

Changing patterns of family formation

家庭型態變遷的再思

Gloria Yuen
Planning and Development Manager



香港善導會
The Society of Rehabilitation and
Crime Prevention, Hong Kong

Family

- a **family** (from Latin: *familiare*) is a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, kinship, or co-residence;
- Changes in demographic characteristics of family in contemporary societies: family size, age, ethnicity, gender of its members;



Family formation (1)

- Phenomena:
 1. Increase average age of marriage
 2. Decrease fertility rate (decrease number of children and first birth at later age)
- Postponing parenthood in Central and Eastern Europe
 - There is a trend in the family formation among youngsters that their transition to parenthood currently take place at a later stage in life course and growing age at first birth since 1990s;
 - Social policy towards childbearing of woman in CEE;

Family formation (2)

3. Aging population;
4. Singleton population;

- Experience singleness in Asian and European countries
(Malaysia / Italy / Britain)

- A dynamic process in which these women learn and relearn how to become women without being wives and mothers;
- Fulfill natural vocation as 'women' by adopting children;
- Importance of social networks, other than the family, is a key element in the lives of single people to deal with an uncertain future.

Family formation (3)

5. Gay, lesbian, bisexual couples
 6. Interracial marriage and mixed children
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual couples in UK and Belgium
 - Change of primacy meanings of family that involve blood or marital relationship;
 - New family designs of “co-parenting” for family-work balance, familial flexibility, joint custody and parental functions;
 - Concerns on end of life care

Family formation (4)

- Patterns of partnering and childbearing of transnational families in North Europe
 - Motivations for transnational marriages
 - migration is related to an increase in union dissolution
 - Different expectations in childbearing

Family formation (5)

- Factors affecting patterns of family formation
 1. Economic level of family
 2. Changing gender roles in family
 3. Postponement of child bearing
 4. Transnational mobility and migration of family
 5. Policies of countries
- Challenges:
 1. End of life care
 2. Parenting practice

Changing families in Scotland (an example)

- By 2010 there will be more stepfamilies than any other family form (census 2001)
- By 2020 it will be very hard to talk of a typical family (Hantrais 2004)
- People will experience different family transitions throughout their adult lives (Williams 2004)

Changing families in Scotland

- People are marrying later
- More marriages in Scotland end in divorce
- Divorce and separation rate is 33% higher for those with children of disabilities
- More people are cohabiting
- An increasing number of children are born outside of marriage
- Household with one adult with children rise from 150,000 in 2004 to 200,000 in 2024
- 30% of all mothers will spend some time in stepfamily before the age of 45. By 2010 stepfamilies will form the dominant family form in Scotland.

Changing families in Scotland

What happen then:

- Changes in marital relationship affect parenting quality more than changes in parenting quality affect marital relationship;
- Quality of parents' relationship associated with how children adapt
- Not only what parents do to the child that matters, but how the parents behave with each other.
- Parenting and partnership is higher up the Government agenda.

A look at our future

- Census and Statistics Dept.: 28% elderly in 2039 and more females (1000 vs 744 in 2039);
- Late marriage and postponement of childbearing;
- New immigrants, families of two-way entry permit, ethnic minority in society;
- Marriage of transsexual
- Changing pattern of end of life care and parenting

Our response as social workers

- Our values
- Our responsivity
- Our practice

- Thank you -