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SOC 345

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10/24/25

Midterm Reflection: A Look Into The Future

Over time the idea of a family in the United States has dramatically shifted across generations. The traditional image of a family is a married couple, male and female, with children where the man is working and the woman stays home to care and attend to the house and children. This traditional family is nowadays not the normal household. Today we are seeing marriage rates drop with an increase in divorce rates, women are now in the work force, there are a lot of single parents raising children or having a blended family, and same sex marriages have evolved and their families are forming. Looking at this in the past perspective where there was only the traditional family structure there has been drastic changes in really such a short amount of time. Looking ahead to the year 2035, ten years from now, I'm positive we will still see change.

In today's society we are seeing less people getting married young and starting a family. Fewer people are getting married in general and if they do, many are cohabiting first. Cohabitation is the idea of a couple living together who are not married but are still in an intimate and committed relationship. These couples can be both opposite sex or same sex. This has become very common and I would say the new norm. The idea is to see if you and your partner will work together by sharing a space before making the big commitment to get married. Research shows that cohabitation is associated with higher divorce rates and leads to more conflict within the

relationship. There are also higher rates of infidelity compared to couples who do not live together before marriage. Because of these trends we are seeing, some people are choosing to focus on their careers instead of on a relationship or family.

We are also seeing a huge shift in women's roles in society. Since the 1970s, women have stepped into the workforce and now have long term careers. This change has also brought a dual income to the family whereas before, it was one income from the husband. Marriages now have to talk about how they want to divide up household responsibilities like bills and chores. In some cases this has led to more equal partnerships and less resentment but this is also why we are seeing changes in other social norms. Because women are now providing for themselves, they now are not being tied down to a relationship because the man was the sole provider. This has led to a huge increase in divorce rates.

Women are leaving their marriages and sometimes with their children. Which brings us to our next topic of single parent families and blended families. This can be significantly difficult on both the parent and the children. Living with one parent or splitting your time between both parents has become normalized because of how often we are seeing it in modern society.

Families are also coming together and creating a new family with step parents and step siblings. It is also important to point out that there is an increase of people having children without being married.

Lastly we are seeing an increase in LGBTQ families. Now that they are more socially accepted and same sex marriage became legal nationwide in 2015 we are seeing this as the new normal as well. More couples have adopted and the journey of IVF has emerged. There are still blended families in this case as well possibly from previous relationships.

The newest trend which I find super interesting is the rise of stay at home dads. As we talked about previously, in the past men were the providers and out working while the women were at home. Today we are seeing men choosing and or needing to stay at home and care for their children while their partner works. I think the rise of this was mostly due to COVID 19. Since then, jobs have shifted to a virtual at home option. This created a more flexible schedule allowing more fathers to spend time at home and taking on the caregiving responsibilities that used to fall onto the mothers plate. There have also been cultural shifts about what we see as masculine in society. Being a hands-on father is seen as more admirable than unmanly nowadays. There still is stigma surrounding the idea of a stay at home dad while the mother is the “breadwinner” simply because of the traditional ideologies from previous generations.

By 2035, I believe we will continue to see a rise in new ideologies. The image of a “traditional breadwinner” will continue to shift along with economic trends and social expectations of a father. I think fathers will continue to be more involved so I hope, but it not only benefits the marriage but it is most important for the children. Being involved in your children’s life can significantly improve their lives and lead to happier and healthier families overall.

There are many influences that affect what 2035 will look like. Being a college student, the first thing on my mind is finding a stable job with a good income because of the rising costs in everyday life. Student debt makes it significantly harder for younger adults to afford having children and even marriages. I think because of this, we will see cohabitation continuing to rise and maybe not even in an intimate relationship but a friendship because of how expensive it is to live. There is going to be a delay in having children but I think having children without a marriage will also continue to increase. I do not necessarily agree that it is a smart and good decision but the way the world is headed right now I would definitely expect that. The looks of a

family will continue to grow in different forms. I think we will shift away from what a “family typically looks like” and more of it comes in all shapes and sizes viewpoint. I don’t think there will be such a standard. I think more adults will choose themselves over a relationship. I think it is becoming more common that it is just easier to look after yourself. This class has really opened my eyes to the fact that less people do not want kids in general or to even get married. There is such a strong hesitation with both aspects that I did not know about before. There is also the idea of not wanting to bring children into such a scary world. I have talked to my family and friends about this a lot and my dream is to have kids and a loving family but a part of me is so worried about what the world will look like for them. I feel like I won’t be able to protect them from the horrific reality of the current world we are living in. I can only hope to see change and we as humans can do better.

In conclusion, the world we see today will not be the same in 2035. We will continue becoming more diverse and accepting. The roles of a family and what one will look like will continue to evolve into many different ways. As long as we accept and support this change as a society we will thrive.