

aunts and uncles in the next. It is also longer, with several generations of older relatives, as people live longer. This trend towards a new emerging 'beanpole' form of the extended family can only be expected to increase with the growing numbers of the elderly, and fewer children being born.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity refers to differences in family structure and lifestyles between ethnic and religious groups largely arising from immigration into the UK, and particularly the large-scale immigration that occurred between the 1950s and early 1970s.

### Caribbean families

Berthoud (2001) sees family life in the Caribbean community as based on 'modern individualism'. This emphasizes individual choice, independence and commitment based on the quality of relationships rather than custom, duty or a marriage certificate. Marriage is just one lifestyle option among many, which people may or may not choose, according to their individual circumstances and preferences, and whether or not they fancy taking on family commitments. Modern individualism finds expression in Caribbean communities through low rates of marriage – with marriage relatively unimportant to the Caribbean self-image – and high levels of lone parenthood. Berthoud points out that Caribbeans are less likely to live with a partner than either white people or South Asians, and those who do have a partner are less likely to have married them, and those who have married are more likely to separate or divorce – the proportion who separate or divorce is around twice as high as for white people. Mixed partnerships are common, with half of black men who have partners living with a white woman, and a third of black women with partners living with a white man. Berthoud suggests mixed marriages are widely accepted among Caribbeans – more than among whites, and much more than among Asians. He points out that this pattern of high numbers of mixed partnerships among Caribbeans, combined with the low rate of partnership and marriage in the first place, means that very few Caribbean men and women are married to each other.

Lone parenthood is higher among Caribbean women than any other ethnic group – over half of Caribbean mothers are never-married lone parents, compared to one in ten white mothers. This partly reflects a cultural tradition, but also high rates of black male unemployment and men's inability and reluctance to support families. As Berthoud points out, the combination of low rates of partnership, and high rates of single parenthood and of mixed marriage means that only a quarter of black children live with two black parents.

### South Asian families

Ballard (1982) found extended family relationships are more common in minority ethnic groups originating in South Asia – from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. Such families are still commonly patriarchal in structure, with seniority going to the eldest male, and males in general.

Berthoud sees family life in South Asian communities as based on 'old-fashioned values', in the sense that many of their present family characteristics were once found in the past among white families, but have now been rejected. These include a commitment to marriage, tight-knit families with a strong sense of family loyalty, births within marriage, respect for parents, **arranged marriages** (a custom derived from their countries of origin), husbands' authority over wives, women's roles as housewives and mothers, and having large numbers of children.

Today, the highest rates of marriage are in South Asian communities. Around three-quarters of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are married by age 25, compared with about two-thirds of Indian women and half of white women. Virtually all South Asians with a partner are in a formal marriage. A majority of Bangladeshi and Pakistani women look after their home and family full-time, rather than taking paid employment. Family sizes tend to be larger than other ethnic groups, particularly among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, with families of four or more children quite common. In many ways, the traditional British 'cereal packet' family of a working male married to a home-based female is more likely to be found among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis than any other ethnic group. Divorce rates are low in such communities because of strong social disapproval and a wide support network of kin for families under stress. Berthoud points out that, for South Asians, the key question

An **arranged marriage** is one which is arranged by the parents of the marriage partners, with few to compatibility of background and status. More a union between two families than between two people, and romantic love between the marriage partners is not necessarily present.

is not whether they are married but how they choose their marriage partner. Arranged marriages are still common in such communities, with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis particularly continuing to have their marriage partners chosen for them by their parents or other family elders. This custom is a source of some conflict between young South Asians and their parents, with rising expectations of young people having some choice in their marriage partner.

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### SOCIAL CLASS DIVERSITY

Social class diversity refers to differences between upper-class, middle-class and working-class families. Classic extended families – where they still exist – are more likely to be found in what remains of traditional working-class communities, although such families are disappearing everywhere. For example, in a study of Swansea, Charles (2008) found that classic extended families were practically extinct, even in the working class, and the only group in which such families remained was the ethnic minority population. Classic extended families in the working class have been largely replaced by modified extended or privatized nuclear families. Modified extended families tend to be more common in the working class, and privatized nuclear families more common in the middle class. Differences in income and wealth will also lead to differences in lifestyle, life chances, amounts of cultural and economic capital, and possibly in parenting practices and the household division of labour, between families from different social classes.

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### REGIONAL DIVERSITY

Regional diversity refers to the way family life differs in different geographical locations around the country. For example, as shown by the 2011 census, the 14 local council areas with the highest proportions of people aged 65 years and over are all on the coast; older industrial areas and very traditional rural communities tend to have more extended families; and the inner cities have a higher proportion of families in poverty, lone parent families and ethnic minority families.

