

#40DayChallenge Day 15

Outline and explain two ways in which changes in legislation have led to changes in gender roles in the family (10)

One way in which changes in legislation have led to changes in gender roles in the family is through changes to equality legislation in employment. The introduction of policies such as the Equal Pay Act and the Sexual Discrimination Act in the 1970s have proved to be motivators for women in employment. These pieces of legislation ensured that women could not be treated unfairly in the workplace and led to many women choosing to have a career as there was more motivation to do so as unfair practices such as blocking them from promotion because of their gender had been removed. Alongside the rise of the feminist movement, this legislation also had an indirect effect of encouraging girls to stay on in education and go to university and pursue careers. Consequently, women's aspirations changed and as Sue Sharpe found in *Just Like a Girl* it meant that careers took precedence over marriage and children. This led to changes in gender roles, as with more educated women and more women working, males had to adapt and help out more with childcare and housework as the gender roles in the family became more symmetrical and the relationship between males and females, particularly educated ones, became a partnership of equals.

A second change in legislation that has impacted on gender roles in the family is the introduction of shared parental leave. Prior to 2015, women were entitled to take up to 12 months of maternity leave (9 months of which was paid) whilst males could only take a maximum of 2 weeks paternity leave. Feminists argued that this led to the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, such as the instrumental and expressive role, as it was assumed that the mother would be the primary caregiver. However, changes to the law in 2015 meant that parental leave could be shared between parents, which allowed parents to split the 12 months of entitlement between them. This has led to an increase in stay at home fathers, particularly in families where the female was the primary breadwinner. In countries such as Sweden, this policy has been in force for many years and has led to a generation of males, referred to as 'latte papas' who take six months off to bond with their children, a clear deviation from traditional gender roles.