

THE FAMILY

INTRO: What does the family contribute to individual development? To the larger society? (Discuss)

FORMS OF FAMILY SYSTEMS

The family is arguably the most important of all social systems; we see it in basically two forms:

- (1) nuclear family unit – this is the form most common in western, industrialized cultures
- (2) extended family unit – this is commonly found in many non-western cultures

CHANGES IN FAMILY SYSTEMS

Family units don't stay the same over time. Developmentalists write about the "Family life cycle" (p. 404)

- (1) each stage of the family life cycle has unique challenges; families are in various stages of the cycle at various times
- (2) while family members are dealing with their own individual developmental issues, they are dealing with family issues as well

Family systems are also influenced by societal changes; what are some changing trends in family systems ?

- (1) more single adults (delaying marriage)
- (2) fewer children
- (3) more women working outside the home
- (4) increase in divorce
- (5) increase in single-parent families (lots of problems)

- (6) more children living in poverty
- (7) more remarriages (Blended families)
- (8) more multigenerational families

INFANCY

Parent/child relationships are a primary influence on development in the the infancy stage; How can they not be?

- (1) Mom-Infant - this is the traditional caretaker relationship
- (2) Dad- Infant – dads are just as capable of taking care of the infants as mom, they just don't spend the time

EX: the “gap” in the amount of time dads spend with kids as opposed to moms

(Discuss) What are dads doing? Which relationship is most important?

CHILDHOOD

A central focus of the childhood years is the parenting style:

- (1) authoritarian – hi control, lo warmth
- (2) authoritative – hi control, hi warmth
- (3) permissive – lo control, hi warmth
- (4) uninvolved – lo control, lo warmth

(Discuss) Which parenting style brings the best results? Long range studies show (p.408)

(Discuss) Where do we learn how to parent? The truth is that there is a mutual effect: parents teach and shape children, but children also influence and teach parents

Sibling relationships are also a major factor: How would you describe your relationship with your siblings? (then? Now?)

- (1) Alfred Adler had an interesting theory of the effects of birth order on personality development

EX: The Birth Order Book, Kevin Leman; How many of you are 1st born or only children?

ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is both a time of continuity and renegotiation in parent/child relationships. What needs to be renegotiated? (Discuss)

ADULTHOOD

Most adults (95%) will marry? Why?

- (1) the “honeymoon” period is relatively short. Why?
- (2) some think that cohabitation, as a trial marriage, but the divorce rates for cohabitating couples who marry is even higher (handout)
- (3) learning to love is a choice that people have to make; the emotional high is relatively short-lived; soon we discover that we have married a stranger, who is resistant to our efforts to change them to fit our expectations

Becoming parents is a challenge that many young adults face

- (1) life will never be the same
- (2) marital satisfaction typically declines in the first year after baby is born; usually steeper for mom than for dad (Why?)

The child rearing years are a mixture of joys and frustrations

- (1) good parents must invest deeply in the parenting roles, but the most important thing they can do for their children is continue to cultivate and model the husband –wife relationship
- (2) factors of influence are many: number of children, ages, spread, etc.

The empty nest years can be a mixed blessing

- (1) requires adjustment as long time roles change when the last child is “launched” from the nest
- (2) can result in improved marriage relationship
- (2) Grandparenthood completes the family cycle

VARIATIONS TO THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE

Not every family unity neatly fits into the family life cycle

- (1) single adults – typical “SA” is hard to describe; in some ways, our society is still family-oriented
- (2) childless married couples
- (3) dual-career families – becoming more common
- (4) gay/lesbian families- the textbook authors take a fairly liberal approach to this controversial issue

SUMMARY: I can see situations where a child would be better off than in a violent, abusive situation. Not all heterosexuals are good parents! I can see problems with the absence of a role model (male or female), but the issue has not been studied long enough to reach long term conclusions

- (5) divorced and remarried families – usually lead to complicated family dynamics

