

**AS Sociology**  
**Family and**  
**Households**  
**Revision Notes**

# Topic 1 – Perspectives on The Family

*Being able to critically apply different perspectives is the most important skill you can demonstrate in Sociology. You can also apply the perspectives to many of the other topics within the family, most obviously Marriage and Divorce and Social Policies. There are six perspectives you need to be able to apply, which form the six topics within this topic.*

## Subtopics

- Functionalism
- Marxism
- Feminisms
- The New Right
- Postmodernism
- Late Modernism

## Key concepts, research studies and case studies you should be able to apply

- The Nuclear family
- Stable Satisfaction of the sex drive
- Primary Socialisation
- Dual Burden
- Stabilisation of adult personalities
- Primitive communism
- ideological functions
- family as a unit of consumption
- Socialisation
- Parson's functional fit theory
- Traditional society
- Extended family
- Triple Shift
- Negotiated Family
- The Underclass
- Moral Decline
- The Pure Relationship
- Risk Society
- Consumer culture
- Globalisation
- Negotiated family
- Individualisation
- 'The normal chaos of love'

## Possible exam style short answer questions

- Outline and briefly explain two positive functions that the nuclear family might perform (10)
- Using one example, explain what is meant by the term 'the stabilisation of adult personalities' (4)
- Using one example explain how the nuclear family 'fits' industrial society? (4)
- Outline and briefly explain two criticisms of the 'The Functionalist Perspective' on the family (10)
- Outline three ways in which the family might perform ideological functions (6)
- Using one example, explain what is meant the phrase 'the family is a unit of consumption' (4)
- Define the term Patriarchy (2)
- Outline and briefly explain the difference between the Liberal and Radical Feminist views of the family (10)
- Using one example explain postmodern society has influenced family life in recent years (4)

## Possible Essay Questions – *You should plan these!*

- Assess the Contribution of Functionalism to our Understanding of Family Life (24) (June 2013)
- Examine Marxist views of the role of the family (24) (January 2013)
- Using material from Item 2B and elsewhere, assess the contribution of feminist sociologists to an understanding of family roles and relationships (24) (June 2011)
- Evaluate the New Right Perspective on the family (24)
- Evaluate the postmodernist view of the family and relationships (24)
- Assess the view that the main aim of the nuclear family is to meet the needs of Capitalism (24)
- ***Using material from Item 2B and elsewhere, assess the view that, in today's society, the family is losing its functions (24) (June 2010)***

***The final question is emboldened because it is more likely you'll get a question like this rather than a straightforward 'assess this perspective' type question.***

## **Topic 1.1: The Functionalist view of The Family**

### **The Functionalist View of Society**

Functionalists regard society as a system made up of different parts which depend on each other. Different institutions each perform specific functions within a society to keep that society going, in the same way as the different organs of a human body perform different functions in order to maintain the whole.

In Functionalist thought, the family is a particularly important institution as this is the 'basic building block' of society which performs the crucial functions of socialising the young and meeting the emotional needs of its members. Stable families underpin social order and economic stability.

### **George Peter Murdock – The four essential functions of the nuclear family**

Looked at 200 different societies and argued that family was universal (in all of them). Suggested there were 'four essential functions' of the family:

1. Stable satisfaction of the sex drive – within monogamous relationships
2. The biological reproduction of the next generation – without which society cannot continue.
3. Socialisation of the young – teaching basic norms and values
4. Meeting its members economic needs – producing food and shelter for example.

### **Criticisms of Murdock**

- Feminist Sociologists argue that arguing that the family is essential is ideological because traditional family structures typically disadvantage women.
- It is feasible that other institutions could perform the functions above.
- Anthropological research has shown that there are some cultures which don't appear to have 'families' - the Nayar for example.

### **Talcott Parson's Functional Fit Theory**

Parson's has a historical perspective on the evolution of the nuclear family. His functional fit theory is that as society changes, the type of family that 'fits' that society, and the functions it performs change. Over the last 200 years, society has moved from pre-industrial to industrial – and the main family type has changed from the extended family to the nuclear family. The nuclear family fits the more complex industrial society better, but it performs a reduced number of functions.

The extended family consisted of parents, children, grandparents and aunts and uncles living under one roof, or in a collection of houses very close to each other. Such a large family unit 'fitted' pre-industrial society as the family was entirely responsible for the education of children, producing food and caring for the sick – basically it did everything for all its members.

In contrast to pre-industrial society, in industrial society (from the 1800s in the UK) the isolated

“nuclear family” consisting of only parents and children becomes the norm. This type of family 'fits' industrial societies because it required a mobile workforce. The extended family was too difficult to move when families needed to move to find work to meet the requirements of a rapidly changing and growing economy. Furthermore, there was also less need for the extended family as more and more functions, such as health and education, gradually came to be carried out by the state.

### **Criticisms of Parson's Functional Fit Theory**

- Basically - it's too 'neat' - social change doesn't happen in such an orderly manner:
- Laslett found that church records show only 10% of households contained extended kin before the industrial revolution. This suggests the family was already nuclear before industrialisation.
- Young and Wilmott found that Extended Kin networks were still strong in East London as late as the 1970s.

### **Parsons - The two essential or irreducible functions of the family**

According to Parsons, although the nuclear family performs reduced functions, it is still the only institution that can perform two core functions in society - Primary Socialisation and the Stabilisation of Adult Personalities.

**1. Primary Socialisation** – The nuclear family is still responsible for teaching children the norms and values of society known as Primary Socialisation.

An important part of socialisation according to Functionalists is 'gender role socialisation. If primary socialisation is done correctly then boys learn to adopt the 'instrumental role' (also known as the 'breadwinner role) - they go on to go out to work and earns money. Girls learn to adopt the 'expressive role' - doing all the 'caring work', housework and bringing up the children.

**2. The stabilisation of adult personalities** refers to the emotional security which is achieved within a marital relationship between two adults.

According to Parsons working life in Industrial society is stressful and the family is a place where the working man can return and be 'de-stressed' by his wife, which reduces conflict in society. This is also known as the 'warm bath theory'

## **General Criticisms of Functionalism**

*It is really important to be able to criticise the perspectives. Evaluation is worth around half of the marks in the exam!*

### **1. Downplaying Conflict**

Both Murdock and Parsons paint a very rosy picture of family life, presenting it as a harmonious and integrated institution. However, they downplay conflict in the family, particularly the 'darker side' of family life, such as violence against women and child abuse.

### **2. Being out of Date**

Parson's view of the instrumental and expressive roles of men and women is very old-fashioned. It may have held some truth in the 1950s but today, with the majority of women in paid work, and the blurring of gender roles, it seems that both partners are more likely to take on both expressive and instrumental roles

### **3. Ignoring the exploitation of women**

Functionalists tend to ignore the way women suffer from the sexual division of labour in the family. Even today, women still end up being the primary child carers in 90% of families, and suffer the burden of extra work that this responsibility carries compared to their male partners. Gender roles are socially constructed and usually involve the oppression of women. There are no biological reasons for the functionalist's view of separation of roles into male breadwinner & female home-maker. These roles lead to the disadvantages being experienced by women.

### **4. Functionalism is too deterministic**

This means it ignores the fact that children actively create their own personalities. An individual's personality isn't pre-determined at birth or something they have no control in. Functionalism incorrectly assumes an almost robotic adoption of society's values via our parents; clearly there are many examples where this isn't the case.

## **Topic 1.2: The Marxist Perspective on The Family**

### **Overview of the Marxist Perspective**

Marxism is a 'structural conflict' perspective. They see society as structured along class lines with institutions generally working in the interests of the small elite class who have economic power (The Bourgeoisie) and the much larger working class (The Proletariat). The Bourgeois gain their wealth from exploiting the proletariat. There is thus a conflict of interests between The Bourgeois and The Proletariat.

However, this conflict of interests rarely boils over into revolution because institutions such as the family perform the function of 'ideological control', or convincing the masses that the present unequal system is inevitable, natural and good.

Something else Marxists suggest about the family (like the Functional Fit theory) is that the family type generally changes with society - more specifically, the nuclear family emerges not because of the needs of industrialisation, but because of the needs of the Capitalist system.

### **Explaining the emergence of the nuclear family – Engels**

According to Engels, the monogamous nuclear family only emerged with Capitalism. Before Capitalism, traditional, tribal societies were classless and they practised a form of 'primitive communism' in which there was no private property. In such societies, property was collectively owned, and the family structure reflected this - there were no families as such, but tribal groups existed in a kind of 'promiscuous horde' in which there were no restrictions on sexual relationships.

However, with the emergence of Capitalism in the 18th Century, society and the family changed. Capitalism is based on a system of private ownership – The bourgeois use their own personal wealth to personally invest in businesses in order to make a profit, they don't invest for the benefit of everyone else.

Eventually the Bourgeois started to look for ways to pass on their wealth to the next generation, rather than having it shared out amongst the masses, and this is where the monogamous nuclear family comes from. It is the best way of guaranteeing that you are passing on your property to your son, because in a monogamous relationship you have a clear idea of who your own children are.

Ultimately what this arrangement does is to reproduce inequality – The children of the rich grow up into wealth, while the children of the poor remain poor. Thus the nuclear family benefits the Bourgeois more than the proletariat.

### **Criticisms of Engels**

- Gender inequality clearly preceded Capitalism. The vast majority of tribes in Africa and Asia are patriarchal, with women being barred from owning property, having no political power, and having to do most of the child care and hard physical labour.
- Wealthy Capitalist economies such as the UK and USA have seen the fastest improvements in gender equality over the last 100 years. Capitalism, increasing wealth and gender equality within a nation seem to be correlated.

## **Contemporary Marxism - The family as an Ideological Apparatus**

The modern nuclear family functions to promote values that ensure the reproduction and maintenance of capitalism. The family is described as an ideological apparatus – this means it socialises people to think in a way that justifies inequality and encourages people to accept the capitalist system as fair, natural and unchangeable. One way in which this happens is that there is a hierarchy in most families which teaches children to accept there will always be someone in “authority” who they must obey, which then mirrors the hierarchy of boss-worker in paid employment in later life.

## **Contemporary Marxism - The Family as a Unit of Consumption**

Capitalists/business owners want to keep workers’ wages down so they can make a profit, but to do so they must also be able to sell the workers goods i.e. they must create demand for their products. The family builds demand for goods in a number of ways

1) Families must keep up with the material goods/services acquired by their neighbours and peers e.g. family holidays, cars - this is known “Keeping up with the Joneses”. There are significant amounts of advertising and TV programmes influencing parents in this way.

2) The media and companies target children in their advertising who then persuade their parents through pester power to buy more expensive items. This is particularly bad in the UK where there few legal restrictions on adverts aimed at children; in Sweden advertising aimed at children under 12 is illegal.

## **Overall Criticisms of Marxism**

- Too deterministic - it assumes people passively accept socialisation and family life, and that the future is pre-determined.
- Ignores family diversity in capitalist society, and that many women now work full time as well
- Feminists argue that the Marxist focus on class ignores the inequalities between men and women, which is the real source of female oppression.
- Marxism ignore the benefits of nuclear family e.g. both parents support the children



## **Topic 1.3: The Feminist Perspective on The Family**

### **Overview of Feminism**

Almost all feminists agree that “gender” is socially constructed. This means that gender roles are learnt rather than determined by biology, and the most significant institution where we are socialised into our appropriate roles and norms of behaviour is the family. The proof for this theory is found in the sometimes radically different behaviour we see between women from different societies i.e. different societies construct being “women” in different ways (This is obviously true for men as well).

### **Feminism and the Family**

Feminism started as a criticism of gender roles in society. Feminists’ argued that gender roles were created by men for their benefit, and they described this type of society as “patriarchal”. From the 1950s onwards, feminists were broadly critical of the nuclear family, which was the dominant family type at that time. They argued the nuclear family performed two key functions which oppressed women a) the family socialised girls to accept subservient roles within the family, whilst socialising boys to believe they were superior – this happens through children witnessing then recreating the parental relationship b) it socialised women into accepting the “housewife” role as the only possible/acceptable role for a women. Indeed it was the only way to be feminine/to be a woman. Essentially, feminists viewed the function of the family as a breeding ground where patriarchal values were learned by an individual, which in turn created a patriarchal society.

Feminism today can be split into three distinct branches: Liberal Feminists, Marxist Feminists and Radical Feminists. They differ significantly over the extent to which they believe that the family is still patriarchal and in what the underlying causes of the existence of patriarchy might be.

Remember – all the theories below are discussing the “nuclear” family. They don’t account for the family diversity and varying family arrangements that are so prevalent in modern society.

### **Liberal Feminism**

Liberal Feminists believe in a “March of Progress” view of the family. This means that they believe that the family is gradually changing for the better over time by becoming more democratic and more equal. They argue that evidence shows men are doing a greater share of domestic labour (housework, childcare), decision making is becoming more equal and that male and female children are socialised in a much more similar manner with similar aspirations. Liberal feminists believe this trend has been facilitated by legal reforms, such as the sex discrimination act and by changes in social attitudes. Essentially, Liberal Feminists believe adult relationships are far less patriarchal than those in the 1950 and therefore children are less likely to learn patriarchal value. They also believe this trend will continue with men and women becoming more equal.