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### THE GROWTH IN 'SINGLEHOOD' – LIVING ALONE

About one in three households today contains only one person, compared to one in twenty in 1901. Under half of these households are over pensionable age, compared to two-thirds in 1971. This means there is a growth in the number of younger people living alone. This trend can be explained by the decline in marriage, the rise in divorce and separation, and the fact that people are delaying marriage or cohabitation until they are older, or rejecting this choice altogether and perhaps choosing a LAT relationship. It might also be related to more insecurity in the job market, with more short-term and temporary contracts. It may also reflect a growing lifestyle choice, as people welcome the autonomy and freedom of living alone with the growing individualization of life that Beck-Gernsheim (2002) has referred to (see the beginning of this topic). There is also less social stigma attached to living alone now, as opposed to the idea of the 'left-on-the-shelf' unwanted solitary individual that once prevailed. Women now often choose singlehood as they wish to pursue careers, and this may frequently involve the demand for geographical mobility (moving to other areas) and this is easier if not bogged down by a partner's job.

There are nearly twice as many men as women living alone in the 25–44 age group, but there are over twice as many women as men aged 65 and over, because women tend to live longer than men. Longer lives, particularly for women, explain the increase in the number of pensioner one-person households.

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### ADULT-KIDS, KIPPERS, THE 'CLIPPED WING' GENERATION, SHARED HOUSEHOLDS AND 'FAMILIES OF CHOICE'

Heath (2004) has described how young people are now less likely to follow the traditional route of living at home, leaving school, going into a job or higher education, and then 'settling down' into a married or cohabiting couple relationship in their own homes. In 2013, one in three men, and one in

five women, aged 20 to 34 were still living with their parents – a 25 per cent increase since 1996. Young women are less likely than young men to live with their parents for three main reasons. Young women are more likely to be in married or cohabiting relationships; more are likely to be lone parents living in their own households, and women are more likely to participate in higher education, often taking them away from their parents' homes. Some of these 'adult-kids', who have finished their education and are in their working years, live with their parents because they can't afford to rent or buy their own homes. Shelter, the housing charity, described this as the 'clipped wing generation', as it was unable to fly from the family nest, and young people were consequently unable to establish a full independent adult identity. But others are staying through choice. This group is sometimes referred to as 'kippers' – 'kids in parents' pockets' – as it's cheaper, easier and often more comfortable to live at home, although it may mean eroding their parents' planned retirement savings. Even by their early 30s, one in ten men and one in twenty women are still living with their parents.

Those who have left the family home are adopting a wider range of living arrangements before forming couple relationships (or living alone) later in life. Shared households are becoming much more common, particularly among young people. This transitional period between youth and adult roles has been described as 'kidulthood' or 'adulthood'. These transitional living arrangements might include moving between living alone, going back to live with their parents, and living in shared households with their peers. There may often be a greater loyalty among young people to their friends than to their family. Such shared households, where people choose to live and form relationships with a group of people with whom they have closer relations than with their families of birth, have therefore sometimes been called 'families of choice' (although they are not strictly speaking families as they are not based on kinship relations). Such households may involve shared domestic life (cooking, eating and socializing together), and shared leisure, sporting activities and holidays.

These households are on the increase because of the high costs of buying or renting houses, the growing numbers of young people entering higher education, and the desire of young people to explore alternative living arrangements rather than simply settling down into a conventional couple household.

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## LIFE CYCLE AND LIFE COURSE DIVERSITY

Life cycle diversity refers to the way families may change through life, for example as partners have children, as the children grow older and eventually leave the home, as partners separate and form new relationships, as people retire, grow older and have grandchildren. All these factors mean the family will be constantly changing. For instance, levels of family income will change as children move from dependence to independence, levels of domestic labour and childcare will change, and levels of participation in paid employment will alter, particularly for women, depending on the absence or presence of children and the children's age. This means there will always be a diversity of family types at different stages of the family life cycle. Figure 5.10 shows an example of a family life cycle, and reflects some of the different forms the family may take at different stages of the life course of individuals. The life course refers to the various significant events, such as marriage or cohabitation, parenthood, divorce and retirement, that individuals experience as they make their way through life, and the choices they make and the meanings they give to these events.

Allan and Crow (2001) point out that in contemporary societies the traditional family life cycle and life course have changed dramatically. In the past, the typical family life cycle took the form of a series of set stages, with a fairly standard life course for individuals: young people would grow up in two-parent natural families, finish their education, leave home, get married and then start their own family, and then the family life cycle would be reborn as their own children left home. By contrast, there are now multiple paths through the life course.

In contemporary Britain, there have been huge changes in family formation, and young people face growing uncertainty in their personal lives about *what* they should do, and *when* they should do it. They are confronted with a range of choices as they make their way through life, which contributes to ever more diverse family forms, as discussed at the beginning of this topic.

Figure 5.11 summarizes the range of family diversity in contemporary Britain.