

Filozofická fakulta  
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky  
Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci

Markéta Vágnerová

Contemporary British Families  
in Context of Social Division

(bakalářská práce)

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Ema Jelínková, PhD.

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### **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní předepsaným způsobem všechnu použitou literaturu.

V Olomouci dne .....

Podpis: .....

## **Poděkování**

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## Contents

Introduction .....	1
1. Study of Family .....	2
1.1. Defining the Term Family .....	2
1.2. Functions of Family .....	4
2. Social Stratification .....	5
2.1. Defining Social Stratification .....	5
2.2. Classifying social status .....	8
3. The Role of Family in Social Stratification .....	14
4. Areas Affected by the Family's Social Status .....	17
4.1. Reproductional Behaviour .....	17
4.2. Health .....	23
4.3. Education .....	26
5. Survey Research on the Influence of Socio-Economic Status on Family Life .....	30
5.1. Survey Details and Participants .....	30
5.2. Reproductional Behaviour .....	32
5.2.1. Number of Children .....	32
5.2.2. Divorces, Second Marriages and Absent Fathers/Mothers .....	33
5.2.3. Differences Between Parents - Socio-economic and Age Differences .....	34
5.2.4. The Age at which the Mother Had her First Child .....	36
5.3. Health .....	37
5.4. Education .....	39
Conclusion .....	42
Resumé .....	44
Apendices .....	50
Apendix 1 .....	50
Apendix 2 .....	51
Bibliography .....	53
Annotation .....	56
Anotace .....	56

## **Introduction**

The aim of my bachelor thesis is to establish whether a family's socio-economic status affects the life of the members of the family, particularly in the areas of reproductional behaviour, health and education, and to observe such potential effects in case they do exist. The focus of the thesis is particularly on the contemporary families in the United Kingdom.

Firstly I will define the term family for the purpose of the thesis and briefly overview the functions of family. I will subsequently explain what socio-economic stratification is and introduce methods of dividing the social strata. With this basic information provided, I will proceed to show the role of family in social stratification, mainly by presenting theories suggesting that the family is a core unit of social division.

Further on I will look more closely on the particular effects of a family's socio-economic situation in the areas of reproductional behaviour, health and education observed in various studies, with the emphasis on British research.

Based on these observations, I will conduct a survey research to examine whether the observations are valid in the contemporary British families. The participants of the survey will be young British people of various backgrounds.

I will conclude the thesis with the results of the survey that should provide a more in-depth analysis of the contemporary situation in Britain regarding the influence of the socio-economic situation of a family on the previously stated areas.

## 1. Study of Family

### 1.1. Defining the Term Family

To be able to examine contemporary families of Britain, it is essential to establish some key points in the study of family, and more importantly to define the term family as such. The family was probably the very first human institution that came into being.<sup>1</sup> We can find several definitions of the term family, ranging from the basic ones to those that are far more complex.

An example of a simple definition could be the one provided by Susan H. McDaniel et al: “We define family as any group of people related either biologically, emotionally, or legally. That is, the group of people that the patient defines as significant for his or her well-being.”<sup>2</sup> More frequently, however, the term refers to a unit binded not only by social, biological or legal relations, but also economical ones, thus typically sharing a household as described by Teresa J Rothausen:

Most uses of the word family in research indicate that it was often defined as ‘spouse and children’ or ‘kin in the household’. Thus ‘family’ as defined in economics, sociology, and psychology often was a combination of the notions of household and kin. Those not living with kin (as defined) were treated as having ‘no family’, although non-family households were also studied (Santi, 1987). An exception to this standard definition of family is in clinical and counselling psychology, where family includes one’s family of origin (parents and siblings) in addition to spouse and children (Patterson, 1996).<sup>3</sup>

Rothausen further explains that such a notion of family can be derived even from the roots of the word proper, as the Latin word familia originally referred to a household consisting of a householder, his kin and his servants and that it appears that a

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<sup>1</sup> See Jonathan H. Turner, *Sociology: Studying the Human System* (Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1981), 333, hereafter in the text referred to as T

<sup>2</sup> Susan H. McDaniel et al, *Family-oriented primary care* (New York, NY: Springer, 2005), 2

<sup>3</sup> Teresa J. Rothausen, “‘Family’ in Organizational research: A review and comparison of definitions and measures,” *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 20, n. 6 (November 1999): 818-819, Wiley Online Library, Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ, 10. Jan. 2011, hereafter in the text referred to as R

considerable part of our perception of the word family still derives from this explanation, both in terms of the definition and a certain hierarchy.<sup>4</sup>

From the sociological point of view, the perception of family as described above is referred to as nuclear family, a term established by Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist.<sup>5</sup> There are two more types of family in relation to its size and composition apart from the two-generational nuclear units, which only consist of parents and children: extended units consisting of several relatives within the household and are often more than two-generational and polygamous units, which involve multiple spouses.<sup>6</sup> While the polygamous family type appears not to be commonly observed in Europe, the nuclear family seems to prevail, so this is the type of family we shall focus on.

When defining family as a nuclear one, it is crucial to avoid its possible confusion with the term marriage. These two terms are clearly distinguished, as the anthropologist George P. Murdock elaborated upon:

The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economical cooperation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. The family is to be distinguished from marriage, which is a complex of customs centering upon the relationship between a sexually associating pair of adults within the family. Marriage defines the manner of establishing and terminating such relationship, the normative behavior and reciprocal obligation within it.<sup>7</sup>

The terms marriage and family are therefore not interchangeable, even though the description of family as a unit sharing the same household essentially does apply to a married couple, the term marriage focuses rather on the mechanism occurring between the couple than the perception of them as a household, as is clearly explained in the quotation above.

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<sup>4</sup> See R, 818.

<sup>5</sup> See Ivo Možný, *Sociologie rodiny* (Praha: Sociologické Nakladatelství, 1999), 43-44, hereafter in the text referred to as Mo

<sup>6</sup> See T, 337-338

<sup>7</sup> George P. Murdock, *Social Structure* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 1, herefter in the text referred to as M

## 1.2. Functions of Family

The functions of family have mainly been examined by functional structuralists, who believe that every institution of the society has a function which contributes to the society.<sup>8</sup> One of the functional structuralists concerned with the functions of family was George P. Murdock, who recognizes four main functions of family: “In nuclear family or its constituent relationships we thus see assembled four functions fundamental to human social life-the sexual, the economic, the reproductive and the educational.”<sup>9</sup>

To briefly describe these functions, the purpose of the sexual function is that sexual encounters between a man and a woman were legitimized by the institution of marriage, which also limits sexual relations outside of it, so it provides a way of controlling sexuality.<sup>10</sup> The following three functions are rather self-explanatory, they refer to the families role in adding new members to the society (reproductive function) and taking care of these newborns both in terms of providing an economic background (economic function) and socialising them into the society and introducing the socially recognised norms.<sup>11</sup>

Another functional structuralist Talcott Parsons then greatly simplified the functions of family by only distinguishing two functions:

“We therefore suggest that the basic and irreducible functions of the family are two: first the primary socialization of children to that they can truly become members of the society into which they have been born; second, the stabilization of the adult personalities of the society.”<sup>12</sup>

There are numerous other functions of family that one can encounter, i.e. the role of emotional support, by which the family serves as a retreat for its members when they are coping with fear, insecurity, anger etc.<sup>13</sup> Another function, which is vital for this thesis, is the function of social placement, which refers to the influence of the parents’ socio-economic status on the children in multiple aspects of their lives.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Mo 43-44

<sup>9</sup> M 10

<sup>10</sup> See M, 4-5

<sup>11</sup> See M, 3-11

<sup>12</sup> Talcott Parsons, *Family, socialization and interaction process* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1955), 16

<sup>13</sup> See T, 334-335

<sup>14</sup> See T, 335



Families have an impact on the lifestyle of their members in multiple key elements, such as spending leisure time, performance of the children at school or in matters of health and nutrition.

## **2. Social Stratification**

### **2.1. Defining Social Stratification**

John Scott claims that “The social stratification of a society can be most straightforwardly defined as its internal division into a hierarchy of distinct social groups, each having specific life chances and a distinctive style of life.”<sup>15</sup>

Numerous sociologists were concerned with the issue of distinguishing certain groups in the society and were speculating about the parameters that should be used for dividing such groups. When talking about stratification, it is obviously impossible to omit Karl Marx. While classical economists focused on the distribution of wealth and income among various classes, Marx believed that the key element in relations among classes was exploitation.<sup>16</sup> He saw the society as a pattern of positions existing in a social division of labour, and according to him the term class referred to both these positions and the people who are currently occupying them.<sup>17</sup> He only identified two fundamental class positions, the bourgeois and the proletarian class, where the only means of distinguishing the two would be matters of possession, which Marx saw as a binary relation of one either possessing means of production (the bourgeois) or not (the proletarian class).<sup>18</sup>

However, other works, such as those of one of the most influential sociologists in terms of works regarding social stratification, Max Weber, denied that possession should be the only criteria of social stratification.

Initially, Weber proposed that class division should be based primarily on property and lack of property.<sup>19</sup> Later on he limited this statement to what he called economic class, and he introduced the term social class, which according to him

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<sup>15</sup> John Scott, *Stratification and Power: Structures of Class, power and Command* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), 1, hereafter in the text referred to as S

<sup>16</sup> See S, 78

<sup>17</sup> See S, 63

<sup>18</sup> See S 64-65

<sup>19</sup> See S, 25

formed on the basis of the economic class situations.<sup>20</sup> He then differentiated the term class from the term status, which was linked to non-economic aspects of life, explaining that: “In contrast to the purely economically determined ‘class situation’, we wish to designate as *status situation* every typical component of the life of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of *honor*.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus Weber distinguished social class and social status as two separate concepts, however there is no doubt that the two concepts are linked. To simplify the connections, it can be said that economic class situations cause the formation of social classes and social stratification would be a form of hierarchy of these social classes, within which it is possible to find various status groups.<sup>22</sup>

The emphasis on non-economic aspects of social stratification has been further explored by more experts, for example Talcott Parsons, who was mentioned in the previous chapter, had the view that “Stratification in its valuational aspect then is the ranking of units in a social system in accordance with a common value system.”<sup>23</sup> This means that he assumed that what Weber would call social status had a vital significance in social stratification.

Who truly elaborated on the idea of the connection of social status and non-economic features of the society was Pierre Bourdieu. He claimed economic differences could not provide enough of an explanation when it came to differences among social classes and stated that the fundamentally important source of differences between certain life aspects of different classes lies within cultural habits and dispositions which are inherited from the family.<sup>24</sup> He therefore decided that it is necessary to differentiate more principles of domination: economic capital, which was the originally observed one by i.e. Marx, and other forms of capital, mainly cultural capital.<sup>25</sup> To understand the term cultural capital more clearly, let’s look at the following definition:

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<sup>20</sup> See S, 29

<sup>21</sup> Max Weber, “The Economy and the Arena of Normative and De Facto Power,” *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenter Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 932

<sup>22</sup> See S, 36

<sup>23</sup> Talcott Parsons, “A Revised Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification,” *Essays in Sociological Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1954), 388

<sup>24</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relations to Culture*, trans. Richard Nice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 8

<sup>25</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 125 Herefter in the text referred to as D

“Cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status. For example, education and/or the ability to talk knowledgeably about high culture has traditionally been a form of cultural capital associated with the middle classes. Cultural capital is distinguished from economic capital (wealth) and social capital (whom you know). Here distinctions of cultural taste are understood to be classifications based on lines of power rather than being founded on either universal aesthetic criteria or individual choice.”<sup>26</sup>

To put it simply, capital is always a form of possession, whether it be economic capital, which is probably the first notion to be commonly associated with the term, or other, symbolic forms of capital – principally cultural capital, but several others which are mentioned by Bourdieu: the already mentioned social capital (which refers to connections), body capital (which is inherited from parents but can be largely modified by dietary choices and exercise), political capital (one’s standing in the political world) or linguistic capital (the extent of command of language, a subset of cultural capital).<sup>27</sup>

Bourdieu did not, however, deny the effects of economic inequalities, he merely stated that there is more to be considered when it comes to differences among social classes:

“Taste is at the heart of these symbolic struggles, which go on at all times between the fractions of the dominant class and which would be less absolute, less total, if they were not based on the primary belief which binds each agent to his life-style. A materialist reduction or preferences to their economic and social conditions of production and to the social functions of the seemingly most disinterested practices must not obscure the fact that, in matters of culture, investments are not only economic but also psychological. Conflicts over art or the art of living, in which what is really at stake is the imposition of the dominant principle of domination within the dominant class — or, to put it another way, the securing of the best conversion rate for the type of capital with which each group is best provided — would not be so dramatic if they did not involve the ultimate values of the person, a highly sublimated form of interests.”<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, Bourdieu introduces a new term connected with social stratification: *Habitus*. He defines *habitus* as “the internalised form of the class condition and of the

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<sup>26</sup>See Chris Baker, *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: Sage, 2004), 37

<sup>27</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” *The Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J.G. Richardson, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241-258.

