Marriage, Divorce, and the Mid-Life Crisis

I. Is marriage a failing institution? Are failing marriages the cause of social problems?

A. Marriage is still popular in the US

1. 95% will marry

2. higher than any other industrial society

3. other IS have a declining rate

4. 70% of those who get divorced will remarry, half within three years

B. People are waiting longer for first marriages

1. men 27.5 and women 25

2. reasons

a. school is longer, graduate school

b. women going to school with careers in mind

c. cohabitation before marriage

C. Happiness/unhappiness

1. married report greater levels of happiness and less unhappiness

a. 62% of married adults very happy with marriage

b. report higher levels of happiness and satisfaction with life

c. especially men who do no housework

d. only 5% "not too happy"

e. married women happier than unmarried and divorced

2. exceptions

a. married women with children who do not work

3. objective correlates

a. marrieds are healthier

i. less illness and disease

ii. longer life expectancy

iii. less likely to commit suicide

4. exception

1. married women with higher levels of mental illness than married men

b. 1 in 4 severe depression

D. Despite all this happiness and good health divorce

1. divorce rate is 1 out of 2

2. highest rate for IS but stable

3. Rate is increasing in other countries

II. Complex institution

A. Romantic love and its expectations

1. personal happiness and fulfillment

2. interpersonal relationship

a. emotionally rewarding

b. sexually fulfilling

3. bliss

a. "happily ever after"

b. "till death do us part"

B. Economic relationship

1. both men and women working

a. 60% of women and women with infants

b. 70% of working women full time

C. Power relationship

1. patriarchal in early American society

a. doctrine of coverture

2. power relationship

a. surveys

b. men make big decisions and exercise a veto power

c. women plan meals and activities

D. Home as a workplace

1. second shift -27 hrs even for working women

2. women's work

3. men's work

E. Children

III. How to make marriages work?

A. Self reporting surveys

1. fidelity 93%

2. understanding 86%

3. good sex 75%

4. children 59%

5. common interests 52%

6. sharing household chores 43%

7. enough money 41%

8. same background

B. marriages that endure

1. intimacy model - Erikson- 1 out of 6

2. reality - over 60% are utilitarian

a. serve a purpose for both

3. 80% of upper middle class and upper class are utilitarian

a. wife benefits enhanced SES

b. husband house manager and arm charm

B. Variable related to stability

1. economic

2. same background

IV. Institutional stresses

A. Economic

1. both working

a. 143 hours per year

a. tired

b. less leisure time

2. biggest cause of arguments

3. conflicted social role for woman - work or child care

B. power arrangement

C. expectations

1. sights way too high for marriage

a. most important thing in their lives

b. source of happiness and fulfillment

2. psychological gentrification

a. personal happiness vs

i. personal freedom

ii. self-actualization

iii. self gratification

b. commitment to unhappy relationship

c. a right to be happy

D. Children

1. most happy before and after

2. expensive $250,000 through college

3. second biggest cause of arguments

4. declining sex

E. Housework

1. women find the work tedious but

a. lower class identify with it as a value

b. not middle and upper

2. source of resentment