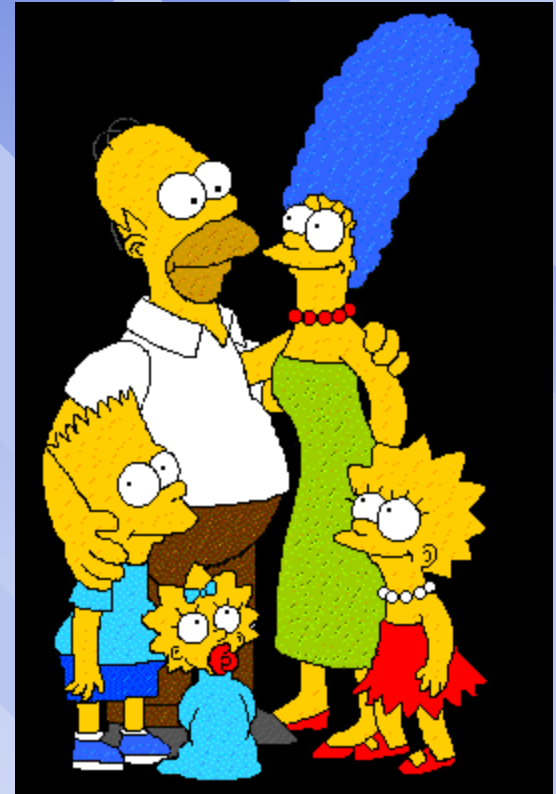


# Industrial Society: The Family

As told by Dr. Frank Elwell

# Industrial Society: The Family

We live in a society whose family system is based on the strong affection and close companionship of the spouses, and in which the basis of marriage is romantic love rather than economics or family lineage.



# Industrial Society: The Family

- Young people expect to choose a spouse free from family dictates and to have a close companion and sexual relationship with that person.
- Yet this mode of family and marital life is a unique creation of industrial/bureaucratic society.



# Industrial Society: The Family

Nowhere before the 17th and 18th century in the West was family and marital life organized in this fashion. This presentation will attempt to tell the story of the evolution of the modern Western family system. It will examine family life in pre-industrial Europe and North America and the profound changes it began to undergo some centuries ago.

# Industrial Society: The Family

Because of the demands for geographic mobility produced by the industrial economy, the extended family would be a major encumbrance in the lives of most individuals, and thus the nuclear family is a much more adaptive type.



# Industrial Society: The Family

In all industrial societies, the nuclear family is the dominant form of family life. Once the extended family is no longer economically adaptive, the emphasis on the nuclear family may well be encouraged by the desire of individuals in the West for greater freedom from control by the older generation.

# Traditional European Families

- Sociologists and social historians date the transition of the modern family in most of western Europe to around the middle of the eighteenth century.
- This family transition began in the middle and upper classes and diffused later to the lower classes.

# Traditional European Families

The pre-industrial European family bears little resemblance to the modern family in terms of the whole tone and texture of familial relationships.

They differ in terms of:

- Bonds
- Boundaries





# Traditional European Families

- There is little evidence that the relationship between husband and wife was typically one based upon strong mutual affection and a sense of companionship.
- Although romantic love as we know it today existed, it was not considered an appropriate basis for marriage

# Traditional European Families

- Marriages were arranged by the families of the respective spouses, and economic considerations determined the choice of a spouse, or even the decision to marry at all.
- Marital unions were fundamentally economic rather than affective relationships.

# Traditional European Families

"And so much more firmly did economics rather than emotion bind together the peasant couple that when the wife fell ill, her husband commonly spared the expense of a doctor, though prepared to 'cascade gold' upon the veterinarian who came to attend a sick cow or bull. That was because, in the last analysis, a cow was worth much more than a wife."--Edward Shorter

# Traditional European Families

- Of course a wife was valuable--but in economic terms. Her domestic labor was essential, and she played a crucial role as a producer of offspring.
- Yet her value to her husband went little beyond this, and social and economic conditions in pre-modern Europe did not encourage the development of strong affection within the marital relationship.

# Traditional European Families

- Also, there seems to have been little in the way of sentimental ties between parents and their children.
- Children were commonly fostered-out right after birth to paid wet-nurses who cared for them for perhaps a year or more. Children were frequently treated in ways that today would be regarded as extreme forms of child abuse.



During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, large families were the rule: the Dudleys of Richmond, Virginia, 1903

# Traditional European Families

They were often left unattended for long periods of time, sometimes were hung by their clothing on hooks to keep them out of the way, and as Shorter has remarked, were frequently left to "stew in their own excrement" for long hours.

# Traditional European Families

In addition they were commonly subjected to physical abuse from which they frequently died or suffered great injury.





# Traditional European Families

There is also the fact that children in the same family were often given the same first name. A newborn infant might be given the name of an older sibling who had recently died, or two living children might have the very same name. This suggests to some that parents had no conception of the child as a unique individual with whom a parent can have a special relationship.

