

Is George Murdock's 'Nuclear Family' still, the norm in British society?

Is George Murdock's Nuclear Family still the norm in British Society?

Rationale

I choose to study the family, because the media often presents the image of the nuclear family, the breadwinner husband and the dependent mother and children living in a romanticized manner, but I myself live in the complete opposite, with a high percentage of divorce. This led me to contemplate, what is the family situation of the rest of society is.

When writing about the family George Murdock (1) (1949) wrote, "It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of sexually cohabiting adults." This research study, aims to investigate if Murdock's 'family' is still the norm in British society. I anticipate my findings will confirm that Murdock's 'family' is decreasing in percentage. The reason being that Murdock's model of the family does not allow for divorce, re-structured families, single parents and serial monogamy these reasons I hypothesise that Murdock's 'family' is no longer the norm in British society, but it is on the course of a rapid decrease, due to the rapid escalation in divorce, which results in the intensity of re-structured families and single parents.

Context

In order to carry my research project out successfully, I decided that it would be imperative for me to understand similar studies investigating the family. In 1949, George Murdock (1) described the family as “a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted of the sexually co-habiting adults” This family or more communally known the nuclear family has been heavily debated whether this image still applies to today’s society.

In the 1960’s the size of the family changed dramatically due to the creation of improved birth control such as the pill. Therefore, the larger family associated with Victorian times, decreased to the two parents and two children, nuclear family. Wilmot and Young’s (2) (1962) study of East London proved this, as during the post-second world war period the extended family was popular, but by 1971 the majority of families consisted of the nuclear. However, from the view of the majority of sociologists, in today’s society the nuclear family is being replaced by an extended family, with various new models of the family (Bi-nuclear, reconstructed families) residing in it, which is the result of divorce, remarriage and child birth outside of marriage. A cause for the new family model, according to Talcott Parson, (3) is because the family has “adapted to fulfil more specialised functions”. By specialised functions, I believe he means the changing society, such as an acceptance of divorce, changing roles of women as well as the acceptance of diversity.

The term diversity means a greater choice or variety in the type of family, which you can live in. Sociologists O’Brien, Alldred and Jones created the following sub-groups of family available to people of today.

- Single-parent family,
- Bi-nuclear family,
- Reconstituted family,
- Extended family

In order to explain why the nuclear family is residing and the above family models are increasing, I looked to O’ Donnell (4) who claimed that an increase in Divorce is one of these reasons. As “Family break up is a normal feature of family experience.” In common society, there is substantial evidence that for many families divorce is typical, as one out of three marriages end in divorce, and in August 1995, the Times found that in 1993 the number of marriages dropped below 30,000 for the first time, while divorces continued to rise to 225,000 in a single year. As divorces rise the nuclear family is broken up, leading to a decrease in the norm. Steel and Kidd, (5) explain the rise in divorce is because of,

- Changes in the law in divorce have made it easier to obtain
- More socially expectable
- Young people have high expectations of marriage and there often not met.

- Longer life expectancy, might mean that as married couples grow older they grow apart
- Increased awareness of women's rights might make more women file for divorce as society now expects them to be treated better than in the past.

Even though, Divorce is on the increase, Steel and Kidd (5) found that 30% of households in Britain typically consist of a married couple and their children. Therefore, the increase in divorce is not only the cause of the decrease in the nuclear family. Sociologists such as Giddens (6) (1992) have explained that the changing role of women is another explanation. He believes that "The male control of female sexuality within the traditional patriarchal (farther led family) and the ideology of the compulsory heterosexuality are both being broken down and as a consequence our traditional notions of family life and relationships are changing. O'Donnell (4) explains, "The number of homosexual couples who bring up children is small but increasing", shares this view. As Murdock's definition of the family includes "adults of both sexes", one model of the family includes adults of the same sex, which no longer makes the nuclear family the norm.

However, contrary to this idea, R Chester (7) (1985) argues, "The nuclear family and marriage remain the normative experience for the great majority of Britons. This view is mirrored by J Bernardes (8) (1997), "Despite enormous real world variation and diversity, a common and popular image of the nuclear family is a young similarly aged white married, heterosexual couple with a small number of healthy children..."

Although, there has been a substantial amount of discussion, to whether the nuclear family existed, in the Twentieth century. I intend my research to discover whether the nuclear family is still the norm in British society in 2003.

Methodology

In order to fully explore my hypothesis, I based my research on collecting quantitative data, about the type of family's in British society. After reading *The Family* By Steel and Kidd (5), I decided that this would be the most effective way of presenting my results. As their end result could clearly be seen in the various graphs and charts they were able to produce after conducting a survey. In order to produce a quantitative data, I choose to conduct a questionnaire. The reason being that it allowed me to able to produce a wide range of data with, which I could easily generalize to British society. In my questionnaire I used a majority of Closed-questions, as I have found from previous experience that they are a lot simpler to interrupt leading to a wider chance of gathering accurate quantitative data, also by using Closed-questions, the individual will find it straightforward and effortless, making them more likely to give accurate results, as it will not take too much time as all they have to do is tick a box. I could of chosen to use open questions, where the participant would have to write an in-depth comment about the type of family they live in. However, this allows the participant more freedom of response, making it difficult to quantify, as, each individual my write the same thing in many different ways making interpretation and organisation much more difficult. Which is why, a closed question is more appropriate.

My research consisted of asking 24 people from the Friesland Sixth Form centre, to fill in a questionnaire. I selected my research population by using Quota Sampling. The Quota, which I shall use, will be 12 females and 12 males at the 17-18: as this will allow my research to cover a family of today, 2003 and a family in the past (1968). I initially choose to study 50, individuals, 25 males and 25 females but it would take a great deal of time and money which I do not have, so I decided to scale this number down by half which is 25 and the closest even number to is 24.

I choose people from my sixth form centre to fill in my questionnaire, as I thought that because they would know it is for a piece of coursework, they would put the time and effort into their answers as they would want someone to do the same or them if it was for their coursework. I rejected other forms of sampling, such as Stratified Sampling, as it would have been very difficult to gather the information I needed, from a stranger as the information is personal and as they did not know me, they may hesitate on giving truthful answers in fear of being judged.

