

ECAY6004 Assessment 2. Dennis Warwick. 2014420.

Through the use of 1-3 images; critically reflect upon how social media can influence current representations of family within society.

Portfolio.

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Singh (2018). Picture 1.



Family (2022). Picture 2.

This Portfolio will briefly due to constraints, critically and ethically reflect upon how social media can influence current representations of family within society. We will look at what constitutes ‘family’ now in the 21st century, United Kingdom and what were the drivers for change over time. We will explore what relationships exist between, individuals, ‘micro’ family ‘meso’ and the wider society ‘macro’. We will look at the tensions between them all in the post- modern age. To do this we will carefully examine the law, theory, policy and practice. We will critically discuss, analyse, compare and contrast between the two photos chosen, through a neutral and non- biased lens. However this will be very difficult in view of the fact that I am an elderly white, European male, who has been conditioned throughout my life by my family history, my education, career and the never ending bombardment of social media, which is now continuous, unrestricted and psychologically targeted on everyone. The law, policy, guidance and the media are all Eurocentric in nature and we are led to believe that everything else is not the ideal and is therefore, faulty or deficit in some way. Our free choice marriage, love culture is therefore seen as the ideal Weberian construct, Weber (1864-1920), as argued by Naema, (2021).

Photo 1, consists of an extended family, their diaspora consists of a third of whom are British, born, Indian descent, who live in the United Kingdom. Another third are Indian born, Indian descent, who reside in India, and another third are European born, Indian descent, and live throughout Europe. They are as can be seen, multi **racial**, multi **national**, multi **generational**, multi **cultural** and multi **religious**. They are a patriarchal in nature and still dominated by males, even though there are more females to males in the photo. This is an ‘arranged marriage’. It is also aristocratic and upheld by parental authority, group orientation and belonging to a wider group. This family is an intersection between tradition and modernity, as it has been heavily influenced by social media as we will describe later. The culture, values and norms of the family group have evolved to what is acceptable today. According to Naema (2021), a working definition of an arranged marriage is ‘ one where mate selection is completed by the elders of the extended family, that aligns the families in a durable relational bond that allows for a legitimate space and belonging for the conjugal union’. It must be stressed here that this is not a ‘forced marriage’, as there are fundamental differences not least that arranged marriages are recognised in Britain and forced marriages are illegal. Convergence Theory and developmental paradigm would indicate that ‘the arranged marriage is likely one day to adapt to Western, dominant European ways and join the ‘autonomous marriage’, or the Eurocentric

or 'liberal individualist', love and consent based marriage. Whose basis is in individual freedom to choose and conjugal choice are central. The ideology that underpins most arranged marriages is that 'obligations to one's immediate and extended family have priority over personal self-interest' and it does not have a Western individualistic bent. This is a characteristic of group cultures, according to Naema (2021). This marriage is based on duty, obligation, honour, mutual aid and protection. Arranged marriages are a cultural trademark and cannot be judged or compared to western European nuclear family marriages. **Advantages** of this type of marriage can include; according to Kapoor, R (2022).

- 1. People may match better.**
- 2. Parents have more experience.**
- 3. Social status is assured.**
- 4. Financial Security.**
- 5. Cultural similarities of partners.**
- 6. Rational rather than emotional decision.**
- 7. Family connections are strengthened.**
- 8. Similar ethics.**
- 9. Similar religions.**
- 10. Similar Values.**
- 11. Avoidance of love sickness.**
- 12. No stress in finding a partner.**

The disadvantages, could be;

- 1. Love is often not a factor.**
- 2. Partners may not fit together.**
- 3. Higher divorce rates.**
- 4. Separation may be difficult.**
- 5. Spouses may not trust each other**
- 6. There may be family problems.**
- 7. No room for personal choice.**
- 8. Husband and wife may have no say.**
- 9. Possible gender inequality.**
- 10. Don't know what they are getting into.**
- 11. No dating period first.**