<sup>28</sup> D, 310

conditionings it entails”<sup>29</sup> and claims that “social class is not defined solely by a position in the relations of production, but by the class habitus which is ‘normally’ (i.e., with a high statistical probability) associated with that position.”<sup>30</sup> By this he means that there are certain patterns of behaviour which a member of a particular social class considers ‘normal’ without being aware of following these patterns. This pattern is what he calls habitus, a theoretical concept which defines the way certain people act in certain situations.

## 2.2. Classifying social status

Mapping of the social strata has been attempted by many theorists, and mostly the power situation would be described by projecting class situations as occupations, which would be distributed into larger occupational categories based on common economic characteristics.<sup>31</sup> As it is apparent from the previous chapter, there are other factors which play a role in establishing a stratification system other than economic situations. These factors shall be discussed shortly, however firstly let’s take a look at the class stratification approaches.

Stratification researchers divide into two groups on the basis of their approach to stratification: the categorical approach and the continuous approach.<sup>32</sup> These approaches are not entirely different; they are both formed on the basis of the assumption that there is a number of social categories which are clearly distinguishable and while the members of the same category are relatively similar (internal homogeneity), the members of one category differ from those of another one (external heterogeneity).<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, they differ when it comes to the amount and limitations of these categories.

According to the categorical approach, the society is divided into a number of discrete categories; they recognize a limited number of layers of the society.<sup>34</sup> Such approach was favoured for example by Marx or Weber, who were mentioned in the

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<sup>29</sup> D, 101

<sup>30</sup> D, 372

<sup>31</sup> See S, 205

<sup>32</sup> See Harry B. G. Ganzeboom, Paul M. De Graaf and Donald J. Treiman, “A standard international socio-economic index of occupational status.,” *Social Science Research* 21 no. 1 (March 1992): 3, EBSCO, Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Nov. 2010. <<http://search.ebscohost.com>>, hereafter in the text referred to as G

<sup>33</sup> See G, 3

<sup>34</sup> See G, 3

previous chapter – starting with the obvious Marxist dichotomy of capitalists and workers (the bourgeois and the proletarian class) or the revised Marxist categories which recognize more positions on the market, yet the key to differentiating these position is still based on ownership, and progressing to Weberian categories, which distinguish positions in the labour market and also take into account sectorial differences and skill levels.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, the continuous approach sees an unlimited number of graded distinctions between the occupational groups and it also presumes that the differences which occur between said occupational groups can be captured in only one dimension, hence they can be represented in statistical models using merely one parameter.<sup>36</sup>

Both of these approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. The categorical scheme has proven to be particularly efficient in cases of analysing intergenerational occupational mobility (i.e. observing whether people remain in the same social class as their parents), as intergenerational mobility patterns are multidimensional by nature.<sup>37</sup> As stated above, categorical approach uses a multitude of parameters while the continuous one only requires one parameter.<sup>38</sup> However, this can also be an advantage for the continuous approach, as it can summarize a great amount of distinctions in a single number, hence it can have a greater impact.<sup>39</sup> This can in fact be useful when describing intergenerational occupational mobility as well, because if the class categories are only scaled in one dimension, the intergenerational mobility within them can be described by using one parameter without losing too much information.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore apparent that both of these approaches have their positive and negative aspects and the preferences of either of these approaches are subject to questioning.

To introduce specific ways of categorizing occupational categories, we shall take a look at the ways of measuring positions of occupation in the stratification system which are used in sociological research: the division is generally made by

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<sup>35</sup> See G, 3

<sup>36</sup> See G, p. 3-4

<sup>37</sup> See G 4

<sup>38</sup> See G, 5

<sup>39</sup> See G, 4

<sup>40</sup> See G, 6

prestige, by sociologically derived class categories or socio-economic status scores.<sup>41</sup> Two of these measures have been standardized on an international scale.<sup>42</sup>

Rankings based on prestige can be connected with Talcott Parsons' definition of social stratification, as he put an emphasis on the valuational aspect of social stratification, as had been stated earlier on.<sup>43</sup> And prestige can be defined as "the approval and respect members of society give to the incumbents of occupations as rewards for their valuable services to society."<sup>44</sup> There is an international standard existing to divide categories based on this measure, which is called Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale (SIOPS).<sup>45</sup> SIOPS scores were coded on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and they were constructed by Donald J. Treiman by calculating an average of prestige evaluations that were carried out in about 60 countries.<sup>46</sup>

The second internationally standardized measure would be the class categories, which are comparable on an international scale thanks to the so-called EGP (Erikson–Goldthorpe–Portocarero) categories, which is an occupational class scheme that was developed, as apparent, by John Goldthorpe, Robert Erikson and Lucienne Portocarero.<sup>47</sup>

In their paper Harry B. G. Ganzeboom, Paul M. De Graaf and Donald J. Treiman have attempted to combine the measures of ISCO occupational categories and the EGP categories with an International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI) to form an even broader internationally applicable stratification system by the adding the third measure commonly used in sociological research (the socio-economic status scores).<sup>48</sup> They interpreted the Socio-Economic Index (SEI) measures as a way of connecting education, occupation and income:

"Our preferred way to think about SEI is that it measures the attributes of occupations that convert a person's main resource (education) into a person's main reward (income). A simple

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<sup>41</sup> See G, 2

<sup>42</sup> See G, 2

<sup>43</sup> See Talcott Parsons, "A Revised Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification," *Essays in Sociological Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1954), 388

<sup>44</sup> G, 8

<sup>45</sup> See G, 2

<sup>46</sup> See G, 2

<sup>47</sup> See G, 2

<sup>48</sup> See G, 2

model of the stratification process looks like this: EDUCATION → OCCUPATION → INCOME”<sup>49</sup>

This mechanism was based on O. D. Duncan’s method used when constructing the SEI measure: “Occupation, therefore, is the intervening activity linking income to education.”<sup>50</sup> Essentially Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman distinguished seven main groups: professional, technical and related workers; administrative and managerial workers; clerical and related workers; sales workers; service workers; agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters; and production and related workers, transport equipment operators, and labourers.<sup>51</sup>

However, let me leave the international scales and concentrate on smaller ones, particularly those regarding the British society. This has been the area of expertise of the previously mentioned English sociologist John Goldthorpe. As it had already been said, the measures he used for analysing distinctions in the society are sociologically derived class categories. In his *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (1980) he originally proposed that the British society can be understood as composed of seven principle social groups, plus an additional group to which he refers to as ‘elite’.<sup>52</sup>

Table 1<sup>53</sup> demonstrates Goldthorpe’s social classes (the original class labels have been slightly altered by John Scott).<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> G, 8-9

<sup>50</sup> G, 10

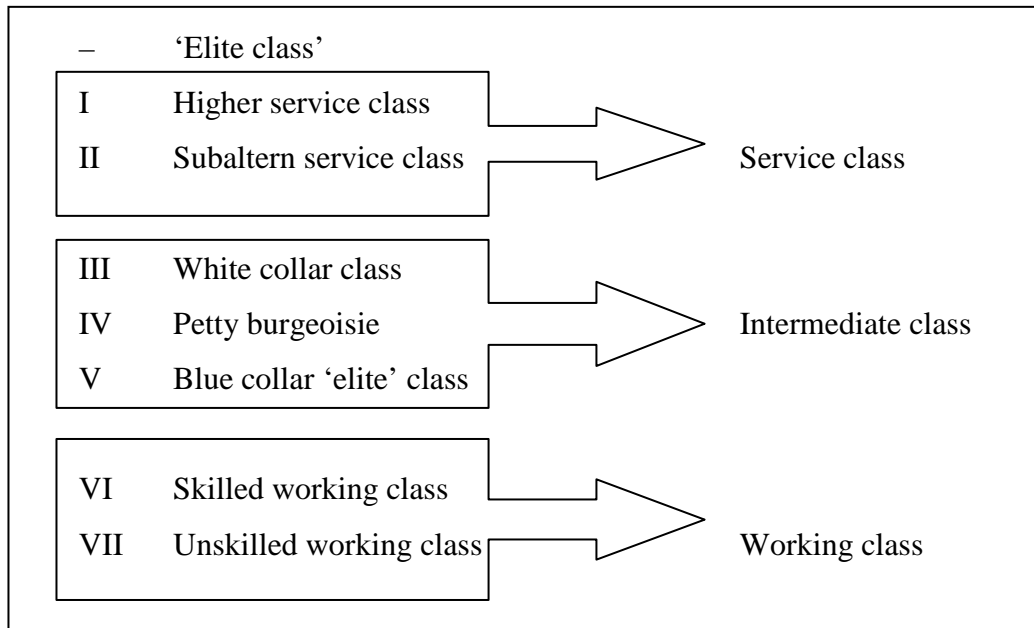
<sup>51</sup> See G, 15-16

<sup>52</sup> See S, 211-212

<sup>53</sup> See S, 212

<sup>54</sup> See S, 212

Table 1



To briefly describe these social classes, the higher service class contains those in households dependent on senior professional, administrative and managerial occupations who either exercise power on their behalf or on behalf of corporate bodies; the subaltern service class constitutes of lower level professional, administrative and managerial occupations and supervisory workers who exercise some degree of authority yet are subject to control from above as well.<sup>55</sup> These two classes form the service class, which is on top of the social system scale (when excluding the additional ‘elite’ class).<sup>56</sup>

The intermediate level according to Goldthorpe is divided into the white collar social class (routine non-manual workers and their households), blue collar social class (technicians and supervisors of manual work) and petty bourgeois social class, who use their own capital in their businesses, hence have a much more significant involvement in the exercise of authority than the white collar social class and the blue collar social class.<sup>57</sup>

The third social class comprises of skilled working class and unskilled working class, or in other words manual workers.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> See S, 212

<sup>56</sup> See S, 112

<sup>57</sup> See S, 213

<sup>58</sup> See S, 212



Further requirements of social stratification research have made Goldthorpe and his coworkers revise the original scheme in a project called CASMIN project, which resulted into the now standard elevenfold Goldthorpe class scheme, and is often considered the most influential contemporary study of class mobility in the world.<sup>59</sup> Table 2<sup>60</sup> shows this currently applied scheme of Goldthorpe class categories.

Table 2

I	Higher-grade professionals, administrators, and officials; managers in large industrial establishments; large proprietors
II	Lower-grade professionals, administrators, and officials, higher-grade technicians; managers in small industrial establishments; supervisors of non-manual employees
IIIa	Routine non-manual employees, higher grade (administration and commerce)
IIIb	Routine non-manual employees, lower grade (sales and services)
IVa	Small proprietors, artisans, etc., with employees
IVb	Small proprietors, artisans, etc., without employees
IVc	Farmers and smallholders; other self-employed workers in primary production
V	Lower-grade technicians; supervisors of manual workers
VI	Skilled manual workers
VIIa	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (not in agriculture, etc.)
VIIb	Agricultural and other workers in primary production

Another scheme that is commonly used in British stratification research and analysis is General Register's standard classification of occupations.<sup>61</sup> Thanks to its popularity among researchers, the scheme has gained a high level of results

<sup>59</sup> See Mark Western, "Class attainment among British men - A multivariate extension of the CASMIN model of intergenerational class mobility," *European Sociological Review* no 15, (1999), 431, EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Nov. 2010. <<http://search.ebscohost.com>>

<sup>60</sup> See Gordon Marshall, *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 38

<sup>61</sup> See Mo, 85

comparability, both with simultaneously run researches as well as researches that have been conducted in different times.<sup>62</sup>

The scheme recognizes 5 social classes (with the third one having two sub-classes) as illustrated in Table 3.<sup>63</sup>

Table 3

I	Professional
II	Intermediate
IIIN	Skilled Non-manual
IIIM	Skilled Manual
IV	Partly Skilled
V	Unskilled

It is apparent that there are many similarities between the General Register's standard classification of occupations and the Goldthorpe categories, the two merely vary in the extent of their inclusion of details.

