CHAPTER 5

Family Problems

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

1. Explain how the sociological definition of family compares to the U.S. Census definition.
2. Describe global diversity in forms of marriage, the role of women in the family, and social norms relating to childbearing and same-sex relationships.
3. Describe changing patterns in U.S. families and households that have occurred over the last several decades.
4. Explain the structural-functionalist perspective of the family and how family problems can be influenced by social institutions and dysfunctional family programs.
5. Explain the conflict and feminist perspectives of how capitalism, social class, and power contribute to family problems.
6. Explain the symbolic interactionist perspective of how definitions and labels affect divorce, parenting, children’s self-concept, and domestic abuse.
7. Define intimate partner violence, describe its prevalence, patterns, and effects globally and in the United States, and explain why some abused adults stay in abusive relationships.
8. Define child abuse and neglect and describe children at highest risk for victimization, the characteristics of the perpetrators of child abuse, and the physical, psychological, and social effects of child abuse.
9. Describe the nature, prevalence, and risk factors associated with abuse and the strategies to prevent and respond to abuse.
10. Describe the prevalence of divorce in the United States compared to other nations and explain the social causes of divorce and the consequences of divorce.
11. Describe strategies to strengthen families, including marriage education, covenant marriage, divorce law reform, and workplace and economic supports for families.
12. Describe how rates of teen pregnancy in the United States contrast to those of other countries in the developed world and explain the prevention strategies of abstinence-only sexuality education, comprehensive sexuality education, contraceptive service, and computerized infant simulators.

KEY TERMS

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LECTURE OUTLINE

I. THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: FAMILIES OF THE WORLD

A. Definitions of family
   1. Census definition: A group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption
   2. Sociological definition: a kinship system of all relatives living together or recognized as a social unit.
      a. This broader definition recognizes foster families, unmarried same-sex and opposite-sex couples and families, and any relationships that function and feel like a family.

B. Monogamy and Polygamy
   1. Monogamy: a marriage between two partners
   2. Serial monogamy: a succession of marriages in which a person has more than one spouse over a lifetime but is legally married to only one person at a time
   3. Polygamy: a form of marriage in which one person may have two or more spouses
      a. The most common form of polygamy, polygyny, involves one husband having more than one wife.
      b. A less common form of polygamy is polyandry—the concurrent marriage of one woman to two or more men.
      c. In the U.S., polygamy is illegal and often referred to as bigamy—the criminal offense of marrying one person while still legally married to another.
      d. Polygamous marriages do exist in the United States among some fundamentalist Mormon splinter groups and some immigrant groups; polygamy is also practiced in other parts of the world.

C. Division of Power in the Family
   1. Roles of women and men in families vary across societies.
      a. Some societies expect wives to be subservient to husbands (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa).
      b. In Western industrialized countries, marriages tend to be more egalitarian, which means spouses are viewed as equal partners.

D. Social Norms Relating to Childbearing
   1. Social norms concerning childbearing also vary widely throughout the world.
      a. In every society, women learn their role includes having children.
      b. Compared to less developed societies where social expectations for women to have children are strong, in developed countries with high levels of gender equality, social norms concerning childbearing are more flexible; women may view having children as optional—as a personal choice.
   2. Norms about out-of-wedlock childbirth also vary.
      a. 4 in 10 of all U.S. births are to unmarried women, a proportion lower than some western countries (e.g., Norway, Sweden) and higher than others (e.g., Germany, Italy).

E. Same Sex Relationships
   1. Norms and policies concerning same-sex intimate relationships vary.
      a. Some countries punish homosexuality by imprisonment or even death.
      b. Some countries and U.S. states grant same-sex couples the legal right to marry.
      c. Some countries and U.S. states grant same-sex couples legal rights and protections that are more limited than marriage.
II. CHANGING PATTERNS IN U.S. FAMILIES

A. Increased singlehood and older age at first marriage
   1. U.S. adults are staying single longer: from 1960 to 2008, the median age at first marriage increased from 20 to 26 for women and 23 to 28 for men.
   2. Today, 13.8% of women and 20.4% of men age 40-44 have never been married—the highest figures in U.S. history.

B. Increased heterosexual and same-sex cohabitation
   1. The percent of people who cohabited before marriage more than doubled from 1980 to 2000, from 16% to 41%.
   2. Children are increasingly living in two-parent families that do not have legal recognition, which could result in denial of Social Security benefits, health care insurance, and more.
      a. Some states, cities, counties and employers allow unmarried couples to apply for domestic partner designation, which grants some legal entitlements, such as health insurance and inheritance rights that have been traditionally reserved for married couples.

