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The British Family Between Change and Continuity

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to:

My father and my mother.

My sisters for whom I wish success in their life.

My niece Imane and all relatives.

My best friends; Aïmed, Adel, Adel, Lakhder, and my entire musical band.

Acknowledgement

My thanks must first of all go to my supervisor Mrs.Bahri for whom I am very grateful for her help and great efforts.Thanks for the inspiring exchange of ideas and reading suggestions that help me so much. I am also grateful for all teachers of English department.

I would also like to express my thanks to my friends, my classmates and every person who has made a share of help and overwhelmed me with a piece of advice.

Abstract:

This report aims to be a starting point for a debate on policy, charting the changing nature of the family, and what that means for parents, children and the wider society; drawing on the breadth of the latest new researches. One thing that unites everyone in Britain is the need for parents to take more responsibility for their children. The traditional single male breadwinner family is declining and the growth of single-parent families and other new kinds of family present many new challenges for government policy on welfare, work-life balance and in many other areas.

This dissertation explores the changing shape of families in Britain today, the main reasons that contributed to this change, the impact of such changes on society and the role of government. We highlight the key opportunities for policymakers in light of the challenges suggested by the current demographic, social and attitudinal terrain, and what the public thinks of these options.

Résumé

Cette thèse se veut un point de départ pour un débat sur la politique, la cartographie de la nature changeante de la famille et ce que cela signifie pour les parents, les enfants et la société en général ; concentré sur l'ampleur des recherches plus récentes nouvelles. Une chose qui unit tout le monde en Grande-Bretagne est la nécessité pour les parents à prendre davantage de responsabilités pour leurs enfants.

Cette thèse explore la forme changeante des familles en Grande-Bretagne aujourd'hui, les raisons principales qui ont contribué à ce changement, l'impact de ces changements sur la société et le rôle du gouvernement ; et ce que pense le public de ces options.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الرسالة إلى أن تكون نقطة انطلاق للنقاش حول السياسات و دراسة الطبيعة المتغيرة للأسرة الانكليزية ،
و ما رأي للآباء و أفراد الأسرة و المجتمع في ذلك.

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List of abbreviation

A.S.B: Anti Social Behaviour.

B.H.P.S: British Household Panel Study.

C.B: Child Benefit.

C.T.C: Child Tax Credit.

F.C: Family Credit.

F.I.Ps: Family Intervention Projects.

M.C.A: Married Couple Allowance.

M.M.A: Married Man Allowance.

O.N.S: Office for National Statistics.

U.K: United Kingdom.

W.F.T.C: Working Families Tax Credit.

W.T.C: Working Tax Credit.

Y.O.Ts: Youth Offending Teams.

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Introduction

Family is a group of people who are related to each other, sometimes we mean by a family: parents and their children (a nuclear family), and sometimes we use it to include often relatives as grandparents, aunts and uncles (an extended family).

Marriage is the most common form of partnership for both men and women, but it becomes less common now than it has been, the divorce rate rose steadily throughout the late part of the 20th Century, stabilised in the mid 1980's and then showed a distinct decline in 2007.

In this entire work, we would like to present the evolution of the British family; we will look beyond changes in households composition to the relationships within which family live. Moreover, we will focus deeply on compositional changes or changes in family living arrangement.

In this research, the British family is presented through the radical changes in households structure, Great Britain becomes one of many countries that have experienced very significant changes in pattern of family formation because most families have become less stable and more diverse. Further, man and women's role within the family has also changed which led to renew the sociological norms. This work deals with both the family and the society in the late half of the twentieth century, so, it is as recent as possible, it is divided in three chapters, each chapter provides data that have been taken from some primary sources, books, magazines, essays, articles and electronic sources, throughout this research, we were in a dire Need to rely on the most reliable sources.

The first chapter aims to show the decline of traditional family, and the emergence of new forms of family composition, it discusses the structure of the modern British family.

The family in Britain is changing, the one typical British family headed by two parents has undergone substantial change in the modern era, particularly there has been a rise in the number of single-parents households, there are evidences in increasing fluency among British families, the proportion of traditional families whose parents were married before their children were born and remained together was fallen to about the half. Nowadays, more people are living alone, more children are being raised alone by single parents, women do not want to have children immediately, and they prefer to concentrate on their jobs and put-off having a baby until the late thirties, moreover, the number of single parents families are increasing, this mainly due to more marriages ending in divorce.

This chapter also deals with cohabitation, where many couples mostly in their twenties or thirties, live together (cohabite) without getting married.

The second chapter is devoted to analyse the impacts of change in the British family i.e. what contributed to this decline, changes in family life are not only a matter of changing family structure, but also family role and relationships these changes will be apparent with respect to all kinds of modern social problems as employment, the decline of traditional values, the impact of feminism changing sexual norms and growing individualism.

The third chapter consists of the government intervention in family and what are the best ways of helping families , and how should government balance work and care, this chapter also deals with the public opinion towards these legislations,

This research includes some charts; circulars, that would appear in each chapter.

The aim of this research is to reveal the most significant changes that the British families have experienced in the modern era and what are the most prominent impacts that contributed to this change?

Chapter one

The decline of the traditional family and the emergence of new forms of family composition.

Introduction

Families are no longer made up of married parents living together with children. Nowadays, many families consist of a number of nontraditional structures such as step families, cohabiting parents, single parents, couples living apart together and civil partnerships,

In Britain today, both public and politicians agree that families have changed, the traditional family does no longer exist, this structure of the British family has shifted significantly over the last 60 years and this set to continue in the future.

This chapter outlines the most significant changes in the British family and the appearance of new forms of family composition, we will explore the changes in family patterns and household, we will move to examine the decline of marriage and the rise of cohabitation and what public think about these changes?

But first we would go back in time to show some evidences concerning traditional family with composition to what exists now.

1. The decline of traditional family

Life has not always been easy or good ;but through it ; we find a traditional family that contains just two parents succeeded in encountering such hurdles and obstacles by trying to maintain a sense of family values ,the traditional family tries to raise a typical family; by providing what children need , some of what they want, and above all love , parents wanted their children to know that they could trust them , and come to them under any circumstances and they would do their best to help , to encourage and to support them in any way they could, they also knew that if they believed that they were wrong they would tell them ,so , they would get an honest opinion and they could discuss openly any situation good or bad .

Parents were good listeners, which becomes a major part of the problem today. Nowadays family members stopped listening to each other , neither parents nor children , they become so busy and so stressed by the pressure of the world around them , they do not really hear each other , they listen to the radio , CD player , their I pods ,TV , and they chat on their Pc , but they no longer listen to each other .

A boy or girl from a traditional family raised in a family where mother were home, and father worked outside the home, he had two parents and grandparents that lived right next door he/she grew up in a neighborhood where the neighbors grew up as he/she did, there was closeness in the community, real friendship that do not seem to exist today, the school and the church were equally important.

Things have changed totally over the past 25 to 50 years, the family has changed to the point that it no longer seems to have the same definition that it had, of course it changed, but we do not think that is for the better.

Families have changed in the last several decades, instead of getting married, many couples are living together or «cohabite», some of those couples eventually get married, many of them break up, and very few stay together as cohabitant for long.

What is so remarkable recently is that women are more likely to give birth before they turn 25 year than they get married, according to official statistics that illustrate how British family life has been transformed in a generation, more people are living alone, more children are being raised by single parents and more grown-up children are living with their parents than ever before.

