

This assignment will set about critiquing the statement ‘there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families’ (Thatcher, 1987, pp. 29-30). The assignment will follow a chronological order, where initially the historical context will be explored to set the scene prior to the statement being made. This will consider the ideology of family and of how family structures have changed (David, 1999). Following this, unemployment pre- and post-World War II (Lucas and Rapping, 1972; Oliver and Pemberton, 2004; Scott, 2019) will be discussed and how families have had to live in poverty (Hatton and Martin, 2010, Timmins, 2016). Proceeding to consider the well-known *Beveridge Report*, which was published during World War II (George, 2019), and the political reforms that followed that sought to lower unemployment and support those who were unemployed (Williams and Williams, 2015). Subsequently, the essay will proceed to briefly consider Margaret Thatcher’s (Thatcher) history (Reitan, 2003; Evans, 2019), moving to briefly note the unemployment situation during her time as Prime Minister (PM), then progressing to focus on the statement from the Woman’s Own interview, and how lone parents are dependent on welfare benefits (Cain, 2016), most recently Universal Credit (UC) (Spicker, 2012; Hartfree, 2014) and the need to consider further up-to-date welfare reforms (Heins and Chung, 2021).

Social policy is concerned with ensuring the needs of individuals are executed, regarding social and welfare protection, (Dean, 2019; Bochel and Daly, 2021), with family policy having ‘become more extensive and explicit in recent years’ (Haux, 2016, p, 413). Although, it is argued by Haux (2016) that it has been difficult to define the overall concept of family policy due to the entwined ideology where some definitions include every matter that concerns families, whether intentionally or unintentionally, yet in contrary there are selected policies that merely intend to target families with specific goals to be achieved. However, Haux (2016) believes that the government do not want to focus directly upon family identity and structures in policy, rather, they aspire to regulate, and provide support to certain areas within the family domain (see Appendix 1) (Haux, 2016).

Family ideology had greatly diversified during the twentieth century (David, 1999). Historically, during the early twentieth century the traditional nuclear family was considered to be the norm (McKie and Callan, 2012) and preferred by the Conservative Party during

Thatcher's reign (Pascall, 1997). This traditional nuclear construct of a man and his wife and their biological children (Murdock, 1949), where they undertook traditional gendered roles, of the husband being the breadwinner, and the wife focusing on household chores and nurturing their children (Parsons, 1952). From a functionalist perspective, it is considered that society is made up from a diverse number of smaller systems which are interconnected (Allen and Henderson, 2017); one vital system would be that of families (Muncie and Sapsford, 1997). Underpinning this ideology is the notion that for a society to function effectively, the family domain must contribute towards creating a stable system, as if it fails then it unbalances the remaining smaller systems, which then results in the overall failure of the greater system, that of society, which would then break down (Allen and Henderson, 2017). This is concurred by theorists such as Murdock (1949) and Parsons (1952), where they believe that a traditional nuclear family structure is the most beneficial in ensuring that social order is upheld and fostered through effective social reproduction.

With the ideology of paid employment being desirable from the early twentieth century (Robinsons, 1937), and with Murdock (1949) stating that it was the husband's role to be the breadwinner, it later transpired that this was not enough as many lived in poverty (Hatton and Martin, 2010). Poverty is a multidimensional concept (Walker, 2020), noted by Seeborn Rowntree (1908, pp. 297-298, cited in Walker, 2020, p. 14) as complex, following research to determine what poverty entailed as a whole. Having undertaken house visitations to gather research, they later reported on families 'living in a state of poverty, i.e. in obvious want and squalor', and finding families admitting to squandering earnings on unnecessary commodities. Moreover, there were often times when no verbal confirmation of poverty was required, as there were numerous visual cues within the homes (Rowntree, 1908, cited in Walker, 2020). Yet, Lister (2021) contends that there are diverse meanings to poverty, which are socially constructed, however in reality it must also be acknowledged that poverty does exist. Lister (2021) suggests that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation provide an overall definition to poverty, where they define poverty as 'when someone's resources, are well below those required to meet their minimum needs, including participating in society' (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2016, p. 13).

However, during the economic depression in the 1930s, unemployment was elevated (Lucas and Rapping, 1972). Unemployment is a concept that is multi-dimensional and can be referred to both as economically active and inactive (Powell, 2019). Most commonly, unemployment is defined as an individual who is not in any form of work, but is actively looking for work, specifically within the four weeks prior, and being able to commence work within the next two weeks; this is also known as being economically active (Powell, 2019). Economically inactive individuals are perceived as those who are unable to work due to illness, are students, or are retired (Powell, 2019). Being unemployed placed further strain on families who were already living in poverty during the 1930s (Hatton and Martin, 2010), with unemployment having been fluctuant since (Oliver and Pemberton, 2004).

