Human Development – Australian Families During The 1900′S Essay, Research Paper

Australian Families in the 1900 s

Throughout the 1900 s, the typical Australian family has had some dramatic changes. In fact, you could go as far as to say that, today, there is no typical family. The family has adapted so much to the public s change in attitude towards families, or perhaps the public has adapted so much to the change in families, it is now virtually impossible to identify one family type as predominant. It is no longer unusual for there to be as many step families, single parent families, De Facto relationships, etcetera as there is. Also the number of children in families has decreased, with some families even deciding not to have children. So, what has influenced these changes in society? Some occurrences through-out the 20th century that are identified as influences on society are the two World wars, the Depression, and the Women s Liberation Movement. All of these had a major impact on society, changing everyone s opinions, attitudes, and overall views on life. The Nuclear family, previously the typical Australian family has slowly become less common, and even though, if there was still a typical family, this would probably still be it, this obvious decline in numbers is a great sign of the changes being discussed, and possibly a sign of what is to happen in the future. Maybe, in the 21st century, it will be more common to be in a step or single parent family, than a nuclear family.

Something that has had an effect on these changes in society, is that of education. For approximately the first half of the century, not many people actually made it through school. It was common for children to leave school early, as it could not be afforded and so they would get a job, and help support the family. However, the number of people deciding to stay in school, or at least receive a proper education, has kept increasing through-out the 2nd half of the century. Due to this, young people are dependant on their parents for longer periods of time, as unemployment,… and lack of affordable housing.. (Getley, A., 1996, 132) makes it harder for them while receiving an education.

As already mentioned, family sizes have decreased. Between 1900 and 1913 the average was 3-4, but today it is 2-3. The main causes of this being the introduction of many new contraceptive devices, and the Women s liberation movement. Both of these worked together, as many women wanting to have a career before marrying, or having children, use contraception as a way of controlling when they have children, and how many they have. Earlier in the century such advanced forms of contraception that are available today, were not available then. Also, more women are deciding that they do not want any children. It is predicted that 20 per cent of women born in the late 1960s will be childless. (Getley, A., 1996, 124).

In fact, the Women s liberation movement has had one of the biggest impacts on the family. With the acceptance of women working, even when married, around the 1960 s, families economic status has improved greatly.

Single women made up to 20 per cent of the work force in 1901 but once they got married had to give up their jobs (Gunstone, et.al., 1992, ?). Also women were paid approximately half the amount males were, whereas, today there is a greater number of women employed, than men, with reasonably equal wages.

It is now common for both parents to work, where the reason for women leaving the work force after marriage, previously, was to do the housework, and look after the children. Due to this, I think it is fair to say that the majority of Australian families are financially comfortable.

Also, welfare assistance was introduced around 1908, and has kept improving since, with more provided for a larger variety of people in need.

This is one factor in the increase of divorce, and single parent families. Previously, many women would have been scared to get a divorce, as they had had little or no experience in the work force, and virtually no means of income, and many single mothers would give their child up for adoption, as they had no way of supporting it, and it was also considered socially unacceptable. But with the introduction, and improvement of welfare for the unemployed, and single parents, a lot more people were able to manage on their own. Single mothers could afford to keep their children, and women were able to divorce their husband, confident that they would be all right financially, until able to find a job. As a result, divorce rates started to climb, and society began to accept divorce.

A factor contributing to women joining the work force is the technological improvements over the years. Between 1919 and 1928, electricity saw the introduction of such labour saving appliances such as electric irons, refrigerators, electric stoves, vacuum cleaners, heaters and electric washing machines. (Gunstone, et.al., 1992, ?). These cut the time taken to do housework dramatically, and with the introduction of more and more appliances that are even more efficient, women are left with time to handle a paid job, as well as doing most of the housework. Also, since the women s liberation movement, that started in 1969, household chores have been shared around a lot more. However, some of these technological advancements have caused people to lose their jobs, as a machine can take over their position.

The two world wars have had quite a large impact on families as well. During the wars, women took over the jobs of the men who had gone to fight for their country, but when the wars were over, many employers were not willing to let their female employers go, as they were cheaper, and often more willing to work. Also after the wars, especially after the second world war, industry was short of workers, so immigration was encouraged by the government, and

Between 1947 to 1969 two million immigrants arrived bringing with them new cultures, dress, language, habits, and extended families. (Gunstone et.al., 1991, ?). This was another great influence on Australian families, as it brought many different types of families, probably the dominant one being the extended family. Also, these new cultures and religions have helped make the multi cultural family that is quite predominant, and accepted in Australia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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