

ESSAY - PLAN BY PARAGRAPHS

Introduction

Topic/ Background

Outline

Main argument/ Thesis statement /Answer *****

Body

Each paragraph one central idea

First sentence is topic sentence

Everything else supports that topic sentence

Conclusion

Link back to question

Summarise what you have written

A major change that has occurred in the Western family is an increased incidence in divorce.

Whereas in the past, divorce was a relatively rare occurrence, in recent times it has become quite commonplace. This change is borne out clearly in census figures. For example thirty years ago in Australia, only one marriage in ten ended in divorce; nowadays the figure is more than one in three (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996: p.45). A consequence of this change has been a substantial increase in the number of single parent families and the attendant problems that this brings (Kilmartin, 1997). **This**

essay will seek to critically examine a number of sociological explanations for the 'divorce phenomenon' and also consider the social policy implications that each explanation carries with it. **It**

will be argued that the best explanations are to be found within a broad socio-economic framework.

One type of explanation for rising divorce has focused on changes in laws relating to marriage. For example, Bilton, Bonnett and Jones (1987) argue that increased rates of divorce do not necessarily indicate that families are now more unstable. It is possible, they claim, that there has always been a degree of marital instability. They suggest that changes in the law have been significant, because they have provided unhappily married couples with 'access to a legal solution to pre-existent marital problems' (p.301). Bilton et al. therefore believe that changes in divorce rates can be best explained in terms of changes in the legal system. The problem with this type of explanation however, is that it does not consider why these laws have changed in the first place. It could be argued that reforms to family law, as well as the increased rate of divorce that has accompanied them, are the product of more fundamental changes in society.

Another type of explanation is one that focuses precisely on these broad societal changes. For example, Nicky Hart (cited in Haralambos, 1995) argues that increases in divorce and marital breakdown are the result of economic changes that have affected the family. One example of these changes is the raised material aspirations of families, which Hart suggests has put pressure on both spouses to become wage earners. Women as a result have been forced to become both homemakers and economic providers. According to Hart, the contradiction of these two roles has led to conflict and this is the main cause of marital breakdown. It would appear that Hart's explanation cannot account for all cases of divorce - for example, marital breakdown is liable to occur in families where only the husband is working. Nevertheless, her approach, which is to relate changes in family relations to broader social forces, would seem to be more probing than one that looks only at legislative change.

The two explanations described above have very different implications

for social policy, especially in relation to how the problem of increasing marital instability might be dealt with. Bilton et al. (1995) offer a legal explanation and hence would see the solutions also being determined in this domain. If rises in divorce are thought to be the consequence of liberal divorce laws, the obvious way to stem this rise is to make them less obtainable. This approach, one imagines, would lead to a reduction in divorce statistics; however, it cannot really be held up as a genuine solution to the problems of marital stress and breakdown in society. Indeed it would seem to be a solution directed more at symptoms than addressing fundamental causes. Furthermore, the experience of social workers, working in the area of family welfare suggests that restricting a couple's access to divorce would in some cases serve only to exacerbate existing marital problems (Johnson, 1981). In those cases where violence is involved, the consequences could be tragic. Apart from all this, returning to more restrictive divorce laws seems to be a solution little favoured by Australians. (Harrison, 1990).

A comprehensive **explanation for the growing trend of marital breakdown presents a complex task;** and it is even more complex to find solutions that might ameliorate the problems created by it.

Clearly though, **As this essay has argued,** the most useful to be found not within a narrow legal framework, but within a broader socio-economic one. Finally, it is worth pointing out that, whilst current social contexts may appear to indicate increased family instability, research suggests that instability may have been the norm rather than the exception. As Bell and Zajdow (1997) point out, in the past, parent and step families were more common than is assumed - although the disruptive influence then was not but the premature death of one or both parents. This situation suggests that in studying the modern family, one to employ a historical perspective, including the possibility of looking to the past in searching for ways of dealing problems in the present.

PARAGRAPH WRITING

“(1) One type of explanation for rising divorce has focused on changes in laws relating to marriage. (2) For example, Bilton, Bonnett and Jones (1987) argue that increased rates of divorce do not necessarily indicate that families are now more unstable. (3) It is possible, they claim, that there has always been a degree of marital instability. (4) They suggest that changes in the law have been significant, because they have provided unhappily married couples with 'access to a legal solution to pre-existent marital problems' (p.301). (5) Bilton et al. therefore believe that changes in divorce rates can be best explained in terms of changes in the legal system. (6) The problem with this type of explanation however, is that it does not consider why these laws have changed in the first place. (7) It could be argued that reforms to family law, as well as the increased rate of divorce that has accompanied them, are the product of more fundamental changes in society.”

Monash University 2007, *Language and Learning Online*, <http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lonline/writing/general/essay/sample-essay/index.xml>

1. Put brackets around the topic sentence.
 - a. What is the topic? Underline this.
 - b. What is the controlling idea? Highlight this.

2. How are the sentences linked to the main idea of the paragraph:
 - a. Write the words or phrases used in each sentence that help link to the main idea of the paragraph:

Sentence 2:

.....

Sentence 3:

.....

Sentence 4:

.....

Sentence 5:

.....