The number of marriage couples fall to the lowest level, so that, more children were being raised by unmarried couples –Dr Richard Woolfson *, said:

« the nature of family life has changed significantly in the last 30 years [...] the traditional nuclear family of two parents and two four children has become a museum piece». ¹

couples who do not get married are now socially accepted which never existed before, psychologists proved that children will suffer hugely if they do not get the balance of two parents in their upbringing .Mr. Duncan Smith** called for the tax system to favour those who choose marriage over living together , in this context , he said :

« it is not our job as politicians, to lecture , but the problem has been caused by successive U.K governments centering on the child and forgetting the parents [...] Marriage is not just a piece of paper.».²

The divorce Reform Act of 1969 made it easier to dissolve a marriage, here, critics of the government point out that the tax system has also changed to the advantage of unmarried

¹ Mori,Ipson.families in Britain.p11

² Mori,Ipson.families in Britain.p17

couples.³ Sue Palmer*** said that many of the statistics relating to the breakdown in traditional family were linked indirectly to separate figures showing that 30% of girls and 31% of boys were overweight, she said:

« The more parent work, the more children stay at home, are not playing outside with friends...»⁴.In the past, people get married and stayed married, divorce was very difficult, expensive and took long time .But, today many couples live together without getting married in past they married before they had children, but now most children are born in unmarried families, the number of single parent families is increasing , this mainly due to the rise of divorce and death, some women choosing to have children as lone parent without being married.⁵

2. Changing family structures and the emergence of new form of family structure

As it has been mentioned that a family is a group of people who are related by blood or marriage, household refers to a person living alone or a group of people with the same address who share their living arrangement. In fact it is said that the extended family was only appropriate for agricultural societies where labor-intensive work was carried out , so that , it was no longer needed , because the nuclear family contained the basic roles of mother, father and children needed to carry out the family essential function, furthermore, the nuclear family was more able to move from place to place than the extended family , therefore , the nuclear family was the typical family structure in industrial societies .All that was discussed few

*Dr Richard Woolfson, a leading family expert and a child psychologist.

**Iain Duncan Smith, a former conservative leader and a chairman of the center of social justice.

*** Sue Palmer, a child expert and author of «toxic childhood».

³Real trends, September-2008.

⁴ Palmer,Sue.Toxic childhood,p71

⁵ Social policy justice group (2006) "fractured families" center of social justice.p13

decades ago. But today , nuclear families make up only 36% of the British families; social and cultural evolution have brought about considerable changes with reference to family; nowadays , more women are employed than ever before, legislation relating to divorce and abortion has affected the nature of women's role in the family, both the high rate of divorce and an ever increasing number of marriages showed a considerable increase in the number of single parents families and co-habiting couples, moreover, the birth rate has been also fallen. This decade has witnessed the age of women giving birth for the first time delayed until thirty. Women today are focusing on their jobs.

Families in the past may have been inter-dependent, possibly an economic unit, certainly a social one, and one which gave Great support to its numbers and extended outside the nuclear family to the wider kinship, but it was also full of constraints, but today smaller families with the growth in leisure and rising opportunities appear to provide a kind of isolation between its members. Although , the nuclear family has succeeded a little bit in occupying a kind of respect and celebrity within the society , but it was criticized in comparison to the extended family; there was a question of isolation too .it was meant that the husband , the wife and the children lived together in an emotional hot house atmosphere, this was different from the old traditional family, where are many kinsfolk lived nearby and , the emotional demands were actively provided from both parents and grandparent.

«The family today is a mobile unit centered in the town»⁶. The environment in which it was placed was linked to the most variable services concerning with education, health and entertainment.

It is obvious that changing within family reflect all kinds of changes in the whole society, this is prominent in the present discussions about women's rights, man exploiting her, the importance of work, different opportunities, get paid... without going into details of these

⁶Bulterworth, Eric. Social Problems of Modern Britain.74

controversies, what is more; is growing tension between parents and children which eventually leads to family breakdown. These family break downs sometimes ending in divorce, it is quite possible to argue that: « divorce is a healthy symptom of the desire of individuals to obtain happiness. »⁷ .The structure of the British family has shifted significantly over the last 50 years and it is clear that it will continue. These changes have resulted in the decline of marriage and the rise of cohabitation what leads to appear new forms of family structures and compositions, families are no longer made up of married parents living with their children, nowadays many families consist of a number of nontraditional structures this is because the changes in marriage, divorce and relationships, which contributed in making step families are one of the fastest growing family forms in Britain .

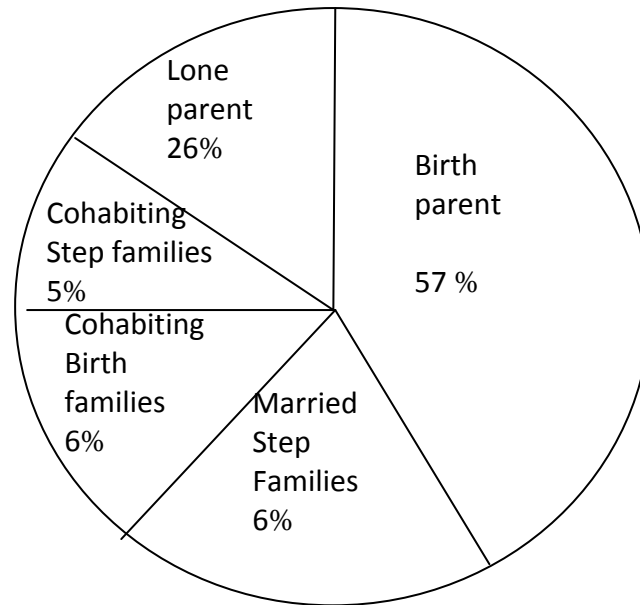
Currently they are making up one in ten of all families.⁸ The number of single parent families also increased to 2, 3 million making up 14% of all families.⁹Consequently, more and more children are growing up in single parent and in step families, moreover, a growing number of couples are now living apart together, further, many people have regular partners in other household, excluding students who get full time and people who live with their parents. In most cases this is either due to working in different locations or because the early relationships. Another type of family called civil partnership which gathers the same sex couples occupy 26,787 civil partnerships since the law introduced in December 2005.¹⁰ The charter bellow demonstrates the new family structure that makes up the British families.

⁷ Bulterworth, Eric. social problems of modern Britain.75

⁸ office for national statistics,(2008) « civil parentship »

⁹Mori,Ipson. families in Britain.26

¹⁰ office for national statistics (2005) « step families »



Family structure in U.K

In the domain of lone parenthood in particular, sociological research agendas have been particularly shaped by criticising the discourses surrounding the presumed meanings of lone parenthood as an indicator of family change and of patterns of claims on state welfare. Recent research has been shaped by a move away from notions of 'the' lone parent family or status, to life course patterns of mobility through this status

By 1991 around 20% of all families with dependent children in UK were headed by a lone parent, three times the proportion of 1971¹¹. Between 1971 and 1986 the growth was mainly due to significant increases in divorce rates. From 1986 to 1991 it was due mainly to the growth in single, never married parents. In a linked piece of survey research demonstrates stress patterns of movement into lone parenthood, and explores the issue of motivations, concluding that 6% of lone parent households were comprised of 'purposive lone parents.

¹¹ Social trends 1998

The increasing number of lone parents recently is due to more events leading to lone parenthood and to an increasing duration of lone parenthood. The recent increase in never married lone parenthood includes a growth the breakdown of cohabiting relationships: a pattern which is linked to a tendency now for lone parents to be younger and to have younger children and smaller family sizes than in past. Additionally, early lone parenthood appears to be the result of growing inequality of opportunity among young women.¹² For those with extra-marital births, median time spent as a lone parent was three years, for those who divorced, the median duration was 4.5 years. Those becoming lone parents recently have tended to remain lone parents for longer. As well as more people becoming lone parents, exit rates from the status have declined as repartnering has become less popular.

Recently Britain has had a comparatively high proportion of children living in lone parent families, matched only in Europe by Denmark. In 1994 about one quarter of all families with dependent children under 16 in UK were headed by a lone parent, a proportion two to three times greater than the Netherlands or Germany. In the UK around 15% of dependent children live in single parent households.

“The growing social acceptance of a separation of sex, marriage and parenthood has created a situation in which lone parenthood is increasingly coming to be seen as another stage in the family life cycle, rather than as an aberration from 'normal' family patterns. Not just in the UK but throughout the western industrialised countries, much more diverse patterns of family structure are developing with more complex ties of family love, support, exchange, duty and obligation”.¹³

¹² Social trends 1999.

¹³ Ford, R., Marsh. A. and McKay, S. (1995) Changes in Lone Parenthood Department of Social Security Research Report no. 40. London: HMSO.

It is the more adequate conceptualisation of such diversity and its meanings, in terms of lived experience, perceptions of fairness and appropriate modes of behaviour, and the related distribution of opportunity and meaningful social participation.

