

INFORMATION AND COMUCATION UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND BUSINESS

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Course: Sociology

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Question:

The family is a social institution that unites individuals into cooperative group s that overseas The bearing and raising of children.these units are in buit on kinship asocial bond on blood, marriage or adoption, that join individuals into families . critically discuss forces that shapes family life

According to Sociologists, the family is an intimate domestic group of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating, or legal ties. It has been a very resilient social unit that has survived and adapted through time. So, the element of time referred to above, is again present. However this piece of academic writing seek to discuss the forces that shapes family life.

The family acts as a primary socialization of children whereby the child first learns the basic values and norms of the culture they will grow up in. a child needs to be carefully nurtured, cherished and molded into responsible individuals with good values and strong ethics. Therefore, it is important to provide them the best childcare so that they grow up to be physically, mentally and emotionally strong individuals.

Stephen (1999) defines the family as a social arrangement based on marriage including recognition of rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife and children are reciprocal economic obligations between husband and wife.

The family is seen as the main pillar block of a community; family structure and upbringing influence the social character and personality of any given society. Family is where everybody learns to love, to care, to be compassionate, to be ethical, to be honest, to be fair, to have common sense, to use reasoning etc., values which are essential for living in a community. Yet, there are ongoing debates that families’ values are in decline. Moreover the same family is viewed as an ‘oppressive and bankrupt institution

George Peter Murdock (1949) defines the family as a universal institution. According to him, the family is a ‘social group characterised by common residence, economic corporation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children owned or adopted of the sexually cohabiting adults’. However, K. Gough (1959) criticises Murdock definition and argues that the family is not universal. The critics were founded in the Nayar society.

Women and the Family

The main role of women according to John Bowlby (1953) is particularly to act as mothers and as such their places are at home to take care of their children in their tender age. He states that juvenile delinquencies among young children are the result of psychological separation from mothers. The mental stability of children rests solely on their mothers. Therefore there is a need for a close and intimate mother and child relationship.

However, Oakley (1974) uses the example of Alor, an island in Indonesia to refute Bowlby statement. In ‘small-scale horticultural societies, women are not tied to their offspring’, and there is no apparent side effect to it’. Moreover, she does not see the ‘intimate and close relationship’ necessary. Research has proved that mothers return to work after childbirth and that the children of working mothers are ‘less likely to be delinquent’ than non-working mothers.

Crouch (1999) describes the benefits gained by wives and mothers as the ‘mid century social compromise’. Duncan et al. (year) argue that women who define themselves as ‘primarily mothers’ are located at all points on the social spectrum.

Current Situation

A recent survey showed that 80 percent of people really think that family is more important to them than their friends in British society (Ipsos MORI Real Trends, 2008). As an institution, family is altering continually. Since 1971, the proportion of all people living in “traditional” family households of married couples with dependent children has fallen from 52% to 37% in Britain (BBC, 2007).

Today, people usually get later marriage, the one possible factor of this situation might be women paying more attention to their career. It is a common phenomenon to live together without marrying. The number of cohabiting couple families increased from 1.4 million to 2.3 million between 1996 and 2006 (ONS Focus on Family, 2007).

More and more children are born outside of marriage, especially occurred among cohabiting couples’ families. A recent survey showed that the rate of births outside marriage has risen from about 10% in 1971 to over 40% in 2006 (ONS Population Trends No.132, 2008). Meanwhile, married couples also have some problems. According to a statistics, there is a increased number of divorces – around 26 thousand in 1950 to over 155 thousand in 2005. Compared with many other developed countries, Britain keep the higher rate in divorce until 2005 (ONS Marriage Stats 2006 (Provisional), 2008).