The reason I choose to study a family of 1968, is because I wanted a time when I knew that anyone aged 17-18, would have been born and had parents living at home as people's parents were born and they still lived at home, so I worked out that an average time, when even the oldest and youngest parent would be living at home, so I came up with 1968. I wanted to look a parent's family to establish if there had been a change in the family structure, over time. I could of opted to use secondary data, from such works as Wilmot and Young's (2) (1962) study of Family and Kinship in East London. However, I thought by looking at a family within the Family I might be able to determine some links. Such as if the individual's grandparents were divorced, then their parent may also be divorced, which may lead me to conclude the nuclear family, has no future, as if one parent has been divorced then maybe the individual will become divorced in the future.

In recent studies, investigating the Family, Sociologists have observed the Family and asked questions directly towards a family member, which in my opinion is highly unethical. It is important, that that this research allowed anonymity, privacy and confidentiality, wherever possible. This research is based on, very personal information about the family, so it was imperative I kept to this. In order to achieve, this I decided that the questionnaire should not ask for their name, as this does not allow for any potential identification of the he participant. In keeping to this, the use of closed questions mean that the participant does not have write anything to long which will result in the identification of handwriting hence not identifying the participant. As the family situation is highly personal I wanted to keep their confidential information private. Asking the individual to put their questionnaire in a blank envelope once they had completed it, and then hand it to me. Not only, does this mean confidentially will be kept, it will also allow the participant freedom to disclose information without them fearing they will be judged, as there is very little chance anyone will be able to identify them. It is important for any sociological research to be based on freely given informed consent. I was able to achieve this by writing "I give my permission forth above information, to be used for Nicola Armstrong's A2 Sociology Coursework." at the bottom of the questionnaire. This states what the research is for, and that they give their permission for it to be used, hence allowing for freely given informed consent.

I was able to establish an accurate piece of research, by completing a pilot study, before completing my final research. This proved most advantageous as it showed me how to improve my questionnaire, in order to gather the most results to helping me prove my hypothesis.(Appendix 1)

Results

The table below shows the results, which I gathered, from conducting my questionnaire.

Family Types	2003 Household	
	Nuclear Family	96%
	Single-Parent Families	4%
	Step-Family (Reconstituted)	0%
	1968 Household	
	Nuclear Family	62.5%
	Single-Parent Family	12.5%
	Step-Family (Reconstituted)	25%
Divorce Rates	2003 Household	
	Never Divorced	62.5%
	Divorced Once	20.85%
	Divorced Twice	12.48%
	Divorced Three times	4.17%
	1968 Household	
	Never been divorced	96%
	Divorced Once	4 %
	Divorced Twice	
	Divorced Three times	
Age of Marriage	<u>2003 Household</u>	
	15-16	0
	17-18	12.51
	19-20	4.17
	21-23	8.34
	24-26	12.51
	27-29	8.34
	30-33	12.50
	34-36	4.17
	<u>1968 Household</u>	
	15-16	12.5
	17-18	35.39
	19-20	29.19

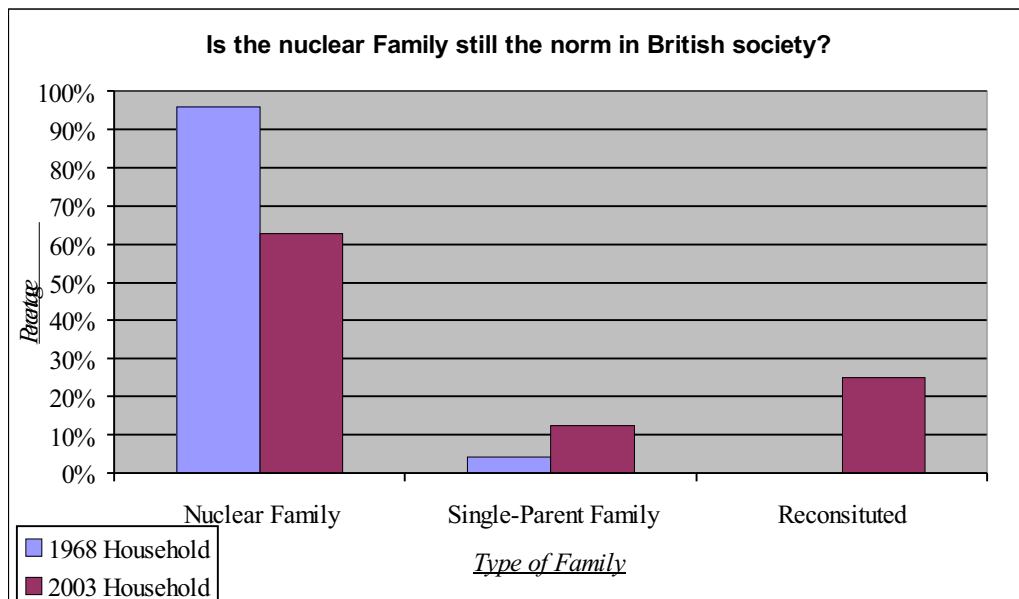
	21-23	4.17
	24-26	6.25
	27-29	8.33
	30-33	
	34-36	
Age of first marriage which ended in divorce	2003 Household	
	17-18	12.5%
	19-20	12.5%
	21-23	12.5%
	24-26	
	27-29	
	30-33	
	34-36	
	<u>1968 Household</u>	
	17-18	
	19-20	
	21-23	
	24-26	4.17%
	27-29	
	30-33	
	34-36	
Childbirth	<u>2003 Household</u>	
	Had children when married	70.83%
	Not married when had children	29.17%
	<u>1968 Household</u>	
	Had children when married	96%
	Not married when had children	4%
Closeness of Family	<u>2003 Household</u>	
	Same Street	4.17%
	Same village	70.83%
	Same city	12.5%
	Same county	8.33%
	Same country	4.7%
	<u>1968 Household</u>	
	Same Street	8.33%
	Same village	79.16%
	Same city	8.33%