12. Emotional Stress. Lower life expectancy.

Arranged marriage is practiced by millions around the World and is a form of social constructionism, as according to Nickerson, C (2021) it holds a critical stance towards knowledge that is normally taken for granted and that knowledge exists in both historical and cultural contexts. She believes knowledge is sustained by social process and knowledge and social action go together. She further argues that postmodernism is the rejection that there can be an ultimate truth. Foucault believed that 'what people at a specific, time and context call knowledge is one truth of many that have been approved by those in power at the time'. Feminists could argue that men and women marry within the structures of a capitalist society, where they provide free reproduction, household services and child care, so that the company owners don't need to do so for the workers. Burr, (2015). There is no doubt that arranged marriages hold and occupy a very awkward place in contemporary Britain. They may be recognised but to have protection in Law they would need to form a civil partnership as set out in the Civil Partnership Act (2004) and the civil partnership (opposite sex couples) Regulations (2019). They must be over 16 years old, not already married or in a civil partnership and not be closely related. The formation, administrative and other protections are similar to marriage under the Marriage Act (1949).

Young British born Asians are engaging in arranged marriages, but they have evolved over time and because of social media influences. Raksha, P (2021) argues that 'modern arranged marriages in the United Kingdom involve a variety of matchmaking practices, where each family tailors its own version to suit modern identities and ambitions'. There seems to have been a marked shift in attitude from 1st generation Indian, transnational to the new 2nd generation. They had started to be assimilated into British culture, as they identified more with Britain than India. Raksha, (2021) identifies two new versions of arranged marriage in Britain.

1. "semi arranged marriage" where parents suggest and introduce possible candidates, from the Indian population. Similar to speed dating, where they get to know one another. The couple go on dates sometimes chaperoned, this allows for love and real consent.

2. A second type is where the young person finds someone they like, again in the Indian community, religion, ethnicity and class, who are also acceptable to the parents or wider family.

This type of marriage allows participants to feel free to fall in love with anyone but within certain boundaries. Europe and British culture still view arranged marriages as being in the grey zone, where young British Indians adopt different elements of their socially constructed, through social media, British and Indian cultures and identities.

We will now look at photo 2. Which is a Western, European and North American ideal idea of a 'nuclear' family of a male and female married couple with two children also male and female, all of whom are white. Functionalist Talcott Parsons theorised that the two main functions of the family are primary socialisation and personality stabilisation. This is the ideal Weberian construct in Britain's, European and North American, contemporary society. Feminists succeeded in directing attention to topics such as familial relationships, and the experience of women in the domestic sphere. They see the division of labour in the family as being a product of industrial capitalism according to Giddens and Sutton (2017). This family is sometimes called the 'immediate family' or an elementary family. It is clear that family structure is incredibly diverse and complex in nature. The 'nuclear' family emerged in the developing world after the major industrial revolution in the 1940 and 1950s. when in America nuclear technology was evolving rapidly after World War 2. The nuclear family according to Armstead, and Divore, (2021), consists of two types. 1. The Family of origin. Where one is the child. 2. The family of offspring. Where one is the parent. Giddens and Sutton argue that this notion has often conflated empirical reality. As society has evolved the family has changed over time with there being more single parent families now, as women gain more independence and freedom of choice. In today's, contemporary 'nuclear family' it is very common for both parents to work in order to provide greater cash flow. It could be argued that both parents working is essential, economically at this time, due to rising inflation, demanding ever larger cash flow in order to sustain the family. Expenses such as housing, transport, food, heat, light and power are all causing 'financial instability'. Extra activities for the children become more problematic as cash flow becomes tighter. The children are then likely to spend far more time on their own in their bedrooms surfing social media sites. The majority of which are unrestricted and can be used for good and bad. Many believe that a 'nuclear family' is the best arrangement in Europe

and North America, but unfortunately as with any system involving humans there are advantages and disadvantages. We discussed one advantage of greater cash flow from two earners. Another according to Armstead and Divore (2021) is greater consistency, in modelling appropriate behaviour and more daily routines. The families form greater bonds when working together to overcome challenges and problems. They tend to be more resilient and support each other emotionally.