### **Key thinker**

Jenny Somerville (2000) argues women’s role within the family has improved significantly, they now have better access to divorce, control over their own fertility, less social pressure to marry and better job opportunities as mothers. Nonetheless, Somerville does recognise the need for further reforms if women are to achieve full equality.

## **Solutions to inequalities within the family**

Liberal Feminists argue that changes in wider society mean that women are now effectively equal to men – Women have equal opportunities to enter the workforce and politics and are thus free to choose not be housewives and mothers. According to Liberal Feminists, it makes little sense to speak of the family as being a patriarchal institution, and we do not need to make any significant changes to wider society or family structure. Liberal Feminists do think there are issues still worth campaigning about that could make life easier for women – such as more flexible working hours for mothers, challenging gender stereotypes in subject choice, but in the grand scheme of things all the major barriers to gender equality have been broken down over the last century and only relatively minor changes need to be made to advance gender equality further.

### **Criticisms of the Liberal Feminist View**

- Marxist Feminists point out that women still do the majority of housework.
- Marxist Feminists point out that Women are still the primary child carers.
- Radical Feminists point out that it is still women who are most likely to be the victims of domestic violence.

### **Marxist Feminism**

Marxist feminists argue the main cause of women's oppression in the family is not men, but capitalism. They argue that women's oppression performs several functions for Capitalism

1. Women reproduce the labour force – through their unpaid domestic labour, by socialising the next generation of workers and servicing the current workers (their husbands!)

2. Women absorb anger – Think back to Parson's warm bath theory. The Marxist-Feminist interpretation of this is that women are just absorbing the anger of the proletariat, who are exploited and who should be directing that anger towards the Bourgeois

3. Women are a 'reserve army of cheap labour' – if women's primary role is domestic, and they are restricted from working, this also means they are in reserve, to be taken on temporarily as necessary by the Bourgeois, making production more flexible.

**Key thinker** Fran Ansley (1972) argues women absorb the anger that would otherwise be directed at capitalism. Ansley argues women's male partners are inevitably frustrated by the exploitation they experience at work and women are the victims of this, including domestic violence.

### **Marxist Feminism – Solutions to Gender Inequalities within the family**

For Marxist Feminists, the solutions to gender inequality are economic - We need to tackle Capitalism to tackle Patriarchy. Softer solutions include paying women for childcare and housework – thus putting an economic value on what is still largely women's work, stronger solutions include the abolition of Capitalism and the ushering in of Communism.

### **Criticisms of Marxist Feminism**

It should be apparent that not only is Patriarchal oppression overt in many pre-capitalist societies, but also that gender equality has tended to go hand in hand with the development of Capitalism.

## **Radical Feminism**

Radical feminists argue that all relationships between men and women are based on patriarchy – essentially men are the cause of women’s exploitation and oppression. For radical feminists, the entire patriarchal system needs to be overturned, in particular the family, which they view as root of women’s oppression.

Against Liberal Feminism, they argue that paid work has not been ‘liberating’. Instead women have acquired the ‘dual burden’ of paid work and unpaid housework and the family remains patriarchal – men benefit from women’s paid earnings and their domestic labour. Some Radical Feminists go further arguing that women suffer from the ‘triple shift’ where they have to do paid work, domestic work and ‘emotion work’ – being expected to take on the emotional burden of caring for children.

Radical Feminists also argue that, for many women, there is a ‘dark side of family life’ - According to the British Crime Survey domestic violence accounts for a sixth of all violent crime and nearly 1 in 4 women will experience Domestic Violence at some point in their lifetime and women are much more likely to experience this than men

### **Key thinker**

Kate Millet (see below) was one of the leading American Second Wave Feminists in the 1960s and 70s

### **Solutions to gender inequality**

In short, Radical Feminists advocate for the abolition of the traditional, patriarchal (as they see it) nuclear family and the establishment of alternative family structures and sexual relations. The various alternatives suggested by Radical Feminists include separatism - women only communes, and Matrifocal households. Some also practise political Lesbianism and political celibacy as they view heterosexual relationships as “sleeping with the enemy.”

### **Criticisms of Radical Feminism**

- Ignores the progress that women have made in many areas e.g. work, controlling fertility, divorce.
- Too unrealistic - due to heterosexual attraction separatism is unlikely.
- Ignores domestic/emotional abuse suffered by men who often don't report it.

## **Topic 1.4: The New Right View of The Family**

In the 1980s New Right thinkers argued that government policy was undermining the family so policy changes were needed. Their thinking dominated policy development from 1979 to 1997.

Like Functionalists, the New Right hold the view that there is only one correct or normal family type. This is the traditional or conventional nuclear family. Again like Functionalists, The New Right sees this family as 'natural' and based on fundamental biological differences between men and women. In their view this family is the cornerstone of society; a place of contentment, refuge and harmony. Finally the New Right argue that the decline of the traditional family and the growth of family diversity are the cause of many social problems such as higher crime rates and declining moral standards generally.

The New Right believe that it is important for children to have a stable home, with married mother and father, and that ideally the wife should be able to stay at home to look after the children.

They believe that the introduction of the welfare state led to a culture where people depend on hand-outs from the state and that these encourage single parenting, which in turn, they argue leads to deviancy and a decline in morality.

New Right thinking encouraged the conservative government to launch the Back to Basics campaign 1993 to encourage a return to traditional family values. This was criticised for being unsuccessful, and hypocritical due some Conservative MPs being found to be having affairs or being divorced.

### **Evidence for non-nuclear families being a problem**

1. The rate of family breakdown is much lower amongst married couples (6% compared to 20%)
2. Children from broken homes are almost five times more likely to develop emotional problems
3. Young people whose mother and father split up are also three times as likely to become aggressive or badly behaved
4. Lone-parent families are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as two-parent families.
5. Children from broken homes are nine times more likely to become young offenders.

### **Criticisms of the New Right**

1. They exaggerate the decline of the Nuclear family. Most adults still marry and have children. Most children are reared by their two natural parents. Most marriages continue until death. Divorce has increased, but most divorcees remarry.
2. Feminism - gender roles are socially determined rather than being fixed by biology. Traditional gender roles are oppressive to women.
3. Feminism - divorce being easier is good because without it many women end up being trapped in unhappy or abusive relationships.
4. Most single parents are not welfare scroungers - most want to work but find it difficult to find jobs that are flexible enough so they can balance work and child care.
5. Chester (see later!) argues that the New Right exaggerate the extent of cohabiting and single parent families -most children still spend most of their lives in a nuclear family arrangement

## **Topic 1.5: The Postmodern Perspective on the Family**

Postmodernists argue that we no longer live in the modern world with predictable orderly structures, such as the nuclear family. Instead society has entered a new, chaotic postmodern stage. In postmodern society, family structures are incredibly varied and individuals have much more freedom of choice in aspects of their lives which would have been relatively constrained in the past i.e. lifestyles, personal relationships and family arrangements.

### **Postmodern society has two key characteristics**

#### **1. Diversity and fragmentation**

Society is increasingly fragmented, with a broad diversity of subcultures rather than one shared culture. People create their identity from a wide range of choices, such as youth subcultures, sexual preferences and social movements such as environmentalism.

#### **2. Rapid social change**

New technology such as the internet, email and electronic communication have transformed our lives by dissolving barriers of time and space, transforming patterns of work and leisure and accelerated pace of change making life less predictable.

As a result of these social changes, family life has become very diverse and there is no longer one dominant family type (such as the nuclear family). This means that it is no longer possible to make generalisations about society in the same way that modernist theorists such as Parsons or Marx did in the past.

### **Examples of Two Post-Modernist Thinkers**

#### **Stacey (1998) "The Divorce-Extended Family"**

Judith Stacey argues that women have more freedom than ever before to shape their family arrangement to meet their needs and free themselves from patriarchal oppression. Through case studies conducted in Silicon Valley, California she found that women rather than men are the driving force behind changes in the family. She discovered that many women rejected the traditional housewife role and had chosen extremely varied life paths (some choosing to return to education, becoming career women, divorcing and remarrying). Stacey identified a new type of family "the divorce-extended family" – members are connected by divorce rather than marriage, for example ex in laws, or former husband's new partners.

#### **Hareven (1978) "Life Course Analysis"**

Tamara Hareven advocates the approach of life course analysis, that is that sociologists should be concerned with focus on individual family members and the choices that they make throughout life regarding family arrangements. This approach recognises that there is flexibility and variation in people's lives, for example the choices and decisions they make and when they make them. For example, when they decide to raise children, choosing sexuality or moving into sheltered accommodation in old age.

### **Criticisms of Postmodernism**

- Late-Modernists such as Anthony Giddens suggest that even though people have more freedom, there is still a structure which shapes people's decisions
- Contemporary Feminists disagree with Postmodernism, pointing out that in most cases traditional gender roles which disadvantage women remain the norm.

## Topic 1.6: Late Modern Perspectives on the Family

Like Post-Modernists, Late-Modernists recognize that people have more choice in terms of their relationships and family arrangements, but people are not as free as postmodernists suggest. There are still underlying patterns, and shared experiences of relationships that are a consequence of our living in a 'late-modern' society – rather than families just being diverse and random.

For example, people are less likely to get married because of structural changes – For example gender equality means that both partners have to work and spend longer building their careers, which means the average person has less time to spend making a relationship work, which means a decline in marriage, and an increase in divorce.

**Ulrich Beck** Argues that fewer people getting married is because of an increase in 'risk consciousness' – people see that nearly half of all marriages end in divorce and so they are less willing to take the risk and get married.

This is not simply a matter of freedom of choice – people are 'reflexive' – they look at society, see the risk of marriage, and then choose not to get married – their personal decisions are informed by what they see going in society.

Beck also talks of individualisation – a new social norm is that our individual desires are more important than social commitments, and this makes marriage less likely.

Giddens builds on this and says that the typical relationship today is the Pure Relationship – one which lasts only as long as both partners are happy with it, not because of tradition or a sense of commitment. This makes cohabitation and serial monogamy rather than the long term commitment of a marriage more likely.

The work of Giddens and Beck is briefly summarised below.

### **Anthony Giddens: Choice, Equality and The Pure Relationship**

Giddens argues that in recent decades the family and marriage have been transformed by greater choice and a more equal relationship between men and women. Giddens argues that relationships are now characterised by three general characteristics:

1. The basis of marriage and family has changed into one in which the couple are free to define the relationship themselves rather than simply acting out roles that have been defined in advance by law or tradition. For example, couples today can choose to cohabit rather than marry
2. The typical relationship is the 'pure relationship'....It exists solely to meet the partners' needs and is likely to continue only so long as it succeeds. Couples stay together because of love, happiness of sexual attraction rather than tradition a sense of duty or for the sake of the children.
3. Relationships become part of the process of self-discovery or self-identity trying different relationships become part of establishing who we are part of our journey of self discovery.

However Giddens notes that with more choice, personal relationships inevitably become less

stable and can be ended more or less at will by any partner! Joy! For example most teenagers (57%) think that their relationships will only last 1 year and only 2% of relationships at 18 will progress to marriage'

### **Ulrich Beck: The 'Risk Society' and The Negotiated Family**

Ulrich Beck puts forward a similar view to that of Anthony Giddens. Beck argues that we now live in a 'risk society' where tradition has less influence and people have more choice. As a result we are more aware of risk (we have developed a 'risk consciousness') because having choice means we spend more time calculating the risks and rewards of different courses of action available.

Today's risk society contrasts with the modern society of the past with its stable nuclear family and traditional gender roles. Beck argues that even though the traditional patriarchal family was unequal and oppressive, it did provide a stable and predictable basis for the family by defining each member's role and responsibly. However the patriarchal family has been undermined by two trends.

- Greater Gender Equality - which has challenged male domination in all spheres of life. Women now expect equality both at work and in marriage.
- Greater individualism - where people's actions are influenced more by calculations of their own self-interest than by a sense of obligation to others.

These trends have led to the rise of the negotiated family. Negotiated families do not conform to the traditional family norm, but vary according to the wishes and expectations of their members, who decided what is best for them by discussion. They enter the relationship on an equal basis.

However, the negotiated family may be more equal, but it is less stable, because it is characterised by greater equality.

## Topic 2 – Marriage, Divorce and Cohabitation

*You need to be able to identify key trends in marriage, divorce and cohabitation and outline the social factors which explain why the trends are happening (ideally using sociological perspectives), and analyse the importance of each factor. You also need to be able to outline different perspectives views on the consequences of the changing patterns of each of the above.*

### Sub topics

- 2.1: Explaining the trends in marriage
- 2.2: Explaining the trends in divorce
- 2.3: Perspectives on the consequences of declining marriage and increasing divorce
- 2.4: Examining how marriage, divorce and cohabitation vary by social class, ethnicity, sexuality and across generations.

### Key concepts, research studies and case studies you should be able to apply

- Civil Partnerships
- Divorce
- Legal separation
- Empty shell marriage
- Secularisation
- Cohabitation
- The pure relationship (Anthony Giddens)
- The negotiated family (Ulrich Beck)
- Consumer culture
- Postmodernisation
- Gender roles (changing)
- Genderquake
- Individualisation
- Monogamy
- Serial Monogamy

### Possible exam style short answer questions

- Identify two trends (changes) in the pattern of marriage despite the fact that the overall number of marriages have declined (4)
- Suggest three reasons for the overall rise in the divorce rate since 1969 (6)
- Suggest two reasons for the recent decrease in divorce rates (4)
- Suggest two alternatives to divorce (2)
- Suggest three social changes which explain why there has been a decline in the marriage rate (6)
- Identify and briefly explain two consequences of an increasing divorce rate (4) *hint – use the perspectives.*
- Briefly explain what is meant by the following terms – the matrifocal family, polygamy, polygyny and polyandry (4\*2 marks for each term).