		Same county	4.18%
		Same country	
Ethnic Diversity		2003 Household	
		English	83.33%
		English and one other backgrounds	12.5%
Change in the role of Women	1968 Household	2003 Household	English and two other backgrounds
Degree-level work	4.17%	54.19%	4.17%
Un-Skilled Work	20.85%	33.31%	
House	74.98%	12.50%	
Wife/Husband			
		1968 Household	
		English	91.67%
		English and one other backgrounds	8.33%
		English and two other backgrounds	
Change in the role of women		<u>2003 Household</u>	
		Degree-level work	54.19%
		Un-Skilled work	33.31%
		House Wife/Husband	12.5%
		<u>1968 Household</u>	
		Degree-level work	4.17 %
		Un-Skilled work	20.85%
		House Wife/Husband	74.98 %

Evidence

My primary research, has led me to find that in the past (1968) the 96% of the British population were part of nuclear family, with only a small margin of people living differently. As the chart shows, only 4% of British society was part of single-parent family and reconstituted families (step families) were unheard of. These results prove that in 1968, the Nuclear family was the norm of British society, as it included 2 adults of both sexes, as well as one or more children.

(Graph A)

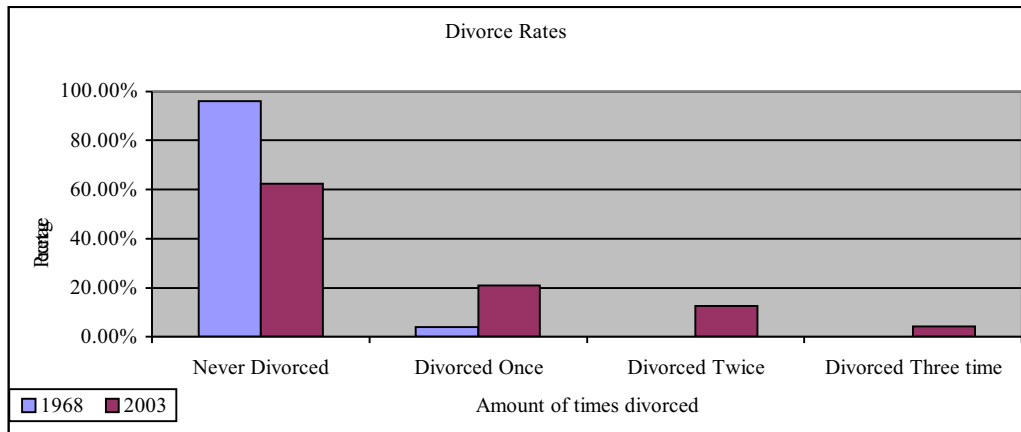


However, 35 years later, in 2003, the nuclear family has decreased by 33.5%, resulting in an 8.5% increase in the single-parent families as well as the formation of the Reconstituted family with 25% of the population residing in it. From the graph, it can be interpreted that George Murdock's nuclear family, is still the norm family model of British society, as the majority, (62.5% of the population) of the British population are a part of one. However, even though the majority of households conform to the nuclear model, it is slowly becoming less popular as the reconstituted family and the single-parent family is becoming evidently more common. These results are similar to the results of R Chester (8)(1985) who found that, "The nuclear family and marriage remain the normative experience for the great majority of Britons."

As the graph, show the nuclear family is still the norm in British society; however, in the aims of this research project was too also produce reason's why the nuclear family was declining and if it will still be around in the next 50 years.

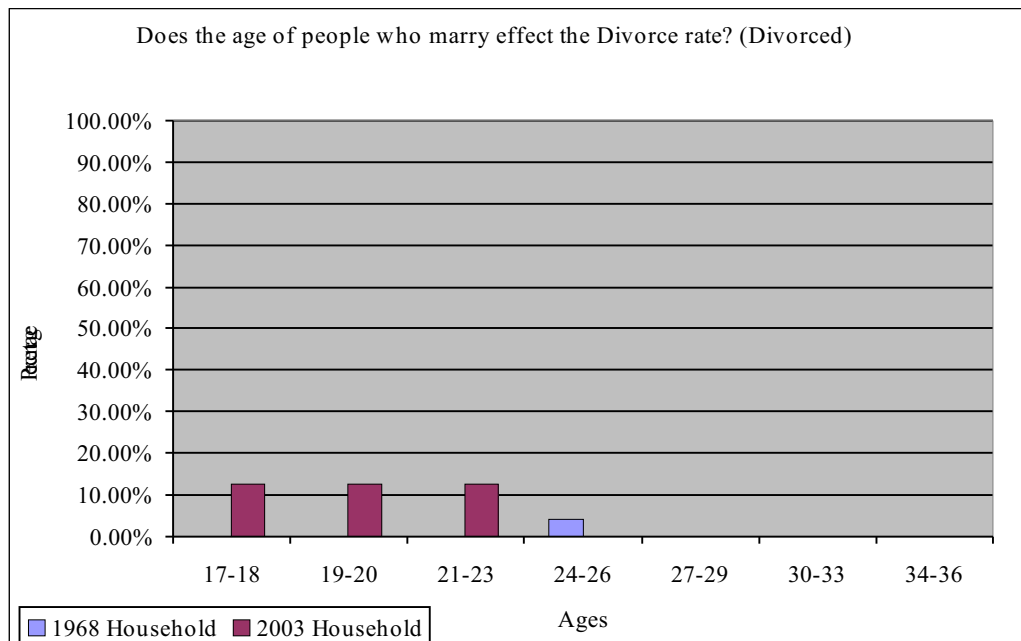
From my research, I was able to identify that one of the reasons, for the small, but evident decrease in the nuclear family is due to the increase in divorce rates.