Changing composition of household and new pattern in family are more remarked recently, there is a huge rise in the proportion of one person-households and In the proportion of lone parent families, nowadays Britain has had a comparatively high proportion of child living in lone parents families*. In 1994 about one quarter of all families with dependent children** in U.K were headed by a lone parent. In U.K around 15% of dependent children live with single parent household.¹⁴

«a growing social acceptance of separation of sex, marriage and parenthood has created a situation in whole parenthood is increasingly coming to be seen as an other stage in the family life cycle, rather than an abatement of [normal] family life, support, exchange, duty and obligation »ford and miller(1997)¹⁵.

One parent or single parent families are not something new, however in the past most of them were created through the death of one parent household. Today the majority is created through divorce- there has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of single parent households in Britain in the two last decades-however, many children in one parent households have two parents alive, and may have, regular contact with the parent outside the household. Lone parent households are likely to share a number of characteristics, it is clear that the majority of lone parent households are headed by a women, further, the average age of children is generally under five years old, furthermore children are going to live in poverty because often lone mothers are less likely to be employed than married mothers.

*lone parent family: a parent without a partner living with their dependent children.

** Dependent children: children either under 16 or 16-19 and undertaking a full-time education.

¹⁴ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/foundation/f4.html>

¹⁵ Ford, R and miller J-(1997) private live and public responses lone parenthood and future policy.

In the current social and cultural structure, it is more acceptable for homosexual couples to share their lives openly, although there is still debate about if they are able to adopt children, many gay people today openly live in couples as families however, the extent to which this is socially tolerated remains in question.¹⁶

3. The decline of marriage and the rise of cohabitation

Traditionally, marriage has had a special status in British law and society. Marriage developed as a way to provide stability for families and for all of society. Marriage is a declaration of commitment which has public as well as private consequences. It is an institution which offers benefits not only to the couples themselves but to society as a whole. When people marry, they commit themselves not only to being emotional and sexual partners, but also to taking care of each other-for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health. They promise to stick by each other through the ups and downs that occur in everyone's lives. This promise and the trust it builds encourage partners to make sacrifices for the good of the family. Traditionally, British government and society have supported the institution of marriage by giving it certain privileges and responsibilities, and by enforcing consequences for breaking marriage vows.

A decrease in the number of marriages and an increase in cohabitation both have come in the wake of a large increase in divorce in the last thirty years. Some people argue that these trends are due to people being less willing to make commitments, or perhaps being more fearful that others will break their promises.

Marriage is still the most common form of parent ship for both men and women, but it becomes to be less common in U.K now than it has been in the past. Most people experienced

¹⁶ <http://www.curriculum-press.co.uk>.

a typical life course pattern of courtship leading to marriage, followed by the birth of children; the woman gave up paid employment during her years of childrearing and the couple stayed together until death took one of them, but in the late twentieth and the early twenty first century, it is figured that there is now much women still married but no marriage is on the increase, cohabitation has been increasingly common, usually preceding or following marriage, but it becomes for some couples usual, the proportion of non married women under sixty cohabiting almost doubled in less than 15 years, from 13% in 1986 to 25% in 1998 and 1999.¹⁷ So, cohabitation seems to have replaced marriage as the first form of co-resident partnership for many couples. The number of marriages has fallen, also, the timing of marriage has changed, it is estimated that, the average age of first marriage was, twenty eight for women and thirty for men compared to twenty two and twenty four. Marriage declined nearly 10% in the United Kingdom during 2005, according to report by (ONS)¹⁸. The number of marriage in 2005 was 238,730, this decline is due to the postpone of time of marriage, furthermore, marriage is becoming less important, it is outdated in the mind of many, more adults choose to live together then get married.

The number and the rate of divorce has steadily rose since the early 1980's with about 145,000 divorces per year, but the number of divorce reached a peak of 176,000 in 1993 then fell to 150000. In 1999, one in four children whose parents divorced are under 5 years old.¹⁹ The most visible results of this changing pattern of family formation and dissolution have been the growth in number and proportion of families headed by lone parent families mainly because of divorce.

Sociologists have endeavored to build an explanation of increasing divorce rates more than they have engaged with the other demographic changes so far addressed. Amongst the core

¹⁷ /office of national statistics .2000

¹⁸ office of national statistics .2005

¹⁹ office of national statistics .2000

developments commonly cited as significant are: change in the material bases of people's livelihoods, leading to marital ties being based increasingly on emotion and romantic love, rather than economic necessity. Expectations in this newly dominant domain could not realistically be met, hence break-up. The other core development which has engendered a good deal of research has been the issue of gender relations, and changes in women's access to 'independent' income. The latter notion has never squared with the patterning of divorce which is associated with female disadvantage, not its opposite. There is an apparent contradiction between the greater 'wealth' of women and the frequent poverty of those who divorce. In fact, divorce is clearly associated with absence of access to resources - material or cultural, and takes place in highly constrained environments.

The most significant causes of divorce are poor economic and somatic well being, with particularly high divorce rates occurring amongst people who marry at an early age; those who experienced parental divorce; and those who are economically, somatically and emotionally vulnerable.²⁰

In the 1990's unmarried motherhood has increased rapidly , this is mainly a result of raising rate of cohabitation, woman who separates from a cohabiting partner and becomes alone as never married ,for six years , she will become a lone parent , the proportion of depended children living with lone mothers increased from 19 to 22%.²¹

Between 1996 and 2006, the number of married couple fall by over 4% while the number of cohabiting couple family increased by 2, 3, million, representing 14%, of all families, it is estimated that more than seven out of ten men and women now in their 30's will marry

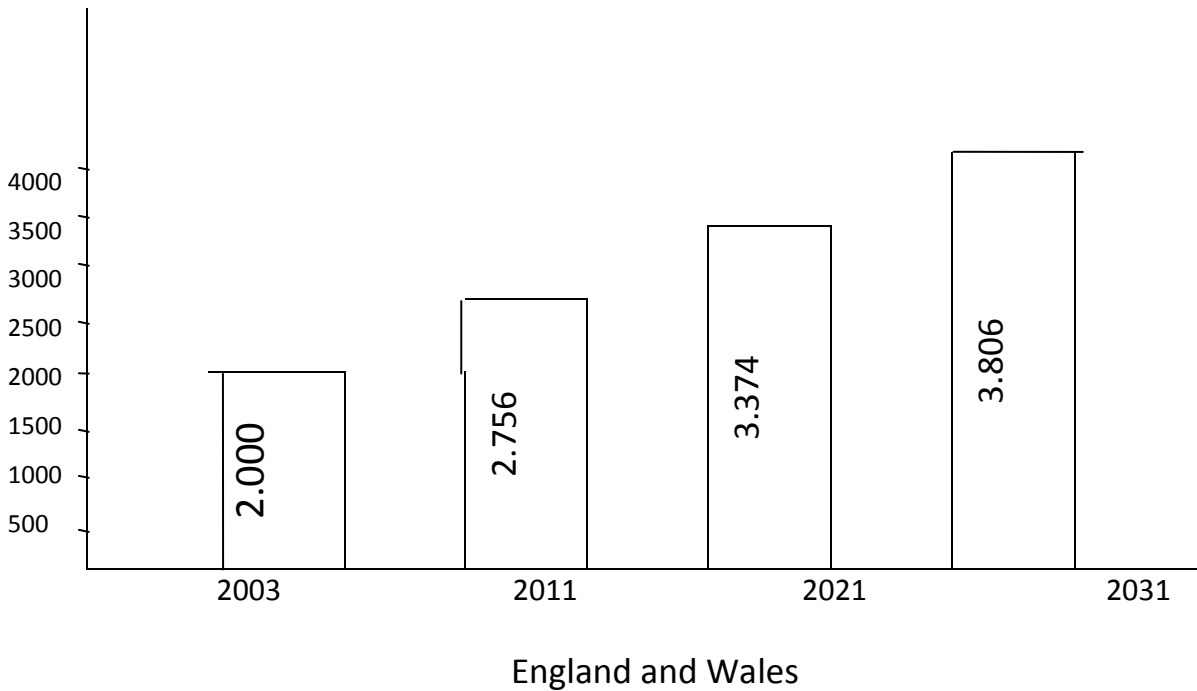
²⁰ Boheim, R. and Ermisch, J. (1998) Analysis of the Dynamics of Lone Parent Families Institute for Social and Economic Research Working Paper 98-8
<http://iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/workpaps/wp98-8.htm>

