

European union in shaping the contemporary sociology essay

[Sociology](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Introduction](#) \n \t
2. [United Nations and its Agencies](#) \n \t
3. [Family, Education and Culture](#) \n \t
4. [United Nations and the Modernization of the Family](#) \n \t
5. [Non- Governmental Organizations and Family](#) \n \t
6. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
7. \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Introduction

The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability and a life of relationship within the family constitute the foundation for freedom, security and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society (CCC 2207). However, in examining the role of the United Nations and the European Union in shaping the contemporary socio-political context of the family, we will highlight how the culture of life and the complementarities between man and woman expressed in marriage has been replaced with the culture of death. Furthermore, this essay will also look at the traditional position of families and then how the United Nations, its agencies and the European Union have introduced some major changes

which, though on an incremental basis, have drastically altered the core traditional values of families regarding what constitutes real family, the roles of its various members, vis-a viz the father, the mother, and the child.

United Nations and its Agencies

Looking at the historical background of the United Nations, it all started after the World War II as Europe was struggling to recover socially and economically. The United Nations emerged from the former League of Nations which was an organization conceived in similar circumstances during the First World War, and established in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles " to promote international cooperation and to achieve peace and security. However this newly formed group stated in its foundational charter that, among other things, its purpose was to ensure peace between nations and to " reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small (United Nations Charter, Preamble), and this was signed on June 26, 1945 in San Francisco. In addition, a second document ensued which categorically clarified the functions and missions of the United Nations in the field of international politics: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 which ensured that this proposal of the universal document and its right must be upheld as legal and to be made available for every human being irrespective of any government's approval or dismissal of these documents. Again the family under the rules of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared the very important protection of the institution of marriage by stating that those " Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to

<https://assignbuster.com/european-union-in-shaping-the-contemporary-sociology-essay/>

found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16)". In this article there was no concrete explanation regarding dissolution of marriage, does it constitute death or divorce? It only states that men and women have equal rights in this event; there was no recognition of children in this article (Araujo 2). Article 16 also acknowledged that the family was not only the "fundamental" group of society, but that it was the "natural" group unit of society, hence, the Member States affirmed, the family is entitled to protection by both the society and state. The document also outlines the specific rights that are guaranteed the family: article 12 states that a person's family and home shall be protected from "arbitrary interference," while article 25 notes that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...". Different members of the family and different roles within it are also protected by the Declaration. Mothers and children are "entitled to special care and assistance". The document also acknowledges the natural rights of parents in the family, particularly in the area of education. This right of parents to "choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children" is not only protected, but is defined as a right that is prior to that of the state or other body outside the family unit (UDHR 12 25 26). Looking at the current socio-political context of the family, and the above declarations

of what the United Nations and its adjoining agencies were set up to propagate, it shows how in a contradictory way, the same organization has helped immensely to catastrophically destroy the family. As the lawmaking function of the U. N. has increased in importance, ideological input to the U. N. System often has been limited to the voices of a few powerful lobbies, who are guided by the doctrine of emotivism in dispensing the decision that shape our social and political life. Many of these lobbies, moreover, have not only been hostile to the traditional family, but have also ignored religious values, denigrated cultural moral principles, and enshrined reproductive and sexual health. As a result of the one-sided influence of these lobbies, the United Nations faces substantial pressure to adopt legal norms that pose serious threats to religious liberty, family stability and parental rights (CB 13). It would be appropriate at this point to look at the impact of the United Nations on the contemporary socio-political context of the family with regard to education and culture.

