be manifested in numerous ways, including sexual discrimination, denigration of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification of women.

Conversely, misandry is the hatred or dislike of men or boys.

**deconstruction …** connected to Postmodernity, where researchers are more apt to critically examine society and to look at it again through a new lens, with an interest in deconstructing or taking apart prevailing beliefs, especially those that claim to know the truth about the social world. All categories are the product of discussion and interpretation and therefore are basically meaningless, in that they are not universal truths.

**theory**… a framework for organizing and explaining evidence. They are not facts, just attempts to explain evidence. They are tools for understanding – ways of seeing, models of explanation.

**Theories…**

**(structural) functionalism**… a sociological theory that looks at how a society is organized to perform its required functions effectively, functionalism assumes that families are institutions that serve a specific function for society and family members are expected to fill prescribed roles within the institution for the good of society as a whole

**symbolic interactionism**… psych theory that looks at how individuals behave based on their perceptions of themselves and others

**systems theory**… a soc theory that looks at how groups of individuals interact as a system, or how different parts work together and influence one another in a relatively stable way over time

**developmental (life course)**… behaviours demonstrated by individuals or families at various stages of their lives. It examines biological, psychological, social and cultural factors that influence development

**social exchange theory**… a psych theory that looks at how individuals make choices within roles by weighing the costs and benefits

**feminist theory**… see charts

**liberal feminism**… see charts

**socialist feminism**… see charts

**women of colour /anti oppression feminism**… see charts

**radical feminism**… see charts

**post modernism**... is the concept of rejecting the idea of the self as a processor of true characteristics and accepting a plurality of voices Gergen (1991). It is the deconstruction of what one believes to be true to make way for multiple realities

**queer theory**… is a set of ideas based around the idea that identities are not fixed and do not determine who we are.  Queer theory challenges essentialist notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality within the mainstream [discourse](https://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/courses/definitions/discourse.html) (the “binary sexual regime,”), and instead posits an understanding of [sexuality](https://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/courses/definitions/sexuality.htm) that emphasizes shifting boundaries, ambivalences, and cultural constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context. "To queer" is to render “normal” [sexuality](https://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/courses/definitions/sexuality.htm) as strange and unsettled, to challenge heterosexuality as a naturalized social-sexual norm and promote the notion of “non-straightness,” challenging the **hegemony**(domination) of "straight"[ideology](https://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/courses/definitions/Ideology.html).

**Summary**

Write a five sentences summary of either of the excerpts (handout #1 or handout #2). Try to be as comprehensive as you can in these five sentences. Include as much of the key information as possible. There will be a prize for the best one! NOTE: Do this first so you don’t forget, it is worth marks on its own.

**Discussion Questions - Action***Introduction*

1. Briefly outline the history of the debate over same sex families and the position and actions taken by Stephen Harper, leader of the Conservative Party?

* Federal government passed a law in 2005, making same sex legal.
* Conservatives were elected in Jan 2006 forming a minority government and part of their platform was a plan to revisit and repeal the same sex law.
* Their motion was defeated.
* Same sex marriages and families have been legally recognized since.

1. What was the view of Pope Benedict XVI regarding family? Research the view of the current pope, Pope Francis on the issue of same sex marriage.

* Urged bishops to oppose same sex marriage.
* Pope Francis is the current pope and while he hasn’t repealed or changed the Catholic Church’s position, he is urging bishops to ask why people want same sex marriage rather than to condemn them.

1. What is at stake in debates about how families are defined?

* Competing conceptualizations of family, who counts, underlying these debates are contending or conflicting views about family that are connected to different starting assumptions about human nature, the importance of biology in social life, the importance of masculinity and femininity, the importance of childhood socialization, the nature of sexuality, and how central families are to social organization.
* Who counts affects social, political and economic policies which affect all of us, particularly those who may not have counted in the past or who currently are not counted.

1. On page 28 in the last paragraph and on to page 29, Luxton cites the various shifts in family that exist today versus the singular nuclear family of the mid-1900s. Additionally, she mentions other practices that are being challenged, such as the social and legal subordination of women to men. Detail the ways in which women were legally and socially subordinate to men. How are the two types of subordination linked?

* There has been a shift in the way families are defined and constructed.
* In the past social norms only recognized the nuclear family, today that has shifted to include same sex families, single parent families, women who have children without being married – without being ostracized or cast out, some intentionally now
* Other practices that are being challenged include the legal and social subordination of women to men, where
  + Legal subordination includes… women’s property becoming the property of their husband, the children were under his authority and not hers, a man could legally beat his wife or have her committed, they weren’t allowed to make decisions, and they even had to have sex at his command regardless of their interest at the time.
  + Social subordination includes… the sanctioning of women who don’t conform to the law and or convention, men can have sex outside of marriage without much consequence, and in fact it was almost expected “sowing their wild oats”, where as only women of ill repute would do the same. If you were a woman who had a child and weren’t married you were penalized socially, your child was termed illegitimate, and you could be subjected to financial and social penalites (couldn’t get welfare if you were suspected of having a male lover, because if you had one he should be supporting you).

1. What are some of the ways that males have experienced privilege in our society? Also, what other social mores have been or are being challenged?

* Sexually, with the double standard
* Legally as above, and socially as above
* Considered to be more rationale
* Assertive male, angry female
* Given more respect and power politically and in business
* Treated with less disrespect sexually – eg. Slut or man whore
* Less likely to be sexually or physically assaulted
* More likely to get a job and or a promotion

All of these are being challenged and the following new mores are being upheld

* Same sex rights
* Teens keeping babies
* Common law lifestyle
* Divorce and remarriage

1. Contemporary theories about the family are based on the older historical ones developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. How have new developments and shifts in family affected family theories?
   * New developments reflect the changing social and political forces that have been shaping today’s families, for instance, new families create new directions in family theory – as the evidence changes so to must the explanation for it, therefore feminism, queer theory and post modernism are now currently included as well.

For 7 to 16 see the charts

1. What is the whole point of the Heforshe campaign?

* Inviting men to be part of the solution for feminism, to help bring about equality

1. How does Luxton explain the variety of theories used to understand families? What does she say is an important challenge for family sociologists?

* The starting assumptions and organizing concepts of different perspectives leads to different questions, different research methods and different “takes” on families
* Also it shows that the perspectives we each have on families are shaped by the particular theoretical orientation we hold, some of these are competing or conflicting
* The challenge is to develop theoretical approaches which constantly examine their own assumptions and concepts and which recognize that there is not “truth” but only different ways of understanding the world

**Reflection Questions - Consolidation**

1. Which theory or theories do you most identify with? Why?
2. Which theory or theories do you least identify with? Why?
3. Which is the hardest to understand?
4. Which is the easiest?