²¹ wales and the USA in population studies vol:59 p135.

compared to nine out of ten men in their mid 60's, it is by 2031 these trend will continue and the number of single parent families will rapidly rise.²²

In 1960, just 2% couples were cohabiting before they married, compared to three quarter in 1998, moreover, many people now marry later ,often living with partner before making a formal commitment.²³

The chart bellow projects increasing trend in cohabitation.²⁴



Many cohabiters view their situation as common marriage ,and believe that they have the same rights as married couples, however, few rights actually exist in July, 2007,the low commission published a report that highlighted the financial implications for couples in cohabitations , that end either in separation or death and made a number of recommendations to address the injustices that they can result , it suggested that cohabiters without children who had lived together for at least two years , should receive some rights on separation or death

²² Mori,Ipson.families in Britain,p25
²³ cabinet office/the strategy unit(2008) families in Britain ,26
²⁴ <http://www.gov-gov.uk>.

whilst those who had lived together for five years might receive further rights , the government has not yet published its final response to this report.²⁵

Many people support for the issue that cohabitation is a good idea, because it allows couples to get to know each other, and therefore to decide whether or not they are suited to each other, but it has been suggested as a risk factor to divorce .That idea which claims that cohabitation leads to marriage did not totally faile but it contributed to huge increase rate of divorce.

The majority of divorcee choose cohabitation as a new form of relationship , it appears that their previous experience affected them , those who have previously been married tend to engage in long cohabitation than never – married and their cohabitation are more likely to end in marriage .²⁶ The increase of cohabitation suggests a change from previous pattern , when cohabiting was usually a trial or a temporary phase prior marriage , today increased number of cohabiting couples is raised dramatically too fast.

To conclude not all cohabitation will lead dramatically to marriage, many cohabitation break up , other couples viewed it as an alternative to marriage , but all these are less helpful to create a long-term stable family. furthermore, changing in law has made it easy to be able to get a divorce , so , Britain now has one of the highest rates in Europe and the highest percentage of people in European nations who have been divorced .²⁷

Conclusion

The decline of the nuclear family unit is well-documented in the U.K; today it is estimated that nuclear families make up only 36% of British families. Social and cultural evolution have brought about considerable change with reference to the family; today more women are

²⁵ <http://www.low.com.gov.uk/docs/ic307.html>

²⁶ national statistics, living in Britain 2001, www.statistics.gov.uk.html

²⁷ <http://iser.essex.ac.uk/pbs/wp98.8html>

employed than ever before and legislation relating to divorce, contraception and abortion has certainly effected the nature of the woman's role in the family. A high rate of divorce and a ever-decreasing number of marriages has signified a considerable increase in the number of single parent families and co-habiting couples. The changing nature of relationships coupled with the increase in divorce has also led to an increase in the number of families with step-relatives and children who have one parent in common. The birth rate has also fallen to an estimated 1.9 children per woman in England and Wales in 2008 which is considerably lower than the figure of 3 children per woman recorded in 1971.

The family unit has undoubtedly changed significantly over the last few decades. The nuclear family unit consisting of a set of parents and their children is now much rarer, with new structures such as lone parent families and step-relatives much more common-place.

In addition, for the first time ever, this decade has witnessed the age of women giving birth for the first time creep lower than that of getting married. Deciding to settle down at a later age, as well as higher divorce rates, also means that the number of adults living alone is higher today than ever before.

Chapter two

Introduction

Families are now less stable than in previous generations , children often growing up with different parents in step families , cohabiting families, as a result , there are considerable evidences suggesting that children are more likely to experience poverty ; poor health and well being and eventually be involved in anti social behaviour .

Families will go on evolving as more women have cares, and seek more egalitarian relation ships, men and women frequently need to negotiate their roles within the family, the impact of new family compositions and the changing dynamic within the families has had different effect upon children, mothers, fathers and other dependant groups of the family.

In this chapter, we will explore the most significant causes that contributed directly to the changes in families, as well as changes in legislation, women's entry into the labour market and the development of science and technology.

This chapter also attempts to show the impact of changes in the family .here we will spot the light on family stability, children health and well being, levels of poverty and the involvement in anti social behaviour.

1. What contributed to family change?

In recent times we have seen changes in social norms and a relaxations attitude towards sex, changes in legislations, divorce and civil partner-ship, more women working, furthermore, advances in science and technology. As result of all these factors, the structure families in Britain have changed.

1.1Changes in social norms

Traditional families are increasingly being replaced by a variety of non traditional family structure such as step families, cohabiting parents. All these new kinds of family structures have become increasingly more common, so that, seven out of ten people think that pre - marital sex is rarely or not wrong at all²⁸ , moreover, some people agree that there is a little difference socially between being married and living together, while other think that living with a partner shows just as much commitment as getting married. These findings may be

²⁸ Duncan's and Philips,MC2008)new families.p5

associated with incorrect belief by many unmarried couples who live together as if married have the same rights as married couples. However, few couples get married, whereas, other see marriage as a piece of paper.²⁹

As attitudes towards marriage have evolved, some religion leaders have been forced to mention these changes and have had talk about the issue of sexual activity. (The ideology of no sex before marriage).

Although, strict religious beliefs about sexual activity out side of marriage, to be up hold, but it has become implicit. Moreover, the proportion of population with strong religions beliefs has been reduced and the concept of sex in both religion and society has influenced the delay in marriage, or abandonment it completely.

1.2 Changes in legislation and understanding family law:

The number of divorce flows speedily after the 1969 divorce reform act, so that, the divorce rate gets much higher because now easier than it was previously, where as some people think that marriage is less successful today,³⁰ and other argue that first step towards a new life is positive. Changes in legislation have allowed for the formalisation of new kinds of families, legislations have allowed lesbian parents to have her own biological children; and discrimination laws around adoption, have also allowed gay couples become families with children. In 2007, new legislation made it illegal for gay couples to adopt children.

Despite this, there are still very few gay families with children.³¹ Changes in legislation have also contributed to changes in women's employment circumstances.

Women are given more important right, in the work places which have had an important effect on the division of labour within families. The legal rights of those who are married and cohabiting provides an important example, for understanding family law, some

²⁹ James G and park A(2001)just a piece of paper

³⁰ Cabinet office/the strategy unit (2008) families in Britain, an evidence paper.

³¹ <http://www.community care.co.uk>

people think that marriage provides more security than cohabitation, despite the fact that marriage provide more security, the data show that people argue that the separation in cohabiting relationship should be treated similarly to marriage, moreover, they claim that these should be in a high level support for similar legal treatment for cohabiting and married couples. The law commission would like to see couple who have cohabiting for at least two years, given the same rights as married couples to the safe guard of their finances in the cases of break up or death such as change, however would remove the motivation for couples to marry.³²

Twenty years ago, people believed that those who want children ought to get married, but in 2008 this has fallen, although the public no longer feel that there is no need to get married, marriage continues to be viewed positive when children are involved, seven in ten people believe that it is better for parents of children to be married rather than unmarried³³; divorce itself is not considered as a particular problem any more if children are not under 16years.

1.3 The mass employment of women

Changing patterns of employment, in particular in female patterns of participation, are often 'grouped' with trends in family and household structure, related divisions of labour in financial and care based resourcing. The links have been drawn in different ways. In the following we explore general patterns of change in paid employment whilst, for the most part, reviewing these in relation to household level divisions of labour and gender (and life course) related developments in respect of access to and rewards from employment. Amongst the key trends experienced over recent decades in the UK are a pattern of polarisation - at the level of individuals and of households; important alterations in gender relations to education,

³² Darwen, Joe. Cohabitation and the law. p41

³³ <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk>

employment and household resourcing; and related developments in respect of the articulation of family obligations and patterns of employment.

Recent decades have seen a growth in participation in post-compulsory education, partly linked to changes in the employment opportunity structure, as well as to changes in early life course trajectories and familial relations of partial dependence and obligation, and linked to growing inequality. Qualification level is an important marker of difference within employment.

