Decline of the Family?/Measuring and Labeling Deviance

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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 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

Social control

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

Defining deviance

- Deviance: behavior, belief or condition that violates social norms
  - By defining what is normal, society defines what is deviant
- 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)
Crime statistics

- Two major sources of crime statistics
  - Uniform crime reports (FBI): based on reports from police departments on reported crimes
  - National Crime Victimization Survey: household survey of crime victimization

Limitations of crime statistics

- Some crimes aren't measured at all (one goal of moral entrepreneurs is to have their targeted form of deviance measured)
- The two major sources miss some crime
- Reported crime rate includes just eight index crimes

Key points about crime trends

- People most fear "random crime"
  - 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 is currently declining
  - Criminals have reasons for committing crimes

Violent crime rates, 1973-2002 (NCVS)

Property crime rates, 1973-2003 (NCVS)