

Changes in the Family

Sociology skills

- Reading and understanding
- Learning and revising the technical language of family analysis

Key skills

- Communication

Stimulus materials

There is clear evidence that cohabitation is becoming an established alternative to marriage in a number of European societies. In Sweden and Denmark, more children are raised by cohabiting parents than married ones.

The evidence on the comparative stability of marriage to cohabitation is still unclear, but it seems clear that parents with children have a sense of long term commitment.

The debates surrounding the 1996 Divorce Bill legislation in Britain have included concerns about the possible weakening of marriage but historical trends in divorce inexorably move towards liberalisation.

Jorgensen et. al. (1997:120)

Understanding the stimulus

1. What is cohabitation?
2. How is marriage different from cohabitation?
3. Why are some writers concerned about the 1996 Divorce Bill?
4. Name two countries where more children are born outside marriage than in it.
5. Is divorce harder or easier to get than in the past?
6. This information came from an 'A' level book. Who wrote the book?
7. Where could you find a copy of this book if you needed to look up information?
8. Re-write the passage in good and easy to understand English.

Development and Revision

1. Find out more about changes in the divorce laws in Britain since WW2.
2. Suggest a number of sociological reasons why the divorce rate has risen since the end of WW2.
3. Suggest a variety of reasons why some people choose not to get married.
4. What difficulties do people experience if they have to bring up children as single parents?
5. What alternative forms to the nuclear family do we see in modern societies? Suggest a number of different types of family that you might find in Britain.