Family, Education and Culture

The Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was signed in November 1945; it is a UN agency which specializes in education. In its Preamble it was declared that " since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed". The mind is a terrible thing to waste and billions of minds have been wasted due to false information. Therefore, the human mind must be built on a solid foundation based on true organic education. Janet Smith in ' Why Humanae Vitae Was Right,' quoted a Chinese philosopher Confucius who wrote:" When the heart is set right, then the

<https://assignbuster.com/european-union-in-shaping-the-contemporary-sociology-essay/>

personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, then the family life is regulated; when the family life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then there is peace in the world. From the emperor down to the common man, all must regard the cultivation of the personal life as the root or foundation". That foundation is the family which is the most important place for education (formation) of the conscience and human development, the privileged place for transmitting traditions and faith and where it fails on its role, children are left scared, vulnerable and soft to survive this life. Because children can be manipulated by their surrounding culture which in this perspective, culture cultivates into a way of life, its institution, ways of worships, construction of the town, what one eats and style of dressing (CB 37). Family education is responsible for changing us, thereby, allowing us to function and live in a globalizing and interdependent world. The global Cultural Revolution has essentially redefined the connotation of education, from the attainment of objective knowledge to learning of know-how and life skills. Education is used by UN to set out its agenda of new values, exercising one's right, the celebration of diversity and multiculturalism, freedom to choose, individual autonomy, social inclusion, good governance, sustainable development and much more. Recognizing school as a force of socialization, these agents of transformation have made it the privileged place for the transformation of these values. Furthermore, UNESCO being an intergovernmental agency and a part of UN responsible for education exerts straight influence on the education ministries of its member states. They habitually apply serious pressure on these governments to re-examine and alter their curriculum contents, re-

structure their courses and make certain that their teachers are in harmony with the new global norms especially gender and gender equality (Peeters 158-160). The council of the International Bureau of Education (IBE) is a UNESCO Institute with specialization on assisting Member States in curriculum development designed for the achievement of quality education for all. Their recommendation No. 20 of sex education training from primary school has contributed to the high level of children being aware of adult way of life at a young age. For example, extensive studies had shown that the prevalence of teenage pregnancy and abortions actually increases following the introduction of " traditional" sex education programs that emphasize the teaching of technical sexual knowledge, including the use of prophylactics. By contrast, however, the occurrence of adolescent pregnancy, abortion and sexually transmitted disease is actually lesser through family-based education programs. Therefore, although Africa is being regarded as part of the developing world, the west has a lot to learn from Africa. The sexual education of children (which in Africa is taught only by your parents at home) should be left alone for the parents to explain to their children, after all, parents themselves were once children. Furthermore, looking at the primary school teachers of these days, majority are not married and are very young themselves without the experience of motherhood or fatherhood.

Nevertheless, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in the General Assembly in 1979. They wanted to identify women's right and to relate this right to the wider society, because the Convention is the only human rights treaty which affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture

and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations (CEDAW text of the convention). The influence of these articles were very important to the family because it focused mainly on reproduction and women's reproductive rights, relations between the sexes and the impact of culture on those relationships, as well as, redefining the concept of human rights to give a " formal recognition to the influence of culture and tradition on restricting women's significant impact on the family and family relations in that it was very much concerned with enjoyment of their fundamental human rights (CEDAW Introduction). Again these agents of social transformation are trying to portray sexual and reproductive rights as if it has been there just as one of the constitutive elements contained in the universal human rights accepted by the international community, for instance, the right to life and to survival, the right to personal freedom and security, right to education, and much more rights. This is the main juridical instrument used by the feminists in their mission to enforce women rights (Peeters 99). The manipulative effects of these treaties are some of the reasons why the contemporary families are in a state of absolute confusion due to misinformation. Again traditional family values and systems are under a serious attack in many parts of the world especially as women claim greater equality and continuously wanting to become men (Giddens 12). Clearly looking at the socio-political context of the contemporary family, the response that the gender ideology gives to male domination is not love and reconciliation, but rather a revolt and search for power on the part of women who aspire to become equal to men in terms of social power. Hence the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) was created