Sentence 6:

.....

Sentence 7:

.....

3. What is the purpose of each sentence in the paragraph? Whose 'voice' do we read in each sentence – the student writing the essay or the source (book/article etc) that the student read. Choose from the following purposes:

- Suggests an alternative explanation
- Gives an example of an explanation for divorce
- Critically analyses explanation
- Gives further detail about an explanation for divorce

Sentence	Purpose	Voice
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

“(1) One type of explanation for rising divorce has focused on changes in laws relating to marriage. (2) For example, Bilton, Bonnett and Jones (1987) argue that increased rates of divorce do not necessarily indicate that families are now more unstable. (3) It is possible, they claim, that there has always been a degree of marital instability. (4) They suggest that changes in the law have been significant, because they have provided unhappily married couples with 'access to a legal solution to pre-existent marital problems' (p.301). (5) Bilton et al. therefore believe that changes in divorce rates can be best explained in terms of changes in the legal system. (6) The problem with this type of explanation however, is that it does not consider why these laws have changed in the first place. (7) It could be argued that reforms to family law, as well as the increased rate of divorce that has accompanied them, are the product of more fundamental changes in society.”

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TEACHER'S ANSWER KEY

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2. How are the sentences linked to the main idea of the paragraph:
 - a. Write the words or phrases used in each sentence that help link to the main idea of the paragraph:

Sentence 2: *For example; increased rates of divorce*

Sentence 3: *they claim; marital instability*

Sentence 4: *they; unhappily married couples*

Sentence 5: *therefore believe; changes in divorce rates*

Sentence 6: *this type of explanation; it; these laws*

Sentence 7: *increased rate of divorce*

3. What is the purpose of each sentence in the paragraph? Whose 'voice' do we read in each sentence – the essay writer's voice or the source voice? Choose from the following purposes:

- Suggests an alternative explanation
- Gives an example of an explanation for divorce
- Critically analyses an explanation
- Gives further detail about the explanation for divorce

Sentence	Purpose	Voice
1	Topic sentence; introduced topic and controlling idea of paragraph	Student
2	Supports topic sentence – gives an example of an explanation for divorce (legal)	Source
3	Gives further detail about the above explanation for divorce (legal)	Source
4	Gives further detail about the above explanation for divorce (legal)	Source
5	Supports topic sentence again	Student
6	Critically analyses the explanation	Student
7	Concluding sentence – link to next paragraph?	Student

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LIST OF COHESIVE WORDS + PHRASES

Relationship	Words
Time	soon, then, finally, previously, next, last, afterwards, on another occasion, at this point, until then, before that, lastly, meanwhile, subsequently, following on from, in the end, now, presently, formerly
Addition	again, and, besides, therefore, additionally, indeed, moreover, as well, furthermore, in addition,
Result	hence, therefore, consequently, so, because, then, finally, in summary, on the whole, thus, accordingly, as a result, such as, these include, evidently
Contrast	however, nevertheless, yet, and yet, but, still, on the other hand, otherwise, conversely, in spite of, though, although, even so, contrastingly, contrarily, on the contrary, balanced against, despite
Comparison	similarly, likewise, correspondingly, equally, equally important, in the same way, even so, by comparison
Analogy or example	for example, an example of this is, this can be seen, this can be illustrated by, an illustration of this is, this can be exemplified by, for instance, to demonstrate, take the case of
Summary	in brief, finally, in conclusion, to conclude, lastly, in summary, on the whole, as shown, thus, to recapitulate, in other words, summing up, hence
Sequence	Firstly, secondly, subsequently, simultaneously, concurrently, previously, at this time, next, last, finally, then, followed by, before, after, meanwhile

PARAGRAPH WRITING

Discuss the following questions and feed back to your class.

- What do you think is meant by “voice” in an essay?
- What are the different types of “voice”?
- What is assertion?
- What is evidence?
- How do you define “critical evaluation”?

Formal Text	Annotations
<p>(1)The way wealth is distributed in Australia also indicates Australia’s lack of equality. (2) ‘In 1995, 20% of the Australian population owned 72.2% of Australia’s wealth with the top 50% owning 92.1%’ (Raskall 1998, p.287). (3) Such a significant difference in the distribution of wealth indicates that, at least economically, there is an established class system in Australia. (4) McGregor (1988) argues that Australian society can be separated into three levels: the Upper, Middle and Working classes. (5) In addition, it has been shown that most Australians continue to remain in the class into which they were born (McGregor 1988) despite arguments about the ease of movement between classes (Fitzpatrick 1994). (6) The issue of class and its inequality, however, is further influenced by factors such as race and gender.</p> <p>(7) The relative disadvantage of women with regard to their earnings and asset ownership shows that within classes there is further inequity based on gender ...</p>	

Voice in Academic Writing TEACHER'S ANSWER KEY

The following examples are re-formatted from *The University of Wollongong 2000 Expressing your voice in academic writing*, viewed 13 March 2012, Unilearn, University of Wollongong, <http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/4bi.html>>.

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Source: The University of Wollongong, 2000. *Expressing your voice in academic writing*, viewed 13 March 2012, Unilearn, University of Wollongong, <<http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/academic/4bi.html>>