# Traditional European Families

The reasons for this indifferent attitude and treatment toward children is probably found in the economic and social conditions of the day.

# Traditional European Families

As Stone has pointed out, the rate of infant death was so high that it would have been difficult for a mother to invest considerable emotion in her children. To become emotionally attached to them, only to watch them die in such high proportions, would be a devastating experience to bear.

# Traditional European Families

- Parental indifference was a response to debilitating economic conditions and a high rate of infant and child death.
- The basic lack of parental affection, then, was not something parents voluntarily chose, but rather something that was imposed on them by external conditions.

# Traditional European Families

- A final characteristic of the traditional family was its fundamental lack of privacy or "separateness" from the rest of society.
- The family form that most of us live in today--a private social unit relatively isolated from the rest of society--scarcely existed.

# Traditional European Families

- There was no real boundary between the family and the rest of society.
- As Shorter has remarked, the traditional family was "pierced full of holes."  
Outsiders interacted freely with members of the household, and the relations between family members and outsiders were just as close as those among the family members themselves.

# Traditional European Families

- The traditional family was basically an economic subsystem of the larger society, much more a productive and reproductive unit than an emotional unit.
- It was most vitally concerned with transmitting property between generations and with reproducing the species.

# Traditional European Families

Its crucial role as a transmitter of property relations explains the powerful role of family elders in the arrangement of marriage.





# Rise of the Modern Family

But in the 17th and 18th centuries this mode of family life began to decay and give way to the kind of family unit familiar to us in the late 20th century.



# Rise of the Modern Family

- The rise of the modern family involved the growth of three fundamental characteristics:
  - ties of affection
  - concern with sexual pleasure
  - desire for private family life

# Ties of Affection

One of the most important aspects of the transition to the modern family was the emergence of romantic love as the basis for marriage.



# Ties of Affection

- Two aspects of this phenomenon:
  - First, young people began to reject parental interference in the choice of marriage partners and increasingly demanded the right to choose for themselves.
  - Second, the marriage itself came increasingly to be seen as an affective rather than an economic unit, one held together by the sentimental attachment of the spouses rather than by considerations of property.

# Ties of Affection

The sentimental revolution in the family also transformed the relations between parents and their children; a growing concern of parents for the welfare of their children became manifest.



# Concern with Sexual Pleasure

Social life was becoming, at least relative to the past, highly eroticized, and the idea of sexual pleasure as an end in itself was becoming significant.



# Concern with Sexual Pleasure

In pre-modern Europe premarital sex appears to have been uncommon. There is also little evidence of much auto erotic behavior.

# Concern with Sexual Pleasure

Marked increases in illegitimacy in 17th and 18th. Marital sex also seemed to become more common and to be given more erotic significance.





# Desire for private family life

By the middle of the 19th century the family had become a unit insisting upon its private existence and its separation (or even isolation) from the outside world.



# Desire for private family life

- Shorter calls this "the rise of domesticity". the modern family was becoming more and more private, and the boundaries between it and the rest of society more and more closely drawn.
- Members of the family came to feel far more solidarity with one another than they did with their various age and sex peer groups.

# Evolution of the Modern Family

The evolution of the modern family was largely a product of the vast changes that were taking place during these centuries toward a highly industrialized, bureaucratized, commercialized civilization.



# Evolution of the Modern Family

- Modern industrial-bureaucratic society requires the individual to be both geographically and socially mobile.
- It requires people to move from one end of the country to the other to pursue their narrow careers. It requires people to move up the social ladder, abandoning family and friends along the way.

# Evolution of the Modern Family

Since it is the nuclear unit that must live in relative isolation, it makes little sense for marriage to be arranged by extended family unit.



# Evolution of the Modern Family

- Christopher Lasch (1977) has suggested that the private family of the 18th and 19th centuries emerged as a kind of shelter into which people could escape from the increasing harsh realities of the outside world.
- The family lost many of its important functions, it became, in Lasch's memorable phrase, a "haven in a heartless world."

# Evolution of the Modern Family

The heartless world that Lasch has in mind is bureaucratic-industrial society. The intensely competitive character of the work environment, as well as its narrowing into specialized role behavior, created the need for a refuge in which people could recover from the slings and arrows of the work world so as to be able to enter it again.

# Evolution of the Modern Family

"As business, politics, and diplomacy grow more savage and warlike, men seek a haven in private life, in personal relations, above all in the family--the last refuge of love and decency." --Christopher Lasch



# Continuing Evolution

As industrialization continues to intensify, the family continues to evolve. Many have suggested that in the past several decades the family itself has been under so much stress that it no longer is able to fulfill its role as a refuge.

# Continuing Evolution

- The Western family since the early 1960s has suffered from enormous strains and has undergone profound changes as a result.
- These changes involve both the relations between husbands and wives and those between parents and their adolescent children.