C. A new family form: Living apart together
   1. In “commuter marriages” couples live apart in different cities or states due to employment but would generally prefer to live together.
   2. In living apart together relationships (LAT), a relatively new type of family form, couples choose to live in separate residences.

D. Increased births to unmarried women
   1. The percentage of births to unmarried women rose to a historic level in 2009: 40%.
   2. The highest rates of nonmarital births are among Black, American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and Hispanics.
   3. Nonmarital birth has become more socially acceptable: In 2011, 54% said it was “morally acceptable.”

E. Increased divorce and blended families
   1. The refined divorce rate—number of divorces per 1,000 married women—increased dramatically from 1960 to its peak around 1980, then decreased until 2005, before increasing again.
   2. Most divorced individuals remarry and create blended families (stepfamilies)
      a. More than 4 in 10 U.S. adults have at least one step-relative in their families.

F. Increased employment of mothers
   1. Employment of married women with children under age 18 rose from 24% in 1950 to 71% in 2010.
   2. 58% of married couple families with children have two employed parents.

G. Public Attitudes toward Changes in Family Life
   1. U.S. adults are sharply divided in their judgments about changes in U.S. families.
      a. 1/3 of adults accept the changes in family life
      b. 1/3 of adults support only interracial marriage and smaller families
      c. 1/3 of adults are skeptical of all the changes

H. Marital Decline? Or Marital Resiliency?
   1. The marital decline perspective
      a. Personal happiness has become more important than marital commitment and family obligations.
      b. Decline in lifelong marriage and increase in single-parent families contribute to a variety of social problems, (e.g., poverty, delinquency, violence, community erosion).
   2. The marital resiliency perspective
a. Poverty, unemployment, poorly funded schools, discrimination, and lack of basic services (e.g., health insurance, child care) represent more serious threats to child and adult well-being than does the decline in married two-parent families.

b. Views on divorce
   i. Many marriages in the past were troubled, but because divorce was not socially acceptable, these problematic marriages remained intact.
   ii. Rather than view divorce as a sign of the decline of marriage, divorce provides a second chance at happiness for adults and an escape from dysfunctional and aversive home environments for many children.

III. SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF FAMILY PROBLEMS

A. Structural-Functionalist Perspective
   1. The family is a social institution that performs important functions for society, including producing new members, regulating sexual activity, socializing the young, providing physical and emotional care for family members.
   2. Traditional gender roles contribute to family functioning
      a. Women perform the expressive role of managing the household and caring emotionally for family members.
      b. Men perform the instrumental role of earning income and making major decisions.
   3. High rates of divorce and single-parenthood constitute a “breakdown” of the family resulting from rapid social change.
      a. Breakdown of the family is a primary social problem that leads to such secondary social problems as crime, poverty, and substance abuse.
   4. Examines how changes in other social institutions contribute to family problems (e.g., economy and law contribute to divorce).

B. Conflict and Feminist Perspectives
   1. Conflict theory focuses on the impact of capitalism, social class, and power on marriages and families.
   2. Feminist theory focuses on how gender inequalities influence/are influenced by marriages and families.
      a. Feminists are critical of patriarchy—the traditional male domination of families.
   3. Conflict and feminist perspectives overlap in views on how industrialization and capitalism have contributed to gender inequality.
      a. Factory production during industrialization resulted in men leaving home to earn incomes and women staying home to do unpaid child care and domestic work—what Engels calls “domestic slavery of the wife.”
      b. Today most wives leave home to earn income, but still do the bulk of unpaid domestic labor and are more likely than men to compromise occupational achievement for child care and other domestic responsibilities.
   4. Economic factors influence norms regarding monogamy.
      a. A double standard grants men more tolerance for being nonmonogamous in societies where monogamy is expected.
      b. Engels argues monogamy arose from husbands’ concentration of wealth and need to verify relationship to children.
   5. Unequal distribution of power among women and men and the historical view of women as property of men contribute to wife battering.
   6. Today, gender relations within society at large are more egalitarian, but male domination persists.
7. Social programs and policies that affect families are largely shaped by powerful and wealthy segments of society; corporations and businesses are in conflict with family needs.

