

# Changes in the structure of the british family



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BUSTER**

How has the structure of the family changed in Britain over the last hundred years? Indicate the implications of the changes for the education system.

I am going to start by defining what a family is from a social science dictionary. " A group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage and adoption". ([www. socialsciencedictionary. com/family](http://www.socialsciencedictionary.com/family)).

In the nineteenth century the family structure was shaped by the industrial revolution. It spread throughout Britain, and there was a massive increase in the number of factories. As the number of factories grew, people moved from the countryside into towns looking for better paid work. The towns were not ready for this great increase of people and housing was very overcrowded. Rooms were rented to whole families. Family size at this time was between six to twelve children and they all slept and fed in a single room. Muncie, et al (1993) cited that Smith (1986: pg 18) showed that in 1860 the average marriage produced seven children. Also part of the family living in one room were the grandparents, this is known as an extended family. They lived and were looked after by the family because they were a valuable resource, as a childminder. " Kin were an important source of aid in ' critical life situations' for example, aging parents, who lived with and were supported by their married children, provided a child-minding service which allowed the mother to work". (Elliot 1986: p46).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century schools were not very common and none were provided by the state. Children, in the working-class, were seen as benefits to the family as they were sent to work in the factories to help bring in money for the family. There was no compulsory education but

Burnett (1982 ) explains that expansion of the Sunday school movement was of a great importance. It brought education opportunities to those who worked 6 days a week. Burnett (1982) also explains that sometimes even the very poor children could not attend Sunday school as they did not have suitable clothes or shoes, and the rich attended much better Sunday schools. Even before state education was around the class divide was great, the rich had better education and the poor couldn't even attend due to being so poor. England was introduced to universal, free education by these Sunday schools and this developed the system of day-schooling.

As the types of work became more diverse, the machinery in the factories became more technical and needed skilled workers to operate them. This meant there was a need for more educated workers and the state accepted that it needed to provide education for the working class. David (1980: pg33) acknowledges this " The arguments for the state to provide education for the working classes only won acceptance as the economy became more diversified, the need for skilled and trained labour became more critical". Another reason why education was needed for the working class was the change in women's employment. Children had no care and needed somewhere to go while their parents were at work. From 1893 all working-class children had to attend school for at least six years, from five years old to the age of eleven. After this children were allowed to be exempt from school as long as they had proof they were going into employment. Sunderland (1971) explained that this lead to most children being exempt from school at the age of eleven as the family needed them to work to

provide an income. " Only 14% of the children on the registers of inspected schools were aged twelve and over" Sunderland (1971: pg44)

The First World War brought new opportunities for women. The men were sent to war and the women were able to fill many different roles in the workforce. This was quickly withdrawn after the war and women were expected to withdraw from working and return to full-time care of the house and children. Unfortunately due to recession money had been withdrawn from providing school meals and nursery care for their children had been forced to close and this made it harder for women to be able to work. " Parents were once more forced to rely on their own resources for the care of their children" David (1980: pg58). Women campaigned for more equal rights and in 1918 women over the age of thirty were able to vote and in 1928 the age was lowered to twenty-one. This gave females more rights and freedom in their choices. Unfortunately there was a great depression and unemployment was high so women were unable to work and therefore stayed at home to look after the family.

After World War Two, education in Britain changed, due to the 1944 Education Act. This act made secondary education compulsory and until the age of fifteen. At this time there was a recognition that Britain's economy needed to be rebuilt and Britain called for immigrant workers. " It attracted for the first time large numbers of workers and families from the Caribbean, Indian and Pakistan" [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) (accessed 14/03/11). This meant that Britain's non-white population rapidly increased. This influx was not very well received by the British people and the government repeatedly discussed how to try and restrict the immigration from these

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countries. In schools racism and divide in social class was very high and unless you were white, middle class and non-handicapped; your time at school was seen as a time of prejudice, frustration and lost opportunity. Factors that contributed to this exclusion were the different language and culture the families brought with them. This contributed to them being unable to mix with the British society it was greatly due to people being uneducated in other cultures and religions. Sidney Webb (1894) wrote that we need to generate a body of systematic political thought as a prime task of those who hoped to teach others how practically to transform England into a Social Democratic Commonwealth. " In 1976 the Race Relations Act was introduced and it became lawful to discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour and nationality (including citizenship)" (Hope 2011). This has lead to a change in education which has only recently come into schools; Citizenship classes.