(Graph B)



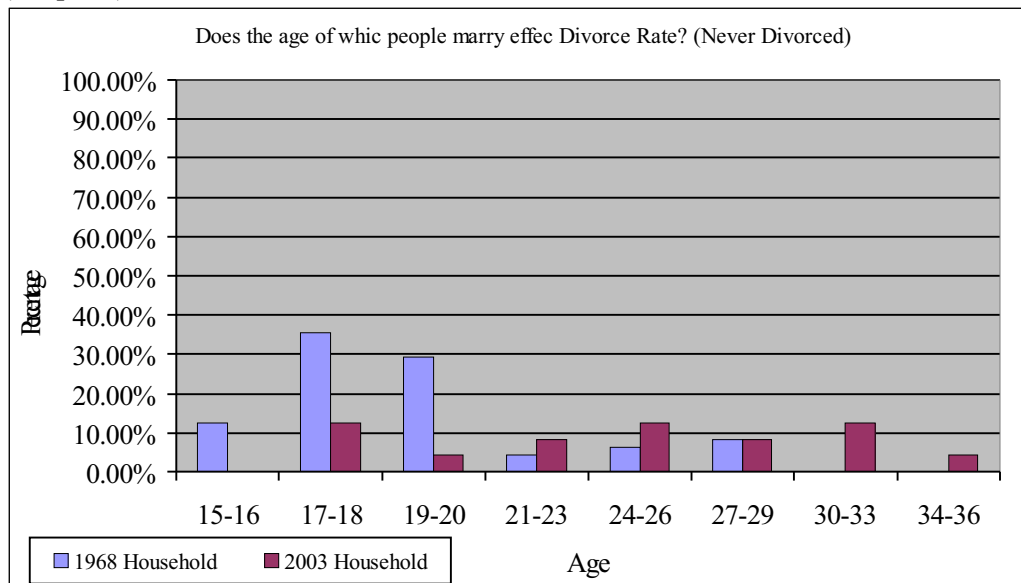
The above table presents the findings of the Divorce rates for 1968 and 2003. In 1968, divorce was virtually unheard of, as only 4% of the population were divorced. However, in 2003, 35 years later 28.85 % of the population had been divorced at least once arise of over 24.85%, which is a rapid increase in such a short period of time. The graph also shows, the finding that within the 35-year time-period, the household member was divorcing an increasing amount of times in one lifetime. The amount of people who were conducting serial monogamist marriages had increased from zero in 1968 to 16.65% of the population.

It is clearly apparent from the graphs that one of the reasons for the decrease of the nuclear family is that of the rise in divorce and serial monogamy, but it cannot just be these factors as their has to be a reason why the divorce rate has escalated. The following table shows that the one of the reasons for the increase in divorce rates is because in people are marrying younger and are and so divorcing earlier.



(Graph C)

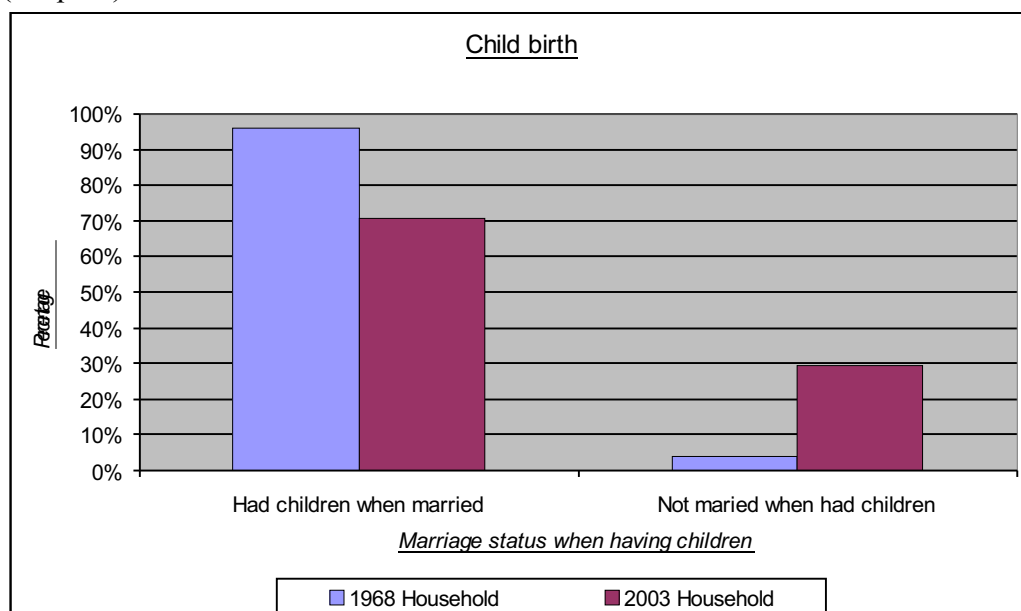
(Graph D)



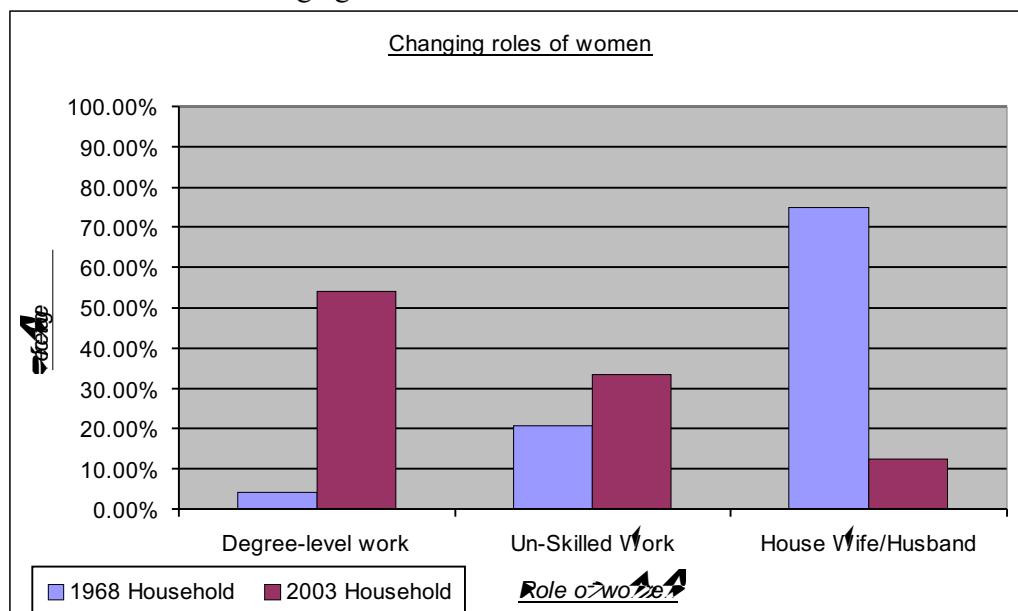
However, in 1968, 77.08% of the population got married between the ages of 16-20 and are all still married today. Creating a contrast of the sociological patterns of 1968 and 2003. From my secondary research, an apparent explanation for change in the sociological pattern, (according to Steel and Kidd), is due to young people having higher expectation of marriage than in the past, (1968) and so enter into it a disillusioned, and when their ideals are not met, they are quick to divorce. This explains the reason why the nuclear family is on slowly decreasing, because the younger generations, had an ideal of marriage, which cannot be met, leading to the divorce rate becoming more common. This, ideal also explains the reason why single-parent families are on the increase, because they are formed when people are divorced.