### **Possible Essay Questions – *You should plan these!***

- Examine the reasons for the changes in the patterns of marriage and cohabitation over the last 40 years or so (24) (January 2011)
- Examine the reasons for changes in the divorce rate since 1969 (24) (June 2011)
- Examine the reasons for changing patterns of marriage and divorce over the last 50 years or so (24) June 2014
- Assess different perspectives on declining marriage, increasing divorce and increasing co-habitation (24)
- Examine the consequences for the individual and society of changing patterns of marriage and divorce (24)

## Topic 2.1: Marriage and Cohabitation

### Overview of the trends in marriage and cohabitation in the UK

*Stats below are taken from a combination of the Office for National Statistics and The British Social Attitudes Survey, two good sources to cite in the exam.*

- There has been a long term decline in marriage
- People are more likely to cohabit (although in most cases this is a step before marriage)
- People are marrying later
- The number of remarriages has increased.
- Couples are less likely to marry in church
- There is a greater diversity of marriages (greater ethnic diversity and civil partnerships)
- ***There has been a very recent increase in the marriage rate.***

**Evaluation Point** – Even though there has been a long term decline, marriage remains an important institution because....

- Most households are still headed by a married couple
- Couples may cohabit, but this is normally before getting married – they just get married later
- Most people still think marriage is the ideal type of relationship
- The fact that remarriages have increased show that people still value the institution of marriage.

### Explaining the long term decrease in marriage

**1. Economic Factors** – The increasing cost of living and the increasing cost of weddings.

Increasing property prices in recent years may be one of the factors why couples choose to get married later in life. The average deposit on a first time home is now over £ 30 000, with the average cost of a wedding being around £ 18 000. So for most couples it is literally a choice between getting married in their 20s and then renting/ living with parents, or buying a house first and then getting married in their 30s. The second option is obviously the more financially rational.

### 2. Changing gender roles

**Liberal Feminists** point to changing gender roles as one of the main reasons why couples get married later. More than half of the workforce is now female which means that most women do not have to get married in order to be financially secure. In fact, according to the theory of the genderquake, the opposite is happening – now that most jobs are in the service sector, economic power is shifting to women meaning that marriage seems like a poor option for women in a female economy.

### 3. The New Right

Blame the decline of marriage on moral decline – part of the broader breakdown of social institutions and due to too much acceptance of diversity. This results in the inability of people to commit to each other, and they see this as bad for society and the socialisation of the next generation.

#### **4. Postmodernisation**

Postmodernists explain the decline in marriage as a result of the move to postmodern consumer society characterised by greater individual choice and freedom. We are used to being consumers and picking and choosing, and so marriage is now a matter of individual choice.

Another process associated with Postmodernisation is the decline of tradition and religion (secularisation) – as a result there is less social stigma attached to cohabiting or remarrying after a divorce.

#### **5. Late Modernism**

Associated with the ideas of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck – argue that the decline in marriage is not as simple as people simply having more freedom – People are less likely to get married because of structural changes making life more uncertain. People may want to get married, but living in a late-modern world means marriage doesn't seem like a sensible option.

Ulrich Beck argues that fewer people getting married is because of an increase in 'risk consciousness' – people see that nearly half of all marriages end in divorce and so they are less willing to take the risk and get married.

Beck also talks about individualisation – a new social norm is that our individual desires are more important than social commitments, and this makes marriage less likely.

Giddens builds on this and says that the typical relationship today is the Pure Relationship – one which lasts only as long as both partners are happy with it, not because of tradition or a sense of commitment. This makes cohabitation and serial monogamy rather than the long term commitment of a marriage more likely.

#### **6. Evaluation Points**

- The decline of marriage is not as simple as it just being about individual choice
- There are general social changes which lie behind its decline
- We should not exaggerate the decline of marriage (see details above)
- It may be that over the last 30-40 years we have just witnessed a shift to people getting married later, and now the marriage rate will stabilise as a result.

## Topic 2.2: Divorce

### Overview of the trends in divorce

- There has been a long term increase in the overall divorce rate
- The increase was especially rapid following the 1969 Divorce Act (see below)
- Since 2005 the Divorce rate has declined.

### Explaining the long term increase in the divorce rate

**1. Social Policy** - Changes are the first factor that explains rapidly increasing divorce in the early 1970s – the 1969 the Divorce Act extended the grounds of divorce to 'irretrievable breakdown', making divorce possible even if only one partner wanted a divorce. *However, this cannot explain all of the increase, since the divorce rate was rising before the act, and continued to rise for many years afterwards.*

**2. Economic Factors** - We also need to look at economic factors – Increasing inequality in the UK has meant that the lower social classes now get paid less compared to rising living costs (mortgages/ bills). This means that both partners in a marriage now need to do paid work to get by, which puts a strain on the marriage which leads to higher numbers getting divorced. *A positive evaluation of this is that divorce rates are higher amongst poorer families.*

**3. The New Right** - Would claim that increasingly generous welfare benefits for single mothers is a crucial factor which allows women to divorce if they deem it necessary – because if divorce occurs within a family, in 9/10 cases, the child will go with the mother – making it difficult to find full time work – and hence benefits may be a necessary link in the chain of explaining the increase in divorce. The New Right would also see the increasing divorce rate as a sign of wider moral decline, a point of view which is not shared by the next three perspectives...

**4. Feminism/ changing gender roles** – The changing position of women in society. Is crucial to understanding the increase in divorce rates.

Women today are much more likely to be in employment today and this means they are less financially dependent on their husbands and thus freer to end an unsatisfactory marriage. The proportion of women in some kind of paid work is now 70%, whereas in the 1950s it was less than 50%

Giddens himself argues that two trends are the most important – the impact of the Feminist movement, which arguably lies behind all of the above changes, and also the advances in contraception – which allows women to avoid unwanted pregnancies – and women in marriages without children will be freer to leave those marriages. Feminists however, point out that the advances of women can be exaggerated – women still earn less than men, and traditional gender norms remain in many families.

**5. A further set of reasons are those associated with Postmodernism.** Both religion and traditional values have declined in Britain. As a result there is no longer a set of social values which force people into staying married, there is less social stigma attached to getting a divorce and so people are freer to choose to get divorced. This change reflects the declining importance of social structure and the rise of consumer culture – the idea that individuals can choose their own lifestyles. *However, one exception to this might be that among some Muslim communities the concept of Izaat still prevents people from getting divorced.*

**6. Late Modern Sociologists** argue against Postmodernists – getting a divorce is not simply a matter of individual choice, rather the increasing divorce rate is because of the changing nature of the typical relationship.

Anthony Giddens, for example argues that the typical type of relationship is the 'pure relationship'... it exists solely to meet the partners' needs and is likely to continue only so long as it succeeds. Couples stay together because of love, happiness of sexual attraction rather than for tradition or for the sake of the children. In short, we have increased expectations of marriage, and if it doesn't work for us, then we get a divorce.

Ulrich Beck points out that divorce has increased because the typical late-modern family is characterised by more gender equality and negotiation – pleasing both partners takes a lot of time and effort, which is simply not sustainable when both partners are in paid work, which in turn explains the high levels of divorce.

### **Explaining the short term increase in the divorce rate**

The divorce rate has declined since 2005. Three possible reasons are:

- Fewer people are getting married, so there are fewer people who can divorce
- Because people are getting married later, they are more likely to stay together
- People can't afford to get a divorce and set up two new homes
- Increased immigration. Immigrants are more likely to hold traditional values and thus less likely to get divorced.

## **Topic 2.3: Perspectives on the consequences of declining marriage and increasing divorce**

### **What replaces married couples?**

- Probably the most fundamental thing is that people's attitudes towards marriage have change. The idea that marriage is a necessary tradition or a sacred duty have declined drastically, marriage is now seen as a choice.
- There is greater family and household diversity as a result.
- Despite the decline of marriage, most people still 'couple up' - cohabitation has increased.
- Cohabiting couples are more likely to break up, so relationships have become more unstable. A related factor here is that serial monogamy, rather than out and out promiscuity throughout one's life appears to be the new norm.
- High levels of divorce create more single parent households and more single person households, as well as more reconstituted families
- Finally, it is important not to exaggerate the decline of marriage – most households are still headed by a married couple.

### **Feminism**

Feminists would generally see the decline of marriage as a tradition as a good thing, because traditional marriage is a patriarchal institution. Most divorces proceedings are initiated by women which suggests that marriage works less well for women than for men.

However, radical feminists would point out that the increase in divorce has not necessarily benefited women – as children go to live with the mother in 90% cases following a divorce, and single parent families (mostly female) suffer higher levels of poverty and stigma.

### **The New Right/ Functionalism**

Would interpret these trends in a negative way, as indicating a decline in morality, and a breakdown of social structure and order – the family is supposed to be the fundamental building block of society, and it is difficult to see what will replace it. Without the family we risk less effective primary socialisation and more problem children as well as more anomie for adults.

### **Postmodernism**

The decline of marriage and increase in divorce reflect the fact that we are part of a consumer society where individual choice is central to life. The end of the ideology of the nuclear family is seen as good, and Postmodernists tend to reject the idea that the traditional married nuclear family is better than other family forms, so these trends are not a significant problem for either the individual or society.

## **Late modernism**

People still value marriage but changes in the social structure make it harder to start and to maintain stable relationships – greater gender equality means it's harder to please both partners, and the fact that both people have to do paid work doesn't help with the communication required to keep a relationship going, or help with people getting together in the first place.

People now delay getting married not only because of needing to establish a career first, but also because of the increased cost of mortgages and weddings, and because of the increased fear of getting divorced – with cohabiting the new norm before marriage.

New institutions also emerge to help us cope with the insecurities of modern relationships – marriage guidance and pre-nuptial agreements are two of the most obvious.

In short, marriage is not about to disappear as an institution, but it's not an easy path to pursue either.

## Topic 3 – Family Diversity

*Since the 1960s, post-modern society has been characterised by an increasing amount of family diversity, and this topic looks at how families and households have become more diverse, why they have become more diverse, and perspectives on increasing family diversity.*

*For this part of the course you need to be able to explain the reasons for the increase in the family and household types listed above and be able to analyse the social significance of these changes from different sociological perspectives. You also need to be able to examine and assess the extent to which families, households and relationships vary according to social class, ethnicity and sexuality.*

### Sub Topics

- 3.1 – The underlying causes of the long term increase in Reconstituted families, Single parent families, Multi-generational households, Single person households and ‘Kidult’ households.
- 3.2 Perspectives on the social significance of the increase of all of the above (covered in 3.1).
- 3.3 – The extent to which family life varies by ethnicity, social class and sexuality.

### Key concepts, research studies and case studies you should be able to apply

- Reconstituted Families
- The cereal-packet family
- Blended Family
- Beanpole Family
- Multi-generational Household
- Forced Marriage
- Polygamy

### Possible exam style short answer questions

- Suggest three types of household that have increased since the 1960s
- Why the term ‘blended family’ might not be an appropriate phrase to describe a reconstituted family
- Suggest two challenges reconstituted families might face which traditional nuclear families might not
- Suggest three reasons for the increase in single parent households
- Suggest two stereotypes associated with single parent households
- Suggest two reasons why single parent households are twice as likely to be in poverty compared to nuclear family households
- Suggest three reasons for the increase in single person households
- Suggest two reasons for increase in multi-generational households
- Suggest three ways in which family life may vary by ethnicity
- Suggest three ways in which family life may vary by social class background
- Suggest two reasons why some Sociologists claim that the decline of the nuclear family has been exaggerated



## **Trends in Reconstituted Families**

In 2011 there were 544,000 step families with dependent children in England and Wales.

This means that 11% of couple families with dependent children were step families.

The Number of step families has increased since the 1950s.

However, the number of step families has declined recently dropping from 631,000 in 2001 to just 544,000 in 2011.

If there is only one biological parent in the step-family, that parent is the mother rather than the father in 90% of cases.

## **Trends in Lone Parent Households**

There were nearly 2.0 million lone parents with dependent children in the UK in 2012, a figure which has grown significantly from 1.6 million in 1996.

In 2012, women accounted for 91 per cent of lone parents with dependent children and men the remaining 9 per cent. These percentages have changed little since 1996.

## **Trends in Single Person Households**

In the UK, 34% of households have one person living in them. According to Euromonitor International, the number of people living alone globally is sky-rocketing, rising from about 153 million in 1996 to 277 million in 2011 – an increase of around 80% in 15 years.

## **Trends in ‘Kidult’ Households**

According to the Office for National Statistics in 2011, nearly 3.0 million adults aged between 20 and 34 were living with a parent or parents, an increase of almost half a million, or 20 per cent, since 1997.

This means that nearly 1/3 men and 1/7 women in the UK now live with their parents.

## **Trends in Multi-generational Households**

*The ONS doesn't collect data on 'multi generational households', but it does collect data on 'concealed families', a closely related concept.*

The latest census analysis reveals there were 289,000 concealed families in 2011, making up 1.8% of all families (15.8 million) in England and Wales. A concealed family is a family living in a multi-family household, in addition to the primary family.