# Continuing Evolution

- Three recent changes:
  - Rise of cohabitation
  - Decline in fertility
  - Rise in divorce

# Continuing Evolution

One of the more widely discussed changes in family life since the early 1960s has been the marked increase in cohabitation-- couples living together without marriage.

# Continuing Evolution

In Sweden cohabitation has become virtually a universal practice, as 99 percent of Swedish couples live together before marriage. In the U.S., numbers living together has more than doubled since the 1970s.

# Continuing Evolution

- Cohabitation, however, does not appear to pose a significant threat to marriage. It seems to be more a preparatory stage for marriage than a permanent substitute for it.
- That cohabitation has become so common, however, suggests that marital and family life is becoming very different in the past 25 years, and that people have very different expectations of it.

# Continuing Evolution

Another major change in family life in the past 25 years has been the marked decline in fertility, or women's childbearing activities.



# Continuing Evolution

Since the early 1960s the fertility rate has declined markedly, all the way to 1.9 children per woman for women whose prime childbearing years came in the 1970s.



# Continuing Evolution

The divorce rate has been rising since the mid 19th century. Especially since the 1960s, however, it has increased sharply.



# Continuing Evolution

From 1965 to 1975, the rate of divorce doubled in the United States. It peaked in 1979 at 22 per thousand married women and then stabilized at the 1994 rate of 20 per thousand.

# Continuing Evolution

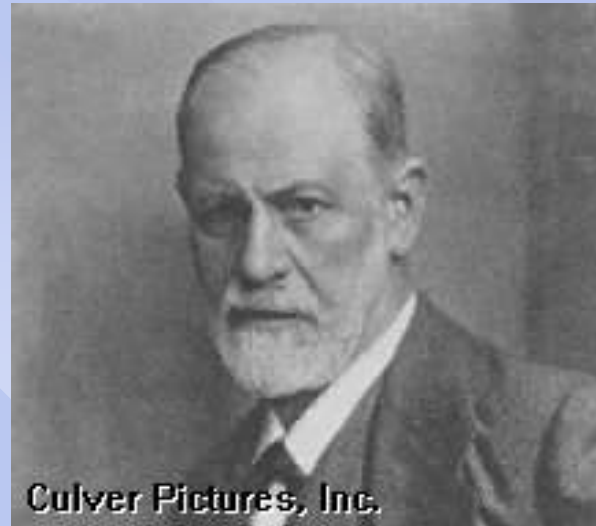
Since 1974, 1 million children a year have seen their parents divorce, and 45 percent of all American children can expect their families to break up before they reach the age of 18.

# Recent Evolution of the Family

- What accounts for the current upheaval in marital relationships? Why are young people living together frequently before marriage, having fewer children, and divorcing at alarming rates?
- It has often been said that the current family changes are attributable to changing values and attitudes in regard to family life.

# Recent Evolution of the Family

This explanation, even if true, would be trivial. We would still be faced with the problem of explaining why the attitudes and values in regard to marriage and family life have changed.



# Recent Evolution of the Family

All the evidence indicates that familial attitudes and values changed after the behavior changed.

# Recent Evolution of the Family

It seems that changes in values and attitudes have actually followed rather than generated behavioral changes. While these attitude and value changes then reinforce and promote the behavioral change, they are not the cause.

# Recent Evolution of the Family

Available evidence indicates that these recent trends are due to fundamental economic changes involving the participation of women in the labor force.





# Recent Evolution of the Family

- These trends correspond closely to the dramatic increase in the proportion of married women with dependent children who work full-time outside the household.
- Such women are more economically independent, and are thus less likely to stay in an unpleasant marriage.

# Recent Evolution of the Family

Their dependence on their husbands has decreased. With both men and women involved in their careers, they have fewer children, and less glue to hold them together.



# Recent Evolution of the Family

- Cohabitation is a logical response to a higher rate of marital failure--a trial period to see if they have a good chance to make it.
- Because of the rise of individualism, and the decline of most of the family's pre-industrial functions, people demand that marriage at least provide the haven from a troubled world.

# Recent Evolution of the Family

When marriages fail to live up to this unrealistic expectation of providing domestic and sexual bliss on a full-time basis, people cut and run.



# Recent Evolution of the Family

Finally, as industrialization continues to intensify we have lengthened the period of adolescence. At the same time the family has lost much of its influence in the socialization process, it now must compete with numerous institutions to instill values and beliefs.





# Recent Evolution of the Family

In a world emphasizing change, parents become increasingly irrelevant as having anything of value to transmit to them. The children have been pulled away by the massive development of non-familial socialization institutions. They have been pushed out by both parents becoming career oriented.

# Recent Evolution of the Family

As industrialization continues to intensify, as bureaucracies increase their dominance over social life, as our values, beliefs, and ideologies change as a result, the family as an institution must adapt.





# Recent Evolution of the Family

- At least 90 percent of people are still opting for marriage, and the rate of remarriage after divorce is very high. What we appear to be moving to is serial monogamy.
- The changing structure of family life is but one consequence of continued industrial intensification.