

Chapter 4 Families and households

Topic 6 Family diversity

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Activity: Research

How different generations view family diversity

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Identify the patterns of opinion on the nature of family life from different generations.
- Draw conclusions about changes in attitudes to family life.
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of using interviews to study generational differences in the meaning of family life.

- A. You will conduct semi-structured interviews to look at the attitudes of different generations to family diversity. Formulate your questions, while bearing in mind key research issues such as:
1. The type of family they live in now.
 2. The different types of family they have lived in.
 3. Any factors that affected their family type, such as pressure to conform to cultural norms.
 4. What do they think about different family types such as same-sex couples.
 5. Do they think there is a 'normal' family type? What is it?
 6. The importance of family.

In groups of three, use the text on pages 225-228 Modernism and the nuclear family for further help in formulating your interview questions.

You need to interview people from different generations (parents and grandparents as well as classmates) so you can compare their responses to note any differences.

- B. Carry out your interviews. (Look at page 125 for further details on semi-structured interviews.) Try to gain further information by asking follow-up questions where you can.

Allocate the roles in your research group as follows:

- **The interviewer**, who asks pre-prepared and follow-up questions and makes the interviewee feel at ease and builds rapport. Think about what kind of person you are going to interview and which of you is more likely to establish the kind of relationship that will encourage them to open up.
- **The recorder**, who makes sure the interview is recorded. You can use pen and paper or an audio recorder. Remember, you must get the interviewee's consent to record their answers. This will include explaining the purpose of your research and what you are going to do with their answers, as well as guaranteeing them anonymity.
- **The observer**, who makes notes on any other aspects of the interview such as body language, tone of voice, emotional response, the physical setting etc. Also makes notes on the effectiveness of the interviewer in gaining information.

- C. Pool your results as a class. Are there any patterns to the responses, e.g. did older people have more negative views about same-sex couples? What reasons might there be for these patterns?
- D. Write a summary paragraph on any generational differences in attitudes to family diversity your class found in your research.