in 1990 by Bella Abzug who passed away after the Beijing conference, in 1998. Their document, the Women's Action Agenda 21 contributed enormously in the influence of the Beijing conference. WEDO made sure that the hot topic of women empowerment would set the tone for Beijing and through other minority groups; continue to lobby in globalizing the gender feminism ideology (Peeters 123-125). The actions of the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995 ensured that women were seen in isolation from their role in the family. This is in line with the entire development of western feminism where the focal point was to liberate women from the repressiveness of being house wives, mothers, and dependants of their husbands (Matlárý 89). Furthermore, in Beijing there was a paragraph (§30 in the draft) devoted to the family as an institution but in brackets (indicating governmental disapproval) as was majority of the family documents, motherhood, religion, ethical and spiritual values to mention but a few. In addition, there was a heavy emphasis on the need to eliminate "stereotyped" gender roles in the family and society via educational and mass media channels. Gender which has replaced sex has quietly slipped into the foremost of official documents in UN and miserably academics have also participated in the mainstreaming of this perspective (CB 29). Gender is not a theoretical concept of academic interest, but it is a reality which we experience in this world. The significant effect of the gender perspective on family is incredible especially on marriage which is a sacrament and at the same time a vocation and commandment for Christian spouses, that they may remain faithful to each other forever, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (FC 20) . This so called 'gender' is being

mainstreamed into our society through laws, policies and funding to make gender equality mandatory and outlaw gender discrimination. Again it is into the social policy of a lot of countries striving to achieve gender equality which has been robed as given women equal opportunity outside the home. While in actual fact gender involves rethinking sexuality and for women procreation is portrayed as a handicap to gender equality. This gender issue is a fundamental base for the contemporary socio-political context of the family. Because the culture of a family and the truth about life is not only a shaping influence; it is also a resource into which a person may dip throughout her life for direction, meaning, and style (Moore 73).

United Nations and the Modernization of the Family

Human rights have become a multi-billion dollar industry, regularly manufacturing new rights and employing hundreds of thousands of people across the globe. The biggest rights factory is located in the UN headquarters in New York where it has its distribution centre on rights to free love, contraception, abortion, artificial fertilization, sexual orientation, right to choose, population control, and to mention but a few. These twisted rights have the truth turned upside down on its head concerning each perspective. Drifting away from its initial 1948 universal rights which are natural in every human person by the virtue of the dignity of human persons given to us by God, the UN contributed to further demise of modernity. The excessive individualism of the western society does not demonstrate our connectedness to other people and our responsibilities toward one another. Importance is placed solely on individual rights without the future considerations on the social obligations on humanity. Furthermore we

<https://assignbuster.com/european-union-in-shaping-the-contemporary-sociology-essay/>

emphasize on the significance of freedom to choose but abandon the common good (Wadell 194). Post modernity as the word stipulates is what comes after modernity, it does not have a viable meaning in its word. In a postmodern system, the adversary is within, and there are no rules of any rational basis for it to appeal to. Therefore, the postmodernists assume that there needs to be a drastic transformation, 'rapture', the breaking down of all things fixed so that new things will emerge. In short, their reasoning and dominant doctrine is guided by emotivism. Postmodernists are also of the view that violence and power is the glue that holds the meaning of words which in turn holds the world together as opposed to the Augustinian vision of heavenly peace. Marriage is also one of the adhesives which hold the world together but they also discard marriage as a dictionary word that you only find in the law courts as an enduring natural law, defined as a union between man and woman. Therefore, the postmodernists want to deconstruct marriage to retrieve that hidden agenda and break it into pieces, taking from within, those argument and forces that enacted that law, claiming that those powers that put it together can also tear it apart(CB 27). This powerful wave of globalization with its bitter fruits of the Western cultural revolution and its ensuing crisis of democracy have already reached the shores of the non-Western world and threaten to globalize the whole world.