An unawareness of these cultures and languages and the differences between the pupils led to citizenship classes being introduced to the curriculum in September 2002. The national framework introduces citizenship as a subject to develop sound principles of freedom, equality, justice and peace. It allows the students to engage with each other and their community. However not everyone agreed to the significance of citizenship classes and parents wanted to know why Muslims and Jehovah witnesses were allowed to take their children out of the school prayers and they weren't allowed, as non-believers, to remove their children from the citizenship classes. On 20th January 2011, there was a major review of the national curriculum by the education secretary Michael Gove and he wanted

to “ demote citizenship to an optional subject” (Shepherd 2011). Teachers argued that this would work against aims of the ‘ big society’ and Chris Waller (Head of the Association of Citizenship Teaching) said it would set England back 15 years to when it was the “ least politically literate country in the developed world”. In schools, the difference between the pupils in their abilities is seen as being due to their socioeconomic status and linguistic diversity. Bernstein (1971) suggested that there is a difference between working-class and middle class children due to the working class children being linguistically deprived. Because of the child’s different tone, accents and languages spoken, this is seen as not Standard English therefore they are misunderstood in schools. Whereas Labov (1977) suggested that there is a difference not a deficit therefore we should be more accepting and willing to understand these differences. The citizenship classes should help to close this divide and allow not only pupils but teachers to have a greater understanding and allowing them to be educated in the same way as middle class students. Staying with the present time I’m going to look at the family in modern society.

There has been a disappearance of the traditional ‘ nuclear’ family and now there are many different types of the family. These include gay and lesbian relationships, adoption and fostering, separation and divorce, re-marriage and single-parents. Many factors have changed in order to create these different types.

“ Age at motherhood and first motherhood has risen, family size has fallen and childlessness has increased. Cohabitation has become common, both

before marriage and between marriage; rising divorce rates and a near-trebling in the number of lone-parent families". (Mcrae S, 1999: pg5)

An increase of divorce since the Divorce Law Reform Act 1969 and an increase of births outside of marriage have led to an increase in single-parent families. Usually the single parent in the single-parent families is the mother living on her own with her children; she does the greater share of caring for her children both financially and emotionally. Being able to provide for your family as a lone-parent has become easier with the help of state benefits and social or subsidized housing: but in many cases the mother is usually forced to work in a manual job or be unemployed. There is a concern if children are at an educational disadvantage in these homes. Spencer (2004) of the school of health and social studies reports that lone parenthood is associated with educational problems and that these families are significantly disadvantaged compared with couple families. In the lone-parent homes it is suggested that there is a material disadvantage and a low maternal education. Maternal education is the inequality in a child's home which does not allow a child to learn things from their mother that will help them develop in life such as what is right and wrong and experiencing affection. This can be due to many factors such as the mother having to work to provide for the family and cannot spend much time at home with her children.

It has been reported by Carneiro, Meghir & Parey (2007) that educated mothers tend to delay in starting a family and when they do they are more likely to be married and have a very good income. The report also shows that the educated mothers are more likely to invest in their children through

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books and extra tuition; also providing an availability of a computer. In these families it is reported by Caneiro, Meghir & Parey (2007) that the maternal education persists into adolescence which reduces the number of children born to young adults and the number of criminal convictions. On the other hand reports have proven that children's education is not affected if they come from a lone-parent family. It just depends on what happens in the home; whether the time and interest is taken in the child's education. If a single parent sets up good morals and standards and lives by example then the children will automatically grow up according to the values set before them. Desai, Chase-Landslade & Michael (1989) have researched into lone-parent mothers and believe their attitudes and ambitions can be changed and instead of accepting that their children will live to be un-educated and therefore not work; they have suggested ways to improve this; such as putting a limit on the number of years the mothers are in receipt of benefit and help them get back to work or even back into higher education to study for a profession. Classes at local community centres have also been introduced to educate mothers in health, education and general well-being to allow the mothers to increase their maternal education.

To conclude the family has taken many different forms over the last 100 years starting with the large families in the industrial revolution where there was not any education and children worked to earn money to support the family. The industrial revolution created a new form of education as factories had more skilled machines and needed experienced workers. Education for working class became universal and allowed every child to be educated and this created an opportunity for women to become more independent and



able to work. The post war immigration brought a change to families in the sense of race, culture and language; this created a need for schools to educate children in citizenship. There was a need to understand each other's cultures and to create a more multicultural society. This brought up disputes between cultures and religions but generally it was seen as a need to make citizenship classes compulsory. This allows not only the children to be educated in the differences in cultures and society but the teachers to understand their pupils too; and to make changes to be able to educate their pupils. Another change to the family structure was the changes in the different types of family in today's modern society. The main one I focused on was lone-parent families. This has seen to affect education in the sense of these children from the lone-parent families tending to be uneducated maternally in morals and standards. This lead to show they tend to under achieve at school; but there is research and reports in trying to improve ways of educating the parents to help their children in their future and to be able to have a good career.