SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
Social Problems of Marriage and Family -- Outline

• Defining Terms
• Myths about the Family
• The Family in Decline Perspective
• Age at First Marriage
• New Family Structures
• Marital Satisfaction
• Child Care
• Divorce
• Preventing Child Abuse
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Defining Terms

• Marriage
  • The union of two people typically recognized by law or cultural norms

• Family
  • Two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption

• Nuclear family
  • A household consisting of husband, wife, and children

• Extended family
  • Structure that includes nuclear family plus one or more additional relatives
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Myths about the Family

• Myths about the family that persist in United States (Stephanie Coontz):
  • The belief that all families are structured like a nuclear family
  • Family units are self-reliant
  • Within each family, there is a predetermined and different set of roles and responsibilities for men and women (see next slide)
  • The nuclear family of the 1950s is the ideal family
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Hours per Week 1965</th>
<th>Hours per Week 1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking and meal cleanup (women)</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking and meal cleanup (men)</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housecleaning (women)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housecleaning (men)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry and ironing (women)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry and ironing (men)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor chores, gardening, and animal care (women)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor chores, gardening, and animal care (men)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs and maintenance (women)</td>
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<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs and maintenance (men)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills, other (women)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bills, other (men)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time spent per week on household chores (women)</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time spent per week on household chores (men)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Family in Decline Perspective

• The traditional American nuclear family has eroded over time, particularly in the past 25 years (David Popenoe)
  • Strengths that make up family institutions have weakened
    • Cohesion
      • Change has occurred as family members became more autonomous and less connected to one another
      • Without cohesion, families are unable to perform proper functions
    • Performance of familial functions
    • Power over other social institutions
    • (see slides on US and Sweden comparison)
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Age at First Marriage

- Why has the median age at which person gets married has increased considerably? (see next slide)
  - Economic and educational opportunities for women have expanded greatly since 1900
    - Has led some to postpone marriage in favor of starting careers
  - Change in values on the nature of marriage, family, and what one seeks from life
Median Age of First Marriage in the United States

- **Early 1900s**: 21.9
- **1950s**: 20.3
- **Present**: 27.5

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New Family Structures

- Cohabitation
- Single-parent families
- Gay and lesbian families
New Family Structures -- Cohabitation

• Why has the rate of cohabitation increased significantly over the past 40 years?
  • Young adults are aware of the realities of divorce
  • Changing societal norms about cohabitation and sexual relationships outside marriage
New Family Structures -- Cohabitation

• Reasons for choosing cohabitation over marriage:
  • Trial period before marriage or substitute
  • A logical step in a serious relationship

• These different reasons for cohabiting can affect the success of a relationship (see next slide)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Cohabitation</th>
<th>Couples Still Cohabiting 5 to 7 Years Later (%)</th>
<th>Couples Married 5 to 7 Years Later (%)</th>
<th>Couples No Longer Cohabiting 5 to 7 Years Later (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substitute for marriage</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precursor to marriage</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trial marriage</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-residential dating</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for all couples</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New Family Structures -- Cohabitation

• Cohabiting relationships look like marriage relationships
  • Couples that opt to remain unmarried maintain a striking resemblance to families of the past
    • Particularly true if the couple brings children into relationship
    • Parental roles remain typical
Cohabitation and Divorce

- Factors such as cohabitation can increase the chances of divorce by 35%
  - It appears that people willing to cohabit have different values and attitudes about the meaning of marriage
  - Hurts chances of creating lasting relationship
Cohabitation and divorce

• Jay Teachman, in his analysis of federal data on 6577 women whose first marriages occurred between 1970 and 1995 found that a woman who had lived only with their future spouse had no greater risk of divorce.
Cohabitation and divorce

- Daniel Lichter found that divorce rates for those who cohabit more than once are more than twice as high as for women who cohabited only with their eventual husbands.
- Lichter also found that the odds of divorce among women who married their only cohabiting partner was 28 percent lower than among women who never cohabited before marriage.
New Family Structures – Single-Parent Families

• There are many single-parent households in which children are typically raised by a mother who is divorced or never married the father of her children
  • Single-parent households tend to have lowest incomes of all forms of the family
    • 48% of all single mothers live below the poverty line
    • Employed single mothers’ per capita income is 13% lower than per capita income in two-parent households in which the father is the only one employed outside the home
New Family Structures – Single-Parent Families

- Children raised in single-parent families:
  - Increased risk for poor academic performance
  - Low self-esteem
  - Substance abuse
  - Delinquent behavior and a host of other social problems

- How can these negative outcomes be explained?
  - Stigmatized by other children
  - Lack of clear and consistent parenting roles
  - Family processes in these families are different from a nuclear family
    - Research supports the idea that differences have less to do with family structure and more to do with family processes
THAT COURT WAS WRONG TO OVERTURN A GAY MARRIAGE BAN. THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE SHOULDN'T BE CHANGED!