Social security was perceived as a rather new concept, as a response to managing the ‘problem of economic security’ (George, 2019, p. 10). It is believed that social security strategies were already in an evolutionary stage during the 1930s, as a consequence to the insecurity owing to the economic depression, however, globally there had already been policies implemented (George, 2019). At this point governmental social policies had been under scrutiny, in view of the requirement to ensure that individuals had a satisfactory standard of living (George, 2019).

Consequently, during World War II, under the Conservative government, led by PM Sir Winston Churchill, an inter-departmental committee was established in 1941, and reluctantly chaired by Sir William Beveridge (Timmins, 2017). The purpose of the inquiry was:

to undertake with special reference to the inter-relation of the scheme, a survey of the existing national schemes of social insurance and allied services, including workmen’s compensation, and to make recommendations.

(Beveridge Report, 1942, p. 2).

The report was titled Social Insurance and Allied Services and published in 1942, during World War II, and became known as the *Beveridge Report* (Williams and Williams, 2015). It is believed that due to World War II, social security developments were accelerated, however, it altered from the original concept of creating a scheme to respond to sickness, old age, or unemployment, and instead the scheme became much broader and comprehensive (Williams and Williams, 2015).

The report was immediately hailed as a phenomenal success (Jacobs, 2008), and described the ‘five giant evils’ that required eradicating in order for individuals to attain better lives (Timmins, 2017, p. 12). These evils were described as want, ignorance, squalor, idleness, and disease (Beveridge Report, 1942; George, 2019). In order to address these evils, it was believed action would be necessary through; 1) ensuring an adequate income was available to remove want; 2) creating a comprehensive education to overcome ignorance; 3) guaranteeing better housing to eradicate squalor; 4) ensuring full employment opportunities were available to reduce idleness; and 5) developing a National Health Service to combat disease (Reeves, Rodrigue and Kneebone, 2016).

Whilst Komine (2010) and Williams and Williams (2015) argued that the *Beveridge Report* shaped the subsequent welfare system, this was not achieved by the Conservative Coalition government it was published under (Whiteside, 2014). Whiteside (2014) contends that there was reluctance to commit to implementation of the recommendations based upon the extensive financial costs involved, whilst amid a costly war. However, the implementation of shaping the welfare system that the *Beveridge Report* recommended, that to provide ‘cradle to grave’ care (Beveridge Report, 1942), was executed following a subsequent victorious election for Labour government (Whiteside, 2014). Many legislations, which sought to quash the ‘five giant evils’ (Timmins, 2017, p. 12), were namely the *National Health Services Act 1946* (Komine, 2010), *National Insurance Act 1946*, *National Assistance Act 1948* (Boyer, 2019), *Education Act 1944*, *Family Allowance Act 1945*, and the *Children Act 1948* (Spicker, 2021).

Since World War II, unemployment lessened (Hatton and Boyer, 2005), however during the 1960s family structures diversified, when the traditional nuclear family structure began declining (Jenkins, Pereira and Evans, 2009). However, the feminist perspective had notably contested the traditional nuclear family structure as being patriarchal and dominated by men (Allen, 2016), which oppressed the roles of women and segregated them from full participation within society (Few-Demo and Allen, 2020). Fundamentally a decline in religion, availability of contraception, greater women’s rights, opportunity to gain employment, legislative changes, and a shift in societal attitudes, allowed for family diversification (Jenkins, Pereira and Evans,

2009), with Chambers (2012) arguing that the breakdown in family structures, and of the deterioration of traditional societal norms would have repercussion upon society. Sequentially, from the 1960s onwards there was an upsurge in lone parent families, owing to divorce, through the *Divorce Reform Act 1969*, and an increase in teenage pregnancies (McCarthy and Edwards, 2011). Data presented by Rimmer (1981) claimed that in 1961 there were approximately two percent of households comprising of lone parent families and, by 1976, nearly doubling to four percent, with Gregg, Harkness and Machin (1999) proclaiming that in 1968 one in ten children were living in poverty. Although in general women would earn substantially less than men, lone mothers would also be likely to acquire less meaningful types of employment, further adding demand on the welfare system (Dewar and Clery, 2019).