C. Symbolic Interactionist Perspective
1. Concerned with how labels affect meaning and behavior.
   a. For example, “visitation rights” (implying visitor status) minimizes the importance of the noncustodial parent’s role; “parenting plan” or “time-sharing arrangement” might mitigate this.
2. Point to the effects of interaction on one’s self-concept, especially of children.
   a. The “looking-glass self”: individuals form a self-concept based on how others interact with them.
   b. Family members are significant others who affect self-concept; can be positive or negative.
3. Useful in understanding dynamics of domestic violence and abuse.
   a. Some abusers and victims define intimate partner violence as an expression of love.
   b. Emotional abuse using negative labels (“stupid”, “whore”, “bad”) affect the self-concept of abuse victims, convincing them they deserve the abuse.

IV. VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN INTIMATE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
A. Family violence and abuse: In the U.S., people are more likely to be physically assaulted, abused and neglected, sexually assaulted and molested, and killed in their own homes and by other family members than anywhere else or by anyone else.

B. Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse
1. Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to actual or threatened violent crimes, committed against by current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends.
2. Prevalence and Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence
   a. Globally, 1 in 3 women have been subjected to IPV.
   b. In the U.S., women are 4 times more likely to be victims of IPV.
   c. More than 1/3 gay women and men reported physical violence in their relationships in the past year.
   d. Four patterns of partner violence have been identified.
      i. Common couple violence: Occasional violent acts arising from arguments that get “out of hand” and usually do not escalate into serious or life-threatening violence.
      ii. Intimate terrorism: Violence motivated by a wish to control one’s partner and involves the systemic use of economic subordination, threats, isolation, verbal and emotional abuse, and other control tactics; most often committed by men.
      iv. Mutual violent control: Rare pattern of abuse that could be viewed as two intimate terrorists battling for control.
   e. Sexual aggression entails sexual interaction that occurs against one’s will through use of physical force, threat of force, pressure, alcohol/drugs, or position of authority.
   f. College students are much more likely to be involved in an emotionally abusive relationship than a physically or sexually abusive relationship.

C. Three Types of Male Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence
1. The psychopathic abuser—generally violent, impulsive and without remorse
2. The hostile/controlling abuser—suspicious and hypersensitive
3. The borderline/dependent abuser—unhappy, depressed, prone to emotions that spiral out of control.

D. Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse
1. Each year IPV results in nearly 2 million injuries and 1,300 deaths nationwide.
   a. Nearly 1/3 of all female murder victims are from IPV.
   b. Many women are abused during pregnancy, resulting in miscarriage and birth defects.
2. Psychological consequences for victims include depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and attempts, low self-esteem, fear of intimacy and trust, and substance abuse.
3. Battering interferes with women’s employment; abusers may prohibit partners from working, deliberately undermine women’s employment, and cause repeated job absences, impairs the victim’s ability to concentrate, and lowers their self-esteem and aspirations.
4. Abuse is a factor in many divorces, which can cause economic decline and homelessness.
5. Children who witness domestic violence are at risk for emotional, behavioral, and academic problems and future violence in their own relationships.

D. Why Do Some Adults Stay in Abusive Relationships?
1. Adult victims are commonly blamed for tolerating abusive relationships rather than leaving the relationship when abuse begins.
2. Victims stay for compelling reasons, including love, emotional dependency, commitment to the relationship, hope that things will get better, the view that violence is legitimate because they “deserve” it, guilt, fear, economic dependency, and feeling stuck.
3. Victims also stay because abuse occurs in cycles: the cycle of abuse involves a violent or abusive episode followed by a makeup period when the abuser expresses sorrow and asks for forgiveness and “one more chance.”

E. Child Abuse
1. Child abuse refers to the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of child under age 18 by a person who is responsible for child’s welfare.
2. The most common form of child maltreatment is neglect—failure to provide adequate attention and supervision, food and nutrition, hygiene, medical care, and a safe and clean living environment.
3. Highest rates of victimization are age birth to one year and children with disabilities; and some minority children.
4. Perpetrators are most often parents of the victim.

F. Effects of Child Abuse
1. Physical injuries sustained by child abuse cause pain, disfigurement, scarring, physical disability, and death.
   b. Shaken baby syndrome—where a caretaker shakes the baby to the point of causing brain or retinal hemorrhage—most often occurs when a baby younger than 6 months will not stop crying.
2. Child abuse is associated with depression, low academic achievement, smoking, obesity, teen pregnancy, alcohol and drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, low self-esteem, aggressive behavior, juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, suicide, and adult victimization.