In 1998, 86% of highly qualified women ('A' level +) were economically active compared to 50% without qualifications, amongst men. Women with pre-school children manifest an economic activity rate of 27% where they had no qualifications (of which 22% were employed); and in contrast if they were highly qualified comparable women had an economic activity rate of 76% (of which 74% were employed). Amongst all women, 75% of women who were in professional and managerial occupations worked compared to 57% of unskilled manual women (ONS 1998).³⁴

In short, one of the key drives behind society change towards the roles within the families has been the increase of women in the labour market, in recent decades, changes in society including improved educational access for women, legislative change, change in social attitudes towards gender roles, have all proved the way for women's mass entry into the labour market. Between 1971 and 2008 women's employment rate increased from 59% to 70%, whilst men's rate fell from 95% to 79%³⁵ regardless to their involvement in the labour market, women still carry the Lange Burdon of care and domestic responsibility within the

³⁴ Ford, R., Marsh. A. and McKay, S. (1995) *Changes in Lone Parenthood* Department of Social Security Research Report no. 40. London: HMSO.

³⁵ Office for national statistics(2008) <<working lives>>

family. Women face substantial penalties in terms of pay and progression, for taking time out of the labour market or reducing their working hours to care children.

More women than ever are able to achieve balance between both family responsibilities and career; the current government has advocated the economic and social benefits of being a working mother, through the introduction of number of initiatives designed to help women with children. These have included:

- Extending paid maternity leave from 18 to 29 week
- Introducing a further optional 12weeks, unpaid maternity leave.
- Introducing paid paternity leave and additional paternity leave.
- Introducing the right to request flexible working for careers and parent with children less than 16 years.
- The ability to claim up to 80% of child care cost.
- Increasing the provision of child care through the launch of (national child care strategy; despite undertaking paid employment, some women feel it is their roles to be the primary carer for their children ³⁶

When seeking to combine employment and care responsibility, childcare regarded as the hurdle to enter to the labour market, single parent ,often mothers find it particularly difficult to balance work and care responsibilities, the single parent employment rate is currently 56% compared to 72% of women in two parent households and 91% for men households³⁷, however, single parent after face some obstacles, for this, the government outlined the additional measures to help them by a guaranteed job interview for all single parent seeking work, extended work trials and access to in work credit ³⁸ in general female empowerment has caused family break up, Sue Palmer said in this context :

³⁶ Irson, DoIF. Families that work .2003

³⁷ Office of national statistics (march 2009)

³⁸ Department of work and education.p12

<<The clock could not and should not be turned back>>³⁹ a study backed by Archibi shop of canterbay . Dr Rawan William* described an increase in a number of mothers going back to work when their babies are less than one year old. This shows the fact that women are less dependent on their husbands, for this how every body forgets that rearing children is a time consuming and important project.⁴⁰

1.4 The impact of technology:

Alongside these social and legislative changes, science and technology have also played a park in reshaping the family, by allowing families, especially women to have great control and flexibility over their daily lives and an ability to plan for the future.

Families are able to plan to a greater degree, when to have children to fit in with their employment, family circumstances, and financial stability, further, The technological advancement of household appliances has reduced the time and effort required to maintain a household. Moreover, the introduction and development of technology, particularly computers, has dramatically increased flexibility in employment opportunities. Many parents are now able to combine working at home with parental responsibilities. Even children nowadays,it is claimed that the quality of friendship among young people has declined as the so called The Face Book Generation who spend more time in front of their screens than outside playing.

2. The impact of changes on the family

2.1 Family stability

Generally speaking, one of the consequences of greater marital instability is the greater frequency of residual families, consisting in the overwhelming majority of cases of a mother

³⁹ Toxic child hood.17

*Dr.Ranan William criticises the parent of young children for spending long hours at work.

⁴⁰ Life style and life chance P15-46

The decline of traditional family has led to increase the tension and instability in modern families. The nontraditional families such as stepfamilies and cohabiting parents are more threatened to breaking down. Divorce in Britain is high and stepfamilies are a growing up so fast. Generally, the majority of children stay with their mother; four in five stepfamilies consist of a natural mother and a stepfather⁴¹. Just under half of stepfamilies also have their own children within the family as well as stepchildren. In addition, cohabiting parent families split up before their children get five years and get another step father at the age of eight, and then another one when he reaches eleven. This means that the structure of a family can change several times while a child is growing up. This lack of stability has been linked to other issues such as poverty, poor health and antisocial behaviour.

2.2 Some families are more likely to be effected by poverty

A family's income makes a huge impact upon the experiences of the people within it. there was not only a strong link between single parents and poverty but also cohabitation: 30% of cohabiting respondents were in poverty compared to 15% of married couples living in poverty can lead to further issues for the future of the children such as low aspiration and educational

⁴¹ Fractured families.p17

achievement and consequently multiple disadvantage and poor life chances. Single parents especially are at much greater risk of multiple disadvantages and are at least twice as likely to live in poverty compared to couple parents. A survey held from 1998 to 2004 found that after a marital split mothers are in worst when divorced mothers income dropped by the half.⁴²

The improvement is attributed to rising rates of employment for women with children and boosted by the introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC)⁴³.

Many believe that work has a huge impact on the family poverty. Seven in ten single parents not working live in poverty, compared to three in ten who are in part-time work and two in ten for those in full-time work. However other argue that ‘work is not always a solution – over half of poor children live with a parent who works.

Financial tensions often create family tensions, and may be a factor in family breakdown. Families, like individuals, are facing growing anxiety over rising costs and debt. It is proclaimed that, the number of vacancies has also fallen to its lowest level since 2001. Therefore the economy is cited as the most important issue facing Britain today.⁴⁴

Looking forward, public are pessimistic about the economy. Less than one in five people (17%) feel the economic condition of the country will improve very soon, fewer people are so concerned about their own personal finances. Two in five (39%) think their circumstances will get worst and only 14% feel they will improve. For instance, two in five of families with an annual income of less than £15,000 have suffered from cold homes due to high energy costs.⁴⁵

Since the 1970s there was a growth of permanent, lifetime inequalities and short term income risk. In 1977 - 6% of the population had incomes less than half the national average,

⁴² [save the children.p11](#)

⁴³ Families in britain.p34

⁴⁴ [http// save the children.org.uk/em/41html](http://save.the.children.org.uk/em/41html)

⁴⁵ [http// family situation, save the children.org.uk/em/41html](http://family.situation,save.the.children.org.uk/em/41html)

by 1995 this had trebled, to 18% of the population and income inequality by the mid 1990s greater than at any time since the late 1940s.

From 1961-79 incomes for all income groups had risen, the lowest fastest. Then, from 1979-91 average incomes grew by 36% while poorest fifth saw static incomes. Factors contributing to income inequality growth between the late 1970s and early 1990s have been cited as:

- A growing gap between high and low pay, with increasing premiums for skills and qualifications;
- The number of workless households rising faster than overall official unemployment rates, with more households containing only one adult and growing polarization between no earner and dual-earner couples;
- The 1980s price linking of benefits meant a falling behind of the rest of the population when overall incomes rose.⁴⁶

In respect of the issue of income mobility: British Household Panel Study data reveals that 54% of poorest tenth in the first year of the study had escaped it a year later, but two thirds were still in poorest fifth. More than 3/4 of low income observations represent either persistent low income, or are linked to other observations of low income with no escape over a four year period. It concludes that the 'poverty problem' is 80-90% of the size suggested by cross section surveys.

The above has focused on some key issues in respect of current patterns and trends, and pointed to considerations in respect of how emergent patterns are best delineated and best understood.

⁴⁶ http://www.jrf.org.uk/social_policy/SP107.html

2.3 Certain kinds of family are more likely to experience poor health and wellbeing

In some cases, the family structure is thought to be important for certain health outcomes. Evidence suggests that children in two parent households have better health and educational outcomes, it is widely proved that raising children as a single parent can be incredibly difficult. As a result children in these families are more likely to suffer from ill health than those in two parent households. For example, children of single parents whether single or widowed, are likely to have a mental health problem comparison to those living with married or cohabiting couples.⁴⁷

Married parents are happier with their lives, with nine in ten married parents are satisfied. This is probably because married parents are likely to have higher incomes and are therefore able to live in areas with less deprivation and practicing leisure activities.⁴⁸

2.4 Most families experience tension over paid work and care

Families play a crucial role in the provision of care and support for both young children and elderly friends and relatives. The entry of women into the workplace has had an impact on the balance of work and care in the family. As female labour market engagement has increased and the structure of families has changed, more employees than in previous generations have care responsibilities to balance with the challenges of working life.