With unemployment having again risen during the 1970s, it was possible to claim welfare benefits (Scott, 2019), which were generated from the *Beveridge Report* (Diamond, 2017) to allow families to sustain and secure the basic necessities (Braybrooke, 1987). It was noted that during the early 1970s approximately one million people were unemployed, and this figure further rose to one and half million by the late 1970s (Leaker, 2009), with it being argued that the recession of 1973 to 1975 was the cause of the rise in unemployment (Moen, 1979). This occurred during a period where transitioning from a Conservative-led government under Edward Heath to a Labour-led government, with Harold Wilson being PM between 1974-1976 and subsequently James Callaghan between 1976-1979 (Gov.uk, No Date).

Nevertheless, with unemployment being a prominent theme during the general election campaign of 1979, the Conservative Party, led by Thatcher, claimed, ‘labour isn’t working’ (Sinfield, 2013), another aspect of the manifesto was ‘the need for a strong state in order to support family life’ (Douglas, 1990, p. 412). Subsequently, the Conservative Party won the 1979 general election, with Thatcher becoming the first female PM (Evans, 2019).

Thatcher, nee Roberts (Reitan, 2003), was a daughter born to a grocer and baker in Grantham in 1925, raised in a traditional nuclear family, described as working-class (Evans, 2019). However, her father, Alfred was Thatcher’s utmost inspiration; he was also a lay preacher, and encouraged Thatcher to play piano, and as such she played at Sunday services. Alfred was also

involved with council work, becoming a mayor and a magistrate, and Thatcher would often accompany her father when he undertook these roles (Goodlad, 2016). His political stance was often based upon Liberal ideologies, however he represented and stood as a Conservative politician, as he believed the Conservative Party based their ideologies on the old stance of liberal outlook (Thatcher, 1995). It is based upon the philosophical viewpoint of the work of John Mill's on Liberty, in which Alfred took the opinion that every person should take individual responsibility (Thatcher, 1995).

Thatcher was not the typical daughter of that era, where other daughters spent time at home with their mothers, Thatcher often attended lectures at university with her father, and immersed herself in complex philosophical literature (Goodlad, 2016). Nevertheless, she did acquire valuable life skills from her mother, thus being able to maintain and run a home and develop practical time management skills (Blundell, 2008). However, Thatcher learned one valuable lesson from both parents, thus being to efficiently manage finances, ensuring that she lived within her means, not to waste a penny and to save (Campbell, 2012).

Thatcher's time as PM was described as challenging, and during her first term as PM, unemployment again soared to over three million, stemmed from a further recession, and particularly through the loss of industrial employment (Sinfield, 2013). Yet this data was criticised, and considered to be far greater, with a rationale that the presented data had been manipulated (Sinfield, 2013). This through the difficulties to claim welfare benefits, and then only considering those who were in receipt of welfare benefits as being unemployed, excluding those with claims in progress and those who were unemployed and having been denied benefits (Sinfield, 2013).

Following her third successful re-election as PM in 1987, Thatcher gave an interview to Women's Own magazine (Thatcher, 1993). This interview highlighted the statement 'there is no such thing as society' (Thatcher, 1987), however, Thatcher contends that the remainder of the interview was never clarified (Thatcher, 1993). As such during the interview Thatcher implied that when individuals encounter problems, they turned to the government for a

solution, whether this be a housing or financial issue, it was the government's responsibility to house them or provide a grant (Thatcher, 1993). It is then that Thatcher quoted:

...they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour and life is a reciprocal business ... I think, one of the tragedies in which many of the benefits we give, which were meant to reassure people that if they were sick or ill there was a safety net and there was help...

(Thatcher, 1987 pp. 29-30).

In this quote and the remainder of the interview Thatcher argued that the benefit system created a way in which individuals turned to the government for support, and as such she believed this system was being abused, and that individuals should take responsibility for themselves (Thatcher, 1987). She argued that the benefit system should have supported those who could not attain employment, to ensure a basic standard of living could be realised, however, some would take this, and interpret that there would be no need to work, as they could survive living off the dole. However, they would not fully understand that it was contributions paid into the system from their neighbour that was supplying them with their benefit claims (Thatcher, 1987). This is where Thatcher argues that 'there is no ... society', by implying that benefit claimants were in fact relying on their neighbours for support and not from the government, that of society (Thatcher, 1987, p.29), she also insisted that individual responsibility should prevail in realising a financial income as a duty.

For a lone mother to sustain and provide for her family, suitable employment is ideally required to be attained (Stack and Meredith, 2018), however childcare has been regarded as barrier to achieving this (Youngblut *et al.*, 2000), and it continues to remain that when a lone mother secures employment, these are lower paid types of employment (Jackson *et al.*, 2000). Although employment is necessary for financial security, a mother feels inattentive and unable to be involved with her children (Burden, 1986). Research by Burden (1986) also noted that a lone mother often disregards her own needs, as duties and responsibilities of supporting her family are too demanding. Nevertheless, Thatcher (1993) described her disgust in how fathers would flee, leaving a single mother to raise their child/children, more so when they would not

financially support their upbringing, leaving the taxpayers to bear the cost of their negligence and placing the child/children to a life of subordinate standards. It was as such that Thatcher specified the creation of a new Child Support Agency, which was the backbone of the *Child Support Act 1991* (Thatcher, 1993).