Family diversity living arrangements throughout the world according to Teachman et al, (2000), are considerably more diverse and fluid than they were just a few decades ago, we have and are witnessing profound demographic changes, including, longer life expectancy, postponed marriage and childbearing, increased childrearing outside of marriage, single habitation, divorce and remarriage. Similarly there has been sharp increases in single parent mostly mother led families, families and households headed by lesbians and homosexuals and families living in absolute poverty. It is therefore clear that the values attached to the then benchmark 'nuclear family', which is often viewed in Europe and North America with nostalgia, is now more varied and highly complex in nature. Feminists might argue that 'nuclear families' are characterised by severe inequalities, such as male dominance, abuse, violence and alcohol misuse. This challenges the implication that there is one best type of family and that all others are dysfunctional and or deviant. The dominant vision of the "male Breadwinner" and "female, caregiver" or "the family wage" model, is no longer relevant, according to Sainsbury, (1999). Diverse family types are no longer marginalised. Families compose of a rich variety of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and family history. family dynamics, strengths and resilience are now important. One definition of family is 'two or more individuals related by birth, marriage or adoption'. Once again it excludes other families. Structurally Allen, et al (2000), defines family as two or more persons related by birth, marriage adoption or choice, which includes many more families. Contemporary families are remarkably diverse and complex in their structures and processes. Stacey, (2000) argues that this is likely to accelerate, with increasing pluralistic family forms. There is a clear need for further research into the rich, fluid and multi- dimensional diversity of family experiences.

One macro trend in the past century seems to be a global increase in the divorce rates across the globe, in all industrialised countries but especially in America. Divorce rates are affected by rapid social change, war and depression. The social upheaval of the sixties and seventies,

with greater emphasis on questioning traditional roles and rights. Civil rights and feminists rightly help stimulate individualism, freedom, autonomy and the pursuit of personal happiness. We now have a culture of seeking instant gratification, no one wants to wait, save or prepare for anything. It always looks greener over the fence. As divorce has increased, social and legal sanctions against it have decreased, it is much more talked about and accepted throughout social media today.

According to Smart Insights. Com there are around 4.70 billion people around the world who use social media. Sites such as

1. Facebook, have 2.90 billion users
2. Instagram have 2.80 billion users.
3. Snapchat have around 538 million users.
4. Tik-Tok have 1 billion users.
5. You-Tube have 2.20 billion users.

There are many more sites with millions of users. This form of social media has become a very strong force in our current cultures and is heavily integrated into social interactions especially with the young. This is over and above the more traditional forms of media, such as Television, Radio and News Papers. According to Mahmoud and AhmedShafik, (2020) there needs to be a balance struck between positive and negative social media over-use. The social part refers to interacting with others, sharing information. The media part refers to platforms such as the Internet. The bond within a family is crucial for personal well-being and for helping to form other bonds outside of the family. Parents can see what other parents are doing or being involved in. Mahmood and AhmedShafik, (2020) also found that more than half the social media users were females who's mean age in the family was 35.83 + or – 17.34 years. They concluded that family members who used social media for long hours often had an effect on family relationships. Young people used social media to overcome boundaries of time and distance and to interact with like minded people and share common interests, goals and attitudes.

One of the bad points is that of cyberbullying, with 1 in 10 children aged between 10-15 years reporting the problem. It takes place around the clock and cannot be escaped. People create it

without fear of being caught or punished. Social media often leads to a culture of comparison with others which can be unhealthy. This can be dangerous for adolescents seeking to find their place in society, causing self harm and eating disorders for some, trying to fit in. Social media sites are deliberately designed to keep as many users as possible coming back time after time. According to Action for Children (2021), Positive social interactions release chemicals into our bodies such as dopamine and endorphins. We feel good, we subconsciously register these rewards and we are driven to check social media. This is a form of operant conditioning as outlined by Thorndike's (1898) law of Effect. More recently by the work of one of the main Behaviourist theorists that of Skinner (1938, p 166) who's theories around operant instrumental conditioning where respondents behaviours were triggered automatically by particular environmental stimuli, are relevant here.

Findings.

As Morgan, (2011) so bluntly put it 'there is no such thing as "the Family". Neither is there such thing in this day and age as a perfect family. Ekern, (2019) found that 70% of women in her study reported that cell phones, computers and TV interfered with their relationships for the majority of the time. Social media is just a tool which can be used for good, bad or ugly and should never be relied upon. There is an urgent need for 'The Online safety Bill' currently receiving its last reading in the Houses of Parliament, to be voted through. This will hopefully save many individual people self harming, committing suicide on a meso level and even murder in great Britain, one life saved will be worth it on a micro level. However there needs to be a macrosociological answer across the world in order to stop and close down the bad and very ugly sites causing these repeated tragedies and people need to be held to account.

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Photograph 2. Unknown. Available at: <https://unsplash.com/images/search/families> (Accessed 14th November 2022).

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