In comparison with other nations, British sociology has gathered an impressive amount of data connected with social stratification.<sup>64</sup> This may be connected with the fact that the British sociology has always naturally leaned forward to understanding the society based on the social class structure.<sup>65</sup>

### **3. The Role of Family in Social Stratification**

The linking element between the analysis of family and the analysis of social strata becomes palpably obvious when it comes to the question what the basic unit of social stratification is. The main discussion in this area has been whether the elementary unit is composed of more people, such as a household, or whether it is merely an individual, and if so, whether it is possible for husband and wife to belong to a different social classes.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Mo, 85

<sup>63</sup> See Mo, 85

<sup>64</sup> See Mo, 85

<sup>65</sup> See mo, 85

<sup>66</sup> See Mo, 81-82

One approach addressing this claims that husband and wife cannot under any circumstances belong to different social classes as family is the core unit of social stratification.<sup>67</sup> Yet according to another approach, husband and wife can indeed be members of different social classes as the principle unit of social stratification are individuals who each attain particular positions in the class structure depending on their occupations.<sup>68</sup>

Another approach tries to make a compromise between these two views, stating that regardless of the individual placements of the husband and wife's occupations in the class structure, family remains the elementary unit of class stratification and the family's status is derived from the combination of the occupations.<sup>69</sup>

There is also an approach which attempts to avoid the situation claiming that individuals tend to choose partners who can be considered their equals on the social class scale, as couples are formed by people with similar economical, social and cultural background.<sup>70</sup> However, while the similarities of factors affecting social status often occur, they cannot be considered a rule and it is entirely possible to come across 'cross class' households.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, another approach suggests that it is impossible to satisfactorily answer the question in favour of either opinion, and that it is necessary to radically revise the current stratification theories.<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately, this view is not particularly useful for current analysis, so let's discuss the main approaches in more detail.

The main supporter of the theory that it is families, not individuals, that occupy locations in class structure is John Goldthorpe.<sup>73</sup> He declared that:

...the family is the unit of stratification primarily because only certain family members have, as a result of their labour market participation, what might be termed a directly determined position within the class structure. Other family members do not typically have equal opportunity for such participation, and their class position is thus indirectly determined; that is to say 'derived' from that of the family 'head'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Mo, 82

<sup>68</sup> See Mo, 82-83

<sup>69</sup> See Mo, 83

<sup>70</sup> See Mo, 83

<sup>71</sup> See W, 125-126

<sup>72</sup> See Mo, 84

<sup>73</sup> See W, 47

<sup>74</sup> John Goldthorpe in W, 128

Goldthorpe supported his view by two main arguments; firstly it was the fact that families are units of consumption and all of the family members share the income benefits of any member, therefore they same material and class interests.<sup>75</sup> His second claim originated from the conventional division of roles in the family, where the male would be considered the main ‘breadwinner’ on whom other members of the family are dependent on.<sup>76</sup>

Naturally, these arguments, particularly the second one, raise a considerable amount of criticism. Regarding the first one, while family members do benefit from all the income coming into the household, this does not necessarily mean that they all share an equal ration of such income, and more importantly, as we explained in the previous chapters, income interests do not equal class interests, which means that even if the consumption of income was proportionate among the family members, it would not imply that these members inevitably have to share the same class interest.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, the second argument was obviously attacked by feminists, as the traditional ‘father equals breadwinner’ concept does not quite necessarily apply in the contemporary society, where both of the partners tend to be active in the labour market and it cannot be generally specified which one is higher on the occupation scale.<sup>78</sup>

However, it seems incomplete to only distinguish social class for individuals alone, as people do not exist as isolated units.<sup>79</sup> In French Sociology, the concept of family being the elementary unit of classification seems to be unquestionable, after all as it had been said earlier, family provides the initial social placement of children and incorporates them into the society, therefore it has to have a crucial effect on their social status.<sup>80</sup> The life chances and power situations form within households based on the intersection of the members’ occupations.<sup>81</sup>

While it would be inaccurate to say that the social status of a family depends purely on the status of the family’s ‘head’, which is a term that becomes more and more questionable in the contemporary society, the social status of one family

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<sup>75</sup> See W, 128

<sup>76</sup> See W, 128-129

<sup>77</sup> See W, 129-130

<sup>78</sup> See Mo, 84

<sup>79</sup> See W, 132

<sup>80</sup> See Mo, 82

<sup>81</sup> See S, 208

member is likely to influence the social status of another member. Erik Olin Wright suggests that:

...social relations within families constitute an important mechanism through which people are indirectly linked to the class structure. Since families are units of consumption, the class interests of sectors are derived in part from the total material resources by the members of a family and not simply by themselves.<sup>82</sup>

This theory offers a suitable compromise as it does not give the entire importance to family, it does not overlook its unavoidable influence on social class. Wright refers to the said influence as 'mediated class relations.'<sup>83</sup> Mediated class relations have an impact particularly on children, in fact they dictate the children's location in the class structure entirely, because their class interests are only based on those of their family.<sup>84</sup>

Regardless the amount of influence imposed by either the individual's position in the class structure alone or the influence of the family, one cannot argue the fact that household relations do belong among one of the means of dividing the social strata and it would hardly be possible for a family member to be entirely unaffected by the other members. As John Scott states:

...all households, whether family or non-family households, are likely to be 'cross class situation' by virtue of the fact that they bring together the occupants of different class situations. It does not follow, however, that such households can be regarded as 'cross social class'... *all households are likely to be 'cross power situation', but none will be 'cross social stratum'*.<sup>85</sup>

#### **4. Areas Affected by the Family's Social Status**

##### **4.1. Reproductual Behaviour**

The influence of a family's social status on the family members' reproductual behaviour appears to be one of the prominent features where one can observe differences among the social strata. Firstly, let me briefly overview some general reproductual behaviour developments.

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<sup>82</sup> W, 143-144

<sup>83</sup> See W, 144

<sup>84</sup> See W, 132-133

<sup>85</sup> S, 211, italics added

The number of children had always been strongly connected with the socio-economic status of the family, however, contrary to the popular belief it was mainly the upper-class that used to have more children per family than their lower-class counterparts.<sup>86</sup> In fact, 15 percent of couples in fourteenth century England were childless, and those who could afford to have children were mainly upper-class women, whose average number of births they had had was five births occurring over the course of 12 years.<sup>87</sup>

Up to the nineteenth century, the upper-class would continue to have more children than the lower-class, but it was also the upper-class that first started to reduce the number of children in the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>88</sup> The middle-class families would follow the trend and in the beginning of the 20th century it was in fact the poor who would have the largest number of children per family.<sup>89</sup> After WWI contraception became more widespread, especially in the skilled non-manual social class and subsequently in the skilled manual class, the partly skilled and unskilled classes which lead to a general decrease in birth rate.<sup>90</sup> Having more children in a family therefore became mostly the domain of the upper-class, as being able to afford more children could be interpreted as an indicator of wealth and prestige.<sup>91</sup>

To overview the more recent situation regarding reproductional behaviour in the UK, let's focus on the development of fertility rate (the average number of live children a woman would have if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the year in question throughout her childbearing life span<sup>92</sup>) over the last 50 years. As illustrated in Figure 1<sup>93</sup> in Appendix 1, while total fertility rate in the UK almost reached 3 in the sixties, it kept steadily declining until it reached approximately 1.7 in 1977.<sup>94</sup> This was followed by a three-year-long continuous increase, however in

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<sup>86</sup> See M, 86

<sup>87</sup> See Angel Colón and Patricia Colón, *A History of Children: A Socio-cultural Survey Across Millennia* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 226

<sup>88</sup> See M, 86

<sup>89</sup> See M, 86

<sup>90</sup> See M, 86-87

<sup>91</sup> See M, 87

<sup>92</sup> "Fertility," Office for National Statistics, last modified 24 June, 2010, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=951>, hereafter in the text referred to as Of

<sup>93</sup> Julie Jefferies, "Fertility Assumptions for the 2006-based national population projections," *Population Trends* no 131 (Spring 2008), 20. , EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Nov. 2010. < <http://search.ebscohost.com>>, hereafter in the text referred to as F

<sup>94</sup> See F 20

1980 the fertility rate regained its downward course.<sup>95</sup> In 2001, UK's total fertility rate reached its lowest point since 1980 at 1.63, yet since then it has been following a rising trend.<sup>96</sup> In 2006 it became 1.84 and subsequently in 2009 the provisional total fertility rate grew to 1.94 children per woman.<sup>97</sup>

As for all the four UK countries individually, all of them have demonstrated the tendency of an increase in fertility rates in the recent years, each of them accordingly to their particular situation.<sup>98</sup> Northern Ireland has historically always had a higher fertility rate than the other UK countries, hence its fertility rate increase went from 1.77 in 2002<sup>99</sup> to 2.04 children per woman by 2009.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the other countries have followed the pattern at their own pace; fertility rate in Wales went from 1.64 in 2002 to 1.93 in 2009, in England the rise was from 1.63 in 2001 to 1.96 in 2009 and even Scotland, which has had the lowest fertility rate in comparison with the other three countries, has experienced a fertility rate rise from 1.48 in 2002 to 1.77 - however this number still remains under UK's fertility rate average.<sup>101</sup> For further details on the individual development of each of the countries' fertility rates, Figure 2<sup>102</sup> in Appendix 1 can be consulted.

There are three main reasons for this increase in fertility in the UK. The first one is connected with the government's enhanced support in childbearing in the last decade.<sup>103</sup> In 1999 and shortly afterwards a set of reforms focusing on the benefits for families with children, such as the Working Families Tax Credit or the Child Tax Credit, was introduced.<sup>104</sup> Also, reforms concerned with employment have offered solutions to combining parenthood and employment; i.e. the Employment Act (2002) prolonged paid maternity leave from 18 to 26 weeks, it offered the opportunity for fathers to also take two weeks of paternity week, it improved the rates of maternity pay and furthermore it allowed the opportunity for the mother to remain on unpaid maternity leave when the paid leave terminates.<sup>105</sup> Since 2003, working parents with children that are under 6 years of age are permitted to request flexible working hours

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<sup>95</sup> See F,20

<sup>96</sup> See F,20

<sup>97</sup> See Of

<sup>98</sup> See F,20

<sup>99</sup> See F,20

<sup>100</sup> See Of

<sup>101</sup> See Of

<sup>102</sup> F 20

<sup>103</sup> See F,22

<sup>104</sup> See F,22

<sup>105</sup> See F, 22

to be able to combine work and family life with even greater efficiency.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, with the Work and Families Act (2006) paid maternity leave was even further increased from 26 to 39 weeks.<sup>107</sup>

The second factor that largely affects UK's fertility increase over the recent years is international migration.<sup>108</sup> Although a certain amount of out-migration has an impact on UK's fertility, as when females move out of the country it changes the fertility rates, in-migrants change the numbers far more dramatically. This is due to the fact that female immigrants born in certain countries traditionally have a higher fertility rate than others, for instance in 2001 Pakistani women who are living in England and Wales had a 4.7 total fertility rate in average, while the average for UK-born women at the time was 1.6.<sup>109</sup> It is therefore apparent that the women born outside of UK who now live in UK make a significant contribution to UK's total fertility rate.

The third influential element regarding the recent rise in fertility rates, as unlikely as it may seem, is the trend of postponement of parenthood.<sup>110</sup> Postponing parenthood has become a major trend in the contemporary British and other European societies.<sup>111</sup> Women have been delaying starting a family since the 1980s - in 1977 the estimated average age at first birth (either within or outside of marriage) in the UK was 24.4, in 1984 it grew to 24.7 and it became 26.5 by 1994.<sup>112</sup> Therefore the fertility rates fell in the age group of women in their twenties in the 1980s, while they remained the same in other age groups, which lead to a decrease in total fertility rate.<sup>113</sup> However, once the women who have postponed their childbearing reached the age when they started to have children, hence caused the fertility rate in the older age group to increase, and the entire pattern becomes established, total fertility rate was bound to recover.<sup>114</sup> This is the reason why postponement of parenthood has on the short term most likely contributed to the fertility rate rise in the past decade.