### 3.1 The underlying factors which explain the increase in household diversity

#### 1. Changing patterns of marriage, divorce and cohabitation

The increase long term decline of marriage and increase in cohabitation and divorce can explain many of the above trends:

The fact that people are getting married later explains why there are more Kidult and single person households (for those who can afford it).

Any divorce which involves children is very likely to create one single parent household and one single person household for a period of time, and then many of these people will go on to form reconstituted families.

Relationship breakdown is more common amongst cohabiting rather than married families, and the cohabiting family household is the fastest growing family type in the UK.

Higher rates of divorce might also explain the increase in multi generational households – as single mothers move back in with their parents, thus forming a multi generational household.

#### 2. Postmodernism and Postmodernisation

**Postmodernists** argue that the increase in the diversity of family household structures reflects the fact that we live in a diverse, tolerant society in which people are free to choose any type of family.

More people choose to stay single and hence there is an increase in Single Person Households Kidult households and because people are more tolerant it is easier than it was to be a single parent today because there is less stigma associated with being a single parent.

Another related factor here is that people are freer to choose non-nuclear families because of the decline of tradition and religion – there is much less social pressure to get married, have kids and stay married, so all other options become more viable.

#### 3. Economic Factors

The long term increase in wealth and overall rising standards of living explains the long-term increase in single person households. Generally wealthier countries have a higher proportion of single person households, and it is only wealthy countries where significant numbers of people can afford to live alone because it is expensive compared to two adults sharing the cost of a mortgage, bills, and food. It seems that when people can afford to do so, they are more likely to choose to live alone.

However, not everyone has benefited from increasing wealth in the UK because at the same time as increasing wealth, the cost of living, and especially the cost of housing has increased. This explains the recent increase in multi generational households and Kidult Households: at the lower end of the social class scale there are millions of people who cannot afford to buy or even rent their own houses, and so they stay living with their parents.

#### 4. Feminism: Changing Gender Roles

Liberal Feminists and Late Modernists would point to the increasing number of women going into work as one of the most important underlying structural shifts in Late Modern Society.

Rather than needing to depend on men for their financial independence, women are now much more likely to focus on building a career before 'settling down' and starting a family. This goes some way to explaining the increase in single person households. The increased earning power of women also explains the growth of the number of never-married women who choose to have babies on their own. While this only accounts for a relatively small proportion of single parent households, such numbers are increasing.

Women's increased financial independence has also led to relationships becoming more fragile and thus helps explain the increase in single parent households and single person households following divorce.

**Evaluation:** *It is important not to overstate the extent of 'women's liberation' - In 2012, women accounted for 91 per cent of lone parents with dependent children and men the remaining 9 per cent. These percentages have changed little since 1996. Women are more likely to take the main caring responsibilities for any children when relationships break down, and therefore become lone parents.*

#### 4. Social Policies

There are two important policies which lie behind many of the above changes – the 1969 Divorce Act and the 1972 Equal Pay Act.

In addition to the above, **The New Right** believe that overly generous welfare benefits have created an underclass in the UK, and a subsection of this underclass consists of teenage girls who choose to get pregnant in order to get a council house and live a comfortable life on welfare.

**Evaluations (of the New Right):** *In reality, only 2% of single parents are teenagers, which is hardly a significant proportion compared to the overall numbers.*

*Also, it is not so much the benefits system which is to blame – The money is simply not enough to encourage someone to have a child to get housed – If you are on benefits, whether you have a child or not, you get enough to exist rather than to have a comfortable life. (The current weekly Jobseekers allowance is under £60/ week).*

#### 5. Late Modernism

**Late Modern Sociologists** argue against Postmodernists. The increase in family diversity is not simply a matter of individuals having more freedom of choice and choosing to live alone or become a single parent, people are forced into these options because of structural changes making life more uncertain.

**Firstly**, most people don't choose to live with their parents until they are 30, and most people don't choose to live in a multi generational household, they do so because they have to out of economic necessity.

**Secondly**, most people still want to get married and have children, but fewer people do so

because of an increase in 'risk consciousness' – **There is more uncertainty about what a 'normal relationship' is.** Changing roles of men and women and changing expectations of relationships and family life result in young people being more reluctant to settle down in a classic long term relationship.

**Thirdly,** Ulrich Beck also talks about individualisation – a new social norm is that our individual desires are more important than social commitments, and this makes marriage less likely. People are more likely to go through a series of monogamous relationships (serial monogamy) – which means cohabiting for a few years and then back to living alone again and then so on.

**Finally,** Anthony Giddens argues that the typical type of relationship is the 'pure relationship'... it exists solely to meet the partners' needs and is likely to continue only so long as it succeeds. Couples stay together because of love, happiness of sexual attraction rather than for tradition or for the sake of the children. In short, we have increased expectations of marriage, and if it doesn't work for us, then we get a divorce, increasing the amount of single person and single parent and then reconstituted families.

## **6. Other Factors Explaining the Increase in Family and Household Diversity**

- Fewer people today are living in couples; there has been a big rise in the number of people living alone, and in 2006 almost three in ten households contained only one person. Half of all one person households are people of pensionable age. Many women in their 70s and 80s live alone simply because there are too few partners available in their age group – women marry men who are older than them and men die younger.
- The massive expansion in higher education has seen the number of undergraduate students triple since 1970, from 414,000 to 1.27 million – this means more young adults are not in work and economically dependent on their parents for longer.

### **Analysis Points**

- The increase in separation and divorce has created more one personal household, especially amongst men under 65.
- The increase in Single Person Households does not necessarily mean that people have stopped having relationships. There has been an increase in people 'living apart together' (LATs). Recent research by Simon Duncan and Miranda Phillips found that about 1/10 adults are 'living apart together' (LATs), they are in significant relationships, but are not married or cohabiting.
- Despite the long term increase in reconstituted families, they are now actually decreasing. This is related to the decline in the divorce rate.

## Overall Evaluation - Is the Nuclear Family really in decline?

*Some commentators argue that the extent of ever increasing family diversity has been exaggerated*

### **Robert Chester – The Neo-Conventional Family**

Robert Chester (1985) recognises that there has been some increased family diversity in recent years. However, unlike the new right, he does not regard this as very significant, nor does he see it in a negative light. Chester argues the only important change is a move from the dominance of the traditional or conventional nuclear family, to what he describes as the ‘neo-conventional’ family.

**The Conventional Family** – (declining) The Traditional nuclear family with ‘segregated conjugal roles’ - Male breadwinner and female home-maker

**The Neo-Conventional Family** (the new norm) – a dual-earner family in which both spouses go out to work – similar to the symmetrical family of Young and Wilmott

Chester argues that most people are not choosing to live in alternatives to the nuclear family (such as lone parent families) on a long term basis and the nuclear family remains the ideal to which most people aspire. He argues that many people living alone have been or one day will be part of the nuclear family. Chester identifies a number of patterns that support his view:

- Most children are still reared for most of their lives by their two natural parents
- Most marriages still continue until death.
- Cohabitation has increased, but for most couples it is a temporary phase before marrying.
- Some ethnic groups are very likely to live in nuclear family households – Pakistani and Bangladeshi especially.

### **Pat Thane – A Historical Perspective on the ‘myth of the nuclear family’**

- Family diversity was the norm up until world war two, then there was a brief period of thirty years from the 1940s -to the 1970s where nearly everyone got married and lived in nuclear families, and now we are returning to greater family diversity.
- If we look at Marriage and Divorce – the decades after the end of the Second World War were an abnormal period, with much higher marriage rates than usual. Previously, in the 1930s for example, 15 percent of women and 9 percent of men did not marry. Similar numbers had long been normal.
- If we look at lone parenthood – In the early 18th century, 24 percent of marriages were ended by the death of a partner within ten years. As a result, a mixture of lone-parents, step-parents and step-children were commonplace in Britain.

### **Topic 3.3. – How does family life vary by ethnicity, social class and sexuality?**

## How does family life vary by ethnicity?

Data from the latest (2011) census shows that 86% of the UK population are classified as 'white', 7.5% as 'Asian' or 'Asian-British', 3.3% as 'Black', 2.2% as 'Mixed' and 1% as 'other'.

(NB - This represents a significant increase in ethnic minorities compared to the 2001 census. In 2011, 14% of the population were non-white, compared to 9% in 2001.)

This brief update explores the extent to which family life and attitudes to family-life vary across these different ethnic groups, looking at the following aspects of family life...

### Item 1 - A brief history of South-Asian Family Life in the UK

Ballard (1982) noted that most South-Asian families had a much broader network of familial-relations than a typical white-British family and one individual household might be only one small part of a complex global network of kin-relations.

Ballard argued that in order to understand South-Asian family life in the UK in the 1980s, you had to look at the ideal model of family life in Asia which is Patriarchal, being based on tight control of women, collectivist (the group is more important than the individual) and obsessed with maintaining family honour (primarily through not getting divorced/ committing adultery or having children outside of wedlock) because maintaining honour was crucial to your being able to do business in the wider community.

Ballard also stressed the importance of Honour and its Patriarchal nature..... The complexity of the question of the asymmetry of the sexes is nowhere better illustrated than in the concepts of honour, izzat and shame. *In its narrower sense izzat is a matter of male pride. Honourable men are expected to present an image of fearlessness and independence to the outside world, and at the same time to keep close control over the female members of their families. For a woman to challenge her husband's or her father's authority in public shamefully punctures his honour. To sustain male izzat wives, sisters and daughters must be seen to behave with seemly modesty, secluding themselves from the world of men.*

### Item 2 - Arranged marriages are still extremely popular today amongst British Asians

According to the author, traditional values are still very important to Asian family life.... 'The Asian family is not a nuclear unit of parents and 2.4 children. It is an extended social unit that includes grandparents, in-laws, aunts and uncles and a long list of relatives, each with a specific title in relation to everyone else in the family. And Asian family values are focused on keeping the unit together - in one physical place if possible - and providing mutual support. The corollary is that you have to accept them on the same terms. It can be onerous, inconvenient, not to say downright demanding....Arranged marriages work in this framework of extended family. They are the heartbeat of Asian tradition. Without this pulse coursing through our lives, everything we know and think as British Asians atrophies and starts to die.'

**Item 3 - Marriage is still seen as a key milestone in Brit-Asian life.** A UK National Statistics report says the highest proportions of married couples under pension age, with or without children, are in Asian households. Over half of Bangladeshi (54%), Indian (53%) and Pakistani (51%) households contained a married couple, compared with 37% of those headed by a White British person.

### Item 4 - Divorce today is now much more common among Asian couples

Divorce has traditionally been seen as something shameful in Asian culture, with children under

pressure to stay in loveless marriages in order to uphold the family's honour and prevent shame falling on the family.

However, for today's third and fourth generation Asians, things are much different: there is a soaring British Asian divorce rate now that young Asian men and especially women are better educated and increasingly going into professional careers.

#### **Item 5 - Forced Marriages are more common amongst Asian Families**

There is also a dark-side to Asian family life, and that comes in the number of **Forced Marriages** associated with Asian communities. One report from 2008 suggests that there are up to 3000 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation Asian women who are subjected to forced marriages.

#### **Item 6 - Single Parent Families are more common amongst African-Caribbean Families**

**In 2007** Almost half the black children in Britain were being raised by single parents. Forty-eight per cent of black Caribbean families had one parent, as did 36 per cent of black African households.

Single-parent families were less common among Indians (ten per cent), Bangladeshis (12 per cent), Pakistanis (13 per cent), Chinese (15 per cent) and whites (22 per cent).

Rates of teenage motherhood are significantly higher among young black women and despite constituting only 3 per cent of the population aged 15 – 17, they accounted for 9 per cent of all abortions given to women under the age of 18

#### **Item 7 - There has been a rapid increase in the number of babies born to non-UK born mothers.**

Births to non-UK born mothers accounted for 25.9% of all live births in 2012. This is the highest proportion of births to mothers born outside the UK since the collection of parents' country of birth was introduced at birth registration in 1969. This proportion has increased every year since 1990, when it was 11.6%.

During these years the number of non-UK born women of childbearing age who are living in England and Wales has increased, causing the increase in the number of births to these women.

#### **Item 8 - Birth rates are significantly higher amongst Muslim parents**

9.1% of under-fives in England and Wales were recorded by their parents as Muslim (which probably means they have Muslim parents) which is twice as high as the number of Muslims in the general population.

#### **Item 9 – There has been a growth in the number of interracial relationships**

Overall almost one in 10 people living in Britain is married to or living with someone from outside their own ethnic group, the analysis from the Office for National Statistics shows.

But the overall figure conceals wide variations. Only one in 25 white people have settled down with someone from outside their own racial background.

By contrast 85 per cent of people from mixed-race families have themselves set up home with someone from another group.

Age is the crucial factor with those in their 20s and 30s more than twice as likely to be living with someone from another background as those over 65, reflecting a less rigid approach to identity over time.

**Item 10 – Middle class couples are more likely to get married than working class couples**

The proportion of people in the highest social class who are married has increased to more than two-thirds in the past ten years. This marks a reverse of an earlier decline in marriage rates. But among those defined as working class fewer than 45 per cent are married.

**Item 11 – According to the stats, poor teens are much more likely to get pregnant and have babies than rich teens**

According to The Poverty Site, teenage motherhood is eight times as common amongst those from manual social background as for those from managerial and professional backgrounds.

