

Introduction

In this assignment the writer will define what a family is, describe the three different forms of families which are Nuclear, Extended and Reconstituted. Further more the writer will discuss the functions of the family, give reasons for decrease or increase in each family setting and the effects on children and the society in which they live.

Next the essay will examine the advantages and disadvantages of each form of family and discuss the extent to which the family has lost its function. Finally the essay will critically analyse the advantages and disadvantages of lone parenting.

The simplest definition for the family is a group of people related by blood and marriage today this includes cohabiting couples and adopted children. The majority of people have lived their lives within some kind of family set up, though each experience may have been very different (Livesy, 2001).

The Nuclear family is based around a two generation household of parents and their children either own or adopted (Haralambos, 2004). The nuclear family is also referred to as the cereal box family which are the father who is the breadwinner and makes all the rules, the wife who is in charge of the household duties and the kids (Leach, 1967). .

Womack (2005) stated that in Britain today only seven in ten of Britain's seventeen million families include a nuclear family the reasons why the nuclear family are not as common today are due to the rise in divorce, The Office Of National Statistics (2003) stated they are 160,000 divorces in England and Wales, the low rate of people being married ONS states the rate in 1971 was 404,000 people got married and 74,000 got

divorced compared to 263,000 marriages in 1999, these figures shows a decrease in marriage.

Parsons, (1959) stated that some advantages of nuclear families are the children have two parents to give them the love and affection they need to live a good life, teach them the basic necessities of life, society usually benefits from nuclear families (cited from, Haralambos & Holborn, 2000).

Parsons, (1959) further suggested that some disadvantages of the nuclear family is isolation from their other kin (cited from Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) for example with the nuclear family there are not obligated to have relationships with their kin, exploitation in the family which occurs when one person or persons uses tactics to cause one to be against one another in the family (Laing, 1971 cited) for e.g. one parent wants a child to be on their side so they do things to please the child that are not allowed by the other parent.

The Extended Family generally consist of three generations of people Grandparents, Parents, Children, Aunts and Uncles who maintain close contact (Moore, 1999). This type of family is not commonly found in England (Laslett, 1965). In the UK is not as common due to housing space, people just want to get out on their own, also migration for work especially in middleclass families which is mostly found in Villages rather than Towns.

Extended families in the UK are mostly found in Asian, African and Caribbean communities these communities are mostly extended because its part of their Culture or Values. In Asian families which consist of father, sons and grandsons with their wives and unmarried daughters, the father is the head of the household who makes all the decisions and his wife is in charge of the household duties and in this Culture men are superior (Moore, 1999).

Some advantages of the extended family are to provide assistance and security in times of need whether it be financially or just support for the ill, it allows grandparents to teach the grandchildren social skills and discipline through their culture, it also maintain law and order among family members. It provides an environment of togetherness they have someone to comfort them in times of joy or sorrow, grandparents don't feel isolated, family members take care of their own which help the state.

Some disadvantages of the extended family are jealousy among members where one thinks that another member is being favoured more than another, they can also be lack of privacy, those who have employment could be overburdened by the other members who are dependent on them, family members could be held back from achieving goal because of their values and commitment to other family members and clashing between members from different generations in the way they think or their work styles can sometimes lead to separation from the family.

The reconstituted family also known as step family consist of step siblings, which are formed when one person who has children from a previous relationship marries or cohabit again. In 2001 step families accounted for ten per cent of the total number of families with dependent children in the United Kingdom, that is 0.7 million step families with dependent children, 0.4 million were married couple step families and 0.3 million were cohabiting couple step families living in the UK (ONS, 2005). In the same year eighty percent of these step families consist of the natural mother (ONS, 2005).

The reconstituted family is common in the UK due to divorce which is easy to get and it is now acceptable to divorce and remarry, when parents change from cohabiting with one partner to another, death of one parent, separation, war and natural disasters.

The advantages of being in step families are both parents usually contribute towards day care and clothing, step daughters or sons might find it easy to talk to the step mum or dad

than their own, division of the workload, emotional security, double role models someone to look up to and be there for you.

The disadvantages of being in step families are tension between the children, jealousy for. Children force to adapt to having to share they room with the step siblings less privacy, they will also be rejection the children not accepting the new parent. A step child being bullied by a step sibling, furthermore when children have to move house leaving they neighbourhood and school, losing friends and loved relatives behind, abuse can also be found in step families.

Parsons, (1959) stated the family has two basic functions, stabilising and socialisation while Murdock, (1949) sees the family performing four basic functions which are stable satisfaction of sexual needs within the marriage, production and rearing of the children, performing economic functions and providing education for the children. From experience they contribute to running the family.

In United Kingdom polygamy seems a norm where husbands and wives cheat on each other, parents drop off the kids at the carers early in the morning then collect them late at night no time to have a proper meal and spend quality time together. Also United Kingdom has the longest working hours in Europe. Women deciding not to have children which will break down society, society needs children to educate and for the work force. Television, computers, mobile phones and game consoles has taken up the place of parents in children's lives. Most of the blame goes to society allowing psychologist and the state who think they know best how to bring up and care for children.

Lone Parent families consist of a single mother or father and his or her dependent children. There are many reasons why there are Lone Parents; the death of a parent, domestic violence, rise in divorce rate, same sex couples are just a few but the most contributing factors are the increase in divorce rates 54%, pregnancy outside marriage 34% and widowhood 6% (Moore, 1999).

There are 1.75 million Lone Parents in the UK, which has triple between 1972 and spring 2004, to 24 per cent, (National Statistics). People accuse lone parents of draining the system but in reality 1 in 10 Lone Parents will be unable to work and the amount of Lone parents has dropped by a fifth (National Statistics). People also assume that lone parents are “feckless teenagers trying to get council flats” but statistics prove different in Britain only 3% of the 1.75 million lone parents are teenagers while 60% had been married and separated, divorced or bereaved (National Statistics).

One of the biggest problems lone parents face is loneliness, having to bring up children on their own especially when the parents is used to making joint decisions about their welfare, missing intimacy or sharing life with another adult. It is convenient to place blame on the parents left raising the children, rather than seeing the reality of someone striving, in the face of great odds, to give their children every opportunity they can.

There are 91.4% of lone parents are mothers and 8.6% are fathers, 40% of lone parents work. Lone parents are now getting support from groups and people like Gingerbread, Ms J.K Rowling “Author of Harry Potter who is also a lone parent” and the Government who for example while lone parents are looking for work provide free child care then once work is found pays part of the child care bill. Society should support lone parents who are bringing up children single-handedly and deserve congratulations and not condemnation.

In conclusion there are many different types of families in the United Kingdom, which consist of many different cultures and religions. One key factor each type of family has are Children, Children are very important to society and even more important to each family so it should not matter which family a child comes from whether it be Nuclear, Extended, Reconstituted, Lone parents or Gay families. As long as the Child or children is receiving the necessities, Love, food and the family is happy.

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