

A Level Sociology Knowledge Organiser

Trends in families and family diversity

(Miss Cantwell)

Trends in marriage

Trends: Decline in first marriages, people marrying later (first marriages - 33 for men, 31 for women) increase in civil partnerships until 2014 (70% decline) and increase in gay marriage

Reasons

- * Changing attitudes towards cohabitation – more acceptable to have sex outside of # marriage
- * Secularisation – do not need to be married to avoid living in sin
- * Declining stigma to family diversity (e.g. lone-parent families)
- * Change in position of women leading to greater focus on independence/careers
- * Fear of divorce
- * Increasing cost (average cost is £18,000)

Consequences

Increase in cohabitation, single person households, more same sex married couples, New right see decline in marriage as negative, feminists view positively due to increased freedom

Cohabitation

Trends: Significant increase (88% of couples who marry have lived together first), over 3 million cohabitating couple families

Reasons

Changing attitudes, effective contraception increased divorce rates, secularisation

Consequences

People marrying later or not marrying at all

Living apart together relationships

A couple in a long-term, committed and intimate relationship but they live separately

Trends in divorce

Trends: Rise in number of divorces and divorce rate since 1970. 42% of marriages now end in divorce. 70% divorce applications come from women. But... divorce rates have started to decline over the past few years – could be a consequence of a rise in the age of marriage and the fact that more couples cohabit

Reasons for changes to divorce

- * Changes in laws (divorce reform act 1969 Matrimonial Proceedings act 1984)
- * Changing attitudes
- * Changes in the position of women
- * Higher expectations of marriage (functionalist view)
- * Individualisation thesis (postmodernist view)

Consequence of changes to divorce

Increase in family diversity- lone-parent and reconstituted families. New Right would argue this has detrimental effect on children and society, Personal life sociologists argue that you cannot generalise about the effects of divorce

Views of family diversity

Functionalist – negative (others less able to perform functions)

New Right – negative (lone-parent, underclass, welfare dependency)

Feminist – positive (freedom for women, less confinement to expressive role / patriarchy)

Postmodernist – evidence of increasing freedom/choice

Personal life – diversity exaggerated, choices made within web of Connectedness

Chester/Weeks – diversity exaggerated, families remain fairly traditional

Is the nuclear family the norm?

Yes

Most popular family type, cereal packet, people still aspire, many families nuclear in structure (e.g. same sex/reconstituted), life-cycle analysis (most people will still live in nuclear), diversity exaggerated (only change is neo-conventional)

No

In decline, greater family diversity (in structure and roles) Rapoport's (five types of family diversity), postmodernist viewpoint (increasing freedom/choice / individualism)

Trends in childbearing

Trends: Women having fewer children (1.8) more children born outside of marriage (47.5%), having children at a later age

Reasons

- * Decline in stigma of cohabitation
- * Changing position of women (equal pay, job prospects, career focus)
- * Better contraception
- * Financial issues (£230,000 to raise a child until 21, greater dependency)

Consequences

Smaller family sizes, aging population (e.g. greater need for public services aimed at the elderly, pension changes, increase in taxes)

Trends in family diversity

Trends

Decrease in nuclear families
Increase in reconstituted, lone-parent, same-sex, cohabitating, one-person households
Increase in diversity by class & ethnicity
Rapoport's – 5 types of family diversity (e.g. organisational, cultural, class)

Reasons

- * Changes in the position of women
- * Changes in divorce laws/marriage laws/benefits system
- * Changes in attitudes (more acceptable)
- * More choice/freedom post-modernist view
- * Immigration – greater diversity of family structures
- * Ageing population – extended, beanpole, one person households

However

- × Chester – family diversity is exaggerated (only change is neo-conventional/dual worker)
- × Weeks – families still remain traditional