Also, the under-age conception rate is highest in the North East of England. Its rate of 11 per 1,000 girls aged 13 to 15 compares to 6 per 1,000 in the region with the lowest rate.

**Item 12 – Middle class women have their first babies ten years later than working class women....**

According to research from the Uni of Southampton, half of women born in 1958 who obtained no educational qualifications had a child by the age of 22, while for those with degrees the age was 32.

This means that the term 'generation' could actually mean different things to different classes.

**Item 13 – There are just over 100 000 Civil Partnerships in England and Wales**

Same-sex civil partnerships, which did not even exist a decade earlier, accounted for around 113,000 people in 2011 census.

**Item 14 – People entering into civil partnerships are generally older than people entering into marriages.**

**Item 15 – Marriages are almost twice as likely to break down within the first four years compared to civil partnerships.**



## **Topic 4 – Changes within the family**

### **Gender Roles, Domestic Labour and Power Relationships**

#### **Overview of the topic and sub-topics**

*In this topic we look at the extent to which relationships between men and women have become more equal, focussing on the following three areas:*

- 4.1. To what extent are gender roles characterised by equality?
- 4.2. To what extent is the Domestic Division of Labour characterised by equality?
- 4.3. Issues of Power and Control in Relationships
- 4.4. To what extent has women going into paid work resulted in greater equality within relationships?

#### **Key Concepts**

- Conjugal roles
- Segregated conjugal roles
- Joint conjugal roles
- Instrumental roles
- Expressive roles
- The symmetrical family
- The ‘march of progress view’
- The Domestic Division of Labour
- The ‘New Man’
- Dual burden
- Domestic Violence
- Intensive Mothering
- Superdads
- Gender norms
- Liberal Feminism
- The commercialization of housework
- Emotion work
- Gender scripts
- Triple shift

### **Selected Short Answer Questions**

- Suggest three ways in which families are becoming more ‘symmetrical’
- Suggest three reasons why families may be becoming ‘more symmetrical’
- Outline three pieces of evidence that criticize the view that the family is becoming more symmetrical
- Suggest two reasons why a gendered division of labour still exists between some couples
- Suggest three ways in which women going into paid work has influenced domestic relationships
- Suggest three ways in which men may still have more power than women in domestic relationships
- Suggest three reasons why official statistics on domestic violence may be inaccurate
- Suggest three reasons why domestic violence occurs

### **Possible Essay Questions**

- Examine the factors affecting power relations between couples (24)
- Assess the view that modern relationships are becoming more symmetrical (24)

#### 4.1. To what extent are gender roles characterised by equality?

*Most Sociological theorising has stressed the fact that gender roles in family life have become increasingly equal since the 1950s*

##### **The 1950s – The Traditional Nuclear Family and Segregated Conjugal Roles**

In the 1950s, Sociologists such as Talcott Parson's (1955) argued that the ideal model of the family was one characterised by segregated conjugal roles, in which there was a clear division of labour between spouses. Parsons argued that in a correctly functioning society, there should be a nuclear family in which

The husband has an instrumental role geared towards achieving success at work so he can provide for the family financially. He is the breadwinner

The wife has an expressive role geared towards primary socialisation of the children and meeting the family's emotional needs. She is the homemaker, a full time housewife rather than a wage earner.

##### **The 1970s - The symmetrical family and joint conjugal roles**

Based on their classic study of couples in East London in the 1970s, Young and Wilmott (1973) took a 'march of progress' view of the history of the family. They saw family life as gradually improving for all its members, becoming more equal and democratic. They argued that there was a long term trend away from segregated conjugal roles and towards joint conjugal roles

- **Segregated conjugal roles** – where couples have separate roles: A male breadwinner and a female homemaker/ carer, and where their leisure activities were separated
- **Joint conjugal roles** – where the couples share tasks such as housework and childcare and spend their leisure time together.

Wilmott and Young also identified the emergence of what they called the '**symmetrical family**': one in which the roles of husbands and wives, although not identical are now much more similar:

1. Women now go out to work full time
2. Men now help with housework and child care
3. Couples now spend their leisure time together rather than separately

##### **Relationships today – are characterised by greater equality and choice**

**Anthony Giddens** argues that in recent decades the family and marriage have become more egalitarian because:

Contraception has allowed sex and intimacy rather than reproduction to become the main reason for the relationship's existence

Women have gained independence because of greater opportunities in education and work

**Ulrich Beck** puts forward a similar view to that of Giddens, arguing that the traditional patriarchal family has been undermined by two trends:

Greater Gender Equality – This has challenged male domination in all spheres of life. Women now expect equality both at work and in marriage.

Greater individualism – where people's actions are influenced more by calculations of their own self-interest than by a sense of obligation to others.

These trends have led to the rise of the **negotiated family**. Negotiated families do not conform to the traditional family norm, but vary according to the wishes and expectations of their members, who decided what is best for them by discussion. They enter the relationship on an equal basis.

### **Evaluations – To what extent are gender roles becoming more equal?**

Evidence of women going into paid work and its effects on the gendered division of labour

It seems obvious that women going into paid work has resulted in greater equality. As most women are now in paid-work this means they have more financial independence than ever before.

Statistics (see the next topic, link below) clearly show that the gendered division of labour has become more equal since the 1950s

However, Radical Feminists argue that paid work has led to the dual burden and triple shift

One argument used to support this view is that paid work has not been 'liberating'. Instead women have acquired the 'dual burden' of paid work and unpaid housework and the family remains patriarchal – men benefit from women's paid earnings and their domestic labour. Some Radical Feminists go further arguing that women suffer from the 'triple shift' where they have to do paid work, domestic work and 'emotion work' – being expected to take on the emotional burden of caring for children.

### **Evidence on gender roles and parenting**

*Some research suggests there is greater gender equality*

Research by **Gayle Kaufman** consisting of interviews with 70 American fathers with at least one child under the age of 18 found that between 1977 and 2008 the average American man increased the amount of time spent on household chores and childcare by more than 2 hours per day on average each workday. Statistics suggest that increasingly men are performing a 'second shift' when they return home from work, spending on average 46 hours a week on childcare and housework, which suggests that it is increasingly men rather than women who face the 'dual-burden'.

Kaufman identified two new types of dad based on how they responded to the challenges of balancing work and family life.

**'New Dads'** which were by far the largest category placed a high priority on involvement with children and made some minor adjustments to their work practices – such as getting to work later or leaving earlier, or 'leaving work at work' or bringing work home with them, and trying to juggle that and family duties.

**Superdads** actively adjusted their work lives to fit in with their family lives – by changing careers, cutting back work hours or adopting more flexible working hours. These dads saw spending time with their children as the most important thing in their lives, with money and career as less important.

## **However, we are a long way from actual equality**

Focusing on the UK, **ONS data** reveals that at the end of 2012 there were just over 6,000 more full-time, stay-at-home dads looking after babies and toddlers than there were 10 years ago, which is hardly a significant increase

Also, although fathers always say they want to spend more time with their kids rather than working, the evidence does not back this up – a third of men don't take their two weeks paternity leave, 40% say they don't intend to take the 6 months they are now entitled to and 90% say they wouldn't take more than 6 months if it was offered to them.

The Emergence of '**Intensive Motherhood**' suggests things might even be getting worse for some mothers...

According to **Sharon Hays (1996)** it is still mothers, rather than fathers who remain the target of most parenting advice, and today all mothers are expected to live up to a new norm of 'intensive mothering' – a style of mothering that is 'expert-guided' and child centred as well as emotionally absorbing, labour intensive and financially expensive, requiring a 24/7 focus on the child.

Hays suggests that intensive mothering has become the taken for granted 'correct' style of mothering , and the the focus is typically on the mother and not on the father.

**Radical Feminists also remind us that 9/10 single parents are female.**

#### **4.2. To what extent is the Domestic Division of Labour characterised by equality?**

**There is evidence that the domestic division of labour has become more equal over time, especially since the 1950s.**

- Numerous surveys carried out since the 1950s show a narrowing of the gender gap in the domestic division of labour.
- Liberal Feminists and Young and Wilmott would argue that this is because more women are in paid work and families become more symmetrical.
- Another reason for this is the 'commercialisation of housework' – New technologies such as washing machines, hoovers and fridge-freezers (think ready meals) have reduced the amount of housework that needs doing and narrows the gender divide in the domestic division of labour.

**However, the gendered division of domestic labour is still very unequal**

- According to a 2011 survey by the Social Issues Research Centre, *The Changing Face of Motherhood*, there has been hardly any change in domestic division of labour over the last 20 years (since the mid 1990s).
- In 1994 it emerged that for 79 per cent of couples the woman did most or all of the laundry, with the role being shared in only 18 per cent of cases. The latest survey (in 2011) showed that the proportion sharing the role has only risen by two percentage points. In 70 per cent of houses laundry is still seen as women's work.
- In the kitchen, there has been virtually no change in the last 10 years. Women still do the lion's share of the cooking in 55 per cent of couple households.
- When it comes to tasks such as shopping for groceries, women's workload has increased slightly since the early 1990s. The picture was similar when people were asked about cleaning and caring for sick family members.
- By contrast, DIY is still seen as virtually the sole preserve of men in 75 per cent of households – exactly as it was almost 20 years ago
- 2014 survey by the BBC's *Women's Hour* has found women devote well over the equivalent of a working day each week to household chores - double the amount undertaken by men. The poll for BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* suggests that women spend an average of 11-and-a-half hours doing housework by their own estimation, while men complete just six.
- Similar findings were revealed in a survey of almost 1,000 users of the Mumsnet website: Changing lightbulbs, taking the bins out and DIY were the only three of 54 common domestic tasks done in more than half of cases by men, with 15 roughly shared and the rest chiefly carried out by women. Most often done by female partners were organising playdates, health appointments, childcare and birthday parties - as well as cleaning and laundry. Parents evenings, school plays and bedtime stories are most often seen as shared activities.

## **Analysis**

Looking at the above statistics it seems reasonable to conclude that Radical Feminist concepts such as the dual burden and the triple shift still apply.

We can also conclude that women going into paid work has not yet resulted in total equality in the domestic division of labour.

It also seems reasonable to assume that there may be social class differences in the gendered division of labour – the top 10% of households will be in a position to hire cleaners and child care thus reducing the dual burden on middle class, professional women.

Another way in which middle class women will be advantaged compared to working class is that because of their husbands' higher earning power, they will be more able to take time off work to be full time stay at home mums – meaning that they may do more domestic labour, but at least they don't suffer the dual burden and triple shift.

### 4.3 – Issues of Power and Control in relationships

**The Radical Feminist** viewpoint is that relationships are the primary means through which men control women and maintain their power over them in society.

Probably the most shocking evidence which supports this view is the continued prevalence of domestic violence. According to the BCS (2007) this accounts for a sixth of all violent crime and nearly 1 in 4 women will experience DV at some point in their lifetime and women are much more likely to experience this than men.

The radical Feminist explanation for DV is that it is an inevitable feature of a patriarchal society and it is part of a wider system that helps maintain male power over women, they key division in society.

Just to demonstrate that this Radical Feminist views didn't disappear in the 1980s – Here is a recent Radical Feminist view on domestic violence...

“Domestic violence against women by men is “caused” by the misuse of power and control within a context of male privilege. Male privilege operates on an individual and societal level to maintain a situation of male dominance, where men have power over women and children. Domestic violence by men against women can be seen as a consequence of the inequalities between men and women, rooted in patriarchal traditions that encourage men to believe they are entitled to power and control over their partners.”

(Women's AID Domestic Violence Fact Sheet, 2009)

#### **Criticisms of the Radical Feminist view on Domestic Violence**

1. Wilkinson criticises Feminists by arguing that it is not so much Patriarchy, but poverty that causes stress which leads to DV, so this is much less common in more equal, middle class households.
2. Men are also victims of DV with some statistics suggesting that men are the victims in as many as 2/5 cases of DV.

#### **Other issues relating to power, control and sexuality in relationships**

*In general, women have more freedom and control over their sexuality than in traditional societies.*

In many traditional tribal societies, there is little notion that women should gain any satisfaction out of sex. As one British witness to sexuality amongst the Himba of Namibia put it 'when the husband wants sex, the woman just opens her legs, he gets on with it, and when he's finished, he just rolls over and goes to sleep, there's no sense of pleasure in it for the woman'. Moreover, in some societies, especially in East Africa, women's sexuality is tightly controlled, in extreme cases through Female Genital Mutilation, which removes much of the pleasure associated with sex, and sex remains very much about reproduction only.

The above example stands in stark contrast to modern notions of female sexuality. Since the heyday of Feminism and the sexual revolution in the 1960s, and helped by modern contraception, we now live in the age of what Anthony Giddens calls 'plastic sexuality' – where sex is primarily about pleasure for both sexes rather than just being about reproduction.

Today, women increasingly demanding sexual satisfaction as an ordinary part of their relationships, and cultural products such as the recent best-selling novel – ‘50 Shades of grey’ and programmes such as ‘The Joy of Teen Sex’ certainly suggest that there is much more open and honest discussion about sex between partners in relationships.

Further evidence that suggests modern relationships are equal and that women are more empowered lies in the proliferation of advice and discussion sites about relationships - Advice



magazines such as seventeen.com certainly suggest that women, and even girls, are more empowered in their relationships than they used to be. Such magazines even have quizzes so girls can assess whether their boyfriend's up to scratch.