G. Elder, Parent, Sibling and Pet Abuse
1. Elder abuse includes physical, psychological, and financial abuse, and neglect.
   a. The most common form of elder abuse is neglect—failure to provide health and hygiene needs, such as clean clothes, doctor visits, medication, and adequate nutrition; unreasonable confinement, isolation, lack of supervision, and abandonment.
   b. Older women are far more likely than older men to suffer from abuse/neglect.
   c. Most cases of elder abuse occur in a domestic setting.
   d. The most likely perpetrators are adult children, followed by other family members and spouses/intimate partners.
2. Parent Abuse: Some parents are victimized by their children’s violence, ranging from hitting, kicking and biting to being pushed down the stairs and using a weapon to inflict serious injury or even kill a parent.
   a. More violence is directed against mothers than against fathers, and sons tend to be more violent towards parents than are daughters.
   b. In most cases of children being violent towards their parents, parents had been violent toward the children.
3. Sibling abuse is the most prevalent form of abuse in families.
   a. 98% of females and 89% of males reported emotional abuse by a sibling.
   b. 88% of females and 71% of males reported physical abuse by a sibling.
   c. Sexual abuse also occurs in sibling relationships.
4. Pet Abuse
   a. Abusers often threaten pets with violence.

H. Factors Contributing to Intimate Partner and Family Violence and Abuse
1. Individual and Family Factors: History of family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and poverty are all related to intimate partner and family violence.
2. Gender Inequality and Gender Socialization
   a. The view of women and children as property helps explain family violence, marital rape and father-daughter incest.
   b. Traditional gender roles teach men to be aggressive and dominant and women to be submissive to their male partner’s control.
3. Acceptance of corporal punishment
   a. Corporal punishment is the intentional infliction of pain for a perceived misbehavior.
   b. Many mental health professionals and children development specialists argue that it is ineffective and damaging to children.
   c. More than 90% of parents of toddlers reported using corporal punishment.
4. Inaccessible or unaffordable community services
   a. Many cases of child and elder abuse and neglect are linked to inaccessible or unaffordable health care, day care, elder care, and respite care facilities.

V. STRATEGIES FOR ACTION: PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE
A. Prevention Strategies
1. Abuse-prevention strategies include public education and media campaigns that convey criminal nature of domestic violence and offer ways to prevent abuse.
2. Parent education to teach parents realistic expectations about child behavior and methods of child discipline that do not involve corporal punishment is another strategy.
3. Another strategy involves reducing violence-provoking stress by reducing poverty and unemployment and providing adequate housing, child care programs and facilities, nutrition, medical care, and educational opportunities.
B. Responding to Domestic Violence and Abuse
1. Shelters and Safe Houses:
   a. Between 1993 and 2004, about 21% of female victims of nonfatal IPV and 10% of male victims contacted a private or government agency for assistance.
   b. Shelters provide abused women and children with housing, food, and counseling services.
   c. Safe houses are private homes of individuals who volunteer to provide temporary housing to abused persons who decide to leave their violent homes.
   d. Some communities have abuse shelters for victims of elder abuse.
2. Arrest and Restraining Order
   a. About half of states have mandatory arrest policies that require police to arrest abusers, even if victim does not want to press charges.
      i. Many victims do not report violence due to: belief violence is a private matter; fear of retaliation; view of violence as a “minor” crime; wanting to protect the offender; belief that police will not help.
3. Foster Care Placement
   a. Abused children may be removed from home and placed in foster care or with another family member.
   b. More than 700,000 children are in foster care; more than 20,000 must leave foster care each year because they turn 18, often making them dependent on housing assistance and Medicaid or homeless.
   c. The recession has more prospective adoptive parents considering foster children because they cannot afford traditional adoption
   d. Foster care has issues with abuse and high drop-out rates, drug abuse and teen parents.
4. Treatment for abusers (which may be voluntary or mandated by the court)
   a. Typically involves group and/or individual counseling, substance abuse counseling, and/or training in communication, conflict resolution, and anger management.
   b. Treatment for men who sexually abuse children involves cognitive behavior therapy (changing the thoughts that lead to sex abuse) and medication to reduce sex drive.
   c. Men who stop abusing partners learn to take responsibility for their abusive behavior, develop empathy for their partner’s victimization, reduce dependency on their partners, and improve communication skills.