Almost all families rely on informal childcare at one stage in their life. Much of this informal childcare will be undertaken by partners, friends or family. But children are not the only dependant group to receive informal care and support from the family. However, it is

⁴⁷ The comelote foundation (2005).

⁴⁸ Families in Britain.p71

estimated that at least five million people in England today already provide care and support for family members or friends.

As people are living longer, demand for informal care from family, friends and community members is projected to rise by 40% by 2022. However, childlessness in Britain has been increasing in recent years.

Britain's population is ageing and the issue of caring for the older generation is one of great debate. History maintains that many generations used to live together in the family home and while this may be true in some cultures today, it is not common in modern British society. Despite trends indicating that adults are staying longer in the parental home, it is extremely rare to find three generations under the same roof today. The problem of looking after the older generation therefore surfaces and now old people are heavily reliant on health and social services, rather than their own relatives.

2.5 the impact of change on children of the non- traditional family

Teenagers living without their biological fathers are more likely to experience psychological problems, to start smoking in an early age, drinking alcohol, take drugs, offend, be excluded from school because of many absences, so that, they are going to leave school at 16 years, less likely to attain qualification. As result, they are going to experience unemployment, homelessness, cohabitation, having children outside marriage; moreover, they are more likely to live in poverty and depression, run away from house and at a high risk of sexual abuse. Not only children who are going to suffer, but also parents are going to suffer deeply. For example, lone mothers are likely to suffer from stress depression and other emotional and psychological problems they will have difficulties interacting with their

children, furthermore, they registered a high rate of death and suicide because of increasing drinking and unsafe sex.⁴⁹

2.6 The impact on social fabric and involvement in antisocial behavior

Disruption in family life certainly have had an impact upon the men and women and the children directly involved however, it is increasingly the case that changes in patterns of family structure also have an effect on the large society. It is difficult to distinguish which are the causes and which are the effects, but it is possible to explore some of the social exchanges associated with changes in family life that have occurred over decades, one prevalent effect on society is the increase of crimes and violence, over the past several decades, rates of crime have increased at the same time as rates of divorce, the relation between crime and family environment is so complicated, especially the role of poverty is also considered. However, many scholars and policy makers who study crimes have identified family break down as one among clusters of disadvantages which are associated with criminal activities with chronic reoffending⁵⁰

An American study found that;”juvenile offending was effected not just by whether a particular child’s parents were married, but also by the prevalent family structure in his neighborhood it has been suggested that this might be the case because tow parent families are better able to monitor antisocial behavior which often leads to more serious crimes.”⁵¹ Analyses of general household survey data shows that two parents families are more likely to be involved in their local communities than lone parent families. From this statement we notice that community ties have increased.

⁴⁹ National survey of sexual attitude and life style.

⁵⁰ Reducing reoffending by ex.prisoners,social exclusion unit(2002)

⁵¹ American journal of sociology

“two parents families are 25% more likely to be neighborly, and 50% more likely to have people to help them if they are ill, need a lift or need to borrow money compared with lone parent families, this relative lack of [mutual] care in lone parents households”⁵²

Although there is no data suggest that certain family types are more likely to have children involved in antisocial behavior, it seems legal that those parents experiencing deprivation are more likely to find their children involved in antisocial and criminal behavior .this may be related to emotional and health outcomes of living in poverty. And a result parents face greater struggle in controlling the challenging behavior of their children.

Conclusion

Traditionally, marriage has had a special status in British law and society. Marriage developed as a way to provide stability for families and for all of society. Marriage is a declaration of commitment which has public as well as private consequences. It is an institution which offers benefits not only to the couples themselves but to society as a whole. When people marry, they commit themselves not only to being emotional and sexual partners, but also to taking care of each other-for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health. They promise to stick by each other through the ups and downs that occur in everyone's lives. This promise and the trust it builds encourage partners to make sacrifices for the good of the family. Traditionally, British government and society have supported the institution of marriage by giving it certain privileges and responsibilities, and by enforcing consequences for breaking marriage vows.

⁵² Office for national statistics, general household survey2002.

With the emergence of new family formations and households. Children are more likely to experience all sorts of insufficiency of health condition, wellbeing, education and respect, which eventually lead them to commit crimes and criminal behaviors.

Chapter three

Government intervention

Introduction

Government has moved away from financial support that previously incentivised marriage towards a more universal provision for families. Legislative changes have given families more flexibility to maintain their home and work lives and have a degree of choice in their options.

Parents need the right of support to give them the freedom to raise their family, yet the government plays an important role in the domestic sphere. Policy is a key driver of the circumstances faced by families, and government can help families by affecting their civil rights through legislation; their health through services; their finances through tax and benefits; and their balance of work and care through a mixture of tax, benefits and services.

However, families are often not aware of all the support available to them at key times of need. Here the majority of families would like to see support made available to families but, they proclaim that these supports should be presented through subsidies or in tax breaks for parents rather than providing additional cash.

This chapter explores when should government intervene in the family sphere and if so, what can do to help them, besides we will tackle the issue of bad parenting and how government should work with it

1. Should government interfere with families?

Actually, Family is a personal sphere, and, some members of the public feel strongly that it is not the role of government to raise children, but that of individuals. The public are not always aware about the role of government, often seeing services as being provided by their employers or childcare providers. However, there is an increasing consensus that government has a role in ensuring fairness amongst all groups in society, particularly those that are most vulnerable.

We have seen that the shift towards non-traditional family forms can lead to poor outcomes for families regarding health, wellbeing and poverty. So the question we should ask here: should government interfere with families and what are the best ways of helping them?

The Labor government took office in Britain in May 1997 promising policy change across a wide range of areas. One of the ten pledges in their 1997 manifesto was the promise that, "we will help build strong families and strong communities"⁵³ and in October 1998, the Home Office published a discussion document. (Supporting Families), which proposed two main types of policy intervention. First were measures that are aimed at providing direct support for families in cash or in kind measures to reduce poverty within twenty years, and the latter

⁵³ <http://www.bbc-news-uk-gov>

includes measures such as the national childcare strategy ,which are very new in Britain no previous British government has made such a promise about poverty . Other significant new policies include measures to support and encourage lone parents into paid employment with a target set for employment levels ,further, benefits for the poorest children (those in families receiving Income Support) have been increased substantially⁵⁴.The second type of policies set out in (Supporting Families) are those that are aimed at changing family behavior in some way. These include, for example, the provision of support and advice services to improve parenting skills, giving local authorities powers to impose child curfews to keep children off the streets at nights in certain areas, setting targets to reduce teenage pregnancy⁵⁵ , measures intended to strengthen marriage through information and support to couples when they marry.

The responses to these sorts of proposals, especially those intended to strengthen marriage, illustrate some of the difficulties inherent in the development of an explicit family policy in postmodern society. As a result, there are very different views about government intervention in family matters, especially measures intended to strengthen marriage have been controversial because they seem to suggest that other family types as lone parents, stepfamilies, are less acceptable and less deserving of support. Other measures, such as the stress on reducing worklessness and increasing levels of employment for all parents, including lone parents, have also been criticized for failing to recognize and value the contribution made by women's unpaid care work within the family.⁵⁶

2. What can government do to help families

2.1What can government do about poverty in the family

⁵⁴ <http://www.family politics and family policy.gov>

⁵⁵ Youth crime action.

⁵⁶ <http://www.home office-gov.uk>

In recent years the amount of money spent by government to support families has increased significantly, but it has also been dramatically re-targeted, which has the effect of shifting support from one type of family to others. Up until 1999 the three key family benefits were:

- Child Benefit (which began in 1975);
- Family Credit for low-income working families; and
- ‘Married Man’s Allowance which became the Married Couples Allowance in 1990. This

structure had numerous problems, for example, the Family Credit could lead to poverty traps, as families increasing their earnings through work could lose almost as much in benefits. These benefits were restructured by the current Government in 1999 into a Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and a Children’s Tax Credit, and then in 2003 a Working Tax Credit (WTC) and a Child Tax Credit (CTC). The WTC is no longer a family benefit as it is available to all those in employment with a low income including single people with no dependants. However, couples and single parents do get additional credit and there is a childcare element for those that have children ⁵⁷

This structure has a very different set of issues. By moving from a system based on tax allowances to one based on payments. The government has created a system whereby almost all families are taxed on the one hand and then some received back payments that equate to a similar level in benefits⁵⁸. There is no longer an incentive through the tax system to get married as a single parent or cohabiting couple are now entitled to the same level of support which means tested on household income. The focus on work rather than family has helped parents to move out from poverty: seven in ten single parent and couple families had moved out of poverty a year after transition into work.