My research, also provided other explanations for the increase in the single parent family, these are shown in the graph below.

(Graph E)



Graph E, portrays the results childbirth in and outside of wedlock in 1968 household and the 2003 household. In 1968 the 96% of the people who had children, had them inside of wedlock, with only 4 % having children outside of wedlock. These results confirm that in 1968, George Murdock's nuclear family is the norm in British society. As 96% of family's consist of adults, male and female and one or more children of their own whilst being married, which in 1968 was what Murdock (1) would suggest by a 'socially approved relationship.' However, in the 2003, household, 70.83% of the British population had children inside of wedlock, which is a decrease of 25.17% over 35 years, which is quite a substantial increase. This has resulted in the increase people having children who are not married, as in 2003 29.17 people gave birth outside of wedlock compared to 4% in 1968. I believe that the reason for this is because the roles of women are changing.



(Graph F)

The above graph, shows that in 1968, the role of the women was to stay at home and look after the home and children, with 74.98% of the female population taking on this role, with only 4.17% of the population obtaining degrees and 20.85% of women having un-skilled jobs. In 1968, as the majority of women were not obtaining degrees, there was no other choice than to have children inside of wedlock. However in the 2003 household more women are obtaining degrees, and working, than in 1968. Allowing women to have children outside of wedlock as they can now support themselves without the financial support of a husband. This can also be used to explain the reason for; people are getting married later (graph d). The reason being, women can now support themselves, and so do not need a husband for financial support. This therefore, leads me to a conclusion that the reason for the decrease in the nuclear family, and the increase in the single-parent families, is because women can now support themselves and so can marry later, or even not at all if they wish, as they can support themselves and their offspring. This can also reflect into why the reconstituted family is increasing. This is due to an individual having a child outside of wedlock, and bringing it up as a single parent. This may later on result in marriage to another partner, which will form a reconstituted family.

Evaluation

In evaluating my methodology, I feel that I choose the most appropriate process for this type of research. This research was based on finding out if the nuclear family was still the norm, in British society, to do this successfully; I had to gather quantitative data in order to turn into percentages to, prove if it was still the norm. The use of closed-questions in my questionnaire, made it a lot easier to produce the quantitative, data, as the participant only ticked the box, which applied to them, and so all I had to do was make a tally of the participants answers and turn them into percentages. The use of the closed-question, limit the freedom of response of the participant, and so I was able to extract the information I needed without any chance of their being misleading answers, which I would certainly have got if I had used open-questions.

For, this research, I wanted to keep absolute anonymity, and confidentiality of the participant. In my pilot study, I had identified that the participants may of felt they could not share their answers with me, in the fear of being judged. By using a self-completion questionnaire, I was able to lighten this fear, allowing their answers to be truthful, leaving me with reliable and valid results. This was furthered by, asking the participant's to place their completed questionnaires into an un-marked envelope, and giving it back to, me in which I did not open until, I had collected them all in. Even, though I attempted to apply total confidentiality for the participants, I was unable to achieve this. By asking the participant's to hand their questionnaires to me, they may of thought that I would read their answers as soon as they gave them to me, which may have left them feeling they could not disclose personal answers such as their parents being divorced. So, if I were to complete this research again I would, ask the participants to place their completed answers in an envelope, and post it to me, creating complete anonymity. This research was meant to have freely given informed consent, which I tried o accomplish by writing "I give my permission forth above information, to be used for Nicola Armstrong's A2 Sociology Coursework." at the bottom of the questionnaire. However, by writing it at the end of the questionnaire, they participant will of all ready of filled it in, and so will no o been aware of what it was for. So, if I were to complete this study again, I would place the statement at the beginning of the questionnaire, which would truly allow freely given informed consent

For my research, I used a Quota sample, which I have identified as having key problems. I initial choose to study 25 Males and 25 females, but the cost and time would have been too extortionate, for a small study such as this. So, I choose to save time and costs by sampling 12 males and females, from my local area, Sandiacre. However, this caused my research to become un-representative of British society. The research population I used were all white-middle class people; ad so did not reflect society's structure, of ethnicity and class. If I were to complete this research study again, I would choose to use a more representative form of quota, so to reflect, the structure i.e. 2 white working class males, 2 Black middle class females. Even though, my sample was not representative of society, it did have its advantages. By choosing people from my sixth form centre, it increased my chance of acquiring valid and

reliable results, the reason being that most A-level students would have had to complete research studies in the past, and so understand the need for valid results. This therefore, would make the participant would put their full time and attention into disclosing accurate answers. As, they would want someone to do the same or them if it was for their research study.

Conclusions

My research has examined the nuclear and is it still the norm of British Society. The findings of this research study are similar to those of R Chester (7) (1985) who claimed, "Most people get married and live in nuclear families. Most children are brought up in nuclear families, most marriages end with death not divorce and divorcees are usually keen to marry again" The result graphs, I have produced clearly show that the nuclear family as popular as ever, graph a shows. Meaning that it is still the norm.