VI. PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH DIVORCE
   A. Prevalence: The U.S. has highest divorce rate among Western nations; 40% of first marriages end in divorce and 60% of those involve children.
   B. Social Causes of Divorce
      1. Changing function of marriage: Before the Industrial Revolution, family was a unit of economic production and consumption largely organized around producing, socializing, and educating children; today marriage is viewed as private pact that meets spouses’ psychological needs.
      2. Increased economic autonomy of women: Before 1940, most wives were not employed outside the home whereas today about 2/3 of married women are in the labor force.
         a. A wife who can support herself economically is more likely to leave an unhappy marriage.
         b. An unhappy husband is also more likely to leave a marriage if his wife is self-sufficient and can contribute to the support of the children.
      3. Increased work demands and economic stress and the stress of balancing work and family roles also impact divorce.
         a. Workers are putting in longer hours, often working overtime or taking second jobs yet struggling to earn enough money to pay for rising housing, health care, and child-care costs; financial stress can cause marital problems.
      4. Dissatisfaction with marital division of labor
         a. Many employed parents (particularly mothers) come home to work a “second shift”—the work involved in caring for children and household chores; perceptions of unfairness can lead to marital tension and resentment.
      5. Liberalized divorce laws
a. Before 1970, the law required couples to prove one spouse was at fault and had committed an act as grounds for divorce—adultery, cruelty, or desertion.
b. No-fault divorce laws, which permit divorce based on the claim of “irreconcilable differences” and are recognized in all 50 states, has contributed to the U.S. divorce rate by making divorce easier to obtain.

6. Increased individualism
   a. U.S. society is characterized by individualism—the tendency to focus on one’s individual self-interest rather than the interests of one’s family and community.
   b. Familism—the view that the family unit is more important than individual interest—is prevalent among Asian Americans and Mexican Americans, which helps explain the lower divorce rate among these groups than among whites and African Americans.

7. Weak Social Ties
   a. Moving from place to place weakens social ties and increases chances for divorce.

8. Increased life expectancy
   a. More marriages end in divorce because people live longer today than in the past: “till death do us part” involves a longer commitment than it once did.

C. Consequences of Divorce
   1. Physical and Mental Health consequences
      a. Divorced individuals, compared to married individuals, have more health problems and higher risk of mortality.
         i. Divorced individuals experience lower levels of psychological well-being, including more unhappiness, depression, anxiety, and poorer self-concepts.
         ii. Both divorced and never-married individuals are, on average, more distressed than married people because unmarried people are more likely to have low social attachment, low emotional support, and increased economic hardship.
      b. There are also studies in which divorced individuals report higher levels of autonomy and personal growth than married individuals.
         i. Many divorced mothers report improvements in career opportunities, social lives, and happiness after divorce; some report more self-confidence.
         ii. Some divorced men report more interpersonal skills and greater self-disclosure.
   2. Economic Consequences
      a. Compared to married individuals, divorced individuals have a lower standard of living, have less wealth, and experience greater economic hardship, and this difference is considerably greater for women than men.
         i. Following divorce, there tends to be a dramatic drop in women’s income and a slight drop in men’s income.
   3. Effects on children and young adults
      a. Negative effects
         i. Parental divorce is often accompanied by a variety of stressors, such as continuing conflict between parents, decline in standard of living, moving/changing schools, separation from the noncustodial parent, and parental remarriage.
         ii. Children with divorced parents score lower on measures of academic success, psychological adjustment, self-concept, social competence, and long-term health; they also have higher levels of aggressive behavior and depression.
         iii. Many negative effects of divorce are related to economic hardship associated with divorce.
      b. Current research findings suggest that most children from divorced families are resilient, do not suffer from serious psychological problems, and develop into well-adjusted adults.
      c. Divorce can also have positive consequences for children and young adults.
i. In highly conflictual marriages, divorce may improve emotional well-being of children relative to staying in a conflicted home environment.

ii. More than half of young adults in one study reported positive outcomes for their parents and themselves.

4. Effects on Father-Child Relationships
   a. Children who live with their mothers may suffer from a damaged relationship with their nonresidential father, especially if he becomes disengaged from their lives.
   b. However, more than half of participants in one study felt their relationships with their fathers improved after divorce; children may benefit from more quality time with fathers after divorce and many fathers play a more active role.
   c. The mother’s attitude towards the father’s continued contact with the child affects the father-child relationship as mothers can serve as gatekeepers.

