

The idea of progress

Social trends (recap)

It deals with the evolution of our modern society. Statistics show that more and more people live longer, thanks to cures and treatments that make us live in better health too. Life expectancy has increased and now the number of elderly people is constantly rising.

Transition: scientific progress → social progress

Together with technological and scientific progress, which have improved our way of life (working conditions and everyday life), our modern societies have also created new trends: throughout the 20th century social advances have changed the way we live. For example the Civil Rights Movement (Martin Luther King) and the end of segregation in the USA in the 1960s, or the abolition of Apartheid in South Africa in 1991 (Nelson Mandela). These are positive examples of social progress. Today we are supposed to live in a better society with equal rights and less racism. Another example is the fight for women's suffrage. Getting the right to vote was a major breakthrough at the beginning of the century. Also, the movement for women's emancipation made mentalities change. The role of women was redefined: they played a more important role. They became more independent financially, they could earn money like men. This had an impact on family life as women started to feel free to get a divorce if they wanted to.

As women gradually gained more rights the image of the traditional family was rejected by many. However, although the role of women has evolved a lot since the 1950s women continue to do most of the work at home and they are still discriminated against. It seems that some traditions are not easy to forget.

Obedience or choice (book)

Garrett is in love with Theresa. He has a father who is getting old. Theresa has a son named Kevin who still goes to school. Garrett lives in Wilmington (North Carolina) whereas Theresa lives in Boston. The towns are about 800 miles apart.

Garrett is worried because one of them is going to have to move if they want to live together. But both have good reasons not to do so. The dilemma is quite clear: if one of them moves he/ she will have to sacrifice something ... but at the same time if none of them does anything they won't be able to live together. There seems to be no solution.

Good reasons for Garrett: he has his own business in Wilmington and he will have to take care of his father. Besides he doesn't want to live in Boston.

Good reasons for Theresa: she has strong ties in Boston and her son goes to school there. She has a good job and friends. If she moved she would have to give everything up. It's a hard decision.

This kind of decision would have been easy to make at the beginning of the 20th century. Women were supposed to follow their husband without questioning their authority. They had to obey them and respect their rules. It is no longer the case in modern societies. In the document Garrett doesn't want to force her to do something she might regret in the future.

Today male chauvinism still exists but women have more choice and more freedom. However, in terms of salary women are generally less paid than men (25% less).