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<sup>106</sup> See F, 20

<sup>107</sup> See F, 22

<sup>108</sup> See F, 22

<sup>109</sup> See F, 22

<sup>110</sup> See F, 22

<sup>111</sup> See Kathleen E. Kiernan, "Becoming a Young Parent: A Longitudinal Study of Associated Factors," *The British Journal of Sociology* 48, no 3 (1997), 406. EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Nov. 2010. <<http://search.ebscohost.com>>, hereafter in the text referred to as K

<sup>112</sup> See K, 406

<sup>113</sup> See F, 22

<sup>114</sup> See F, 22



Since postponement of childbearing is a major theme in the reproductional behaviour in British society, it shall be discussed in more detail. This trend is caused for multiple reasons. The main ones would be that a larger number of women take part in labour force nowadays, a higher amount of people participating in higher education and a general delay in forming partnerships and marriages.<sup>115</sup>

There are positives and negatives regarding the theme: it enables people, in particular women, to have more time for acquiring their human capital via education, the couples will have acquired more wealth by the time they start having children and are therefore able to support the child more in terms of housing, consumer goods and leisure activities, and by both of them being able to work prior to birth of their children, they are able to support them from two incomes.<sup>116</sup> This means that the trend is connected with the socio-economic status of the family, both in terms of education and in terms of occupation of the family members and their income, which implies that the trend of parenthood postponement is of higher occurrence in the upper social class families.

Another positive factor of becoming a parent later in life is the fact that the parents spend more time together as a couple before having children, which is helpful not only from the economic point of view (longer time with two incomes), but also by making the relationship stronger, as there is often a lower chance of marital breakdown if the couple gets married at a higher age.<sup>117</sup>

However, the trend is also accompanied with negatives. The most dominant one is the fact that postponement of parenthood often leads to childlessness, due to the fact that both parents become committed to work force and both grow accustomed to a certain economic standard which inevitably changes if one of them leaves workforce. Moreover, if the mother takes a maternity leave and is absent from the workforce for a longer time, she might face the threat of being less desirable on the labour market.<sup>118</sup> These reasons may result into the couple postponing parenthood until they are not able to have children at all, or even deciding not to have children.

There is another major theme in reproductional behaviour and the timing of parenthood which is completely opposite to the trend discussed above, yet it appears

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<sup>115</sup> See F, 22

<sup>116</sup> See K, 407

<sup>117</sup> See K, 407

<sup>118</sup> See K, 407

dominantly in the British society, and that is teenage parenthood. Compared with other European countries, the UK has a very high teenage fertility; as of 1997 it was about three times bigger than teenage fertility in Sweden or France, four times higher than in Italy, six times more than in the Netherlands and ten times higher than teenage fertility in Switzerland.<sup>119</sup>

Teenage parenthood in the UK mostly happens outside of marriage; 85% of teenage births were born outside of marriage.<sup>120</sup> Teenage parenthood is often associated with a pattern that is carried on intergenerationally, as daughters of teenage mothers appear more likely to become teenage mothers themselves, as supported by the studies of Kathleen Kiernan, Sandra Hofferth and Cheryl Hayes.<sup>121</sup>

Multiple studies have also revealed a link between the socio-economic status of the family and fertility behaviour.<sup>122</sup> Kathleen Kiernan's study showed that "young mothers and fathers were more likely to come from the lowest socio-economic status families and that children from families that had experienced financial difficulties at the age of 7 or age 16 were also more likely to become parents at young age."<sup>123</sup> This outcome is also implied by several other studies, i.e. J. E. Goldthorpe's study showed that pregnancy under the age of 20 was more likely to be found in the skilled manual and non-manual class, partly skilled and unskilled class rather than in the professional and intermediate class.<sup>124</sup> This appears to be connected with class-based differences in uses of contraception, as the majority of young mothers who indicated that their pregnancy was unwanted came from the lower classes.<sup>125</sup>

Kiernan's study also shows that the aspect of education has a strong influence on teenage parenthood - the majority of teenage mothers and fathers who participated in her study left school at the minimum age and did not acquire many qualifications or none at all.<sup>126</sup> The study also brought attention to the fact that if the children's scores had improved in their teenage years, they were less likely to become young parents and similarly if their scores dropped, the probability of their teenage parenthood increased.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> See K 407

<sup>120</sup> See K 408

<sup>121</sup> See K, 412

<sup>122</sup> See K 412

<sup>123</sup> K, 413

<sup>124</sup> See M, 86

<sup>125</sup> See M, 86

<sup>126</sup> See K, 414

<sup>127</sup> See K, 415

As it had been stated, the majority of children born to teenage parents were born outside of marriage. However, being a child in a single parent household is not necessarily connected with teenage parenthood. Ken Fogelman made a survey among British sixteen-year-olds (who had already previously been subject to this continuous research from their infancy) and he found out that one in seven sixteen-year-olds were not living with both parents.<sup>128</sup> This situation may have arisen via different means such as divorce etc.; while half of the teenagers in question were living in single parent families (no new spouses of parents), only about 3% of children had lived in a single-parent family for their entire lives.<sup>129</sup> According to the Census in 2001, almost one child out of four was living in a single parent household and over 10% of children were living in step-families.<sup>130</sup>

It is apparent that children coming from single parent families are disadvantaged economically, as the family only has one income at its disposal instead of the combined incomes of the spouses, hence being from a single parent family also affects the child's socio-economic status.

However, growing up in a single parent household needs to be distinguished from the previously mentioned growing up as a child born outside of marriage. Nearly 60% of British women who gave birth outside of marriage were nevertheless living with their partners at the time, and about one fourth of these women got married within the following 8 years since the child's birth (mostly to the father of the child).<sup>131</sup>

## 4.2. Health

Several studies illustrate that there appears to be a connection between economic status and health, and in fact there are studies (such as the study of William W. Dressler) which suggest that social status of the family affects the entire family

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<sup>128</sup> See Ken Fogelman, *Growing up in Great Britain: Papers from the National Child Development Study*, (London: Macmillan, 1983), 107, hereafter in the text referred to as Fo

<sup>129</sup> See Fo, 107-108

<sup>130</sup> "Quarter of children have single parent", BBC News, last modified May 7, 2003, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/3006207.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3006207.stm)

<sup>131</sup> See Judith A. Seltzer, "Cohabitation in the United States and Britain: Demography, kinship, and the Future," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, No. 4 (November 2004), p. 924, Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Nov. 2010. <<http://search.ebscohost.com>>

health.<sup>132</sup> This should not come as a surprise as sociological research mostly has the tendency to favour the approach of family being the key unit to social stratification, as it was established and explained in chapter 3.

A widely acknowledged notion concerned with the impact of economic status on health is the social causation hypothesis, which claims that low economic status causes poor health.<sup>133</sup> The hypothesis is strongly supported by studies which show that bad health is to a certain extent related to income (shown i.e. by the study by Michaela Benzeval and Ken Judge), unemployment (the study by Annika Maria Ahs and Ragnar Westerling) or bad jobs and poor work conditions (the study by Dorothy Broom et al.).

However, the relationship between economic status and health also applies to the reverse situation, as stated by Panayotes Demakakos et al.: "people of higher socioeconomic status (SES) live longer, enjoy better health, and suffer less from disability, while those of lower SES die younger and suffer a greater burden of disease and disability."<sup>134</sup>

Although a variety of explanations for this connection have been proposed, the exact ways of how precisely this occurs are still not established to a greater extent.<sup>135</sup> It does nevertheless appear that the link lies not merely in the economic situation of the family (wealth or poverty), but that it is also influenced by the manner in which people themselves perceive their position in the social hierarchy.<sup>136</sup>

A natural source of this kind of self-evaluation is bound to come from a comparison of one's situation to the situation of others in the society, as it appears to be only through others that one is able to place oneself on the stratification scale. However, one mainly constructs a self-image thanks to those who are close to them, hence family is likely to also play a role in an individual's perception of himself in the society and therefore also his health. In fact, a study conducted in the UK in 2004

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<sup>132</sup> See William W. Dressler, "Social status and the health of families: A model.," *Social Science & Medicine* 39, no. 12, (1994): 1605. Science Direct, Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Dec. 2010. <<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>>

<sup>133</sup> See Adam Tipper, "Economic models of the family and the relationship between economic status and health.," *Social Science & Medicine* 70, no. 10, (2010): 1567. Science Direct, Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Dec. 2010. <<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>> Hereafter in the text referred to as Ti

<sup>134</sup> Panayotes Demakakos, et al., "Socioeconomic status and health: The role of subjective social status.," *Social Science & Medicine* 67, no. 2, (2008): 331. Science Direct, Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ, 18. Nov. 2010. <<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>>, hereafter in the text referred to as De

<sup>135</sup> See De 331

<sup>136</sup> See De 331

by Jonathan Gardner and Andrew Oswald came to the conclusion that married people tend to be healthier than their single counterparts and that marriage actually has a greater impact on the reduction of mortality than income.<sup>137</sup>

Empirical research shows that when a family is experiencing economic troubles, such as one of the partners being left unemployed, the family members provide a psychological and social support, therefore they decrease the potential of unemployment's influence on health, in particular in case of mental health.<sup>138</sup> Adam Tipper explains the role of family in this situation by the following statement:

Like employment, family membership gives meaning to an individual's life, and makes them feel as though they have a useful role in society. Labour adjustments by the spouse may also have direct and observable effects on the health of the unemployed member. Second, other family members may help an individual member cope with unemployment by acting as a buffer ... Finally, the family may help the individual to adapt ... *In comparison to single person households, larger households/families allow individual members the freedom to pursue good health, because negative health events are prevented* (through various pre-emptive and/or compensatory actions).<sup>139</sup>

Now when it has been established how family affects one's perception of themselves in the social hierarchy, the subjective social status<sup>140</sup> (SES), let's focus on the connection of socioeconomic status and health, particularly in the UK. A study conducted by Panayotes Demakakos, James Nazroo, Elizabeth Breeze and Michael Marmot was observing this connection while using the data from the UK Data Archive.<sup>141</sup> It collected data from 2004-2005 and it focused namely on self-rated health, long-standing illness, depression, hypertension, diabetes, central obesity, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, triglycerides, fibrinogen and C-reactive protein in a sample of 3368 men and 4065 women in England that are over 52 years of age.<sup>142</sup> The data have been studied in a gender-specific manner because it appears that different socio-economic status aspects relate to men's and women's health in a different way.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> See Ti 1567

<sup>138</sup> See Ti 1571

<sup>139</sup> Ti 1571, italics added

<sup>140</sup> See De 331

<sup>141</sup> See De 330

<sup>142</sup> See De 330-331

<sup>143</sup> See De 331

The results of the study showed that almost all health outcomes were linked with subjective social status and that people who considered their social status lower had poorer health.<sup>144</sup> The link between wealth (or income) and SSS was a stronger one than the link between health and the other two indicators of social status (education and occupation), however the connection for all the three indicators was weaker for women rather than men.<sup>145</sup> This could be caused by the fact that the father of the family traditionally took the role of the breadwinner, therefore men felt stronger responsibility for the family's socio-economic status, hence their health was affected more.

The study concluded that SSS was strongly related to health, mainly to self-rated health, depression, long-standing illness or disability and that the influence of SSS appeared to be stronger than the one of education, occupation and wealth as the objective indicators of socio-economic status, and also stronger than marital status.<sup>146</sup> However, it did acknowledge that these factors are also important.<sup>147</sup> After all, as it had been explained earlier on in the chapter, all these factors, particularly the presence of a family have an impact on the forming of SSS as such, therefore all of these factors influence one another retrospectively. It can therefore be suggested that health, socio-economic status and the family situation are interlinked and that together they form a full circle.

### **4.3. Education**

The social status of the family one is born into also has a certain impact on one's education. This happens via the various forms of capital (Bourdieu's term which had been described in chapter 2.1.): cultural capital, economic capital and social capital.<sup>148</sup>

The cultural capital of the family is constructed by the education which the parents have achieved, and their ability to stimulate their child and support the child's development, skills etc.<sup>149</sup> Of course, the child has to have inquisitive tendencies on their own, and these tendencies vary from child to child, however the parent's

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<sup>144</sup> See De 333

<sup>145</sup> See De 333

<sup>146</sup> See De 334

<sup>147</sup> See De 334

<sup>148</sup> See Mo 89

<sup>149</sup> See Mo 89

decision to motivate the child and perhaps also setting an examples is likely to have a significant impact on the child's steps towards further education.

The influence of economic capital is rather straightforward; wealthier families can afford to buy children stimulating toys and enroll them for various courses and enrich their horizons by travelling.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, the family is responsible for creating the child's study environment, as it suggests that a child who has their own room and their own study area has better conditions for studying than a child who is required to share these things with siblings.<sup>151</sup> Also, in the UK the economic situation of the family has a higher impact in case of higher education, as the steadily increasing tuition fees form more of a challenge for families of lesser wealth.