Also, blogs such as the good men project suggest that men are more prepared to discuss 'what it means to be a man' and 'modern relationships', further suggesting more equality between the sexes where intimate relations are concerned.

### **However, there is evidence against the view that there is equality in sexual relations**

**Women experience less sexual satisfaction than men....** Indiana University's comprehensive survey found that while 91% of men had an orgasm the last time they had sex, but only 64% of women did. These numbers roughly reflect the percentage of men and women who say they enjoyed sex "extremely" or "quite a bit": 66% of women and 83% of men. Only 58% of women in their '20s had an orgasm during their latest sexual encounter.

30-40% percent of women report difficulty climaxing and 33% of women under 35 often feel sad, anxious, restless or irritable after sex, while 10% frequently feel sad after intercourse."

**The mainstream media refuses to advertise vibrators.** According to one Feminist blog..."Vibrators still are such a big taboo. The media and films (e.g. American Pie) glamourize women's sexuality, but then refuses to run ads for vibrators which are very useful tools for helping women understand their sexuality. Yet Viagra ads run on all of these platforms with no problem.

All of this serves to reinforce 'heteronormativity', or the idea that women need men to give them sexual satisfaction. The problem with this is that the evidence suggests that men are failing to provide this.... many women report a lack of satisfaction in the bedroom."

### **There is evidence that men and women are becoming more equal where decision making is concerned in relationships**

Pahl and Volger (1993) found that 'pooling' of household income is on the increase – where both partners have equal access of income and joint responsibility for expenditure

50% of couples pooled their income compared to only 19% of their parents, showing a movement away from 'allowance systems' in household expenditure'

### **Feminist criticisms that decision making is becoming more equal**

While some decisions concerning money are made jointly, these tend to be less important ones – such as what clothes to buy while, some recent research suggests that men still tend to have the final say in more important decisions such as changing jobs or moving house

#### **4.4 To what extent has women going into paid-work made relationships more equal?**

##### **Evidence that paid work benefits women**

- John Gershuny (1994) found that women who were in paid work spend 10% less time doing housework than women who were in part-time employment or not in employment.
- Gershuny also found that women whose parents had a more equal relationship were more likely themselves to have an equal relationship and argued that although things are unequal, there is a gradual shift towards more symmetrical relationships as women increasingly turn to paid work

##### **Evidence that paid work does not benefit women (The Feminist view)**

- In contrast to the ‘march of progress view, Anne Oakley points to the above evidence and suggests that women’s primary role is still as a housewife – even though women are more likely to go out to work, many female jobs are just extensions of traditional female roles – such as cleaning and nursing.
- There is little evidence of the ‘new man’ who does their fair share of domestic chores. They argue women have acquired the ‘dual burden’ of paid work and unpaid housework and the family remains patriarchal – men benefit from women’s paid earnings and their domestic labour.
- Duncsmobe and Marsden (1995) argue that women suffer from the ‘triple shift’ where they have to do paid work, domestic work and ‘emotion work’ – being expected to take on the emotional burden of caring for children.
- This last point is more difficult to assess as it is much harder to quantify emotion work compared to the amounts of domestic work and paid work carried out by men and women.

*NB – You can also use much of the material from topics 4.1 to 4.3 to illustrate the fact that while domestic relations are now more equal with women going into paid work, we are still a considerable way of actual equality.*

# Topic 5 – Childhood

## Subtopics

5.1 - To what extent is 'childhood socially constructed'

5.2 - The March of Progress view of childhood (and parenting) – The Child Centred Family and Society?

5.3 - Toxic Childhood and Paranoid Parenting – Criticisms of 'The March of Progress View'

5.4 - Is Childhood Disappearing?

5.5 - Reasons for changes to childhood and parenting practices

## Key Concepts

- The social construction of childhood
- The golden age of childhood
- Child centred society
- The cult of childhood
- The March of progress view
- Conflict perspective
- Child liberationism
- Age patriarchy
- Acting up
- Acting down
- The disappearance of childhood
- Toxic childhood

## Selected Short answer questions

- Suggest three ways in which children are viewed in modern western societies
- Identify two ways in which children's lives are marked out as being separate from adults
- Suggest two ways in which notions of childhood are different in different cultures
- Explain two ways in which childhood differed in the middle ages compared with today
- Suggest three reasons why the position of children has changed over time
- Explain one way in which industrialisation led to the position of children in society changing
- Suggest two ways in which children's positions have improved in recent years
- Briefly outline two ways in which gender inequalities exist between different types of children
- Suggest two examples of ethnic inequalities between children
- Suggest two examples.. nationality/ class/ ethnicity/ gender
- Suggest three ways in which adults control children in modern society

- Suggest two ways in which children resist the status of ‘child’
- Suggest two pieces of evidence that childhood is disappearing
- Suggest two reasons why childhood may be disappearing
- Suggest two pieces of evidence that suggest the boundaries between adults and children are stronger than ever

### **Possible Essays**

Assess the view that childhood is disappearing (24)

Examine Sociological Perspectives on changes to childbearing and parenting (24)

## 5.1 To what extent is childhood socially constructed?

There seems to be near universal agreement that there are some fundamental differences between adults and children. For example people in most societies seem to agree that:

1. Children are physically and psychologically immature compared to adults
2. Children are dependent on adults for a range of biological and emotional needs – Children need a lengthy process of socialisation which takes several years.
3. In contrast to adults, children are not competent to run their own lives and cannot be held responsible for their actions

In contrast to the period of childhood, one of the defining characteristics of adulthood is that adults are biologically mature, are competent to run their own lives and are fully responsible for their actions.

However, despite broad agreement on the above, what people mean by childhood and the position children occupy is not fixed but differs across times, places and cultures. There is considerable variation in what people in different societies think about the place of children in society, about what children should and shouldn't be doing at certain ages, about how children should be socialised, and about the age at which they should be regarded as adults.

For this reason, Sociologists say that **childhood is socially constructed. This means that childhood is something created and defined by society.**

### The social construction of childhood in modern British society

Part of the social construction of childhood in modern Britain is that we choose to have a high degree of separation between the spheres of childhood and adulthood:

1. There are child specific places where only children and 'trusted adults' are supposed to go, and thus children are relatively sheltered from adult life.
2. There are several laws preventing children from doing certain things which adults are allowed to do.
3. There are products specifically for children –which adults are not supposed to play with (although some of them do).

All of the above separations between adults and children have nothing to do with the biological differences between adults and children – children do not need to have 'special places' just for them, they do not need special laws protecting them, and neither do they need specific toys designed for them. We as a society have decided that these things are desirable for children, and thus we 'construct childhood' as a being very different to adulthood.

### The Social Construction of Childhood – A Comparative Approach

A good way to illustrate the social construction of childhood is to take a comparative approach – that is, to look at how children are seen and treated in other times and places than their own. The anthropologists Ruth Benedict (1934) argues that children in traditional, non-industrial societies are generally treated differently from children in modern western societies.

- In other cultures children are seen as an 'economic asset' and expected to engage in paid work - In Less developed countries children are seen as a source of cheap (free) labour on the farm, in the home or in sweat shops where the wage can help boost the family income.
- Sexual behaviour – In some cultures girls are sometimes married off at 14 or younger, taking on the duties of a wife or mother at a young age

## **Philippe Aries – A Radical View on The Social Construction of Childhood**

The historian Philippe Aries has an extreme view on childhood as a social construction. He argues that in the Middle Ages (the 10th to the 13th century) ‘the idea of childhood did not exist’ – children were not seen as essentially different to adults like they are today.

Aries uses the following evidence to support his view...

- Children were expected to work at a much earlier age
- The law often made no distinction between children and adults
- Works of art from the period often just depict children as small adults – they wear the same clothes and appear to work and play together.

In addition to the above Edward Shorter (1975) argues about parental attitudes to children in the Middle ages were very different from today...

- High infant mortality rates encouraged indifference and neglect, especially towards infants
- Parents often neglected to give new born babies names – referring to them as ‘it’ and it was not uncommon to eventually give a new baby a name of a dead sibling.

Aries argues that it is only from the 13th century onwards that modern notions of childhood – the idea that childhood is a distinct phase of life from adulthood - begin to emerge. Essentially Aries is arguing that childhood as we understand it today is a relatively recent ‘invention’

## **5.2 The March of Progress view of childhood (and parenting) – The Child Centred Family and Society?**

Childhood in Britain used to be much closer to how it is amongst more, traditional, tribal societies today. This section looks at what childhood used to be like in the Victorian era and how and why children's lives have 'improved' in recent years. Most people take a 'march of progress' perspective on this, arguing that children's lives are better today than they were 200 years ago.

### **Changes to Childhood since Victorian Times**

Since the Victorian era, childhood has gone through many changes. There is general agreement that these represent improvements to childhood.

1. Child Labour has been restricted
2. Schooling has become compulsory
3. 'The rights of children' have become more central to society
4. The increase in child protection and welfare
5. Parents spend considerably more money on children and spend more time parenting than in the past.

### **5.3 Toxic Childhood and Paranoid Parenting: Criticisms of the March of Progress View of Childhood**

The common sense view is to see the above changes as 'progressive'. Most people would argue that now children are more protected that their lives are better, but is this actually the case? The 'March of Progress' view argues that yes, children's lives have improved and they are now much better off than in the Victorian Era and the Middle Ages. They point to all the evidence on the previous page as just self-evidently indicating an improvement to children's' lives.

Conflict theorists argue against this view – they say that in some ways children's lives are worse than they used to be. There are basically three main criticisms made of the march of progress view

1. Recent technological changes have resulted in significant harms to children – what Sociologist Sue Palmer refers to as Toxic Childhood.
2. Some sociologists argue that children today are too controlled. Sociologists such as Frank Furedi argue that children today are overprotected, or too controlled – We live in the age of 'Paranoid Parenting'.
3. There are significant inequalities between children, so if there has been progress for some, there certainly has not been equal progress.

**Toxic Childhood** - Toxic Childhood is where rapid technological and cultural changes cause psychological and physical damage to children. Palmer She argues that a toxic mix of side-effects of technological and cultural changes is having a negative impact on the development of a growing number of children. On her web site Palmer outlines SIX WAYS in which childhood is toxic:

1. The decline of outdoor play – linked to increased childhood obesity
2. The commercialisation of childhood – linked to children being exploited by advertisers
3. The ‘schoolification’ of early childhood – reduces independence
4. The decline of listening, language and communication skills – because of shortened attention spans
5. Screen saturation – reduces face to face interaction
6. Tests, targets and education – increases anxiety amongst children.

### **Criticisms of the view that childhood has become increasingly toxic**

- Could be an example of an adult ‘panicking’ about technological changes.
- Children are better off today as consumers rather than producers (child labourers)
- Children are still very protected today
- Assumes children are delicate and in need of protection rather than resilient.

### **Are Children Today Too Controlled? Paranoid Parenting**

A second set of criticisms of the March of Progress View and The Child Centred Society is that children’s lives are now too controlled, that children have too little freedom, and that children are effectively oppressed by adults.

Conflict theories argue that many laws introduced in the name of ‘child protection’ are really about the oppression and control of children. Dianna Gittins uses the term ‘Age Patriarchy’ to refer to adult domination over children. Adult control over children takes a number of forms –

1. Control over resources – Labour laws and compulsory schooling make children financially dependent on adults. Shulamith Firestone sees protection from paid work as forcibly segregating children, making them powerless and dependent.
2. Control over children’s space – There has been an increase in surveillance of children in public spaces. Take school as an example – Children are monitored more than ever through electronic registration systems, constant testing and nearly every school in the UK has surveillance cameras, with up to 10% of them having them in the toilets. Children are even more controlled in terms of their journey to and from school - In 1971 80% of 7-8 year olds when to school on their own, this had reduced to 10% by 1990.
3. Control over children’s time - Parents restricts children through daily and weekly routines. Children today are given less time to themselves, with parents scheduling in more activities for them to do in evenings and weekends.
4. Control over children’s bodies – Parents control how children dress and how they interact physically with other children and over their own bodies (don’t pick your nose, don’t slouch etc.).

Evidence that children childhood as oppressive comes from the strategies they use to resist the status of child and the strategies that go with it. Two of these strategies are ‘acting up’ and ‘acting down’. Acting up is where a child acts older than they are in order to rebel. Acting down is where a child acts younger than they are as an act of rebellion



## **Inequalities between children**

Conflict theorists such as Marxists and Feminists criticise the 'March of Progress view' because it is too rose tinted. The March of Progress View ignores the fact that not all children have benefited equally from the protections and services put in place. We can point to at least the following significant inequalities among children.

### **1. Children have not benefited equally from universal education - Rich children on average benefit a LOT MORE than poor children.**

Free school meals are generally held as a reliable indicator of poverty. In 2012/13, 64.8% of pupils not eligible for a free school meal obtained at least 5 A\*-C grades including maths and english. But that percentage drops dramatically to just 38.1% among pupils who are eligible for free school meals. The difference - 26.7 percentage points has been dubbed the 'attainment gap' by the think tank Demos.

At the other end of the class spectrum - Half of all A and A\* grades at A level in the UK are secured by the 7 per cent of students who are privately educated, and 4.5 times as much is spent on teaching them as on the average state-educated student.