Patricia Day Hookoomsing (2002) states that, plans and projects are designed and implemented by men. It is assumed that if men as heads of the family will reap the benefit from projects designed, automatically women and children will benefit

The Darker Side of the Family / Erosion of Family Life

Earlier in this review of literature, it is shown that the family is warm and supportive. However, many writers have questioned the ‘darker side of the family’. The fact that women spend most of their time either at work or doing household chores can lead to emotional stress in the family. The twentieth century family is mostly nucleus and thus children at times feel isolated and lacking the support of their extended kins: grandparents, aunts, cousins etc. They become introvert and their stress level rise to such an extent that when ‘explosion’ occurs, it can have dramatic results. This may lead to violence, psychological damage, mental illness, drug intake, crime etc

The breakdown of children may lead to quarrel between parents. In the long run, marriages may fail and consequently lead to divorce. Incidence that may appear trivial can blow out of proportions and cause drastic consequence within the family. The mass media is increasingly bringing to people attention the sexual, physical and emotional abuse of children through neglect. Similarly, The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (2000) parts that around 10% of children suffering from serious abuse or neglect at home by natural parents.

Domestic violence is very prevalent in any society. It is estimated that one in four women are victim of domestic violence.

In order to support the family, people have to hunt for a job. Individual plays essential role in different working areas, such as the large number of workers are employed in the services sector, a minority in industry and a little proportion in agriculture). Those people create necessity for public need and make income for their family, thus there is a situation that the family workers fulfill the social demands while create wealth. Meanwhile, the family could be impacted by the external environment. For instance, financial crisis hit British families since 2008.

According to research, the conflict between parents occurred frequently due to them worrying about the economic risk, therefore, a number of children suffered a hard period during the financial crisis Furthermore, families contribute children’s growth. The new generation is the force of the society continually developing. In order to make sure the better outcome for children, parents have to balance children’s state of being fully developed while make the children being a part of family and society by providing love, encouragement and guidance (Bornstein and Bornstein, 2007).

Major institution in society

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Cohabitation

In contemporary society, public attitudes of sexual relationships have moved forward, thus cohabitation has been accepted by a majority of people Review the recent two decades, the number of people who cohabit has rapidly raised (Oakland , 2006:190).

 When the divorce were difficult to achieve, people likely choose cohabitation There are several factors enable adults to cohabit, one of the factors is decreasing the living cost. Men and women live together and share the expenses of daily necessities. Moreover, living together lead to learn more about each other. It is an opportunity to test whether the person suit to the other party (Allan and Crow, 2001:67-68)

. In turn, there is not any data (no data) shows that cohabitation could be helpful to marriage living, meanwhile, some statistics prove that if some people married after cohabiting, they had higher rate to divorce. People in cohabitation families maintain the relationship rely

As a result of what have mentioned, the government is considered that should establish reasonable policy for different type families. Trying to improve the marriage rate, create employment opportunities for lone parent, pay more attention to the mental health of single-parent children and provide help for them. Ensuring each kind of families getting equal rights include homosexual families. Honestly, family is the fundamental part of the society, making each unit running normally is one possible way to boost the development of society.

Children living with single parents may be at higher risk of experiencing physical and sexual abuse and neglect than children living with two biological parents. Single parent households are substantially more likely to have incomes below the poverty line. Lower income, the increased stress associated with the sole burden of family responsibilities, and fewer supports are thought to contribute to the risk of single parents maltreating their children. In 1998, 23 percent of children lived in households with a single mother, and 4 percent lived in households with a single father.

A strong, positive relationship between the child and the father, whether he resides in the home or not, contributes to the child’s development and may lessen the risk of abuse. In addition, studies have found that compared to similar non-neglecting families, neglectful families tend to have more children or greater numbers of people living in the household. Chronically neglecting families often are characterized by a chaotic household with changing constellations of adult and child figures (e.g., a mother and her children who live on and off with various others, such as the mother’s mother, the mother’s sister, or a boyfriend)

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Conclusion

In summary, under several period changing, the family developed into many forms, it all depends on individual needs, so that the changing to the family is an inevitable phenomenon. For the society, its development rely on each family’s growing, such as changes to household required a development of services, domestic variety created new demands on government policy, and some of the new type families led to social crisis. Meantime, it could be found that the social environment influenced family lifestyle. Therefore, a interaction between families and society could be discovered.

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