Evaluate the ways in which government policies and laws effect the nature and extent of family diversity.

There are many ways in which the government policies and laws effect the nature and extent of family diversity. These ways are dependent on the party in power and the type of perspective they hold on society, for example the Conservative party holds the ideology of the New Right. The New Right holds a similar perspective of the family to functionalists. The labour party hold more communist views and would be preferred by people with a Marxists ideology. Before we can discuss this in detail, we should identify what we mean by the term family diversity. The term family diversity refers to variations from the traditional nuclear family which were considered dysfunctional and deviant in the post-industrial society. In the contemporary society is also refers to a range of dimensions and characteristics of family.

One of the policies with a drastic effect on family diversity is the divorce act 1969. This policy eliminated the condition of waiting 5 years if only wanted partner wanted a divorce from The Divorce Reform act 1969 and the policy before that which required you to prove a fault in your partner. For example, cheating, in order to get a divorce. This policy would extent family diversity by accepting divorcees and single parent families into society, without alienating them as much as before. This would allow women to escape from abusive marriages and thus change the nature of the family for other people, because during that era, women were controlled by their husbands due to being socialised into financial dependency. Being able to leave an abusive marriage would create hope of survival without a husband for the women who bore abuse and domestic violence.

The policy with a large impact on the nature of family is development of the Maternity and Paternity Policy – The Employment Protection Act of 1975 and the ‘Paternity Act’ (2010), because traditionally women are seen to have the expressive role (A passive nurturer, providing emotional support in the private sphere, being responsible for the well being of family members and the socialisation of children) and men are seen to have an instrumental role (A dominant task oriented leader in the public sphere taking care of economic needs and serving as an authority figure that makes decisions) within the family. This policy blended the expressive and instrumental role of the couple, because it stops women from losing their jobs due to taking time out for child bearing (protected their employment status) and gave the father time off to bond with their child.

Although some feminist’s like Anne Oakley would argue that such policies, put women under a dual burden because they are playing both the expressive and instrumental role, functionalists would argue that it is within the best interest of the family because if a family wants a luxurious lifestyle, both parents working would allow them achieve that financial status.

Furthermore, The Civil Partnership Act 2004 which allowed couples of the same sex to live together extended family diversity and protected their rights of inheritance, property share, adoption etc, thus politically normalising same sex relationships as much as same sex relationship and giving them the right of marriage in 2013. The normalisation of LGBT depended on religions, in particular Christianity becoming more liberal and interpreting the mention of ‘Love’ in the bible as more powerful then the mention of God’s plan for heterosexual couples to reproduce.

This shows that religion can affect laws and therefore effect family diversity, for example the divorce laws have changed historically along with the religious domination e.g. during catholic rule divorce was illegal and during protestant rule it became legal.

Inconclusion, I think government policies and laws affect family diversity to a high extent because policies like income support for Lone parent families 2014 has allowed single parents to carry out