Non- Governmental Organizations and Family

The attack on parenthood and family was always clearly evident in the ideological union connecting the International Planned Parenthood

Federation (IPPF) and the UN. IPPF was established by Margaret Sanger in

<https://assignbuster.com/european-union-in-shaping-the-contemporary-sociology-essay/>

1952 and comprising some 150 family planning associations in over 180 countries (Peeters 110). They portray the false image of uncontested defender of human rights, while radically as a pressure group, nonsensically educating globally the culture of death even to the smallest village in Africa, armed with a bag of rice and ready to attack with sexual reproductive health information. They pressure to win these feeble hearts hoping to convince them to adopt their ideas, values, contraceptive mentalities, behaviours (through TV) and lifestyles so as to achieve this revolution. This attack on the natural traditional family has evolved from numerous interest groups some of who are feminists, homosexual, and the leftist traditional dislike for the family (Pride 160-166). They argue that the traditional family is very repressive for women, that motherhood also constrains them, they teach that sexual freedom is an individual human right and that true freedom only comes when the twin restraints of religion and family are released. The freedom to choose by the individual, even to choose against the design of the creator has by now become the cornerstone of a new global ethic. Deconstruction paradoxically becomes systemic and globally normative. This liberal, anti-family and feminists agenda to destroy the institution of Marriage is also spreading furiously in the developing World. In an apparent defiance of pressure by Western interests, especially the United Kingdom, which has threatened to stop its financial assistance to any country that legislates against gay marriage, the Nigeria Senate passed the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill. From the 29 November 2011, people found guilty of indulging in same sex marriage risk a jail term of 14 years with no option of fine. In a reference to the threat of the UK government, Senate President

David Mark said " any country that would refuse Nigeria aid on account of the passage of the said Bill should hold such aid", insisting that the practice of same sex marriage remains strange to the Nigerian cultural values and practices moreover, it is very un-African (Akogun kunle and Ohia Paul). This anti-family, liberal and radical feminist agenda to destroy the very foundation, fabric and bedrock of any moral society must be stopped; this is a moral issue not a civil right issue. Foreign Government has no right to interfere in the moral issues of a sovereign nation. On the other hand, the European Union (EU) was established on November 1, 1993, when the Maastricht Treaty, or Treaty on European Union, was ratified by the 12 members of the European Community (EC; created in 1967)-Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. Upon ratification of the treaty, the countries of the EC became members of the EU, and the EC became the policy-making body of the EU (Encarta Encyclopaedia).

Throughout Europe, especially since World War II, women's role in relation to the family, and the role of family itself, has been undergoing what are perceived as unprecedented changes. In reality, there is evidence that striking changes in family forms and the construction of gender and affective relations within them occur periodically throughout most of European history. The traditional western European family has consisted of a male, a female and their offspring, if any. However, in England, since the mid-eighteenth century, the two adults were bound together in both law and taxation policy by a contract known as marriage. Significantly, marriage in the position of the Catholic Church is a sacrament; it is the fundamental

centrality of the family based on marriage, and for the society this is obvious and ancient. It is clearly expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in its Social Doctrine, as well as in the various encyclicals written by popes such as, the pastoral constitution ' Gaudium et Spes' (GS) and the apostolic exhortation ' Familiaris Consortio' (FC). Also in the Holy Scripture, the creation account shows how the couple made up of a man and a woman constituted the first form of personal communion in the plan of God. Our First Parents (Adam and Eve) are given a comparable nature to complement each other by their diversity in a resilient, lifelong unity. Nevertheless, they are gifted with the role of collaborating with God's work of creation through bearing the fruit of offspring (SCDF 3). Being the crucial natural community, the family is the focus of typical and unique rights and the centre of social life, as the principal place for interpersonal relationships and the very important basic cell of society (AA 11). For this reason, its procreative function comes first before society and the state. These days the secular theorists consider gender identity as a cultural and social product (Judith Butler), that is why the Catholic Church stands firm in reiterating its teaching, according to which each person, man or woman, has to accept his or her own sexual identity. The European Community has no competence to regulate family life; therefore there is no such thing as EU Family Law. The legal relationships identified as family ' ties' and the norms governing family life are matters left to the competence of member states. However, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union protects the right to respect for family life (Article 7), the right to marry and to found a family (Article 9), the right of the parents to educate their children (Article 14, Para

