Chapter 7

Discussion Questions.

1. This chapter starts out stressing the importance of using our sociological imagination in understanding the relationship between our families and the family as a social institution: “If we use our sociological imagination…..we can uncover the links between our personal family experiences and our social world.” Hold a class discussion about the following question: What does your family have in common with the other family groups?
2. Divorce is often looked at in a very negative manner. Social conservatives often frown upon the high divorces rates in the U.S. and some even want to go as far as restricting divorce or at minimum making it harder to obtain. Should divorce be harder to obtain in the U.S. and if so why?
3. Though this textbook purports that, “There is a persistent belief that nontraditional families, such as divorced, fatherless, or working-mother families, threaten and erode the integrity of the family as an institution is a myth,” there are some within our society that believe this is not a myth and is actually a real threat to the sacred institution of marriage and the family. What do you think and why?
4. The U.S. teen birthrate is the highest in the developed world. There are no federal laws in the U.S. that require sexual health education in schools like, for example, in France and Australia that have much lower rates of teen pregnancy. Should sex education be mandatory in the U.S. public school system? Why or why not? In what grade should sex education start? Why?
5. Researchers have different opinions regarding the changes that have taken place in regards to families in the United States. One view is that the family is deteriorating since familymembers spend fewer hours together due to outside obligations. Another view is that the family unit changes as our society changes. Finally, another view is that the family is stronger than ever, as families make sure the time spent together is quality time. Discuss with the class which view they take and why.
6. Ask the class which trends, in regards to the family, do they think have increased (i.e. cohabitation rates) and which trends have decreased (i.e. marriage) in the past 50 years. Then, discuss with the class why these trends have taken place. Ask them to predict what changes they believe will take place in the future.