### **2. Child Protection services fail to protect many children from harm.**

The most horrific example of this is from the town of Rotherham where gangs of Asian men groomed, abused and trafficked 1400 children while police were contemptuous of the victims and the council ignored what was going on, in spite of years of warnings and reports about what was happening.

A recent report commissioned by the council, covering 1997 to 2013, detailed cases where children as young as 11 had been raped by a number of different men, abducted, beaten and trafficked to other towns and cities in the north of England to continue the abuse.

It said that three reports from 2002 to 2006 highlighted the extent of child exploitation and links to wider criminality but nothing was done, with the findings either suppressed or simply ignored. Police failed to act on the crimes and treated the victims with contempt and deemed that they were "undesirables" not worthy of protection.

### **3. Girls suffer more problems in childhood than boys**

One example of this is that girls have to negotiate the psychological pressures of 'objectification' much more than boys – Evidence below

- A 2007 survey of Brownies aged 7-10 were asked to describe 'planet sad' - they spoke of it being inhabited by girls who were fat.
- A 2009 survey found that a quarter of girls thought it was more important to be beautiful than clever. – Youngpoll.com
- 16% of 15 -17 year old girls have avoided going to school because they were worried about their appearance
- One further consequence of objectification is that girls face sexual abuse from boys. (nspcc)

A further example comes in the number of Forced Marriages associated with Asian communities. One report from 2008 suggests that there are up to 3000 third and fourth generation Asian women who are subjected to forced marriages. However, the actual numbers may be far greater.... Full fact reported that in 2011 the Forced Marriage Unit in the UK had taken up 400 live cases of forced marriage, but the site also reports that one expert in the field suggested that there might be up to 10 000 forced marriages or threats of forced marriage per year in the UK.

## **Topic 5.4 - The Disappearance of Childhood?**

There is an argument that childhood as we know it is disappearing; that the distinction between adulthood and childhood is narrowing. Neil Postman (1994) argued that childhood is 'disappearing at a dazzling speed'.

As supporting evidence he looked at the trend towards giving children the same rights as adults, the growing similarity of adult and children's clothing and even cases of children committing 'adult crimes' (murder, rape).

Postman's theory is based on the view that communications technology is the primary thing which shapes society.

Following Aries, he suggested that in the middle ages most people were illiterate (they couldn't read or write) and speech was the main form of communicating, thus there was hardly any distinction between adults and children.

Postman argues that childhood emerged along with mass literacy. This was because the printed word created a division between those that could read (adults) and those that couldn't (children). This division emerged because it takes several years to master reading and writing skills.

HOWEVER, he argues now that things like television and the internet blur this separation and that children are now much more able to access the 'adult world'. As a result, childhood as we know it is disappearing.

### **Three pieces of supporting evidence for the disappearance of childhood -**

- Growth of the Internet/ Social Media means parents and children are becoming more equal
- The 'Learner Voice' in education – and children being used on interview panels for some new teachers
- Children having the same rights as adults (UN's rights of the child)
- 'Kidults' – adults becoming more like children!

### **Criticisms of the theory that childhood is disappearing**

It's more complex than just 'disappearance – several trends going on at once

- E.G. Children are more protected (labour and welfare laws)
- E.G. Children are more controlled (cotton wool kids)

## **5.5 - Examining the Reasons for changes to childhood**

A Final possible sub-topic here is to consider the social changes which lie behind changes to childhood and parenting – think back to the rest of the course and add in details, You could also apply perspectives!

1. Industrialisation
2. The need for a more educated workforce
3. The growth of mobile technology
4. The expansion of Capitalism
5. The growth of the risk society and the 'Culture of Fear',

## Topic 6 – Social Policy

### Overview of the topic

*You need to be able to assess a range of policies using three key perspectives*

- The New Right
- New Labour
- Feminism (Liberal and Radical)

### ***Some of the policies you need to know about –***

- Changes to the Divorce law
- Tax breaks for married couples
- Maternity and paternity pay
- Civil Partnerships
- Sure Start – early years child care

### **Key ‘test yourself’ questions (basic knowledge)**

- Identify three social policies that might have led to increasing family diversity
- Identify three social policies that have ‘extended childhood’ (links to last topic)

### **Essays**

Assess the New Right’s perspective on the relationship between Social Policy and The Family (20)

Assess the view that the main function of laws and policies on families and households is to reproduce patriarchy (20)

## **Key social policies which have affected family life**

*There are many social policies which have affected family life over the years, so the summary below is necessarily selective!*

### **1. The 1969 Divorce Act (and the 1984 Divorce Act)**

Previous to 1969, one partner had to prove that the other was 'at fault' in order to be granted a divorce, however, following the Divorce Reform Act of 1969, a marriage could be ended if it had irretrievably broken down, and neither partner no longer had to prove "fault". However, if only one partner wanted a divorce, they still had to wait 5 years from the date of marriage to get one. In 1984 this was changed so that a divorce could be granted within one year of marriage.

### **2. Maternity and Paternity Policy – The Employment Protection Act of 1975 and the 'Paternity Act' (2010)**

Social responsibility for women's health during childbearing was first recognised through the 1911 National Insurance Act. It included a universal maternal health benefit and a one off maternity grant of 30 shillings for insured women (around £119 in today's money)

However, many women were routinely sacked for becoming pregnant until the late 1970s and the UK only introduced its first maternity leave legislation through the Employment Protection Act 1975. However, for the first 15 years (until 1990!) only about half of working women were eligible for it because of long qualifying periods of employment.

In 2003, male employees received paid statutory paternity leave for the first time, an entitlement that was extended in January 2010.

Today in the UK employees can take up to 52 weeks of Statutory Maternity Leave, of which the first two weeks after the baby is born is 'compulsory' maternity leave (4 weeks for women who work in a factory).

Since 2010 (following what is often called the 'Paternity Act') - This leave is divided into a two 26-week periods. After the first 26 weeks, the father of the child (or the mother's partner) has the right to take up to 26 weeks' leave if their partner returns to work, in effect taking the place of the mother at home. Eligible employees can take similar periods of Statutory Adoption Leave. It is unlawful to dismiss (or single out for redundancy) a pregnant employee for reasons connected with her pregnancy.

From 2015, parents will be given the right to share the care of their child in the first year after birth. Women in employment will retain their right to 52 weeks of maternity leave. Only mothers will be allowed to take leave in the first two weeks' leave after birth. But after that parents can divide up the rest of the maternity leave.

### **3. The Civil partnerships Act 2004 and the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013**

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 gave same-sex couples the rights and responsibilities similar to those in a civil marriage. The Act was introduced by the New Labour government in power at the time. Civil partners are entitled to the same property rights, the same exemptions on inheritance tax, social security and pension benefits as married couples. They also have the same ability to get parental responsibility for a partner's children as well as reasonable maintenance, tenancy rights, insurance and next-of-kin rights in hospital and with doctors. There is a process similar to divorce for dissolving a civil partnership. 18,059 couples entered into a civil partnership between December 2005 and the end of December 2006, with approximately 6000 taking place each year since. The Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 allows same-sex couples to enter into a marriage in England and Wales on the same basis as heterosexual couples, and to convert Civil Partnerships to Marriages.

#### **4. The Adoption Act 2002 (came into force 2005)**

Not much to say about this one – In 2005, under New Labour, the law on adoption changed, giving unmarried couples, including gay couples, the right to adopt on the same basis as married couples.

#### **5. The Child Benefit Acts (1975) and significant changes (1998 and 2013)**

The Child Benefit Bill introduced for the first time a universal payment, paid for each child. The rate payable was £1/week for the first and £1.50 for each subsequent child. An additional 50p was payable to lone-parent families.

Child Benefits increased in line with inflation, until 1998, when the new Labour government increased the first child rate by more than 20%, and abolished the Lone Parent rate. Rates increased again in line with inflation until 2010, since which time they have been frozen.

Effective from 7 January 2013, Child Benefit became means tested - those earning more than £50,000 per year would have part of their benefit withdrawn, and if earning over £60,000, would receive nothing at all.

## Perspectives on Social Policies and the Family

### The Functionalist View of Social Policy and the Family

Functionalists see society as built on harmony and consensus (shared values), and free from conflicts. They see the state as acting in the interests of society as a whole and its social policies as being for the good of all. Functionalists see policies as helping families to perform their functions more effectively and making life better for their members.

For example, Ronald Fletcher (1966) argues that the introduction of health, education and housing policies in the years since the industrial revolution has gradually led to the development of a welfare state that supports the family in performing its functions more effectively.

For instance, the existence of the National Health Service means that with the help of doctors, nurses, hospitals and medicines, the family today is better able to take care of its members when they are sick.

**However, the functionalist view has been criticised on two main counts:**

- It assumes that all members of the family benefit equally from social policies, whereas Feminists argue that policies often benefit men more than women.
- It assumes that there is a 'march of progress' with social policies, gradually making life better, which is a view criticised by Donzelot in the following section.

*Adapted from Robb Webb et al*

### A Conflict Perspective - Donzelot: Policing the Family

Jacques Donzelot (1977) has a conflict view of society and sees policy as a form of state power and control over families.

Donzelot uses Michel Foucault's (1976) concept of surveillance (observing and monitoring). Foucault sees power not just as something held by the government or the state, but as diffused (spread) throughout society and found within all relationships. In particular, Foucault sees professionals such as doctors and social workers as exercising power over their clients by using their expert knowledge to turn them into 'cases' to be dealt with.

Donzelot applies these ideas to the family. He is interested in how professionals carry out surveillance of families. He argues that social workers, health visitors and doctors use their knowledge to control and change families. Donzelot calls this 'the policing of families'.

Surveillance is not targeted equally at all social classes. Poor families are much more likely to be seen as 'problem families' and as the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour. These are the families that professionals target for 'improvement'. For example as Rachel Condry (2007) notes, the state may seek to control and regulate family life by imposing compulsory Parenting Orders through the courts. Parents of young offenders, truants or badly behaved children may be forced to attend parenting classes to learn the 'correct' way to bring up children.

Donzelot rejects the Functionalists' march of progress view that social policy and the professionals who carry it out have created a better society. Instead he sees social policy as oppressing certain types of families. By focussing on the micro level of how the 'caring professions' act as agents of social control through the surveillance of families, Donzelot shows the importance of professional knowledge as a form of power and control.

However, Marxists and Feminists criticise Donzelot for failing to identify clearly who benefits from such policies of surveillance. Marxists argue that social policies generally operate in the interests of the capitalist class, while Feminists argue men are the beneficiaries.

*Adapted from Robb Webb et al*

## **The New Right and Social Policy**

The New Right have had considerable influence on government thinking about social policy and its effects on family. They see the traditional nuclear family, with its division of labour between a male provider and a female home maker as self-reliant and capable of caring for its members. In their view, social policies should avoid doing anything that might undermine this natural self-reliant family.

The New Right criticise many existing government policies for undermining the family. In particular, they argue that governments often weaken the family's self-reliance by providing overly generous welfare benefits. These include providing council housing for unmarried teenage mothers and cash payments to support lone parent families.

Charles Murray (1984) argues that these benefits offer 'perverse incentives' – that is, they reward irresponsible or anti-social behaviour. For example –

- If fathers see that the state will maintain their children some of them will abandon their responsibilities to their families
- Providing council housing for unmarried teenage mothers encourages young girls to become pregnant
- The growth of lone parent families encouraged by generous welfare benefits means more boys grow up without a male role model and authority figure. This lack of paternal authority is responsible for a rising crime rate amongst young males.

## **The New Right supports the following social policies**

- Cuts in welfare benefits and tighter restrictions on who is eligible for benefits, to prevent 'perverse incentives'.
- Policies to support the traditional nuclear family – for example taxes that favour married couples rather than cohabiting couples.
- The Child Support agency – whose role is to make absent dads pay for their children

## **Criticisms of the New Right**

- Feminists argue that their policies are an attempt to justify a return to the traditional nuclear family, which works to subordinate women
- Cutting benefits may simply drive many into poverty, leading to further social problems

## **Feminism and Social Policy**

Liberal Feminists argue that that changes such as the equal pay act and increasingly generous maternity leave and pay are sufficient to bring about gender equality. The following social policies have led to greater gender equality:

- The divorce act of 1969 gave women the right to divorce on an equal footing to men – which led to a spike in the divorce rate.
- The equal pay act of 1972 was an important step towards women's independence from men.
- Increasingly generous maternity cover and pay made it easier for women to have children and then return to work.