5. Parental Alienation
   d. Some children of divorce suffer from parental alienation syndrome (PAS): an emotional and psychological disturbance in which children engage in exaggerated and unjustified denigration and criticism of a parent; PAS occurs when one parent manipulates the child’s perception of the other parent.
   i. Long-term effects of PAS can include long-term depression, inability to function, guilt, hostility, alcoholism/drug abuse, and other symptoms of internal distress.
   e. Some noncustodial fathers discontinue contact with their children as a coping strategy for managing emotional pain.

VII. STRATEGIES FOR ACTION: STRENGTHENING MARRIAGE AND ALLEVIATING PROBLEMS OF DIVORCE

A. Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Prevent Divorce
   1. A growing “marriage movement” attempts to strengthen marriage and prevent divorce.
   2. Marriage education (or family life education) involves classes that teach relationship skills, communication, and problem solving; convey that healthy marriages require effort; and convey the importance of having realistic expectations of marriage, commitment, and a willingness to make personal sacrifices.
   3. Covenant Marriage and Divorce Law Reform
      a. In 1996, Louisiana became the first state to offer covenant marriage, which permit divorce only under conditions of fault or after a two-year separation and require premarital counseling.
   4. Workplace and Economic Supports
      a. The most important divorce-prevention may be measures that maximize employment and earnings.
      b. Supports such as job training, employment assistance, flexible workplace policies that decrease work-family conflict, affordable child care, and economic support, such as the earned income tax credit.
      c. Policy makers also need to examine policies that penalize poor couples for marrying (e.g., loss of Medicaid benefits, food stamps, etc.).

B. Strategies to Strengthen Families During and After Divorce
   1. It is the post-divorce conflict between parents and not the divorce itself that is traumatic for children.
      a. Children exposed to high levels of parental conflict are at risk for anxiety, depression, and disruptive behavior; are more likely to be abusive toward romantic partners; are more likely to divorce and suffer maladjustment in adulthood.
   2. Forgiveness can promote positive and cooperative coparenting after divorce.
3. Divorce mediation is where divorcing couples meet with a neutral third party, a mediator, who helps them resolve issues of property division, child support, child custody, and spousal support in a way that minimizes conflict and encourages cooperation.

4. Divorce education programs emphasize the importance of cooperative co-parenting for the well-being of children.

VIII. TEENAGE CHILDBEARING

A. The U.S. teenage birthrate (per 1,000) peaked in 1991 at 61.8, then dropped steadily until 2005, then began to increase again.

B. Causes and Consequences of Teen Childbearing

1. Early Sexual Activity: Nearly 1/2 of youth grades 9-12 have had sexual intercourse and more than 1/3 are sexually active; 39% of the sexually active report not using a condom during last intercourse.

2. Low Educational Achievement is a contributing factor and potential outcome of teenage parenthood.
   a. Teens who do poorly in school may have little hope of pursuing educational and occupational goals, and may think their only meaningful option is to become a parent.
   b. Becoming a teen parent also curtails future academic achievement.
   c. The children of teen parents are also at risk for low academic achievement.

3. Poverty
   a. Teens from low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to become teenage parent.
   b. Though many teens are poor before pregnancy, childbearing exacerbates the problem.

4. Poor Health Outcomes
   a. Pregnant teens are less likely to receive timely prenatal care and gain adequate weight.
   b. Teens are more likely to smoke and use alcohol and drugs during pregnancy.
   c. Consequently, their infants are at higher risk of low birth weight, premature birth, and infant mortality.

IX. STRATEGIES FOR ACTION: INTERVENTIONS IN TEENAGE CHILDBEARING

A. Sexuality Education and Access to Contraceptive Services

1. The U.S. has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the developed world—almost twice as high as England, Wales and Canada, and eight times as high as the Netherlands and Japan.
   a. In Northern and Western Europe low teen pregnancy is attributed to widespread availability and use of effective contraception.

2. The G.W. Bush Administration emphasized abstinence-only sex education.
   a. Supporters of abstinence-only programs believe promoting condoms sends the “wrong message” that sex outside of marriage is okay.
   b. Critics of abstinence-only sex education
      i. Argue that abstinence-only programs do not protect youth against pregnancy or sexually transmissible disease.
      ii. Cite a report that found more than 80% of abstinence-only curricula contain false, misleading, or distorted information about reproductive health.
      iii. Point to an evaluation commissioned by the Congress that found youth who received abstinence education were no more likely than control group to have abstained from sex, had similar numbers of partners and initiated sex at the same mean age.
   c. Most U.S. adults want schools to provide comprehensive sexuality education that includes topics such as contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, disease-prevention methods and the benefits of abstinence.