3) and the right of children to maintain relations with their parents (Article 24). These are the only provisions of EU primary law making explicit reference to the family. Nevertheless, family ties and family life has been a subject of European interest each time they have come into play in a sphere of life covered by EU legislation (Opromolla 161-174). The news about abortion, marriage, divorce and the birth rate in Europe is bad and only getting worse, according to a report recently presented to the EU. According to the report by the Institute for Family Policies (IPF) abortion rates in Britain have leaped by a third among unmarried teenage girls and abortion is helping to age the population of Europe. Without a massive shift to family-friendly policies, the pattern of increased abortion and increasingly aging population will inevitably lead to the collapse of social welfare benefits, and, ultimately, to the bankruptcy of Europe's cradle-to-grave socialist welfare state. Presented to the European Parliament the report said that the situation of the family in Europe is " a desolate panorama". Europe is plunged in an extraordinary demographic winter and has become an elderly continent, with a large birth deficit, fewer marriages and more of them broken, homes emptying." Furthermore, the aging population, critical birth-rate, increasing abortions, the disintegration of marriage, the explosion in family breakups and the emptying of homes are the main problems of Europeans," stated the 2009 Report on the Evolution of the Family in Europe. The study found that the annual number of abortions in the EU equals the entire combined population of its ten smallest member states, with the three top aborting countries being Britain, France and Romania. In Europe there is one abortion every 25 seconds, for a total of more than 1,

200, 000 abortions a year. 19 percent of all European pregnancies end in abortion and 28 million children have been killed by abortion since 1990, making abortion the main cause of death in Europe (IPF)The average age of EU citizens is 40. 3 years, with Italy and Germany having the highest populations of the elderly. The average birth rate of EU countries is now 1. 38 per woman, well below the replacement rate of 2. 1 births per woman, even in relatively fertile countries like France. Without a significant shift in family policies in all EU countries, the report predicts the result will be "catastrophic." Starting in 2010, the population of Europe overall will begin to fall from 499 million to 472 million by 2050 and every third inhabitant will be over 65. According to the study, Britain is the "abortion capital of Europe" with rates that last year pulled ahead of France. Its abortion rate is fifth in the world, behind Russia, the U. S., India and Japan. Other indicators show the number of marriages, especially first marriages, is down and divorce rates are up. One out of every 3 children (36. 5 per cent) is born outside marriage. In some countries the fall in marriage rate has been around 50 per cent since 1983 and there are over one million divorces a year, the equivalent to one marital breakdown every 30 seconds. More people (55 million) are living alone than ever before. One in four households in Europe has a single dweller and two out of three households have no children. Of the households with children, 50 per cent have only one child. The report recommends the creation of a European Union ministry of the family, laws to increase flexibility of working hours to accommodate families, increases in tax benefits for families and an emphasis on family welfare programs over welfare for individuals. It calls for governments to recognize the rights of

families, including the right of parents to reconcile work and family life; to have the number of children they want; to choose the type of education their children receive and the right of children to live in a stable home (IPF). One of the surest routes for restoring morality back to this society is to bring marriage back nevertheless, feminist ideas on women and the family have ranged from those who believe women in families are exploited by men for their domestic and reproductive labour just as workers are exploited for their production in the labour market, to those who see women's relative lack of access to familial resources as a crucial element in their oppression, to those who believe that women and children would be safer and more economically secure if state recognition of family forms actually excluded husbands as a category. Early second-wave feminists focused on freeing women from being continually stereotyped as housewives, i. e., that the two identities were in many western societies thirty years ago inextricably linked. While the full-time tradition of housewifery was mainly limited to the middle classes, the ideology was extended to all women, many of whom took on the double burden of both waged and house work (Satir 25-33). Ideas about what constitutes a 'good mother' are still partially informed by an ideology of domesticity. This variety of theoretical approaches merely highlights the fact that it has become an increasingly complex task to define marriage and family and women's correlation to them. Many social historians, faced with a greater diversity in family forms than expected, have opted for using the term 'household' in preference to 'family', as the word family has so often been linked with a particular type of grouping which does not actually apply to a large percentage of the northern European population for the family,

