DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY?/MEASURING AND LABELING DEVIANCE
Oct. 13, 2008

WHAT ABOUT THE 1950S?
- What was different about the 1950s?
  - Divorce rate, high during Depression & WWII, dropped
  - Age of marriage fell to 100-year low
  - Birth rate soared (Baby Boom)
- What led to the 1950s family experiment?
  - Women were forced out of jobs after WWII
  - Economic growth and government programs allowed for prosperity with one wage earner
  - Ideal of dad-works, mom-stays-home family established
  - New ideal was supported by experts and media

WHY DID THE 1950S EXPERIMENT END?
- 1950s conditions allowed both preferred family form and preferred family lifestyle
  - Form: dad works, mom stays at home
  - Lifestyle: requires purchasing latest consumer goods
  - By 1970s many families changed form to maintain lifestyle, e.g., two wage earners, postponing marriage
  - During 1970s and 1980s, economic changes resulted in fewer families able to afford preferred form at all

SIGNS THAT MARRIAGE WILL PERSIST
- Percentage of women who never marry is lower now than at turn of 20th Century
- Higher divorce rates may indicate higher expectations for marriage
- Most divorced people re-marry; “serial monogamy” is common pattern
- Many gays and lesbians want to marry (and can in two-three states)
SOCIALLY CONTROL

Society

Social control: various means by which a society encourages conformity to its rules and expectations

Individuals

DEFINING DEVIANCE

- Deviance: behavior, belief or condition that violates social norms
  - By defining what is normal, society defines what is deviant (relativist approach to deviance)
  - Origin of term is in statistics—"deviation" is the difference between the value of a given case and the group average
  - Sociologists began using "deviance" in 1950s to encompass four major topics—crime and delinquency, mental illness, drug use/addiction, sexual misbehavior
  - Different approaches to studying deviance:
    - Why do people commit deviant acts? (causation approach)
    - Why are some people labeled as deviant and what are effects of label? (labeling theory)
    - Why do rules and punishments benefit some groups more than others? (conflict theory)
    - Why are some forms of deviance considered problems and others are not? (social problems approach)

FEARING "RANDOM CRIME"

- People most fear "random crime" (Joel Best)
  - Patternless: It can happen to anyone
  - Increasing: Crime is getting worse
  - Pointless: Criminal motives make no sense
  - But none of these claims are true
  - Crime is not random: it is stratified by gender, race, class and age
  - Official crime has been declining over the past decade or longer (but may have risen slightly in recent years)
  - Criminals have reasons for committing crimes
VIOLENT CRIME RATES, 1973-2005 (NCVS)

Victimization per 1,000 population

- 1973: 52.3
- 1975: 47.7
- 1977: 42.0
- 1979: 51.2
- 1981: 21.0

PROPERTY CRIME RATES, 1973-2005 (NCVS)

Victimization per 1,000 households

- 1973: 519.9
- 1975: 553.6
- 1977: 496.1
- 1979: 248.7
- 2005: 154.0