Even, though i hypothesised that the nuclear family is breaking up due to a rapid increase in divorce, I was wrong. As 62.5% of the British population live with the same partner the whole of their life. However, I was able to expose the reasons why the nuclear family is slowly decreasing in percentage, in British society, These reasons include the rise in divorce rates, and serial monogamy, a rise in the amount of younger people becoming married, due to high expectations of marriage created by the media who present the family in a romanticised manner. Which as they are rarely met the divorce is often an easy way out. In my research, I have established that the main reasons for the reduction in nuclear families in British society, is because of the emergence of the reconstituted family, resulting from divorcées, and single parents remarrying to form a new model of the Family.

Although the nuclear family is the universal norm in British society, it is plausible to say that the family is adapting to the changing society we live in. The reason being that since a change in the role of women, the development of the 1971 divorce laws, plus the change in opinions to single-parenting and divorce, the family model absorbed these changes resulting in the family models we have today.

Footnotes

- (1) **Murdock, G.P** (1949) *Social Structure* (Macmillan)
- (2) **Young M and Willmott P** (1962) *Family and Kinship in East London* (Pelican,)
- (3) **Parson T** (1951) *the social system* (The free press)
- (4) **O' Donnell M** *Introduction to Sociology – Chapter 3 Households, Families and marriages* (Fourth edition, Nelson)
- (5) **Steel L and Kidd W** *The Family*
- (6) **Giddens A** (1992). *The transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality Love and Eroticism in modern society* (Polity Press)
- (7) **R Chester** (Found in **O' Donnell M** *Introduction to Sociology – Chapter 3 Households, Families and marriages* (Fourth edition, Nelson))
- (8) **Bernardes J** (1997) *Family studies: An introduction* (Rutledge)

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Appendix

(1) Pilot Study

Pilot Study

Is the 'nuclear family' still the norm in British society?

Hypothesis

When writing about the family George Murdock (1949) wrote, "It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved relationship, and on or more children, own or adopted, of sexually cohabiting adults." This research attempts to look at if Murdock's 'family' is still the norm in British society. I expect my findings will confirm that Murdock's 'family' is decreasing in percentage. The reason being that Murdock's model of the family does not allow for divorce, re-structured families, single parents, cohabitation couples, extended families etc these reasons I hypothesise that Murdock's 'family' is no longer the norm in British society, but it is on the course of a rapid decrease because the rise in divorce, re-structured families, single parents, cohabitation couples, extended families and serial monogamy is steadily increasing.

Similar studies

Various sociologists have investigated into the nuclear family and whether it is still the norm. However there has not been one importicular sociologist who has investigated the subject as whole but Sociologists have looked into the following studies:

1. Explaining types of Families in Britain:

1. ***George Murdock*** in his 1949 book, Social structure he claims, "The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at last 2 of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of sexually cohabiting adults".
2. ***Liz Steel & Warren Kid*** in their book "The Family" describe the nuclear family as a "mother, farther and children living together in harmony with mother looking after home and farther going to work to support the others."

2. Explaining the is the nuclear family still the norm in Britain:

It is no longer the norm:

- **Liz Steel & Warren Kid**
 1. “Less than 30% of households in Britain typically consist of a married couple in their children”
- **Jon Bernardes** in his book ‘The family in question’ (1990). “I purpose that there is no such thing as ‘normal families’ [the nuclear family].”
- **Talcott Parsons (1955)** in the book Family socialisation and Interaction Process “the changes that have taken place in the family and the nature of the modern family are related to the impact of the process of industrialisation”
- **Mike Featherstone (1991)** “we can no longer point to a single, all uncompromising family type or structure and say for sure that this type is the most common”

It is still the norm

- **Robert Chester (1985)** “argues that the nuclear family and marriage remain the normative experience for the great majority of Britons”
- **Mike O'Donnell** “...the majority of married people still do not get divorced but remain committed, more or less happily to one partner for life”

3. Explained the reasons for the decrease in the nuclear family:

Liz Steel & Warren Kid

1. “There has been a huge rise in the proportion of married women working outside the home”
2. “The increase in the extended, single-parent family and constituted families”
3. “...The increase of co-habitation...”
4. “As society changes so does the family”
5. “Divorce increased markedly from the 1970's but became relatively stable in the 1990's”

The General Household survey 1989 proposes,

1. “By 1989 cohabiting couples and their children formed 26% households”
2. “Single person households increased from 17% from 1971 to 25% in 1989”
3. The proportion of single parent families increased from 8% in 1971 to 17% in 1989. 15% were lone mothers and 2% lone fathers.

The change in the reasons why people marry:

- **Philippe Aries (1973)** “suggests that before the rise of individualism under capitalism, marriage was usually a matter of economics: it was based on the exchange of property”

The Change in women roles

- **Wilmott & Young (1975)** “Husband now do their fair share of the domestic chores”
- **Giddens (1993)** “Traditionally a man's place was at work, however it is slowly becoming more acceptable for men to be house husbands...”
- **Anthony Giddens (1992)** “The male control of females sexuality with the traditional patriarchal family and the ideology of the compulsory heterosexuality are both being broken down and as a consequence our traditional notions of family life and relationships are changing

- **Hannah Gavron (1960): (The captive wife: conflicts of household mothers)**
Technique- investigated how much personal freedom middle and working class young mothers had in their marriage by completing unstructured interview.
Found: “Clearly the nature of women’s roles is changing”
- **Helen Crowley** “Women have acquired a political voice”

Diversity

- **Judith Stacey (1990)** “Contemporary family diversity has opened up a great deal of choice for women: family structure have changed and are still changing, divorce is more commonplace than ever before as are illegitimacy, homosexuality and cohabitation.”
- **David Morgan (1996)** “Diversity in family forms may be evidence of the wider plurality, fragmentation and fluidity that characterises post-modern society”

Sex

- **Giddens (December 1995)** the transformations in the attitudes to sexuality that have occurred have liberated individuals from traditional family values, leaving them much freer to explore their sexuality in ways that were previously deemed deviant”
- **Mike O’ Donnell**
 1. “Improved methods of birth control and the resultant decrease in the fertility rate families tend to be much smaller
 2. “Many people no longer associate sex with marriage

Divorce

- **Liz Steel & Warren Kidd**: Reasons for increase in Divorce rates:
 1. Changes in the law
 2. Its more socially acceptable
 3. Young people have high expectations of marriage and there often not met
 4. Increased awareness of women’s rights might make more women file for divorce as society now expects them to be treated much better than in the past
 5. Longer life expectancy might mean that as married couples grow older they grow apart
 6. Increased economic pressure
- **David Morgan (1996)** “...for many in society divorce...has become another commonplace point in the life course of the individual.”

