|  |
| --- |
| **Learning Table 2: Social Policy** |
| **Analysis** | **Analysis** | **Application** |
| **History of Social Policy** | **Theoretical Perspectives on Social Policy** |  |
| **1980’s & 1990’s Conservative Party Policy**The New Right approach was very influential through the years of the Conservative Party Government. Social policy aimed to strengthen nuclear families, by emphasising self-help through increasing reliance on the family, as it tried to save money by reducing welfare benefits. For example the Child Support Agency was established in 1993 to ensure absent fathers took financial responsibility for their children, and this was accompanied by cuts in the value of benefits paid for single mothers. **1997 – 2010 (New) Labour Party Policy**Between 1997 – 2010 the Labour Party formed the government. There was continual concerns over ‘dysfunctional’ families. However, these policies showed a recognition of the growing diversity of family forms with more emphasis placed on the care, protection and development of children regardless of what type of family they grew up in. * There were policies were coined ‘**New Deals’** to support lone parents in moving from dependence on welfare back to employment.
* Britain’s first **National Minimum Wage** to help the most poorly paid.
* **Child Tax Credits** to help the poorest families.
* Increase in **free childcare** with all 3 and 4 year olds guaranteed fives half days of nursery education each week.
* **Civil Partnership Act (2005)** enabled gay and lesbian couples to get legally married through forming civil partnerships.

**2010 – 2015: Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition Policy:**Family policy took on some of the New Right characteristics. * There was a renewed emphasis on the importance of marriage. They offered **tax breaks for married couples** (2010) to encourage this.
* The **Troubled Families Programme (2011)** tackled families that had problems and were causing problems for the community around them. This put high costs on the public sector.
* There were **also major cuts in welfare** including to children’s services and the care of the elderly. This reflected the New Right ideas of self-help and relying on the family and not the state.
* Interestingly, although a huge emphasis was placed on promoting the nuclear family. The coalition government made **same-sex marriages legal** on the same basis as opposite-sex marriages in 2014.

**2015 - Present: Conservative Government:***Your notes here:* | **Surveillance theory (postmodernist conflict view)****Donzelot (1977)** sees social policy as a form of power and social control over individuals. He believes that professionals such as health visitors, social workers ‘police’ families and place them under **surveillance** as they use their power and knowledge to observe, monitor, control and change families, particularly poorer families EVAL: However, this approach fails to explain who benefits from the power and control carried out by the ‘caring professionals’. Marxists would claim they serve the ruling class, feminists would say men.**Marxism (class conflict view)**See social policy negatively –benefits the ruling class and capitalism.* Low level of state pensions – older family members who are no longer productive workers and only to be maintained at minimal costs.
* Welfare system does serve the interest of the working class. Benefits and health care for the working class are frequently cut, which means working class family life can be a struggle.

EVAL: Offers a conspiracy theory – assumes social policy is set up to benefit the ruling classes. This underplays the how much social policy helps working class family life.**Feminism (gender conflict view)****Leonard (1978)** highlights that some polices appear to benefit women but actually reinforce patriarchy in the family.* Maternity leave polices – maternity pay and leave much more generous than paternity leave. This reinforces the idea that women should be the main carers of children.
* Child benefit – this is paid to women and although this gives women a source of income independent of men it reinforces the notion that the mother is responsible for the welfare of children.

EVAL: Not all social policies are directed at reinforcing patriarchy – e.g. equal pay and sex discrimination laws, benefits for lone parents, domestic violence refuges, equal rights for divorce.**Functionalism (consensus and march of progress view)**See social policies positively – help families to perform their functions more efficiently, benefiting individual members and society as a whole. **Fletcher** claims the creation of welfare services such as health care, housing, education helps the family to perform its functions more effectively. For example, looking after family members alongside NHS professionals in times of ill health.EVAL: Assumes a march of progress with social polices, making family life gradually better – sometimes benefits are cut to poor families, mainly benefit men.**New Right (political view)**See social policies negatively – believe that governments should intervene as little as possible. Favour social polices that support the self reliant nuclear family as it is capable of caring for its own family members. They are critical of social polices that have undermined this family structure (e.g. laws making divorce easier) and self reliance. **Murray** argues that a generous welfare system creates dependency:* Council housing for unmarried teenage mothers – encourage teenage girls to get pregnant.
* Generous welfare benefits to families, especially lone parent – encourages some fathers to abandon their financial responsibilities towards their families.
* He also claims the growth of lone parent families, partly due to generous benefits, means boys grow up without a male role model and authority figure and that this partly explains increases in juvenile male crime.

**Murray** advocates cutting welfare spending and placing tighter restrictions on those that are eligible. He is supportive of the Child Support Agency, whose role is to make absent fathers financially responsible for their children. He also encourages polices that supports the nuclear family, e.g. taxes breaks for married rather than co-habiting couples.EVAL: Ignores the negative consequences of welfare cuts - can push families into more poverty and drive up crime levels.**New labour policies** were not a complete success – significant numbers of children remained in poverty and Sure Start was not adequately funded. |  |