⁵⁷ Financing childcare choice, Policy exchange,p26

⁵⁸ Families and childcare study, department of work and pension.p12

2.2 What can government do about the balance of work and care in families?

The changes to family dynamics have had a profound effect on parents' requirements childcare and early years provision, and conditions of employment. Britain has had a national scheme of government-funded paid maternity leave for 30 years. Since 1994, it has been progressively expanded to increase women's participation and retention in the labour market and to support working parents⁵⁹. Since 2003, fathers have been able to take two weeks statutory paternity leave and an increasing number take additional time off. The availability and take-up of flexible working is on the rise. 95% of employers offer at least one of the six main flexible working arrangements to employees⁶⁰; the right to request flexible working is available to parents with children up to 16 years old.

A quarter of requests regarding working arrangements are to change the number of days, and which days of the week are worked, and for a reduction in the number of hours. Hence, women and men use the right to request flexible working in different ways. Female employees who request a change to their working time are more likely to request part-time work than any other arrangement. Women are also more likely to have their requests accepted than men: two thirds (66%) of women had a request accepted, compared to just over half (54%) of men. These trends reinforce Britain's broader pattern of women working part-time hours, and may be a result of other constraints rather than a desire to be spending more time on care, such as the availability of childcare, and the fear that career prospects may be damaged.⁶¹

There is also an increasingly high take-up of formal and informal childcare as more parents spend time at work. Four in five families have used some form of childcare or early years provision in the last year. The take-up of early years education is almost universal among

⁵⁹ Families in Britain-cabinet office.p55

⁶⁰ Document of trade and industry.

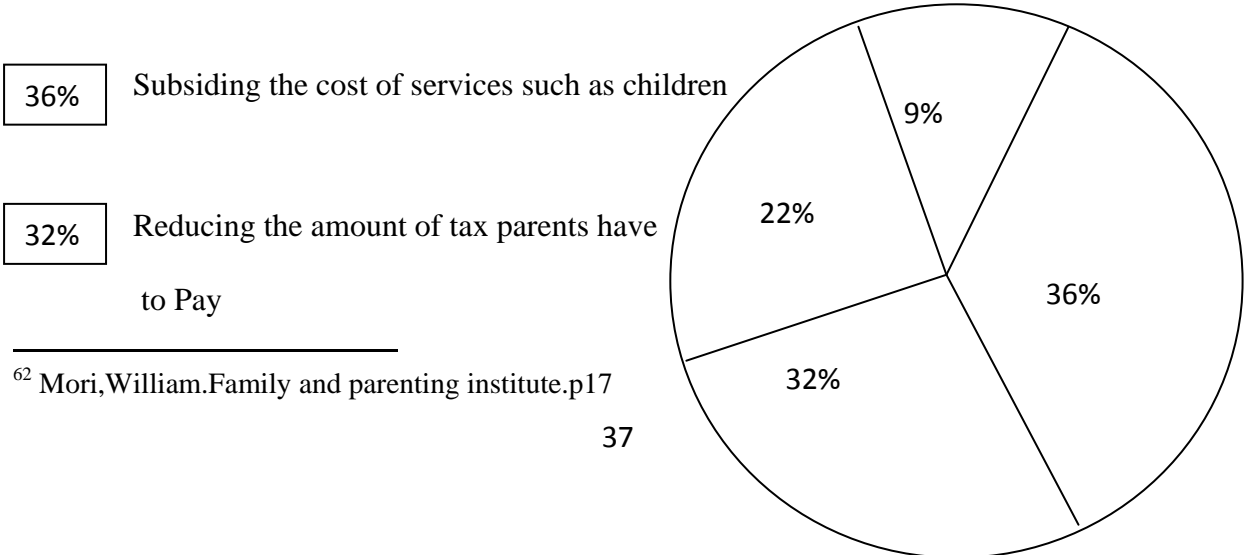
⁶¹ Results of second flexible working employee survey.department of trade and industry.p3

four-year-olds, currently standing at 97%, and very high among three-year-olds, at 90%. Nonetheless, some barriers still exist as 12.5 hours of free childcare per week is usually not enough to enable parents to go out to work.⁶²

The deterrent of high costs of childcare means that the higher the household income, the higher the take-up of both formal and informal care due to the need for childcare to allow both parents to work, So that, Families are more likely to use informal childcare (65%) than formal provision.

The new structure of the tax and benefits system has successfully encouraged more women with children to work, partly by removing the Married Couples Allowance but also by insisting that the childcare element of the WTC only be spent on approved formal childcare. Access to childcare is important for parents as the public believe mothers ought to have the choice whether to undertake paid employment or remain at home to care for their child full-time.

There are different ways in which support could be given to help parents with the cost of raising children. For this reason, we are going to show in this chart below the best ways of helping families with the cost of raising children and what the public think about this:



⁶² Mori, William. Family and parenting institute. p17

22%	Providing extra cash to help towards the cost of raising children
9%	Don't know

2.3 Government calls for tough family intervention to prevent crimes

Ed Balls and Alan Johnson* are today writing to all local authorities in England asking them to expand and accelerate Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) which, in the last year alone, have challenged and supported over 2,300 families to turn their behaviour around. Councils and police have reported that FIPs are an excellent way of preventing and tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. The Government is also today setting out future plans for turning around Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) where there are serious concerns. Whilst many YOTs are doing a good job identifying and working with young people who are one step away from the courts, there are some measures to preventing young people offending by tackling problems such as alcohol or truancy early and providing positive and exciting things for them to do, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights; to provide more support for families whose children are getting into trouble and to tackle the difficulties lying behind their poor behaviour; besides, tough enforcement, involving police working closely with other services on the streets and punishments. In this context, Alan Johnson said:

"Today is an important milestone in our fight against youth crime. We have made real progress and early indicators show it is making a really positive difference to the lives of young people and communities across the country [...] but we are not

complacent. There is still much work to be done and looking ahead to the next year I am committed to ensuring our young people and communities are on the right track and our streets remain safe for everyone.[...] We know that the vast majority of young people recognise right from wrong and make a positive contribution to our society. There are a minority however who persist in anti-social behaviour and some in more serious criminal activity - their behaviour will not be tolerated."⁶³

Other actions include work to undertake annual consultation with local communities on what reparation work young offenders should undertake in their area. Second to ensure parents take proper responsibility for the poor behaviour of their children, including making sure that there is an assessment of parental need for all children being considered for an Anti Social Behaviour.

Operation and introducing mandatory parenting support when a child breaches an ASBO; moreover, increase the drive to bear down on serious youth violence, including on knives and gangs⁶⁴, besides, parents should take more responsibility for the behaviour of their children , encouraging more parental responsibility would improve safety in their area. Despite media coverage, the public do not automatically link antisocial behaviour with particular kinds of family forms. Children brought up by a single parent are more likely to get into trouble than children brought up by married parents.

3. Bad parenting and government procedures

* Alan Johnson, Jack Straw and Ed Balls are today calling on local authorities to crack down on out-of-control families who need to be challenged to prevent their children getting involved in anti-social behaviour, crime and violence

⁶³ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/html>

⁶⁴ Improving the life chance of family at risk. <Http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk>

While every concerned about 'bad' parenting, the public struggle to see how government should work with this issue. Bad parenting' is a very difficult task beyond the most obvious cases. The public feel, it would be more appropriate to provide parents with the training they need to break the cycle of 'poor' parenting often passed through enerationns than to impose financial sanctions or penalties. However, despite people supporting parenting programs for those who do not bring up their children 'properly', they cannot see how attendance at such provision would be enforceable. Any financial penalty or imprisonment would ultimately impact on the wellbeing of the child, something considered totally unacceptable by most people.