While the impact influence of social capital on the child's educational chances seems less apparent, it cannot be overlooked. The family is able to help the child succeed more if they are acquainted with people with valuable connections, which may provide support in various stages of the child's education.<sup>152</sup>

Socio-economic status of the family appears to be linked with the child's education all throughout the process of education acquisition. James W. B. Douglas's *The Home and the School* was a study which observed the earlier years. He observed all children born in Britain in the first week of March 1946 and put their abilities and attainment in primary school in context with their parents' social status.<sup>153</sup> For establishing the social status of the parents, he used not only the is General Register's standard classification of occupations, but took their background and education into consideration.<sup>154</sup> He paid equal attention to both of the parents' social status, as his prior research has demonstrated that both the mother's education and occupation and the father's education and occupation are of significant importance, hence the child's social status should be derived as a combination of the two.<sup>155</sup>

Douglas not only found out that the children's school performance was strongly connected with the social status of the family, but also that the impact of the family had the tendency to increase as the children got older, therefore the effect of the home situation appeared to be stronger than the effect of the school institution.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> See Mo 89

<sup>151</sup> See Mo 89

<sup>152</sup> See Mo 89

<sup>153</sup> See Mo 90-91

<sup>154</sup> See Mo 91

<sup>155</sup> See Mo 91

<sup>156</sup> See Mo 91

He also discovered, that the child's educational chances were already strongly influenced in infancy and were mainly connected with the education and aspirations of the mother.<sup>157</sup> This is not overly shocking as it is the mother figure who conventionally spends most of the time with the child throughout the initial years.

Douglas also concluded that it appeared that regardless of their performance, the children with higher social status seemed to have been somewhat favoured regarding their acceptance to secondary schools - apparently one out of two children belonging to upper-middle class would be accepted for secondary schools, whereas in case of children coming from manual-skilled and unskilled class it was only one out of four children, in spite of their results being similar to those of the accepted upper middle class children.<sup>158</sup> It was suggested that the class differences were only disregarded in cases of extraordinarily gifted children, however the research was conducted over half century ago and class differences appear to not be so closely connected with secondary school acceptance nowadays.<sup>159</sup>

Regarding the access to higher education and its link with socio-economic status, this issue is often brought up in the UK in connection with a one-sided elitism based on the institutions selecting students in connection with the social class of their family, however, it is also important to remember that the prospective students are choosing a university as well.<sup>160</sup> The 2002 research by Stephen J. Ball et al. observed this pattern of choosing among students of 6 London-based institutions of various backgrounds who were deciding which universities to apply to.<sup>161</sup> Certain statements made by these prospective university students clearly illustrate the relevance of the socio-economic status of the student's family and the the student's choice:

I don't know anybody well, who has completed university ... So I suppose that's maybe why I didn't know about the reputations of the universities or any sort of things like that. Apart from what I was told by the prospectuses, the brochures, computers, what my teachers told me. I sort of worked it out as I went along really, played it by ear. Maybe if I had known

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<sup>157</sup> See Mo 92

<sup>158</sup> See Mo 92

<sup>159</sup> See Mo 92

<sup>160</sup> See Stephen J. Ball, Jackie Davies, Miriam David, and Diane Reay, "'Classification' and 'Judgement': social class and the 'cognitive structures' of choice of Higher Education.," *Education* 23, no. 1 (2002): 51–72. EBSCO. Knihovna Univerzity Palackého, Olomouc, CZ. 18. Nov. 2010.

<<http://search.ebscohost.com>> p. 51, hereafter in the text referred to as Ba

<sup>161</sup> See Ba, 52



some people that had gone to university it might have made my choices different, or maybe not, I don't really know. (*James*, Crieghton Community School)<sup>162</sup>

As it is apparent, this student is influenced by the socio-economic status of his family particularly due to their lack of higher education attainment and therefore them not being able to help him with the decision-making process. Yet the links between choosing a university and the prospective student's family's socio-economic status can be even more simple by the undeniable effect of the economic factors:

I think the decision was more economical than anything else, because ideally I would like to travel outside London and live away from home, probably rent a place, ideally, but looking at the reality of how likely it is, its is very, very, very unlikely. It is more sense to say, you know studying inside London, somewhere that it close by, so I can cycle there or take the train. (*Ahmed*, Crieghton Community School)<sup>163</sup>

Obviously the influence of the school the student attends is also considerable, the so-called 'institution habitus' (the environment at the school created by schoolmates and teachers) contributes into the shaping of opinions regarding further education.<sup>164</sup> For example less than 2% of private school students in Ball's study indicated any newly-formed "red brick universities" as their first choice of university and prioritised the more prestigious universities such as Oxbridge.<sup>165</sup> This is, however, also related to the fact that the students attending a particular institution tend to come from a certain type of families who often possess a similar socio-economic status, as the institution was already selected for them based on the family situation, therefore the effect is somewhat reciprocal.

The preference of Oxbridge seems to be related to the socio-economic status of the students family not only in terms of students from the higher status families choosing Oxbridge as their best choice, but also vice versa, as it is apparent from the following statement of a student who attended an interview at Cambridge:

It was a complete shock, it was different from anywhere else I have ever been, it was too traditional, too old fashioned, from another time altogether. I didn't like it at all. It was like going through a medieval castle when you were going down the corridors. The dining room

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<sup>162</sup> Ba, 56

<sup>163</sup> Ba 56

<sup>164</sup> See Ba 58

<sup>165</sup> See 60

was giant long tables, pictures, it was like a proper castle, and I was thinking—where's the moat, where's the armour? Save me from this. You know, you expect little pictures with eyes moving around, watching you all the time. And I just didn't like the atmosphere, not one bit ... All typical private school, posh people ... posh and white.<sup>166</sup>

This suggests that one has a strong feeling of belonging into a particular group and feels somewhat out of place in a different one, therefore it seems that social status of one's family not only has an impact on performance at school, something one cannot entirely control, but that it also affects the choices one knowingly makes.

## **5. Survey Research on the Influence of Socio-Economic Status on Family Life**

### **5.1. Survey Details and Participants**

To see if the observations theoretically discussed in the previous chapter do occur in the contemporary British society, I conducted a survey research that aims to observe the links between socio-economic status of a family and the previously addressed areas of reproductional behaviour, health and education. The survey had 20 questions focusing on these three elements. The exact survey form can be found in Appendix 2.

The survey was conducted on a sample of 100 British people aged 18-27. All of them remain anonymous. 20% of the participants were non-students; in particular there were 3 unemployed people who have only attained secondary education, 8 people who attained secondary education and were working full time, 7 people who obtained a university degree and were working full time and 2 people who referred to themselves as housewives/homemakers. Curiously none of the participants were unemployed with a university degree, however the number of non-student participants is not sufficient enough to drive any conclusions from that fact.

80% of the participants consisted of students. 58 of them were studying their undergraduate degree and 22 were postgraduate students. The student participants of the survey were studying at the following institutions: University of Exeter, Loughborough University, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Surrey, De Monfort University (Leicester), University of Salford, University of Southampton, University of Hull, University of Sheffield, University of York, Aston University (Birmingham), University of Kent, Sheffield Hallam University,

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<sup>166</sup> Ba 68

University of Brighton, University of Portsmouth, University College London, University of Westminster, University of Northampton, University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University, University College Birmingham, Teeside University, University of East Anglia, Durham University, University of Cumbria, London Metropolitan University, Newcastle University, Aberystwith University, University of Liverpool, Worcester University, University of Greenwich, University of London, University of Leicester, Coventry University, Cambridge, Leeds University, Cardiff University, Bangor University, University of Edinburgh, University of Aberdeen, University of Leiden (the Netherlands). This means that the participants were attending 36 universities in England, 2 universities in Wales, 2 universities in Scotland and one participant chose to attend a university in the Netherlands. Note that this participant was British as well.

The connections between socio-economic status of the family and reproductional behaviour were observed by questions concerning the parents of the participants. The participants were asked questions regarding siblings, the amount of time their parents had been together for at the birth of their first child, whether their parents were married when they were born and remained married etc.

The socio-economic situation of the family was derived from the education of the parents, their occupations and the average income which would be adequate to said occupations. In several situations throughout the entire socio-economic spectrum, the mother of the participant was a housewife. In fact, this was the case for 19% of the participants' families. If that occurred, I classified the family's socio-economic status mainly on the basis of the husband's status, however the mother's education was also taken into consideration (as it provides cultural capital to children), yet so was the fact that the family was only supported by one income. No cases of stay-at-home fathers (homemakers) were noted in the survey.

For simplicity, the participants' families will be analyzed on the basis of the General Register's Standard Classification of Occupations. To briefly remind this system, it consists of five main categories: I. Professional, II. Intermediate, III. Skilled (divided into Skilled Non-manual and Skilled Manual), IV. Partly Skilled and V. Unskilled.

## **5.2 Reproductional Behaviour**

### **5.2.1. Number of Children**

Firstly, let's discuss the number of children in the observed families. In 13 cases, there were 5 or more children in the family. Regardless of the socio-economic situation of the family, the majority of the mothers in these more numerous families were housewives. 7 of the families (over a half) were classified as the manual skilled category, 3 as professional, 2 as non-manual skilled and merely 1 as Intermediate. The particular family in the intermediate category had 5 children, and 4 of them were in fact two sets of twins. It is therefore reasonable to assume that having such a numerous family had not been planned. This would suggest that based on the sample, families in the intermediate category do not tend to be very large.

On the contrary, this would often occur in the manual skilled category. However the largest families were amongst those classified as professional, in fact the second largest family consisting of a couple and 8 children was one where the father was a doctor and the mother was a university educated housewife.

The most numerous family which was observed in the research was a peculiar case. The participant's parents were a photographer and a housewife, both with university education, and they had 11 children together (including the participant). At the time when the survey was conducted, the ages of their children ranged from 38 to 8 years old. Unfortunately, both of the parents have passed away, which currently creates a very different socio-economic situation for the family.

51% of the families only had 1-2 children. 22 of them were either Manual or non-manual skilled, 14 were in the intermediate category, 8 in the professional category, 4 in the unskilled and 3 in the partly skilled category. Considering families with 3-4 children, these were represented mainly in the non-manual skilled category (11 families) and professional category (9 families). There were also 6 families with 3-4 children among the families classified as intermediate and 3 among the manual-skilled category. This means there were 29 cases of families with 3-4 children observed in the survey.

The remaining 7 families are difficult to analyze as they are all patchwork families with children from different marriages. It would therefore be difficult to truly define the entire elaborate socio-economic situation of these families.

To conclude the observations from the survey research regarding the number of children in a family, the following can be stated: Out of the 20 couples classed as professional, almost a half of them (9) had 3-4 children. This potentially supports the theory that well-situated families often have more children as a certain sign of prestige, as suggested in chapter 4.1. Families in the intermediate category predominantly seem to have 1-2 children (14 families out of 21).

Considering the manual and non-manual families, which were represented by 45 families covered in the survey research, the situations vary the most. As a whole, they appear to have mostly 1-2 children (22 cases), however, when looked at individually, manual-skilled families often have 5 or more children (7 cases) while non-manual skilled families stop at 3-4 (11 cases). This may suggest that the non-manual skilled category has a higher awareness regarding contraceptives, however given the high number of non-manual and manual skilled families with only 1-2 children, it appears to be mostly individual.

The remaining 14 families consist of the previously mentioned 7 cases of patchwork families and 7 partly skilled or unskilled families, which will not be analyzed due to the fact that the number of these families is not high enough for any conclusions to be drawn.

### **5.2.2. Divorces, Second Marriages and Absent Fathers/Mothers**

In 30 cases the participants' parents got divorced after the participant (and potentially the participants's siblings) were born, or the participant was born to a couple who had previously been married to someone else and potentially had children from prior marriages. Half of these situations (15) occurred in the manual skilled or non-manual skilled category, 6 in the intermediate category, 4 in professional, 2 in unskilled and 3 in cases where the parents' socio-economic statuses were considerably different.

This may seem as if divorces occurred more in marriages in the manual skilled or non-manual skilled category, however it must be taken into consideration that almost half of the families that were observed in the survey research (45% as stated in the previous chapter) belonged to this category. The occurrence of divorce therefore seems to be rather proportionate throughout the socio-economic spectrum suggesting that the probability of a lasting marriage is not class-dependant.

There were also 5 cases in which the parents of the participant had not been married at the time of participant's birth or did not get married at all. In all of these cases the parents had been together for less than a year at the time of the participant's birth. These situations may perhaps be presumed to be unplanned pregnancies. This was noted twice in the non-manual skilled category, twice in the manual skilled category and once in the unskilled category. Furthermore, there were two occurrences, in which the parents were not only unmarried, but their socio-economic statuses were very distinct. One was a case where the mother was a 34-year-old (when she gave birth to the participant) accountant with a university degree and the father, who was 39-years-old (when the participant was born), only reached the O level qualification and was unemployed, in the other the mother was a 36-year old (at the time of the participant's birth) secretary with secondary education only and the father was a 28-year-old director (at the time of the participant's birth) with a university degree. Neither of the two couples got married later on.