Increase in reconstituted families

- **Mike O’Donnell** “In a society in which at least 1 out of 3 marriages involves partner who is remarrying, the reconstituted family is becoming increasingly common”

Increase in lesbian and homosexual led families

- Mike O' Donnell "The number of lesbian and homosexual couples who bring up children is small but increasing

Increase in lone parents

- Hillary Land (1995) – Facts on lone motherhood
 1. There has been a rise in lone motherhood during the 1980's
 2. The majority of lone mothers were reliant upon state benefit
 3. Only $\frac{1}{4}$ of lone mothers were receiving support from the absent father
 4. By 1987 14% of families with dependent children were lone parents
 5. In 1989, 664,000 lone parents received state benefit to provide for over a million children
 6. By 1989 27% of all births took place outside marriage
 7. In 1989 75% of all births to teenage girls took place outside marriage
- Social Trends 1997: "In 1994 1 in 5 families with dependent children in Britain were headed by single parents, over 90% of whom were women"

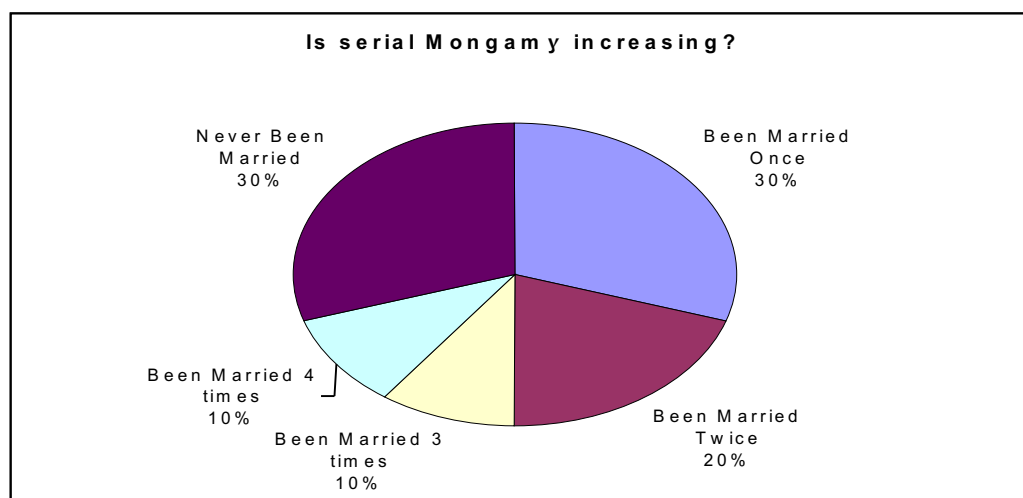
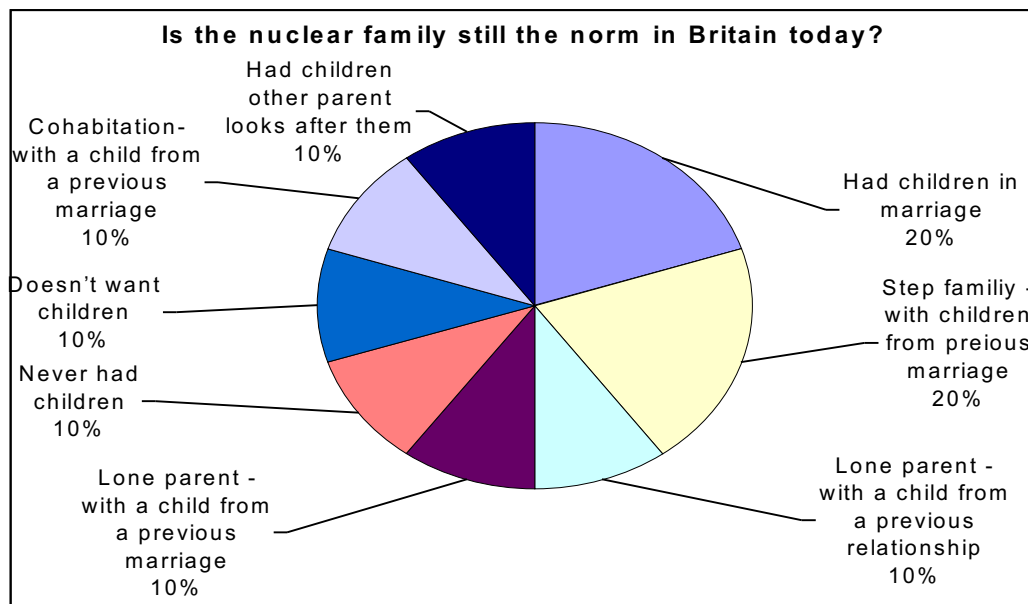
Research Method