they say, is just another relationship based on power (Kilpatrick 153 154). In Norway, the 1993 Partnership Act endorsed a whole variety of human couple forms to register as families, whether they had children or not. However, this more multicoloured approach has individualistic implications for social welfare policies directed at women and children in particular. This Norwegian law has been derided by conservative critics, who see it as furthering what they perceive as ' the decline of the family'. It has also been praised by gay liberation groups, who see in it a greater acknowledgment of their citizenship rights. Because Norway is part of the EEC, its partnership law affects those who wish to take advantage of the European freedom of movement provisions, which provide social benefits for legal spouses of working EEC nationals. The continuous death of marriage in Scandinavia is also heart breaking as the majority of children in Sweden and Norway are born out of wedlock. Sixty percent of first-born children in Denmark have unmarried parents. Not coincidentally, these countries have had something close to full gay marriage for a decade or more. Same-sex marriage has locked in and reinforced an existing Scandinavian trend toward the separation of marriage and parenthood. The Nordic family pattern including gay marriage is spreading across Europe. The separation of marriage from parenthood was increasing; gay marriage has widened the separation. Out-of-wedlock birth rates were rising; gay marriage has added to the factors pushing those rates higher. Instead of encouraging a society-wide return to marriage, Scandinavian gay marriage has driven home the message that marriage itself is outdated, and that virtually any family form, including out-of-wedlock parenthood, is acceptable (Hyggen 103-123). The Netherlands also has for

years pushed the boundary of what constitutes marriage, beginning with the decision to legalize homosexual " marriage" in 2001 it was the first country in the world to do so; also in the Netherlands polygamy has been legalised in all but name. In 2005 the Netherlands entered yet again uncharted territory when a Dutch man and two women were given a license for their three-way civil union. The man claimed that the arrangement was justified because there is no jealousy. The arrangement was given government sanction after it was confirmed before a notary who duly registered it as a legal civil union (Belien Paul).

Conclusion

In summing up, the overt and unapologetic attempt by the U. N. to change societal attitudes and culture has obvious and serious ramifications for the family, and increasingly, traditional or even natural motherhood is denigrated in U. N. documents, in the media, and education in general. Traditional family structures and relationships are also being challenged, as the international and national policy makers, academic theorists, educators and the media continue to describe and portray parents as being untrustworthy to provide the proper care and upbringing for their children, particularly in the area of sexual education. Cunningly yet clearly, the move is on to replace the natural family—which was recognized by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights as being the fundamental group unit of society. As a model, the traditional family is alive in the minds of people; as a working institution, it is still performing important functions. While its fragmentation and the multiplication of types is an undeniable fact, it is not clear that this process will accelerate and that the traditional family is

<https://assignbuster.com/european-union-in-shaping-the-contemporary-sociology-essay/>

condemned to death. On the contrary, chances are that it may come back in the middle run, although not to what it was. It is therefore clear that liberalised democracy propagated by the United Nation and the European Union has occasioned a shift from the core traditional values of the family predicated on communal relationship, to an ideology of individualism which reflects a belief in the supreme importance of the human individual as opposed to any social group or collective body, like the family. Human beings are seen, first and foremost, as individuals, which implies both that they are of equal moral worth and that they possess separate and unique identities. Thus, these organisations, i. e. the United Nations and the European Union, are striving to construct a morally neutral society within which individuals can flourish and develop, each pursuing ' the good' as he or she defines it, to the best of his or her abilities, without regard to traditional and Biblical precepts and norms, hence, introducing selfishness in the contemporary socio-political context of the family in the name of freedom of choice.