Some evidence indicates that children growing up in new family structures demonstrate poorer outcomes in relation to educational achievement, health, poverty and participation in antisocial behaviour. This has raised the question of the degree to which parents are responsible for their child's development, and whether the government has a role in intervening in families. Despite indicating that families do not necessarily want further government intervention, the public do think parents have a responsibility to raise their children properly and provide them with the best start in life. When asked what constitutes 'bad parenting', the public feel that it is demonstrated by varying forms of neglect. In addition physical and mental abuse, further, the daily activities where parents have a role. For example, they feel bad parenting includes not paying an interest in: child's education, feeding, cleanliness and respect. So, all this combination would lead to the child growing up with a poor attitude towards society and has the potential to lead to antisocial behaviour and poor outcomes. 'It is very difficult to measure what's a good and bad parenting...so it is difficult to have sanctions.'⁶⁵

⁶⁵ <http://www.respect.gov.uk/members/articles/html>

If bad parenting is believed to lead to poor outcomes, financial support from the government to parents should be made conditional on ‘good behaviour. Other countries have made family benefits conditional. In Mexico parents have to keep their children in school and take them for regular health checks, a measure which does seem to have boosted school attendance and child health outcomes. In Australia maternity payments are conditional on having children vaccinated and pilots are currently ongoing in Aboriginal communities whereby family payments have been tied to a wide range of behaviours including school attendance and housing tenancy conditions. A bill is currently working its way through the Australian parliament that would see child benefit cut to parents of children who truant from school. Even more controversially since 1992, 24 US states have introduced so-called ‘family caps’ which means that children conceived while their mothers are on welfare are not eligible for additional support. The ‘cap’ is still operating in 22 states. Rather than attempting to incentivise good behaviour these laws try to directly influence the fertility of families who are statistically more likely to be dysfunctional. The evidence on the effectiveness of these measures is, though, very mixed. Some research has found reductions in births and an increase in abortions to affected families while others find no effect at all. Moreover, where children are born to mothers on welfare the effect of the ‘family cap’ must reduce the families’ living standards. Given the strong established relationship between poverty and negative outcomes it would be surprising if ‘family caps’ did not harm the children born into these families.⁶⁶

In Britain, the closest we have got to conditionality on family payments was when the government proposed removing Child Benefit from parents whose children were persistently truanting from school. This policy was eventually rejected after pressure from child poverty groups but fines were introduced instead which can range from £50 to £2,500 or three

⁶⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures website, accessed at www.ncsl.org/statefed/welfare/familycap05.htm

months in prison. There is little evidence that these actions have had much impact, despite 10,000 prosecutions in 2007, up 76% since 2000, as incidents of truancy have increased since 1997.⁶⁷

An alternative strategy which the government has made increasing use of in recent years is to intervene directly with Parenting Orders and family interventions to try to reduce the number of seriously dysfunctional families. Parenting Orders can be imposed by magistrate courts if a child is between 10-17 years and has been convicted of an offence; typically the order specifies attendance at a parenting program which can last up to three months. Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) are much more intensive programs to tackle highly problematic families. They provide a single key worker to ‘grip’ the family and challenge the root causes of their behaviour by giving individual support. The most intensive level families who require supervision and support on a 24-hour basis stay in a residential unit. These programs have had some success. The public really struggled to comprehend how the government would be able to decide what is ‘proper parenting’. If ‘bad parents’ could be identified the public felt it would be preferable to offer them support and education through parenting programs rather than imposing sanctions or fines to prevent bad parenting being passed from generation to generation. And also, like the idea of a contract between the parent and the state, and if the contract was broken, an educational route would be preferable to financial sanctions.⁶⁸

Family Allowance was introduced as a payment for the support of children, paid directly to mothers rather than fathers in the belief that this was more likely to ensure that it benefited children. This core principle, that mothers are more responsible than fathers and therefore the ‘proper’ people to care for children, remains firmly fixed within the family policy to this day,

⁶⁷ Capping Kids: The Family Cap and Non marital Childbearing, Population Policy Review 27, pp. 122-123.

⁶⁸ Communities and local government

with Child Benefit - as Family Allowance is now called – still being paid most often to mothers and tax credits and other financial support following close behind. If the picture that the family policy paints is to be believed, mothers remain the cornerstone of family life, holding together not only their children's health and well being but that of modern day society too, but analysis of the footage of *The British Family* tells a very different story. Far from mothers being the Holy Grail when it comes to caring for the nation's children, women, and therefore mothers, have undergone a remarkable transformation over the years, moving out of the heart of the home and into public life in their millions. Far from being dependent upon men for support, women were now capable of earning their own living, supporting themselves and their children along the way.

Conclusion

Although a good deal of evidence shows that cohabiting relationships have higher risks of poor outcomes, governmental and other official continue to treat cohabitation and marriage as essentially the same. Some people argue that marriage should not receive any special recognition from the state. They claim that cohabitants should have the same legal rights and responsibilities which used to be reserved for marriage, from property rights to the right to take decisions about children's lives.

Currently, when a married couple divorces, a court decides how to divide their property, based upon the needs of both spouses and any children they have. However, when a cohabiting couple breaks up, each person retains ownership of their own property. This system ensures that individuals who commit themselves to the institution of marriage have some legal protection. It also protects the freedom of those who choose to live with each other outside the bounds of marriage.

Although a marriage always requires two people, a divorce sometimes requires just one person, leaving the other in the cold. The state could help strengthen the institution of marriage by ending 'no-fault', non-consensual or unilateral divorce, and by introducing divorce settlements which penalise, rather than favour, the spouse who leaves or behaves badly.

Conclusion

This entire work is about the family in Britain, which raised some interesting points and it has been refreshing to see some of the social policy that governs the family life set in context. Far from being a nostalgic wander back to the days when women stayed at home and cared for the children and dads were breadwinners, The British Family has shown us just how society has changed over the years.

The typical British family of 2003 falls into one of five categories anyone who thinks that the typical British family has 2-4 children, two parents and a dog called Rover, would be wrong.

The first chapter demonstrated that the traditional British family has been reduced, and there's no definition of a "typical" family. This work includes a discussion of new family structures, including nuclear, extended, lone-parent, the roles of family members have changed.

Nowadays, there is no such thing as a typical British family. We have all heard of the nuclear or cereal packet family, which usually consists of an adult man, an adult woman and dependent children- usually a girl and boy, at the breakfast table, where the male is the breadwinner. This is the typical British family.

The second chapter discussed many issues concerning women liberation and her entrance to the labour market; and all what contributed to the change in the British family as change in social attitudes and customs, in legislations, and the advance of science and technology. As a result, both children and especially women would suffer deeply due to this change.

As more mothers and fathers share roles within the home, it would be good to begin to push family policy towards a more egalitarian support of parenthood for example. We could start by recognising and acknowledging that mothers not only want to work outside of the home but benefit from it and that fathers benefit from being close to their children. Equally, children benefit from being parented by mothers and fathers who are nurturing within the home as well as capable outside of it. Finally, we need to understand and acknowledge that a society in which all of its individual people are combining independence with interdependency, is one in which all of its citizens thrive.

But to get to this place would mean some tough choices, most of which are still likely to be fiercely resisted, particularly by those old feminist stalwarts who were active in breaking open the prison walls of the family in the first place. Particularly vociferous on the issue of men abandoning women would be up in arms at any suggestion that move to a more egalitarian society. This is because the fundamental belief that underpinned family policy back in the 1940's was that men and fathers cannot be trusted. It is a belief that is not only present in the British family policy to this day, but one which continues to be unashamedly expounded by British politicians and furthered by policy makers and practitioners alike. This belief, which created a welfare system that, sees mothers as carer first and worker second, continues its stranglehold on the society, overburdening mothers and treating fathers as scapegoats.

The third chapter examined the relation and the role of government with family, when it should intervene, what types of helps should provide and should make benefits conditional.

Despite all of the struggles for freedom shown so well on The British Family that remains governed by policy which is outdated and based not upon real lives now, but fears from back then. It is about time to stop tinkering timidly around the edges of the British family policy and found the courage to bring about radical change to support the real lives of the people who make up the 21st Century British Family.

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