Further on, 3 of the completed surveys suggested that one of the parents was not present in the participants life at all, as any information regarding that parent was unknown to the participant. There were 2 cases of absent fathers and 1 case of an absent mother. The details about the mother are unknown including her age at the time of birth suggesting that she left the family early after the participant was born. The participant's father was a carpenter O level qualification only. In the cases of the absent fathers, one of the mothers had a university degree and currently works as a registered manager for a mental health and learning disability institution. She later had two more children with another partner. The second mother works as a supervisor has secondary education only, as she became a mother at the age of 17. The participant, when asked how long his/her parents had been together for at the time of his/her birth responded: "4 months, I was an accident clearly!"

### **5.2.3 Differences Between Parents - Socio-economic and Age Differences**

The vast majority of the couples observed in the survey research were either from the same socio-economic part of the spectrum, or a very similar ones, as their category difference was not higher than one in most cases. If there was a significant difference in category between the partners, it was in the case of the previously mentioned couples who did not get married at all or got married yet subsequently had a divorce.

The only situation in which a functioning couples consisting of partners with a significant difference in socio-economic status can be observed in the survey responses tends to be a pattern where the father belongs to the professional category and is the breadwinner, while the mother (typically with A level or O level qualifications only) is a homemaker. 8 such couples could be noted among the participants' parents.

This however does not imply that all women whose husbands rank in the professional category are housewives, all of the 12 remaining couples in the professional category are composed of spouses that are both employed. In majority of these cases the parents' education and occupations are of similar rankings, except for 1 case in which the university educated father is an attorney and his wife with secondary education is a yoga instructor.

One participant also indicated, that the situation is vice-versa (in terms of socio-economic differences between parents) in case of his family; at the time when the survey was completed, said participant's mother was a teacher of English as a Second Language and had a postgraduate degree, while his father was a mechanic who only attained O level qualification. The couple has been together for 29 years at the time when the survey was completed.

Regarding the age difference between partners, this occurrence was represented mainly by couples classified in the Intermediate category, not only as a highest number, but also proportionally, as 9 out of the 21 couples had a larger age difference than 5 years, and 4 of those displayed a difference in age larger than 8 years. In the non-manual and manual skilled category the age difference between the father and the mother could be observed three times, in the professional category twice and in the unskilled category once only. Note that both of the couples representing the professional category had an age difference higher than 8 years.

The largest age difference observable was to be found in a couple consisting of a currently retired father who has only attained primary education and was 51 years old when the participant was born and a mother who has an O level qualification and works as a coordinator at a maternity unit, who was 27 when she gave birth to the participant. The participant's mother is his/her father's second wife, as he has two sons from a previous marriage. The couple remains married and they have 3 children together.

#### **5.2.4. The Age at which the Mother Had her First Child**

Chapter 4.1. introduced J. E. Goldthorpe's observation that pregnancy under the age of 20 was more likely to be found in the skilled non-manual and classes and lower. The survey research noted 12 cases of childbearing under the age of 20, out of which 6 happened in the skilled manual class, 3 in the non-manual skilled class, 1 in partly skilled class and one in the unskilled class. The survey therefore does appear to support Goldthorpe's claims.

The twelfth case is a slightly more complicated situation in which the participant was born to his/her parents when they were 16 years old. The mother later obtained a college social work certificate and is now making a living as a social worker, while the father only has O level qualification and works as a brick layer. The parents of this participant did not stay together.

Only 3 out of the aforementioned 12 cases entail becoming parents under the age of 18. The youngest parent featured in the survey research was a father of one of the participants, who became a father at the age of 15. He is a plumber and his only qualifications are on the job courses. The survey answers unfortunately do not provide any information about the age or socio-economic situation of the mother of that child, as the respondent was born to the father 15 years later when he had a different partner already. The third case of childbearing under the age of 18 was the birth of the participant that referred to himself/herself as an accident.

While teenage pregnancies were not prominent in the results of the survey, it does not necessarily mean that the teenage pregnancy rate is currently low in the UK, as the questions focused on reproductional behaviour addressed the participants parents. This is due to the fact that 80% of the participants were students and would therefore not provide an accurate representation of teenage pregnancy in the UK.

What however could be observed in the survey responses was a strong tendency in postponing childbearing. The mothers of the participants were over 30 years old at the time when their first child was born in 31 cases. This tendency could be observed in the entire socio-economic spectrum, however it was most considerable in the professional class. Out of the 20 couples considered professional category, 15 of them had their first child when the mother was 30 or older. This does appear to illustrate that postponing childbearing occurs mainly to enable the parents to establish themselves by acquiring a higher education and progressing in their jobs.



The oldest age at which any of the respondents' parents had their first child was 45. Both of the parents were university teachers with a PhD title.

Another significant tendency apparent from the survey responses was the fact that 33 couples had their first child after 5 or more years of having been together. This was displayed in all socio-economic strata, no group was dominant. Out of the 33 couples, only 6 got divorced. Moreover, 22 of these couples had been together for 8 or more years at the time when their first child was born, and only 3 of these couples had a divorce.

This observation, together with the previously mentioned observation related to divorces, strongly implies that the probability of the marriage lasting is not connected with the socio-economic status of the family, and it rather seems to be firmly linked with the amount of time the couple spends together prior to having children.

### **5.3. Health**

91% of the participants stated that they feel generally healthy. The participants who indicated that they do not feel generally healthy were 2 participants from families classed as manual skilled, 2 from families considered non-manual skilled and 1 from an intermediate family. The ninth participant was the participant from the previously mentioned family with 11 children where the parents are deceased, hence the socio-economic situation of the family is difficult to derive.

The amounts of the participants who do not feel generally healthy appear proportionate to the total numbers of each category depicted in the survey research, with the exception of the participants from the professional category. It is also interesting that the 3 participants coming from families classed as professional and who claim to feel generally unhealthy all also responded that there are no chronic illnesses or mental disorders in their families, and none of these participants get ill more often than twice a year. In fact, one of them claims that he/she never gets ill. It is therefore rather intriguing that they still do not consider themselves generally healthy.

The participants from the remaining categories (intermediate, non-manual skilled and manual skilled) who do not feel generally healthy have the following in common: they all get ill 3 or more times per year, they all have certain chronic

diseases in their families and all of them have encountered depression within their family or even themselves.

Another interesting fact is that out of the three unemployed participants, two of them do not feel generally healthy. This could potentially imply that being unemployed may have a negative effect on one's self-perception of health, however the sample of unemployed participants in the survey is not sufficient to provide such information.

Out of the 91 participants who do feel generally healthy, 63 only get ill once or twice per year, 20 get ill 3 or 4 times per year and 5 get ill more often than 4 times per year and 3 claim to never get ill. 2 of these 3 come from families ranked intermediate and 1 from a professional family. Concerning the 5 participants who do get ill more than 4 times per year, all of them but one (who comes from a manual skilled classed family) come from the non-manual skilled category. 4 of the said 5 participants do not have any chronic illnesses in their families, which may be the cause of them feeling generally healthy in spite of the fact that they get ill 5 or more times per year.

Out of the total of 9 participants who indicated they get ill more than 4 times per year (regardless of them feeling generally healthy or not), all but 2 come from families where the parents are classified as belonging to the manual skilled or non-manual skilled category. However, only 23 out of 45 participants from non-manual or manual skilled families get ill once or twice a year. This means that almost a half of the total of participants from this category get ill more 3 or more times per year, while in case of both the participants coming from families classed as intermediate or professional, more than 75% of them get ill only twice per year or less. This strongly implies that people raised in families in the non-manual skilled and manual skilled category tend to get ill more often than those raised in families classed as intermediate or professional.

Regarding chronic and mental illnesses, the participants stated that the following can be found in their families: diabetes, heart problems, breast cancer, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome, glaucoma, myalgic encephalomyelitis and chronic fatigue disorder, asthma, OCD, leukaemia, epilepsy, autism, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety/panic disorder, schizophrenia and alcoholism. Apart from diabetes, depression and bipolar disorder, all of these illnesses occurred in 3 or less

cases, therefore not providing sufficient data to analyze the links between the illnesses and the socio-economic situation of the families.

Diabetes occurred in 7 cases, 6 out of which were in families falling into the non-manual or manual skilled category. It is therefore possible that there may be a connection between the socio-economic status and the occurrence of diabetes.

The most observable disease noted in the survey answers was depression. 22% of the participants had family members suffering from depression or were struggling with depression themselves. Almost a half of the participants who have encountered depression in their families were from the non-manual or manual skilled families. Nevertheless, as it has been stated 45% of the participants do come from families in this category, therefore the numbers appear quite proportionate.

On the other hand 6 of the cases of depression, that is more than one third of the total occurrences of depression, could be encountered in the families ranked as intermediate. This means that 25% of the total amount of intermediate families observed in the survey responses have depression in their families. It thus appears that depression can be found in families in the intermediate category more often than in the other categories.

#### **5.4. Education**

In spite of coming from various socio-economic backgrounds 80% of the survey participants are students and 7 of the non-students have already obtained their degree, therefore it seems rather clear that the education of the parents most likely has no direct impact on the education of their children. Furthermore, if we look more closely at the families of the 13 participants who do not have university education and are currently not pursuing it, 5 of these participants in fact have university educated parents. It is thus apparent that children of uneducated parents can attain higher education nevertheless, and vice versa.

However, the fact that there is no direct connection between the education level of the parents and the child does not necessarily mean that the parents' education and socio-economic status of the family has no influence on the decision-making process when it comes to the choice of a particular university.

One of the questions the participants were asked was what their main reason was for choosing their university. 29 participants stated that it was the reputation of

the university, 13 participants decided mainly on the basis of their grades, for 11 participants the key influence was the university's closeness to their home, 10 participants based their decision on the course content, 6 participants simply enjoyed the particular city where the university was located, 5 made their choice due to economic factors, 3 chose their university because it was where their friends or boyfriends were applying to and 1 participant formed his decision on the basis of the university's exchange program which he/she found very suitable. 2 of the students did not answer the question.

The highest amount of participants therefore put emphasis on the university's reputation in their decision-making. The response occurred among participants coming from various socio-economic situations, thus the university's reputation appears to be the crucial factor in general. However, it is remarkable that out of the 19 students who grew up in families classed as professional, all but 3 listed the university's reputation as the main reason for choosing their university. The remaining 3 based their decision on the content and structure of the courses of their choice. It therefore appears that proportionally the reputation of the university seems to be more relevant to students raised in the professional class families, potentially due to the fact that money is less of an issue in such families. It is also notable that all but 1 of the participants from professional families in fact were university students.

On the other hand, there was only 1 participant who studied at a truly prestigious Oxbridge university, to be more precise at Cambridge. This participant's parents were room painter with primary education only and a nurse with secondary education. It is therefore conspicuous that in case of talented students, financial matters do not play a role.

Nonetheless, when taking a closer look at the participants who stated economic factors as the core of their decision, it comes as no surprise that they come from the less financially fortunate categories. 3 of them were raised by partly skilled parents, 2 come from unskilled families and 1 from a manual skilled family. A notable fact is that 1 of the participants in fact decided to study in the Netherlands due to economic factors, as the University of Leiden has lower tuition fees.

8 of the 13 students who chose their universities on the basis of their grades come from intermediate families. This means that over one third of the total of participants with parents in the intermediate category answered this way. There is no

clear explanation as for why it is the students from intermediate families who seem to be limited by their grades the most.

The course content was also a popular answer among the participants. Those who indicated the particular course as their main reason for choosing their university were from the professional class (3), intermediate class (3), non-manual skilled class (3) and manual skilled class (1).

As for the participants who based their choice on the university being close to their homes, they came mostly from manual skilled families (6) and non-manual skilled families (3). This may suggest either that the participants from these categories are more attached to their families, or it may also be related to partly economic reasons, as students who chose a university which is not too far can limit their expenses by living at home.

## **Conclusion**

As this bachelor thesis illustrates, it does appear that there are distinct connections between a family's socio-economic status and the reproductional behaviour, health and education in the family, and that the family's socio-economic status indeed has some kind of impact on the life of the children raised in the family. I looked more closely particularly on the aforementioned areas of reproductional behaviour, health and education in my survey research, and I could observe some links in all three of them.

