The Personal Life Perspective on the Family

Criticises previous perspectives

- Their focus on the nuclear family with fixed traditional gender roles does not recognise the complexity of contemporary family life.
  - Criticises Functionalism and Marxism for making generalisations about family life which do not fit the realities of the society we live in today.
- People are not entirely free to decide for themselves how to shape their families, and their family relationships
  - Also critices Giddens, Beck's postmodern theory of influenced by traditions or norms when they make these decisions.

Evaluations

- Positive
  - Recognises that people are active in constructing family lives
- Criticisms
  - It takes a too broad a definition of the family

Major contribution: The family is not the only significant relationship in people's lives

- Their identity or sense of belonging comes from other meaningful relationships
  - Close friends my be treated as 'Fictive kin'
  - Pets may be seen as more significant than uncles/ aunts
  - Gay and lesbian 'chosen families offer emotional and maybe financial support
  - Subcultures/ gangs may be regarded as family
  - Dead relatives may be regarded as part of the family

the development of families and relationships is complex.

The families and roles that people are constructing have an element of individual choice but the choices that people are making are constrained by a social context in three ways:

- firstly people are embedded in their past experiences or family history,
- secondly the expectations of the society they presently live in,
- thirdly people are subject to structural factors such as social class, ethnic and gender inequalities.