However, **Radical Feminists** argue that patriarchy (the ideal of male superiority) is so entrenched in society that mere policy changes alone are insufficient to bring about gender equality. They argue, for example, that despite the equal pay act, sexism still exists in the sphere of work –

- There is little evidence of the 'new man' who does their fair share of domestic chores. They argue women have acquired the 'dual burden' of paid work and unpaid housework and the family remains patriarchal – men benefit from women's paid earnings and their domestic labour.
- Some Feminists even argue that overly generous maternity cover compared to paternity cover reinforces the idea that women should be the primary child carer, unintentionally disadvantaging women
- Duncsmobe and Marsden (1995) argue that women suffer from the 'triple shift' where they have to do paid work, domestic work and 'emotion work' – being expected to take on the emotional burden of caring for children.
- This last point is more difficult to assess as it is much harder to quantify emotion work compared to the amounts of domestic work and paid work carried out by men and women.
- Class differences also play a role – with working class mothers suffering more because they cannot afford childcare.
- Mirlees- Black points out that ¼ women experience domestic violence – and many are reluctant to leave their partner

### **New Labour and Family Policy**

New Labour was in power from between 1997 – 2010. There are three things you need to know about New Labour's Social Policies towards the family

1. New Labour seemed to be more in favour of family diversity than the New Right. For example –

In 2004 they introduced The Civil Partner Act which gave same sex couples similar rights to heterosexual married couples

In 2005 they changed the law on adoption, giving unmarried couples, including gay couples, the right to adopt on the same basis as married couples

2. Despite their claims to want to cut down on welfare dependency, New Labour were less concerned about 'the perverse incentives of welfare' than the New Right. During their terms of office, they failed to take 'tough decisions on welfare' – putting the wellbeing of children first by making sure that even the long term unemployed families and single mothers had adequate housing and money.

3. New Labour believes in more state intervention in family life than the New Right. They have a more positive view of state intervention, thinking it is often necessary to improve the lives of families.

For example in June 2007 New Labour established the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This was the first time that there was ever a 'department for the family' in British politics.

The Government's aim of this department was to ensure that every child would get the best possible start in life, receiving the on-going support and protection that they – and their families – need to allow them to fulfil their potential. The new Department would play a strong role both in taking forward policy relating to children and young people, and coordinating and leading work across Government and youth and family policy.

Key aspects included:

- Raising school standards for all children and young people at all ages.
- Responsibility for promoting the well-being, safety, protection and care of all young people.
- Responsibility for promoting the health of all children and young people, including measures to tackle key health problems such as obesity, as well as the promotion of youth sport



## Topic 7: Demography

*Demography refers to the study of the causes and consequences of changes to the size and structure of a society's population. There are generally three things which can change the size and structure of a population – birth rates, death rates and migration, and these three things make up the three major sub-topics.*

*As with marriage and divorce, we break this down into discussing the reasons for the changes and then consider the consequences. A final additional topic here is migration patterns, which we deal with separately.*

### Subtopics

7.1: Reasons for changes to the Birth Rate

7.2: Reasons for changes to the Death Rate

7.3: *The consequences of an Ageing Population*

7.4: The reasons for and consequences of changes to patterns of Migration

### Key concepts, research studies and case studies you should be able to apply

- Birth rate
- Death rate
- Dependency Ratio
- Total fertility rate
- Infant Mortality Rate
- Child Mortality Rate
- Life Expectancy
- Healthy Life Expectancy
- Demographic Transition
- Immigration
- Emigration
- Net Migration
- Push Factors
- Pull Factors

### Possible exam style short answer questions

- Suggest two reasons for the long term decline in birth rate (4)
- Suggest changes in the role of women that may explain why they have fewer children (4)
- Suggest three consequences of the decline in the birth rate (6)
- Suggest three reasons for the long term decrease in the death rate (6)
- Suggest three problems society may face as a result of an ageing population (6)
- Suggest three ways in which the elderly might be represented in stereotypical ways (6)
- Suggest three ways in which society might respond to the challenges of an ageing population (6)
- Suggest three pull factors which might attract people to immigrate into a particular country (6)
- Suggest two push factors which might explain patterns of migration (4)
- Identify two changes in the patterns of child-bearing over the last thirty years (4)

### Possible Essay Questions – You should plan these

- Examine the reasons for, and the effects of, changes in family size over the past 100 years or so (24) (January 2012)
- Using material from item B and elsewhere assess the view that an ageing Population creates problems for society (24) (June 2014)

## Topic 7.1: Explaining the Changing Birth Rate

### Trends in the Birth Rate and Total Fertility Rate

- Between 1901 to 2010 the birth rate declined from 29 per thousand to 13 per thousand
- The Total Fertility Rate has also seen a general decline in the last century, from a peak of almost 3 babies per woman in the 1960s to a low point of about 1.6 babies per woman in 2001.
- However, the last 15 years have witnessed an increase back up to 2 babies per woman.

### Explaining the long term decline in the birth rate

#### Economic Changes

Globally, the general trend is that the wealthier country, the lower the birth rate. It would seem that economic growth and rising living standards mean adults have fewer children. Part of the reason for this is that higher living standards mean better quality housing, better nutrition, better education and better medical care - all of which reduce the infant mortality rate, meaning that parents have fewer 'replacement babies' to make up for those who die before their first birthday.

A second factor here is related to Functionalism - as Functionalists see it, as societies evolve and become more complex, other institutions take over key functions of the family - men go into wage labour, which gets taxed, which then translates into schools and hospitals and pensions - the last century in the UK has seen the emergence of all of these institutions - people no longer need children to look after them in their old age, or to work the fields, other institutions do this, so people have fewer children.

A final way in which economic factors can reduce the birth rate are that people are so busy working they don't have time to start families - which is the case in contemporary Japan.

*A criticism of economic arguments is that they are deterministic, people don't just react to economic changes like robots, and they also appear a little 'cold' - It implies that people only have children for selfish, economic reasons.*

#### Technological Changes

The development of contraceptive technologies in the 1960s - Namely the contraceptive pill - gave rise to what Anthony Giddens calls 'plastic sexuality' = Sex becomes detached from reproduction. Also, importantly, The Pill gave women control of their reproduction and they could choose when to have children. There is no direct correlation between the invention of The Pill and the decline in the fertility rate - in fact the Baby Boom of the 1960s came immediately after The Pill's invention, and most women clearly still choose to have babies, but this technological change does explain why women have babies later in life and have fewer children.

Other technological innovations which have led to people having babies later in life are IVF and the freezing of eggs - together these technologies mean women can delay having children into their 40s, extending the 'natural' period of fertility much later than is traditionally the case.

An attendant analysis point here is that for IVF to be available for all women, it requires the state to fund it, otherwise this would be prohibitively expensive for couples with low incomes, so for this technological factor to have an impact, it needs to combine with political rights and a wealthy state.

## Changes in the Role of Women

Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck both regard this as the most important factor explaining the decline in the birth rate. Because women now have formal legal equality with men, and increased educational opportunities (girls are now outperforming boys at school), women now make up half the work force, and this has led to changes in attitudes to family life -

Career now comes first for many women, and childbearing is delayed by an average of ten years compared to in the 1950s. Women now typically have their first babies in their 30s, not their 20s and up 1/4 women are expected to remain childless.

As an evaluation point here - it's important not to exaggerate the advances women have made, when the children come along, it is still predominantly women who do the majority of childcare and housework and suffer the consequences in terms of their career.

## Postmodernisation

All of the above changes are part of the broader process of postmodernisation - The decline of traditional norms and values such as those associated with religions mean that contraception is no longer viewed in a stigmatised way and declining birth rates also reflect individualisation - the fact that we put our own needs first and it is acceptable to choose not to have children.

A criticism of Postmodernism is that many people simply don't choose to have children. Many people are forced into living an uncertain, unpredictable life where having children may not be a possibility or simply not be rational or affordable.

## Changes in the position of children

Until the late 19th century children were an asset to their parents because they could be sent out to work. Today, laws protect children from working and dictate that they should spend 18 years in education, and thus children have become an economic liability - they are a net drain on parents' income

This puts people off having children. People also have fewer children because we now live in a 'child centred society' - It is expected that children be the centre of family life, and parents are expected to spend more money (£250K is the average cost) and more time than ever engaged with their children - it is easier to do this with fewer children.

## Explaining the recent increase in the birth rates

*Three factors which could explain this include*

- **Increasing immigration** - immigrant mothers have more children (accounts for approx. 20% of the increase)
- **Reduction in child poverty** - New Labour increased welfare payments to poorer families - easier to have children
- **Advances in birth technologies** - increase in IVF - more women in their 40s having babies.

## Topic 7.2: Explaining the long term decrease in the death rate

### What are the Trends?

- The death rate has halved in the last century, declining from 19/1000 to 10/1000 today. In the first part of the century, most of this decrease was due to fewer children dying of infectious diseases, later on in the century, the continued decline is due to people living longer into old age.
- The major causes of death have changed – from mainly being due to preventable, infectious diseases in the early part of the century to 'diseases of affluence' such as heart disease and cancers today.
- There are considerable variations in life expectancy by gender and social class – people in the poorest parts of Glasgow die before 60, in the wealthiest parts of the UK (e.g. Kensington) life expectancy is nearer 90.

### Explaining the decrease in the death rate

#### Firstly - Economic growth and improving living standards

There are number of ways in which this had led to a decline in the death rate:

- **Better food and nutrition** (which in turn is related to better transport networks and refrigeration) which has meant that children are better able to resist infectious diseases, reducing the infant and child mortality rates. This is estimated to account for 50% of the decline in the death rate.
- **Better quality housing** – Better heating and less damp, means less illness.
- **Smaller family sizes** – as people get richer they have fewer children, which reduces the chances of disease transmission.
- **More income** = more taxation which = more money for public health services.
- *Evaluation* – *It's worth noting that not all people have benefitted equally from the above advances. The wealthy today have longer life expectancies than the poor, who still suffer health problems related to poverty.*
- *Evaluation* – *In terms of food and nutrition, obesity is now becoming a serious problem – more food doesn't necessarily mean better nutrition.*

#### Secondly - Social Policies

These are mainly institutions set up by the government and rules and regulations put in place by the government. Examples include...

- The setting up of the NHS
- Public Health Legislation – which legislate so that we have clean drinking water, food hygiene standards and safe sewage and waste disposal
- The clean air act and other policies designed to reduce pollution
- Health and Safety laws at work.

*Evaluation* - *These are largely taken for granted, but they are important!*

### **Thirdly - Medical Advances**

Mass immunisation programmes have limited the spread of infectious diseases such as measles.

More recently, medical advances have been important in improving survival rates from 'diseases of affluence' such as heart disease and cancers.

**Evaluation** – *It's easy to fall into the trap into thinking that modern medicine is the most important factor in improving life expectancy, it isn't – economic growth, rising living standards and improvements in public health are more important. Really, these have only really been significant in reducing death rates since the 1950s.*

#### **Other factors**

- There is greater knowledge and concern about health today
- The decline of manual work means work is less physical and exhausting and less dangerous.

#### **Overall conclusion/ analysis points**

- 3/4s of the decline between the 1850s and 1970 was due to the reduction of infectious (fairly easily preventable) diseases such as Cholera, and improved nutrition accounts for half of this reduction. In these early years
- More recently, the decrease in the death rate has been due to improving survival rates from heart disease and cancers.
- The declining death rate is not necessarily all good – in the last decades we have witnessed a declining death rate and a declining birth rate – and so we now have an ageing population, which requires society to adapt in order to meet the different demands of differently structured population.

## Topic 7.4 – The reasons for and consequences of changing patterns of migration

### Trends in migration

- From 1900 to the Second World War the largest immigrant group to the UK were Irish, mainly for economic reasons, followed by Eastern and Central European Jews, who were often fleeing from persecution.
- Before the 1950s very few immigrants were non-white.
- By contrast, during the 1950s, black immigrants from the Caribbean began to arrive in the UK, followed during the 1960s and 70s by South-Asian immigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Since 2001 the main sources of immigration to the UK have been as follows:
  - 15% UK citizens returning home-ownership
  - 30% from the European Union (mainly Polish)
  - 30% from New Commonwealth countries such as India

### To what extent is migration responsible for UK population growth?

*In short, it's not all about increased immigration, it's more complex!*

- For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the growth of the UK population was the result of natural increase (more births than deaths). Until the 1980s the numbers of people emigrating was greater than the number of people immigrating
- More recently, however, and especially since the turn of the Millennium (around the year 2000), there has been an increase in net migration, reaching a peak in 2011 of just over 250,000.
- However, this recent increase in net migration is mainly due to the decrease in emigration, rather than an increase in immigration.
- Finally, there has been a mini baby boom in the UK since the year 2000 which is responsible for about a third of the increase in recent population growth.

### Explaining the reasons for immigration to the UK

*In order to explain immigration, you have to look at both push and pull factors.*

- Push factors are things like escaping poverty, unemployment or persecution.
- Pull factors include things like better opportunities for jobs, study, a higher standard of living, more political and religious freedom and joining relatives.

### The main pull factors to the UK in recent years have been:

- To study at university (and also resulting in short term immigration only)
- For employment – NB historically this is the major reason, and yes this does explain Polish immigration to a large extent but it's also worth noting that many early migrants from the Caribbean and South-Asia were recruited by the British government to fill labour shortages in the UK – so quite literally pulled to the UK.
- To be with family members.

## **Push Factors**

- The most significant push factor has been to seek asylum from Persecution. The most significant recent wave of this type was when 30 000 East African Asians escaped racist persecution by Idi Amin in Uganda in the 1970s. More recently Britain has accepted thousands of refugees fleeing persecution from several countries.
- Another significant push factor is the high levels of unemployment in some southern and eastern European countries – Spain for example has youth unemployment of around 50%.

## **Explaining the reasons for emigration from the UK**

Historically the UK has been a net exporter of people. Two of the main reasons for emigration include:

- To take advantage of better employment opportunities
- To have a higher standard of living
- To benefit from the lower cost of living abroad in retirement.
- If we go back into long term history, we could even add 'colonial conquest' to list – much early emigration was linked to the British Empire's desire to control resources in other parts of the world.