Regarding the area of reproductional behaviour, the following can be concluded from the survey research:

9 out of the 20 couples classed as professional had 3-4 children and 3 professional couples had 5 or even more children. This observation supports the theory that well situated families tend to have a higher number of children as to prove they can support them and still afford a certain kind of lifestyle.

The majority of the couples observed in the survey research were either from the same socio-economic part of the spectrum or similar ones, with the exception of the situation where the father belongs to the professional class and his wife is a housewife (8 out of 20 cases in the professional category). It therefore appears that people predominantly choose partners from similar backgrounds.

Out of the 21 couples observed in the intermediate category, 9 had an age difference between the partners that was larger than five years, and 4 of them even larger than 8 years. This suggests that the largest age differences between partners occur in the intermediate category. An age difference between the partners that was higher than 5 years could be observed in 15% of the couples, which indicates that age differences between partners appear more commonly than socio-economic differences between partners.

While parenthood postponement was a trend that could be observed among all categories (although it most strongly featured in the professional category, where 75% of the mothers had their first child when they were over 30), childbearing under the age of 20 was only found in the cases of families ranking non-manual skilled, manual skilled or lower. The survey responses therefore confirm the claims of John Goldthorpe.

Possibly the most intriguing observation concluded from the survey in the area of reproductional behaviour is the fact that while the occurrence of divorce appears to be independent on the family's socio-economic situation, the probability of divorce declines in correlation with the amount of time the parents have been together for at the time their first child was born. It is highly observed in the survey results that the longer the parents waited to have their first child, the higher the chances of the marriage lasting seem to be.

The observations in the area of health strongly correspond with the studies mentioned earlier in the thesis. Not only the respondents who indicated that they don't feel generally healthy come from families in the manual skilled or non-manual skilled category, but more importantly 22 out of 45 respondents from this category get ill more than 3 times per year, while 75% of the respondents from professional families only get ill twice a year or less. The survey results therefore fully support the statement of Panayotes Demakakos that people of higher socio-economic status tend to be higher than their lower socio-economic status counterparts counterparts. What was a somewhat surprising health-related result in the survey was that depression most often appears to occur in the intermediate category.

As for the education aspect of the survey, the survey has indicated that higher education attainment seems to be no longer so strongly dependent on the education of one's parents, however the socio-economic status still does affect one's priorities when choosing the particular university, particularly regarding the financial aspect of the decision. In spite of that, it appears that the majority of the respondents was able to choose their university for its reputation or on the basis of the content of their chosen course, therefore the impact of the economic factors on the decision making process seems to be diminishing.

Although the survey research merely confirmed previously stated theories in some aspects (which is also important as every situation evolves and cannot be taken for granted), I do feel that it also brought some new information and fresh insights. My research could not observe a sample as large as the samples studied by the researchers I mentioned in my thesis, yet I believe that I managed to obtain a sample that is diverse enough to have a certain amount of relevance.

## Resumé

Bakalářská práce se snaží vymezit jak se socio-ekonomický status rodiny odráží v určitých oblastech života rodiny, především co se týče reprodukčního chování, zdraví a vzdělanostních šancí. Soustřeďuje se na tuto problematiku především u rodin britských.

V úvodu práce nejprve definuje pojem rodina jakožto skupinu lidí spojených určitými biologickými, emocionálními či právními vztahy, kteří jsou na sobě rovněž závislí ekonomicky, tudíž nejčastěji sdílí jednu domácnost. Takováto rodina je označována jako rodina nukleární a obvykle ji tvoří pouze rodiče a děti, jedná se tedy o rodiny dvougenerační. Existují i jiné širší pojetí rodin, ovšem práce vychází z pojetí nukleární rodiny. Práce dále uvádí základní funkce rodiny, kterými jsou funkce ekonomická, reprodukční, sexuální a vzdělávací.

Dále práce uvádí různé koncepce sociální stratifikace. Zmiňuje přístupy Karla Marxe, Maxe Webera, Talcotta Parsonse a Pierra Bourdieua, jehož pojetí sociálního statusu bylo nejpropracovanější. Bourdieu totiž sociální status nedefinoval pouze v rovině ekonomické (tzv. ekonomický kapitál), ale rovněž kladl důraz na další aspekty, především tzv. kulturní kapitál, založený zejména na vzdělání. Co se týče vlastní kategorizace, dochází práce k závěru, že socio-ekonomický status vychází ze tří hlavních kritérií, jimiž jsou vzdělání, zaměstnání a příjem. S touto koncepcí přišel Harry B. G. Ganzeboom a kolektiv. Zmiňují se také přesnější kategorizace Johna Goldthorpea, a ve Velké Británii často používaný General Register's standard classification of occupations, který se Goldthorpovu rozdělení značně podobá. Rozdělení dle General Register's standard classification of occupations se člení na následujících šest skupin:

- I Professional
- II Intermediate
- IIIN Skilled Non-manual
- IIIM Skilled Manual
- IV Partly Skilled
- V Unskilled



Skupina I je hierarchicky skupinou nejvyšší, jedná se o vzdělané odborníky, zatímco skupina V je tvořena lidmi bez jakýchkoli kvalifikací. Pro názvy skupin v české terminologii neexistují žádné ekvivalenty, obvykle se uvádějí tak, jak jsou uvedené v angličtině.

Po tomto osvětlení základních pojmů se práce zaměřuje na specifikaci role, kterou rodina v sociální stratifikaci hraje. Zejména ve francouzské sociologii se totiž vychází z předpokladu, že základní jednotkou sociální stratifikace je právě rodina. Je vcelku nasnadě, že u určování socio-ekonomického statusu dětí je nutné vycházet ze zaměstnání, vzdělání a příjmů obou rodičů. Tento přístup byl velmi zastáván například již zmiňovaným Johnem Golthorpem, který argumentoval, že vzhledem k tomu, že nukleární rodina tvoří ucelenou domácnost, sdílí tudíž veškeré příjmy a tudíž především z ekonomického hlediska musí členové rodiny nutně příslušet ke stejné třídě.

Ačkoli existují i teorie, podle nichž v rodině každý z manželů přísluší k jiné kategorie socio-ekonomické kategorie, z dříve uvedených poznatků týkajících se funkce rodiny je zřejmé, že rodina s největší pravděpodobností skutečně tvoří základní jednotku stratifikace, vzhledem k tomu, že rodina zastává ekonomickou a vzdělávací funkci. Také práce Pierra Bourdieua tento přístup podporuje. Objevují se rovněž teorie, že lidé si obvykle vybírají partnery, kteří mají podobné vzdělanostní a ekonomické zázemí, ovšem ze reality všedního života je patrné, že tomu tak není vždy. Přesto je nejobvyklejším přístupem předpokládat, že jednotlivá socio-ekonomická zázemí manželů se v rodině skládají v jednotný celek, protože vliv na děti v rodině mají obě strany. Jak uvádí John Scott, ve všech domácnostech lze pozorovat určité sociální nerovnosti, avšak tyto nerovnosti v rámci jednotlivých rodin nepřesahují jednotlivá socio-ekonomická strata.

Práce dále přistupuje ke konkrétním vlivům, které má socio-ekonomický status rodiny na život jejích členů, a to nejprve co se týká reprodukčního chování. Z historického hlediska měly více dětí až do 19. století spíše rodiny vyšších společenských vrstev, patrně proto, že lidé z těchto vrstev měli vyšší předpoklady na dožití. S nástupem antikoncepce začaly rodiny z vyššího socio-ekonomického spektra počet dětí omezovat jako první, další vrstvy je následovaly po první světové válce. V dnešní době opět mají údajně více dětí spíše rodiny movitější, neboť se jedná o jakýsi ukazatel prestiže a toho, že si větší počet dětí rodina může dovolit.

Co se týká situace ve Velké Británii, v 60. letech 20. století byl průměrný počet dětí na jednu ženu (plodnost) téměř 3. Posléze až do roku 1980 plodnost spíše klesala a dostala se až na 1,63 dětí na ženu, avšak od té doby začala mít vzestupný trend. U konkrétních zemí Spojeného Království byla tato situace reflektována vždy obdobně, ovšem s přihlédnutím k tomu, že v Severním Irsku byla porodnost tradičně vždy vyšší, zatímco ve Skotsku nižší. Mezi hlavní důvody, proč především v posledních 10 letech plodnost stoupá (v roce 2009 dle bristké Office of National Statistics dosáhla 1,94 dětí na ženu) patří zejména tyto 3: zvýšená vládní podpora v mateřství, vyšší imigrace ze zemí, kde ženy obvykle mají vyšší počet dětí a v neposlední řadě fakt, že ženy, které v osmdesátých letech začaly odkládat mateřství na pozdější věk, nyní začaly mít děti.

Tento trend odkládání mateřství má poměrně velkou návaznost na socio-ekonomický status, protože k odkládání rodičovství dochází zejména z důvodu získávání vyššího vzdělání a budování kariéry. Lze tedy předpokládat, že tento trend bude patrný především ve vyšších vrstvách.

Ve Velké Británii je však častým jevem nejen odkládání rodičovství, ale naopak i situace, kdy se rodiči stávají náctiletí. Dle studie Kathleen Kiernanové je takto rané rodičovství spojeno častěji spíše v nižších socio-ekonomických vrstvách a často souvisí s finančními problémy v rodině.

Další oblastí, na kterou se práce zaměřila, byla problematika zdraví. Mnoho studií, například studie Williama Dresslera poukazují na to, že mezi socio-ekonomickou situací rodiny a zdravím jejích členů je přímá závislost. Lidé z hůře ekonomicky postavených skupin jsou údajně častěji nemocní, zatímco lidé z vyšších vrstev jsou prý v lepším zdravotním stavu a dožívají se vyššího věku, jak tvrdí Panayotes Demakakos a kolektiv. Na zdraví však mají podle Demakakose vliv nejen podmínky zaměstnání, výše příjmů či eventuální nezaměstnanost, ale i to, jak se lidé sami vidí ve společnosti a jakou pozici si sami na socio-ekonomickém žebříčku přiřazují. Demakakosova studie mapující data z britské společnosti v letech 2004-2005 tento jev potvrzuje.

Ve dalším britském výzkumu, kterým se zabývali v roce 2004 Jonathan Gardner a Andrew Oswald se také ukázalo, že na zdraví má velký vliv vůbec přítomnost rodiny jako taková, a že svobodní či rozvedení jedinci jsou častěji nemocní než lidé, kteří mají manžela či manželku. Je možné, že k tomu dochází díky sociální funkci rodiny, tedy proto, že lidé mají ve své rodině oporu, což přispívá

především k jejich duševního zdraví. Rodina může být také oporou v případě ztráty zaměstnání či zhoršení ekonomické situace, a napomůže tak tuto situaci rychleji překonat. Dalo by se říci, že vliv rodiny, zdraví a socio-ekonomické situace jsou na sebe tudíž návazné v určitém koloběhu.

Posledním aspektem, kterým se práce zabývá je vzdělání a vzdělanostní šance. Rodiče dětem předávají svůj kulturní kapitál i sociální kapitál (konexe), a vliv hraje i kapitál ekonomický, protože movitější rodiče mohou svým dětem rozšiřovat obzory cestováním, případně jim financovat různé kurzy.

J. B. Douglas se snažil najít souvislosti mezi socio-ekonomickým statusem rodiny a vzděláváním dětí v této rodině tak, že po více než 10 let mapoval vzdělávání dětí narozených ve Velké Británii v prvním březnovém týdnu roku 1946. Douglas zjistil, že socio-ekonomický status rodiny skutečně má vliv na vzdělání dětí, a dokonce vypořádal, že rozdíly jsou s věkem stále zřetelnější. Rovněž si všiml, že větší roli hraje vzdělání matky, neboť právě matka obvykle tráví s dítětem v jeho raných letech nejvíce času. V eposlední řadě se také v Douglasově výzkumu ukázalo, že bez ohledu na výsledky ve škole měly děti z rodin s vyšším socio-ekonomickým statusem vyšší šance přijetí na střední školu, a že tyto rodiny se stíraly až v případech slutečně nadaných dětí.

Stephen J. Ball se zabýval výzkumem v oblasti vyššího vzdělávání a vypořádal, že socio-ekonomický status rodiny, z níž student pochází má velký vliv na rozhodnutí jakou univerzitu zvolit. Například ti, kteří neznali nikoho vysokoškolsky vzdělaného byli ve svém rozhodování nejistí. Někteří studenti se rozhodovali podle toho, co pro jejich rodinu bylo finančně únosné. V Ballově výzkumu také bylo patrné, že studenti si školy vybírají také na základě toho, jakou cítí socio-ekonomickou sounáležitost s typickými studenty této instituce, ve výzkumu se mezi studenty objevil například i názor, že Cambridge je příliš snobský a tudíž pro daného respondenta nežádoucí.