3. Contraceptive Services
a. Most sexually active teens in the U.S. cannot obtain contraceptive services in schools, and find significant barriers to obtaining contraception elsewhere

B. Computerized Infant Simulators
1. Some teen pregnancy prevention programs utilize computerized infant simulators to give adolescents a realistic view of parenting.
2. Computerized infant simulators are realistic, life-sized computerized “dolls” that are programmed to cry at random intervals; the “baby” stops crying only when the caregiver “attends” to the doll.
3. A program evaluation it was effective in changing perceptions of the time and effort involved in caring for an infant, the effect a baby has on one’s life, and the importance of using birth control.

C. Resources and Assistance to Teenage Parents
1. Teenage parents benefit from assistance with child care, financial support, and housing.

D. Increase Men’s Involvement with Children
1. Fatherhood initiative programs encourage father involvement by improving work opportunities for low-income fathers; increasing child support collections; providing parent education training for men; supporting visitation by noncustodial parents; and involving boys and young men in preventing teenage pregnancy and early parenting programs.

VIII. UNDERSTANDING FAMILY PROBLEMS
A. Family Problems are Felt by the entire Society
1. Families can be functional in a variety of forms as long as institutional supports are in place which provides care for children.
2. Strengthening marriage is important, but not as the only pathway to a legitimate family form.
ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

STUDENT PROJECTS

Legal Benefits of Marriage

Request students research the national legal benefits and the legal benefits in their state that the status of marriage provides and that cohabitating couples (same-sex and opposite-sex) do not have.

Media Portrayals of the Role of Fathers in the Family

Request the students to choose a kind of media, such as television, magazine advertisements, or movies, that portray the role of fathers in the family. Instruct the students to discuss how these media portrayals both reflect and contribute to the cultural definition of the role of the father in U.S. families.

Working Families

Using the Family Resource Simulator at http://nccp.org/tools/frs/, have students research what supports are needed for families versus what is actually available in various cities and states. Additionally, have students research the history of funding such programs in their home state to understand the politics behind the decisions.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Guest Speakers on Domestic Violence

Invite the director of a local shelter for battered women to talk with the class about domestic violence and the services of the shelter. Also invite a police officer to discuss domestic violence from a law enforcement perspective. Beforehand, have each student write two questions they would like to ask of each speaker.

BIG Families

One family that has been in the news a lot lately is the Duggar Family. With 19 kids (and counting), this is one of the largest families in the country. See their blog here: http://duggarsblog.blogspot.com/. Engage students in a class-wide discussion about the impact of having a family that large, especially in contrast to China’s one-child policy.

Sex Education Debate

Divide the class into small groups and assign half the groups the position of supporting abstinence-only sex education and assign the other half the position of supporting comprehensive sex education. Instruct each group to prepare points and research to support their argument, then hold a class debate on the issue.

Children of Divorce

Form a volunteer panel of students whose parents have divorced. Request the panel to share their experiences prior to and after the divorce with the class and to evaluate these experiences as positive or
negative. Then engage all of the students in the class in a discussion of whether divorce laws should be more strict and what parents can do to reduce the negative effects of divorce.

**International Teenage Pregnancy Rates**

Instruct the students to investigate teenage pregnancy rates in other countries. Each student should investigate at least one country, and report on the current teenage pregnancy rate, recent trends in teenage pregnancy (e.g., is the rate increasing or decreasing in recent years?), cultural response to teenage pregnancy, and national efforts, programs or policies to address teenage pregnancy. Instruct the students to bring the information they collect to class, where each student can give a short presentation about the country they investigated. As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between countries, and compare the U.S. to the countries the students investigated.

**INTERNET ASSIGNMENTS**

**Father-Child Relationships and Father Rights**

Request students to search the internet to find out more about issues concerning fathers and their children and father’s rights. Students should compare and contrast the issues and arguments expressed by different groups and organizations. Students can bring examples to class that demonstrate the different viewpoints they found. Students can analyze the viewpoints in small groups.

**The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

Direct students to find out more about domestic violence by visiting the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence website at [http://www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org). Instruct the students to search for strategies to combat domestic violence and to evaluate whether these strategies will be effective.