RIGHT. I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU HUSBAND AND PROPERTY.
New Family Structures -- Gay and Lesbian Families

- Gay and Lesbian Families (1990s Census data)
  - Only a small percentage have children
    - 50% of heterosexual couples have children
    - 5% of gay couples and 22% of lesbian couples have children
- Children raised in gay/lesbian homes:
  - No more likely to grow up to be gay than children raised in straight homes
  - Less likely to suffer abuse
  - Tend to have more opportunities because parents are generally better educated and better off financially than their peers
  - Don’t exhibit adverse effects on self-esteem or self-worth related to the fact their homes are “different”
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Marital Satisfaction

• Married people tend:
  • To be happier
  • Have better health
  • Enjoy higher a standard of living because incomes tend to be higher

• Men tend to benefit more from marriage than women
  • Married men live more stable lives than their single peers
    • Less likely to be involved in dangerous activities
  • More likely to experience contentment in their lives
Marital Satisfaction

• Parents report lower levels of satisfaction compared to nonparents
  • Mothers of infants show the greatest difference in marital contentment when compared to women with no children
  • Satisfaction for both men and women decreases after birth of first child
    • Due to conflicts from parenting and decreased levels of personal freedom
  • Adults with children exhibit lower levels of sense of well-being while expressing more frequent negative emotions than do their peers who are without children, regardless of the form of family
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Child Care

- Child Care
  - Raising children is expensive
    - Raising a child until age of 17 cost $289,000 in 2006.
  - Expenses can be a major point of tension
  - A main issue is making decisions about child care
    - May involve deciding whether one parent will stay home
    - In families where both spouses are employed, it means making arrangements for children during work hours
  - Several different options
    - Day care centers, family day cares, hiring babysitters, or having children stay with other relatives during the day
Child Care

• The increased number of women in the workforce corresponded with changes in child care arrangements
  • In 1965, 15% of mothers employed cared for their preschool children while they worked
  • In 1994, number dropped to 6%
  • The percentage of working fathers who cared for young children increased from 14% to 19% (1965 to 1994)
  • The percentage of preschool children in day care centers increased from 7% in 1965 to 29% in 1994
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Divorce

- High Divorce Rate
- Decreasing the Odds of Divorce
- Children and Divorce
- Divorce Globally
- No-Fault Divorce
High Divorce Rate

• 1950s, more than 85% of marriages lasted 10 years or more, now, only about 70% last that long (see next two slides)
• Reasons the divorce rate has increased considerably since the 1950s
  • More women were able to pursue their own careers and earn a successful living
    • Removed the economic concerns single women faced in the past
  • People today are more supportive of divorce than in the past
FIGURE 15.5 Divorce Rates in the United States

Till Death After All

Though the number of divorces has been rising in the United States, more married couples stay together than divorce.

Percent of people divorced at least once, by age they were divorced


MEN

40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%

WOMEN

40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Decreasing the Odds of Divorce

• There are features that decrease the likelihood of divorce
  • People with college degrees
    • The divorce rate for college graduates who married between 1990 and 1994 would end up at only about 25 percent, compared to well over 50 percent for those without a four-year college degree. (see next slide)
  • People who share similar educational and religious backgrounds are more likely to remain married
  • Those who marry in their mid-20s or older and wait to have children are more likely to stay with their spouse
  • Coming from a family that hasn’t been through a divorce decreases the likelihood of experiencing one
Now, the moderately educated are slightly more likely to divorce than the least education and significantly more likely to divorce than then highly educated.

**FIGURE 1. Percent Chance of Divorce or Separation Within 10 Years of First Marriage, 15–44 year-old Women, by Education and Year of Marriage**


Children and Divorce

- Children whose parents divorce experience social problems
  - Sometimes encounter difficulties at school
    - Emotional drain and loss of time while parents are in transition
  - Research indicates that in the U.S.
    - A child loses close to 70% of full school year due to divorce
    - Children who experience intense divorces have extreme difficulty in coping with the situation
  - Children from families with divorced parents are more likely to get a divorce
  - Children of divorce are found to have more negative attitudes about marriage and the possibility of sustaining a long-term relationship
Children and Divorce

- Reducing the impact of divorce on children
  - Deliver the message together and in a way that does not focus on conflict
  - Taking responsibility for the decision
  - Avoiding the blame game
  - Encouraging children to ask questions
Divorce Globally

• Countries with fewer women than men have lower divorce rates
• Women are getting married later in life, which also lowers a country’s divorce rate
• The median age of marriage is lower in the U.S. than in most developed nations
Divorce Globally

• Studies of the effects on children indicate similar findings regardless of country
  • Children who experience multiple transitions are more likely to have difficulties in school and experience sexual relations earlier in life
  • These can lead to higher dropout, pregnancy, and STD rates
Divorce Globally

• Deadbeat dads are not just an American phenomenon
  • 40% of divorced fathers in the U.S. do not pay child support
  • 66% in Argentina
  • 75% in Japan
No-Fault Divorce

• No-fault divorce
  • Divorce in which both parties in a marriage are granted a divorce without having to prove fault
  • Between 1953 and 1987, most fault-based divorce laws were eliminated in the U.S.
    • Increased the number of divorces (see next slide)

• Discussion: No-fault divorce good or not?
Changes in Divorce Rate Following the Passage of No-Fault Divorce Laws

Preventing Child Abuse

• Child Abuse
  • Defined by federal law as
    • “Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm”
  • 2007 Statistics
    • 1,760 child fatalities as a direct result of injury related to neglect or physical abuse
    • Children under the age of 4 accounted for 75% of child abuse-related fatalities (see next slide)
Child Abuse and Neglect Fatality Victims by Age

- Younger than 1 year: 42.2%
- 1 to 3 years: 33.5%
- 4 to 7 years: 6.5%
- 8 to 11 years: 4.7%
- 12 to 17 years: 12.9%

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Preventing Child Abuse

- Preventive measures that can be taken
  - Most states require immediate notification to authorities if a person suspects a child is being abused
    - More rapid responses lead to fewer children being murdered
- Complications arise over the definition of “abuse”
  - Some parents who use violence believe they are using physical punishment as just form of discipline
Preventing Child Abuse

• Children in the U.S. are at greatest risk of being abused by someone responsible for their care
• Therapy and family intervention
  • Helps parents identify and understand their triggers
  • Develops ways of coping with and avoiding situations that previously resulted in abuse
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