

Introduction to the New Right

- The New Right is closely linked to Functionalism as it is based on consensus.
- It is a set of ideas which has influenced the political right/Conservative party in recent years.
- The New Right are pessimistic about modern society and want to return to the 'golden age' which emphasises traditional values.

Statistics and sociologists for New Right views

- Single mothers are twice as likely as two-parent families to live in poverty at any one time (69% of lone mothers are in the bottom 40% of household income versus 34% of couples with children).
- Single mothers were 2.5 times more likely than married mothers to experience high levels of psychological distress.
- Young people in lone-parent families were 30% more likely than those in two-parent families to report that their parents rarely or never knew where they were
- Among children aged five to fifteen years in Great Britain, those from lone-parent families were twice as likely to have a mental health problem as those from intact two-parent families (16% versus 8%).
- After controlling for other demographic factors, children from lone-parent households were 3.3 times more likely to report problems with their academic work, and 50% more likely to report difficulties with teachers
- Analysis of 35 cases of fatal abuse which were the subject of public inquiries between 1968 and 1987 showed a risk for children living with their mother and an unrelated man which was over 70 times higher than it would have been for a child with two married biological parents.
- children from lone-parent families are twice as likely to run away from home as those from two-birth-parent families (14% compared to 7%).
- The Welfare state is causing the disintegration of the nuclear family as benefits encourage teenage pregnancy and single parent families who lose control of their children (Murray 1990)
- Children, especially boys, raised by single mothers are likely to experience problems at school as well as poor health compared with children raised in nuclear families (Dennis and Erdos)

New Right views on the family

- The New Right believe that the traditional nuclear family is best and are critical of other 'non-standard' family types such as lone parent and reconstituted families.
- The New Right also dislike single mothers, suggesting that they are poorer and raise children who are less likely to obey authority
- Like functionalists, they believe the nuclear family is the foundation of society and that society would collapse without the nuclear family

Criticisms of the New Right

- New Right thinkers often hark back to a 'golden age' of family life that probably never existed.
- Bernardes (1997): The nuclear family portrayed by the New Right is 'too good to be true' and fails to acknowledge the negative side of the family
- 'Murray's thesis may have been exaggerated for effect, so as to get his main point over, but making scapegoats of single mothers for society's ills does not help us to approach the serious issues raised by the growing proportion of one-parent families.
- We live in an age when over 90 per cent of those aged between 18 and 34 do not consider pre-marital sex to be particularly wrong, and when divorce and cohabitation are increasing and are being seen as acceptable at all levels of society.
- Chambers (2001): The New Right has created undue fears - a moral panic - about so-called problem families in order to justify cuts in welfare spending
- It can be seen as victim blaming