**Juvenile Law Center**

Request the students to find recent developments in the law regarding the welfare of juveniles by going to the website of the juvenile law center at: [http://www.jlc.org/](http://www.jlc.org/). Instruct them to click on “Current Initiatives” and then read and report on one of the articles.

**Marriage**

Have students use the internet to research the various arguments being made against same-sex marriage. Have them summarize or list these arguments and their sources. Then, have them research the traditional arguments made against interracial marriage including the years when anti-miscegenation laws were repealed in various states. Are there similarities between the two arguments? Do students see these as the same kind of issue, or are they qualitatively different things?

**Laws on Child Abuse**

Request the students to use the internet to learn about the laws relating to child abuse in their home state. Instruct the students to report on what constitutes child abuse according to these laws and to evaluate whether the definition of child abuse under these laws covers all potential incidences of child abuse. In addition, request the students to find information about the penalties for child abuse in their state and
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have them evaluate the effectiveness of these penalties. The students can then discuss their ideas about child abuse laws and prevention in a class discussion.

Divorce

Divorce is often seen as having a negative impact on the children, but can divorce make fathers better, more involved parents? Watch the following video clip: http://college.cengage.com/sociology/shared/videos/template154.html According to this video, what are the benefits to children of divorced couples? What are the role expectations of males in a marriage and how do they change after a divorce?

VIDEO SUGGESTIONS

Our Families, Ourselves: An Introduction to Marriages and Families

Documentary that examines contemporary family arrangements and choices, changes and issues.

Discussion Questions:
1) In what ways have U.S. families changed over time?
2) What are some of the challenges faced by different types of families?
Our House: A Very Real Documentary about Kids of Gay and Lesbian Parents

A documentary that shows the typical family life of a variety of gay and lesbian families with children. The video interviews children of gay and lesbian parents, and shows the challenges they face being accepted at school and in society.

Discussion Questions:
1) How do the children of gay and lesbian parents interviewed in the video describe their lives at home?
2) What kinds of challenges did the children experience?
3) What kinds of programs and policies could be created that would help children in gay and lesbian families?

Survival From Domestic Violence: Stories of Hope and Healing

A short (15 minute) documentary that interviews women who escaped abusive relationships and their advocates. Documentary covers issues such as the cycle of violence, victimization, reasons why women stay, the experiences that finally encouraged women to leave, and information on support services.

Discussion Questions:
1) In what ways did the women interviewed in the video describe their relationships?
2) Why did the women interviewed in the video stay in abusive relationships? Why did they eventually leave?
3) What was necessary for the women in the video to leave their abusive relationships?

Women and Men Unglued: Marriage and Relationships in the 21st Century

Documentary that contains interviews with various people regarding their views of marriage and family. The interviews cover topics that include chosen singlehood, changing gender roles, dating, marriage, parenting, romantic love, and commitment.

Discussion Questions:
1) In what ways do the individuals interviewed in the video view marriage, family, dating, and singlehood?
2) How are the viewpoints expressed in the video impacted by changes in gender roles that have taken place over the past several decades?

Motherhood Manifesto

This documentary takes a comparative international approach to cultural and structural supports for mothers and families.

Discussion Questions:
1) How does the U.S. compare to other countries?
2) Do you think the policies in place in other countries would work here?

RELATED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Family Planning: Family planning the U.S. has been controversial for a long time. Read this 2011 article from Miller-McCune (http://www.miller-mccune.com/politics/family-planning-subsidies-save-taxpayer-
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money-30529/) which details how we keep defunding family planning efforts for political reasons even though it saves taxpayer money. Which side of this movement do you support?

Divorce: In the wake of rising divorce rates, some people are advocating for a return to “traditional” marriage where people are bound by much tighter regulations. This movement is known as the “covenant marriage” movement and is profiled here: http://www.covenantmarriage.com/

Domestic Violence: The national hotline for domestic violence can be found here: http://www.thehotline.org/ along with related resources for helping to end intimate partner abuse.

SOLVING SOCIAL PROBLEMS
Many local communities have shelters for battered women and families. You could get connected with one of these agencies to find out what kind of support they need. Additionally, you could be child advocate for children in the foster care system. CASA (www.casa.org) will train you to provide a single source of contact and support for children as they go through the court system. On a more international level, you can support any one of a number of micro-credit programs which empower women. The Microcredit Summit Campaign has a website here: http://www.microcreditsummit.org/.