Lone mothers have continued to encounter difficulties within the past 30 years (Millar, 2019), even when reforms have occurred, however, it could be implied that if there was no benefit support available, then these lone mothers could be in a worse position. The legislature, *Welfare Reform Act 2012*, established UC (Spicker, 2012), which began being rolled out from 2013 (Gov.uk, 2015) which saw UC amalgamating six legacy benefits (Gov.uk, 2019a). This was perceived to be a simpler system, that would be a means-tested benefit based upon each individual circumstance (Spicker, 2012). It was published as a benefit that would endeavour to ‘lift people out of poverty’ (Department of Work and Pensions, 2010) and intended to make it more beneficial to be in employment (Gov.uk, 2019b). However, UC has been heavily criticised (Rotik and Perry, 2011; Parliament, House of Lords, 2020), particularly with the benefit being paid in arrears (Hartfree, 2014), which is argued by Millar and Bennet (2017) to imitate a monthly wage as would occur when in employment, nevertheless the wait to receive benefits has caused individuals to fall into poverty (Timmins, 2016), which has seen many, including single parent, turning to foodbanks (Loopstra *et al.*, 2019). Most recently, within the UK, lone mothers are reported to be ‘a quarter of all families with children’ (Millar, 2019, p. 85), many of which are dependent on UC (Cain, 2016). However, these lone parents are now expected to be in employment, and to enable mothers to attain employment, UC assists in repaying 85% of childcare costs (Wood, 2021), however this again is paid in arrears, and as such creates a barrier to those who can not pay for childcare in advance, which is often required by childcare settings (Child Poverty Action Group, 2019).

Nonetheless, with the Covid-19 lockdowns during 2020, which further rose unemployment (Mayhew and Arand, 2020), Brewer and Handscombe (2020) argue that the welfare state is crucial as many individuals and families resorted to having to claim UC. Yet, Parliament. House of Lords (2020) have noted how further reforms are now required, whilst Heins and Chung (2021) have argued that a modern approach, in the form of an updated *Beveridge Report*,

should be considered, to revolutionise the welfare system. In spite of this, individuals who are also in employment struggle to meet their basic needs (Francis-Devine, 2021), hence, within the Labour Party's manifesto for the 2019 election, there were remarks made to consider trials of Universal Basic Income (UBI) schemes (Labour Party, 2019). UBI is a scheme that provides a financial income to all individuals, irrespective of their current income status (Ghatak and Maniquet, 2019). As Wales having particular policy areas devolved from the United Kingdom government (Parry, 2016) and with the National Assembly for Wales (2019) noting how it is beginning to become further fragmented, it has been revealed that a UBI scheme will be trialled in Wales (Sargeant, 2020), to establish its feasibility.

Conclusively, unemployment trends and poverty have been experienced both through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Lucas and Rapping, 1972; Oliver and Pemberton, 2004; Hatton and Martin, 2010; Timmins, 2016; Scott, 2019), however the provisions of the Beveridge Report, although at the time hailed as astonishing (Heins and Chung 2021), have later transpired to fail with eradicating the evils that exist in society that cause inequality and social injustice. The individualistic approach that Thatcher strived for (Thatcher, 1987), would now be considered unachievable, welfare dependency is still of concern, however, UC is attempting to combat the issues, with the motto of making it easier to get back into work (Gov.uk, 2019b). Nonetheless, with the rise in unemployment, difficulties remain for individuals and families to fend and sustain daily needs and life (Francis-Devine, 2021), and even more so since Covid-19 (Brewer and Handscombe, 2020). However there has also been growing concerns that those in employment also struggle with meeting their daily needs, and as such deliberations of providing UBI to all have been explored, particularly in Wales, where trials are now being considered (Sargeant, 2020).

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Appendices.

Appendix 1. Defining Family Policy.

Box 57.1 Defining Family Policy

Family policy can be defined by three main areas of activity:

- 1 *The legal regulation of family behaviour:* laws relating to marriage and divorce, sexual behaviour, contraception and abortion, parental rights and duties and child protection.
- 2 *Policies to support family income:* tax allowances, family and child benefits, parental leaves and benefits, enforcement of child support.
- 3 *The provision of services for families:* childcare provisions, subsidised housing, social services, community care.

(Haux, 2016).