Aby práce více odpovídala současné reálné situaci ve Velké Británii, je její další součástí dotazníkový průzkum, jehož účastníky je 100 lidí z Velké Británie ve věku 18-27 let. 20% respondentů jsou nestudenti (7 vysokoškolsky vzdělaných a pracujících lidí, 8 středoškolsky vzdělaných a pracujících lidí, 3 nezaměstnaní a 2 ženy v domácnosti). Zbývajících 80% respondentů tvořili studenti 36 univerzit v Anglii, 2 univerzit ve Walesu, 2 univerzit ve Skotsku a jeden bristký student či studentka, který/á se rozhodl/a pro studium v Nizozemsku.

Při analýze výsledků dotazníkového průzkumu se vycházelo ze socio-ekonomického statusu rodičů respondentů. V úvahu přitom bylo u obou rodičů bráno vzdělání, povolání i platové ohodnocení, které příslušnému povolání průměrně odpovídá. V 19% případů, kdy byla matka respondenta žena v domácnosti se však přihlíželo spíše k socio-ekonomickému statusu otce, ovšem s ohledem na vzdělání matky (její potenciální kulturní kapitál, který mohla dětem předat). Konkrétní vymezení skupin bylo určeno na základě již zmíněného General Register's Standard Classification of Occupations. Otázky, které byly respondentům kladeny se vztahovaly k oblastem reprodukčního chování v rodině, zdraví v rodině a vzdělání respondentů i jejich rodičů. Přesné znění dotazníku je k dispozici v příloze 2.

Nejširší množství poznatků vyplývalo z odpovědí na otázky související s reprodukčním chováním. 13 respondentů pocházelo z rodin s pěti a více dětmi, přičemž rodiny 7 těchto respondentů spadaly do kategorie Manual Skilled. Největší rodiny však byly nalezeny ve skupině professional, v níž byla například i rodina s 8 dětmi. Naopak nejméně často se takto vícedětné rodiny objevovaly ve skupině intermediate; pouze jediná rodina v této kategorii měla pět dětí, z nichž navíc čtyři byly ze dvou párů dvojčat. Je tedy možné, že skupina intermediate má patrně obvykle méně dětí, v případech rodin respondentů v těchto rodinách bylo nejčastěji 1 či 2 děti (14 rodin ze 20 spadajících do kategorie intermediate). Ze 20 rodin v kategorii professional téměř polovina (9) měla 3-4 děti, což souhlasí s již zmiňovanou teorií, že výše postavené rodiny mají často více dětí jako určitou známku prestiže. U skupin manual skilled a non-manual skilled se počty dětí poměrně různily.

30% respondentů pocházelo z rozvedených rodin, či byli dětmi z druhého manželství. V těchto 30% byly všechny socio-ekonomické skupiny zastoupeny velmi rovnoměrně, jeví se tedy, že rozvodovost nemá souvislost se socio-ekonomickou situací rodiny. Naopak se ukázalo, že velký vliv na rozvodovost má doba, po kterou spolu rodiče byli předtím, než se narodilo jejich první dítě. Ze 33 párů, které měly svého prvního potomka až po 5 a více letech se rozvedlo pouze 6, ze 22 párů, které počkaly 8 a více let se rozpadla dokonce jen 3 manželství. Co se týká vlastního odkládání rodičovství, podle očekávání se tento trend objevoval především ve skupině professional (v 15 případech ze 20 v kategorii professional měla matka respondenta své první dítě ve více než třiceti letech).

Co se týče problematiky zdraví, 91% respondentů odpověděla, že se cítí celkově zdraví. Z těch, kteří řekli, že se celkově zdravě necítí většina pocházela z rodin manual skilled a non-manual skilled, což koresponduje s již uvedenými výzkumy, podle kterých jsou lidé z nižších socio-ekonomických skupin častěji nemocní. Za zmínku rovněž stojí, že dva ze tří nezaměstnaných respondentů se nepovažovali za celkově zdravé, což by mohlo poukazovat na provázanost zaměstnání a sebehodnocení svého zdraví, ovšem k potvrzení této teorie by bylo zapotřebí více nezaměstnaných respondentů. Téměř polovina (22 ze 45) respondentů z kategorie manual skilled a non-manual skilled onemocní více než třikrát za rok, zatímco ve skupině professional více než 75% respondentů je nemocných pouze dvakrát ročně nebo méně. Tento poznatek opět podporuje dřívější tvrzení, že lidé z výše postavených socio-ekonomických skupin bývají zdravější. Chronická tělesná i duševní onemocnění v rodině lze pozorovat napříč všemi kategoriemi, nejčastěji se mezi respondenty vyskytovaly případy deprese. U kategorie intermediate se dokonce deprese v rodině vyskytovala ve čtvrtině případů.

Vzhledem k tomu, že 80% respondentů bylo studenty vysoké školy a 7 z nestudentů mělo vysokoškolské vzdělání, byť respondenti pocházeli z velmi různorodých socio-ekonomických zázemí, je patrné, že socio-ekonomický status rodiny nemá přímý vliv na vzdělanostní šance potomků. Je však pravdou, že z 20 studentů, kteří vyrostli v rodinách ve skupině professional, se 19 stalo studenty vysoké školy. Určitý vliv socio-ekonomického statusu se rovněž dal pozorovat v oblasti priorit při volbě univerzity. Ačkoli nejčastější odpovědí mezi studenty bylo, že svou vysokou školu zvolili zejména pro její dobrou pověst, tato odpověď se objevovala především mezi studenty z rodin v kategorii professional (16 z 19). Naopak téměř všichni respondenti, kteří odpověděli, že se rozhodovali hlavně s přihlédnutím k finančním důvodům byli z rodin příslušících do skupin partly skilled a non-skilled. Je tedy patrné, že z ekonomického hlediska je ve Velké Británii mezi volbou konkrétní instituce a postavením rodiny jistá provázanost, nicméně skutečností zůstává, že jediný respondent, který byl studentem prestižní Oxbridge univerzity, konkrétně Cambridge pocházel z nižších ekonomických poměrů, tudíž u skutečně nadaných jedinců ekonomická situace rodiny není v cestě za vzděláním překážkou.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

Figure 1

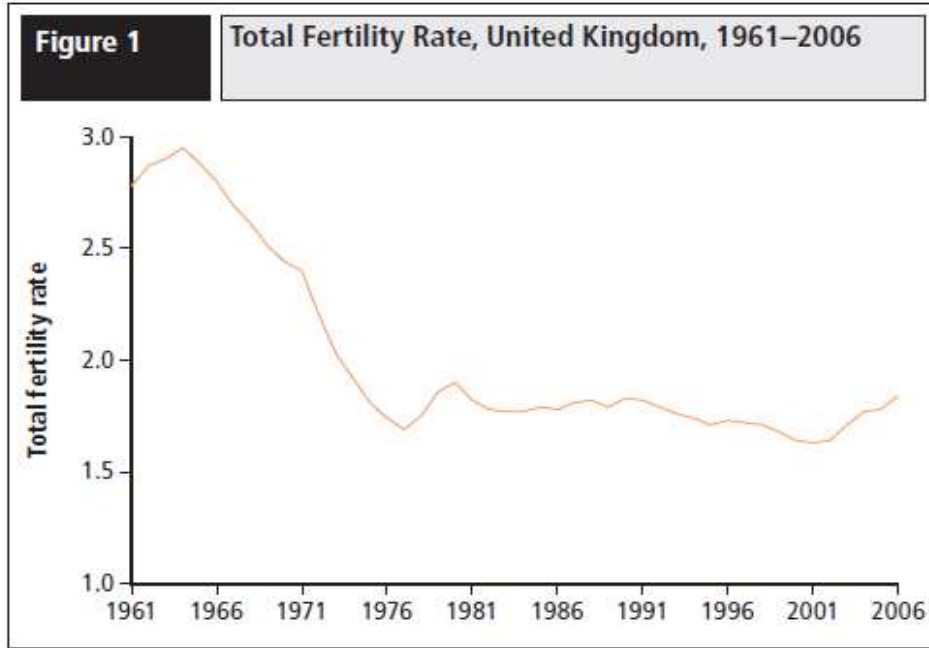
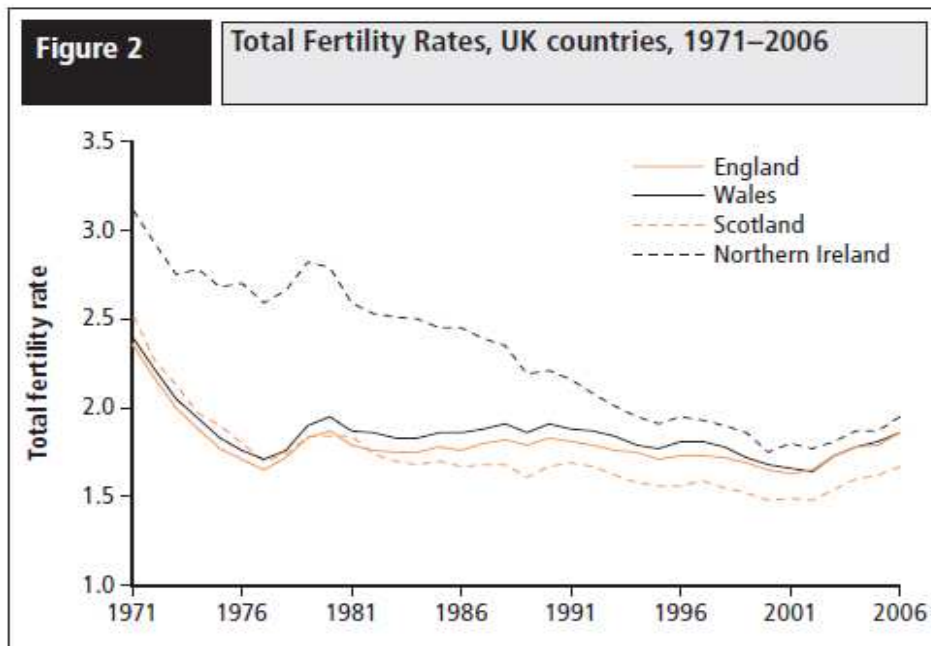


Figure 2



## **Appendix 2**

### **The Survey**

1. How old are you?
2. What is the highest level of education you have attained?
3. What is your occupation? (If you are a full-time student, write student)
4. If you are a student, what course do you study? (Leave blank if you are not a student)
5. What is the highest level of education your father has attained?
6. What is your father's occupation?
7. What is the highest level of education your mother has attained?
8. What is your mother's occupation?
9. How old were your parents when you were born?
10. For how long had they been together when you were born?
11. Were your parents married when you were born?
  - Yes
  - No
12. If so, are they still married?
  - Yes
  - No (divorced)
  - No (widowed)

13. Do you have any siblings? (If you do, write how many)
14. How old are your siblings? (Separate ages with a comma. Leave blank if you have no siblings)
15. Are there any chronic illnesses in your family? (If so, specify which)
16. Are there any mental disorders in your family? (If so, specify which)
17. Do you consider yourself generally healthy?
- Yes
  - No
18. How often do you get ill?
- Never
  - Once or twice a year
  - Three or four times a year
  - More often
19. If you are a student, what university do you study at? (Leave blank if you are not a student)
20. If you are a student, what was your main reason for choosing your university?
- The reputation of the university
  - The university's distance from your home
  - Economic factors
  - Your grades
  - Other:



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## **Annotation**

The aim of my bachelor thesis is to establish whether a family's socio-economic status affects the life of the members of the family and to observe such potential effects on British families in case they do exist. This is done both theoretically (by gathering data from previous researches conducted in Great Britain) and empirically (by doing my own survey research with British participants). The main emphasis is given to the areas of reproductional behaviour, health and education.

## **Anotace**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je zjistit, zda je socio-ekonomický status rodiny provázaný s určitými oblastmi života jejích členů a eventuálně tyto konkrétní vlivy nalézt u britských rodin jak teoreticky (pomocí shromáždění dat z předešlých britských výzkumů v této oblasti), tak empiricky (sestavením vlastního dotazníkového průzkumu, jehož respondenti jsou z Velké Británie). Práce se v tomto ohledu zabývá především oblastmi reprodukčního chování, zdraví a vzdělání.