Sociology 1101

Marriage and Family

Marriage – A Definition

- Marriage – A legal union that involves a man and a woman as husband and wife
- Based on 2 premises:
- Primariness – each partner wants to be primary in each other's lives
- Permanence – security that the marriage will last
- What is the difference between marriage and cohabitation? Domestic partnerships?

Marriage Patterns

- Endogamy – marriage between people of the same category
- Exogamy – marriage between people of different categories
- Homogamy – marriage between persons with similar characteristics
- Heterogamy – marriage between persons with different characteristics

Marriage Patterns

- Monogamy – marriage to one person at a time
- Serial monogamy – succession of marriage and divorces involving one spouse at a time
- Polygamy – marriage to more than one person at a time

Marriage Patterns

- 2 Types of Polygamy:
- Polygyny – marriage of one male to two or more females
- Polyandry – marriage of one female to two or more males
- Example: Tibetan women can marry more than one man at a time

Residential Patterns

- Patrilocal – married couple lives with or near the husband's family
- Matrilocal – married couple lives with or near the wife's family
- Neolocal – married couple lives apart from the parents of both spouses

Patterns of Descent

- Patrilineal – tracing kinship through males
- Matrilineal – tracing kinship through females
- Bilateral – tracing kinship through both males and females

Patterns of Authority

- Patriarchy – men dominate the family
- Matriarchy – women dominate the family
- Egalitarian – men and women share authority

Types of Marriages

- Conflict-habituated – unresolved conflict and tension are the norm
- Devitalized – marriage has lost its zest, liveliness or excitement
- Passive-congenial – utilitarian in nature; emphasizes practicality rather than emotional closeness
- Vital – marriages that are full of life, enjoyment and pleasure

Types of Marriages

- Total – multifaceted marriages; all important aspects are included
- Static – follows traditional marriage roles with little or no room for change
- Flexible – allows spouses to negotiate and talk about expectations concerning intimacy

Family – A Definition

- Family – a relatively permanent group of people connected by blood, marriage or adoption that live together and share social and economic responsibilities
- Kinship – a network of individuals related through common ancestry, marriage or adoption; common in preindustrial times
- Defining family as a concept is very problematic because there are so many variations in the social structure that societies call families

Types of Families

- Family of Orientation – the family in which one is born
- Family of Procreation – the family that one creates usually through marriage
- Nuclear Family – composed of a married couple and their children
- Extended family – composed of three or more generations

Types of Families

- Single-parent family – composed of one parent and children
- Blended family – a family created from previous divorces or separations experienced by one or both spouses

Sociological Theories

- Structural-functionalism – suggests that the family performs various tasks that contribute to the stability of society
- Conflict theory – suggests that the family perpetuates social inequality
- Symbolic-interactionism – focuses on how individuals shape and experience family life on a daily basis

Structural-Functionalism

- Families promote the following functions:
- Socialization
- Regulation of sexual activity
- Social placement
- Economic and emotional security

Conflict Perspective

- Social inequality is perpetuated in three ways:
- Property and inheritance – Engels traced the need for men in the family to transmit property to their sons
- Patriarchy – men determine their heirs by controlling the sexuality of women
- Race and ethnicity – racial and ethnic categories persist over generations only to the degree that people marry others like themselves

Symbolic-Interactionism

- People experience family life in terms of relationships, and these vary from person to person, and change from day to day
- Family living offers an opportunity for intimacy
- Members of families forge emotional bonds

Divorce

- How are divorce rates reported?
- Number of divorces per year – not an accurate measure; does not take into account population increases
- Ratio of current marriages to current divorces – faulty measure; marriages reported have all taken place in the current year and divorces occur over many years

Divorce

- Crude divorce rate – the number of divorces per 1000 in the population; a faulty measure because it includes members of the population not at risk
- Refined divorce rate – best measure; the number of divorces per 1000 married women over age 15; no predictive use for individuals

Current Divorce Rates

- Between 1960 and 1979, the refined divorce rate rose from 9.2 to 22.8
- From 1979 to 1996, the rate dropped from 22.8 to 19.5
- In 1997 the refined divorce rate was 19.8
- Redivorces take place more rapidly than first divorces

Causes of Divorce

- Individualism
- Romantic love subsides
- Women are less dependent on men
- Many of today's marriages are stressful
- Divorce is more socially acceptable
- From a legal standpoint, divorces are easier to obtain

Who is at risk for divorce?

- Young spouses (who have a brief courtship, fewer financial resources and less emotional maturity)
- People of lower social position (due to financial strains)
- The risk of divorce rises for all social classes if an unexpected pregnancy or substance abuse problem is involved

Who is at risk for divorce?

- People who are non-religious
- Two-career marriages (due to career related strains and financially independent women)
- People who have experienced divorce already

Adjustments of Divorcees

- Emotional divorce – distancing oneself from the former spouse before the formal divorce
- Legal divorce – involves a legal change of status; involves financial settlements
- Psychic divorce – involves regaining a sense of psychological independence as a result of emotional seperation from their former spouse

Adjustments of Divorcees

- Community divorce – involves reorganizing friendships and adjusting relations with family members who are accustomed to seeing them as a couple
- Economic divorce – involves dividing marital assets equally; may mean a higher standard of living for men, but financial hardships for women
- Co-Parental divorce – involves facing the issues of child custody; a current trend in joint custody, in which children divide their time between both parents

Alternatives to Traditional Families

- One-parent families
- Cohabitation
- Communes
- Gay and Lesbian families
- Remaining single
- Blended families (from divorces)
- Binuclear families (from joint custody)
- Grandparent-headed families
- Extended families