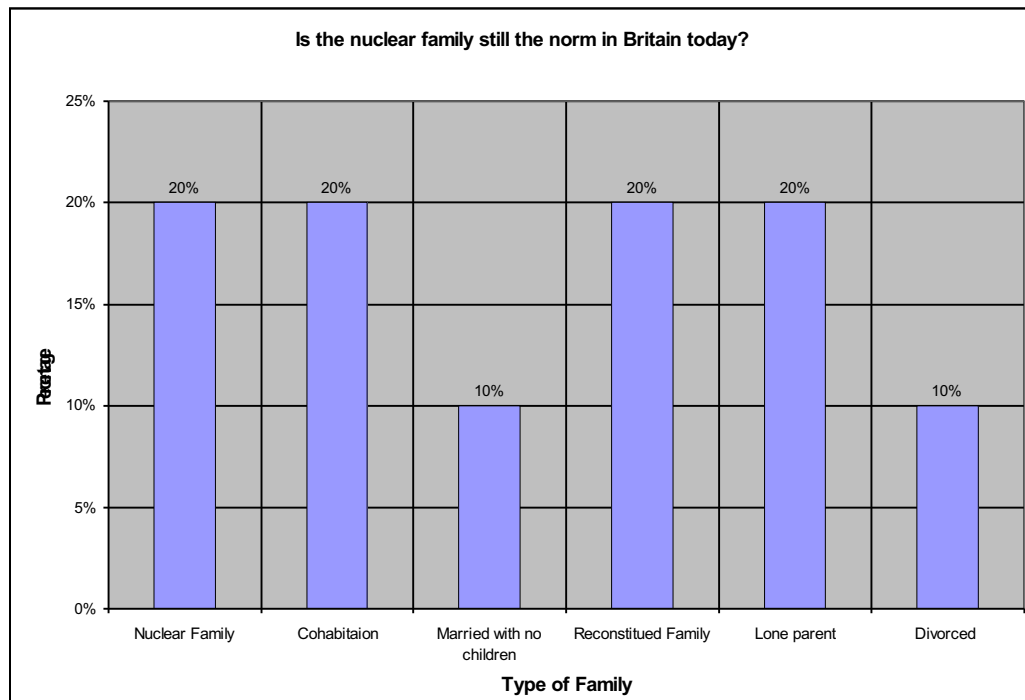
For my research I have chosen to complete an extensive survey to find out if the nuclear family is still the norm in British society. The reason I have chosen to complete a survey is because it will produce a wide variety of data, which can easily be, turned into quantitative data i.e. percentages. These will allow me to easily analyse and draw conclusions to whether the nuclear family is the norm in Britain today. I have chosen to use a Quota Sampling. The Quota, which I shall use, will be 5 females and 5 males from the age range 20-70. As this will allow my research to be more representative allowing me to make more accurate conclusions to whether the nuclear family is still the norm in British society. In order to gather the information accurately and quickly, I will use a questionnaire with closed questions. As when it comes to writing up my results I will be able to clearly work out percentages, and conclusions than I would if I used open questions, which would mean I would have to depict, the questions first, leading to a wider chance of gathering in accurate results. The questionnaire, which I used when conducting my survey, are on pages 9-11. The 10 people I interviewed were 10 people who I knew who fitted the quota sample requirement. By conducting a survey in this way will allow me to collect the data easily and quickly and cost effectively, which is an added bonus.

Survey Results

From the results of my results I am able to conclude that the Nuclear family is becoming a thing of the past as according to my results only 20% of the people who I interviewed claimed to have a nuclear family. The reason being that other types of

households were emerging such as cohabitation, flat shares and lone parents, showing the nuclear family to be a thing of the past. When attempting looking into reasons for the decrease in the nuclear family, I found some interesting results. I found that serial Monogamy was extremely common as 40% of the people I interviewed had been married more than once, which is one of the reasons for the decrease in the nuclear family. Another reason I found that could be linked to the decrease in the nuclear family is that of the amount of people who have children out of wedlock. I found that 20% of the people I interviewed were lone parents. All of the results I found from survey are displayed on pages 12-17 of my pilot study.





Evaluation

The a pilot study of my research into the family has been extremely useful, as it has given me an insight into the aspects of the family, which I have never considered I would need to investigate into if I hadn't conducted the research. This especially regards to the changing role of women as being one of the reasons for the change in the family.

By conducting the pilot study I am able to think of how to improve my research study when it comes to the real thing. The key elements, which I realised, were unsuitable for my research was the structure of the questionnaire. The reason being that as the questions included a lot of open ended questions, in my real research I will attempt to use more closed questions allowing myself to more effectively figure out the results and conclusion.

For one of the questions when I ask about what type of family do you have, I will have a piece of paper with a list of the descriptions of and ask them to pick which one they have. This will allow me to see if the nuclear family is still the norm more efficiently. The reason beginning that in my pilot study I found that, I asked about marital status and children separately which made it more difficult when analysing my results to see if people were really in a nuclear family or not.

Also in regards to the questionnaire I will attempt to include more questions about why the nuclear family is becoming a thing of the past such as what are their feelings on the topic. I will also ask more in-depth questions into their family situation such as why did they divorce, do single choose to be on their own and if so why? As this will allow me to make more accurate conclusions into why the nuclear family is no longer the norm in Britain today.

When conducting my survey for my research I have also decided to survey 50 people instead of 10 as this will allow me to have a more representative analysis of the population as it will include more of the population but will still allow me to easily turn my results into quantitative data.

14. Do you want to get married? Yes No

15. Why?

16. Do you have any children? Yes No

17. How many? 1 2 3 4 5

18. Do you want children in the future? Yes No

19. Why?

20. Do you live with the father of the children? Yes No

21. Are you a lone parent? Yes No

22. Do you receive financial support from him? Yes No

23. Do you receive financial support from the government for your children?

Yes No

24. Are you part of a step - family? Yes No

25. Does your partner have any children from a previous marriage?

Yes No

26. Do you have any children from a previous marriage? Yes (Q23) No (Q24)

27. Do they live in your household? Yes No

28. Do they live in your household? Yes No

29. In your view who has the final in an argument in your household?

Man Women Equal

30. Who does the majority of the cleaning in the household?

Male Female Equally

31. Who does the majority of the DIY in the household?

Male Female Equally shared

32. Who raises the children in your household?

Man Woman Equal

33. Where do your parents live?

34. Do they give you financial support? Yes No