Work, Economics, Courtship & Marriage

Why do we work? What is **social significance**?

- Money is subsistence root, social processes include:
  - Activity level - acquire and exercise skills
  - Variety - adds context to life
  - Temporal structure - part of the rhythm of daily life
  - Social contacts - friendships and activities
  - Personal identity (when retirees cluster they commonly talk about old work days processes)

Modern American productivity built on Fordist concepts:

- large physical plants designed for mass production for mass consumption in mass markets. Fordism (particularly as directed by Henry Ford) involved significant processes for social control -- DISCUSS processes)

DISCUSS MODERN PROCESSES (LOW TRUST SYSTEMS) VS. POST-MODERN PROCESSES (POSSIBLY HIGH TRUST SYSTEMS)
CONFLICT AND ALIENATION

Labor vs. Capital -- Discuss Marx and control of means of production;
Also discuss concepts of alienation through dull, repetitive work processes.

Fordist processes are passing, but new processes of stratification through restructuring of economic system through tax law changes are emerging:

2001 Tax Cut:

1) $121 billion showered on wealthiest 1% w/ avg income of $1.5 million
2) poorest 20% will receive about 1% of total tax relief
3) 80% of cuts kick in after 2005 -- allows wealthy time to restructure assets; average cut per taxpayer of $342,000 per taxpayer ($500 billion total drain from Federal budget

All these cuts while this is going on:

1) top 1% of population control 40% of the wealth
2) top 10% own more than other 90% combined
3) from 1977 to 1999 after tax income for bottom 60% declined by 12%, after tax income for top 1% more than doubled
Is this fair? Are we really giving back to those who pay the most? Consider this:

1) top 10% shoulder 26% of the tax burden but will receive more than 50% of the tax cuts

2) repeal of the Federal Estate Tax will benefit only the wealthiest 2% of Americans

And, just how good is public policy when you consider the following:

1) 1 of 5 children in American live in poverty during the first 3 years of life

2) Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” program followed by a budget with smallest increase in education spending in 7 years

3) Change in earned income credit rules would cost $34 billion a year (1/2 the tax cut for wealthiest 1% of Americans) and would lift every poor family with children above the poverty level -- great impact because every year spent in poverty reduces economic output over lifetime by $12,000 per year

4) Finally, each additional $1 spent on quality childhood care and education saves $7
Stratification processes based on ownership of means of production have been historically documented. Those based on structuring of the tax system are actively in progress.

Issues of Work and Alienation play significant roles in process of family organization. Work processes have played HUGE role in family structure which is subject to change, but only VERY SLOWLY:

Stereotypical Gender Roles -
- women: wife, mother
- men: bread winner, leader

Sex Inequality -
- education: women catching up; BA and MA from 1/5 at turn of century to roughly equal now; PhD from 1/20 to 1/3
- work force: WW II blip, but now up to 55%
Quick Review:

Sexism has roots in myth (and religion - Koran and Biblical references)

Theoretical Views:

- Functionalism: role arrangements based on early human history which then became entrenched without basis. Division over whether roles are outdated - i.e. belief in importance of strong nuclear family unit w/ mom, dad, kids in functional roles;
- Conflict theory: no use for gender roles in today’s world, have outlived usefulness;
- Interactionist theory: roles linked to terms that are entrenched and with symbolic importance; if terms persist so will sexism.

Family Structures Change but Continue

Like it (or them) or not, we're all part of a family. There may be two parents, or one, there may be several, or no, siblings, but family units, however they are composed, are an exceptionally important part of society. In millennial America family units are typically one of the following two types:
a) traditional - mom and dad (one or both) and child (or children)

b) reconstituted - biological mom or dad (divorce is quite common these
days, and a "step" parent (not a biological parent, but one who has married
your biological parent) and child (or children). In the reconstituted family,
you may also have "step" brothers and/or sisters as well as "half" brothers or
sisters, "half" siblings being the offspring of one of your biological parents
and a subsequent spouse of theirs.

But, there are issues of family that are not normally considered:

1) Structure

vs.

2) Function

**Which is most important? -- DISCUSS**

Specifically, what about same sex parenting? Does it work? Is structure or
function most important in constituting a family? Also, what about other
aspects, including:
1) Economic issues -- poor family = poor children? Single parents have more economic problems? What to do about that? Consider Sweden? Viable here?

Regardless of which type of family you come from, the family serves numerous important functions in society. By tradition, and practice, the family functions include:

1) teaching of morals and values and assisting in the process of "socialization" of the children (teaching them what is and is not acceptable behavior society)

2) teaching interaction skills -- the skills you need to get along with other people and do the things that help them and get them to do the things that help you function better in society

3) provide a sense of "being," of having your "place" in society. This makes you feel you belong somewhere in particular and aren't just an aimless wanderer; *what is in a name?*
4) *provide the necessities of life, like food, clothing and shelter*

5) provide emotional support as you grow and mature, helping you learn from both good and bad experiences

6) provide a setting for procreation -- it takes two to make a baby and the two parents in a family have the opportunity to have children in a manner that is fully approved by society. That does not suggest that you can't have children outside of a family setting, but having, and raising children, may be easier with family support

7) *provide protection -- It's a big, bad world out there and the family is traditionally the "safe haven" to which you can always turn no matter how bad things get.*

Bold, italics indicate items more important since 1900 (mobility issues)
Plan bold items are less important since 1900

Within American society (which is obviously the society that concerns us most since that's where we're living at present), love is the primary criteria for marriage. Is this good, or bad? Discuss other countries -- i.e. India, Muslim countries. Good question, and there is no absolute answer to the
question, but we do know that love:  a) impairs judgment and causes people to behavior in unnatural ways (putting on a false, or "best" appearance for the benefit of the one you love). So, when you marry for love (which is probably what you will do) be aware: You may find some surprises after the first bloom of love begins to fade.

John Cuber and Randy Collins have done a significant amount of family study, including study that resulted in a system of classification of types of marriage in American society. They identified three types as follows:

1) Vital -- a living, breathing, active partnership in which the couple interact almost constantly in a meaningful and productive manner. Cuber and Collins estimate that only 3-5% of marriages are "vital."

2) Conflict Habituated -- the couple live together, make things work, but engage in constant minor bickering and disagreement that makes family life workable, but a little uncomfortable, for those in the household.

3) Cordial -- no real vital interaction, but no real conflict either. You just sort of roll along and get along with each other and don't make waves.
Despite the effort involved, and the problems associated with it, marriage survives as the preferred form of "coupling" in our society. Statistics indicate the divorce rate stands at roughly 50% today. However, and importantly, this does not suggest that 50% of all first marriages end in divorce; the rate is "skewed" by the fact that people who divorce two, three, or more times, affect the overall average.

Discuss Radically Changing perceptions: Birth control, legal abortion, premarital sex, extramarital childbirth, gay adoption.