

Instructor Guide for COVID-19 Discussion and Activities
Families Now: Diversity, Demography, and Development

PART I: The Big Picture

Chapter 1. Myths and Realities: Defining, Understanding, and Studying Family Life

- p. 11, The Impact of Globalization section offers the opportunity for discussion about how the increasingly globalized nature of social life facilitates the spread of the virus (e.g., through increased travel and contact) and enhances our response to it (e.g., multinational efforts to develop a vaccine). The point in this section about immigration and its effects on conceptions of families also applies, as changing ideas about what constitutes “the family” have implications for who people shelter with and support during the pandemic.
- p. 14, One of the three biases in understanding families (see Figure 1.6) is the Perspective Bias, which concerns historical understanding of families. Although we do not yet have sound research about how families fare during this pandemic, we do know a great deal how families fared during past national and global crises (e.g., the Great Depression, World War II, the 1918 flu pandemic, 9/11) that we can look to for lessons.
- p. 26, the discussion of the life course paradigm (see also Figure 1.9) covers how the interplay between our family roles and family experiences is influenced by the specific circumstances of the historical moment, using a woman’s transitions through various roles (e.g., daughter, mother) and how they affect her (e.g., support, struggle) as an example. This discussion can be extended to think about the pandemic—and resulting economic recession and shelter-in-place conditions—as the circumstances of the current historical moment. Why would they matter to this example?

Chapter 2. Families throughout History: The Social Construction of Us

- p. 30, The chapter opens with a discussion of two historical forces that shape family life and how we view families (social construction of family and cultural diffusion). How the pandemic and policy response (e.g., shelter-in-place conditions) is being socially constructed across diverse sets of families (e.g., is it a crisis, overly alarmist?) is one way to go, and the tendency for all families to be judged according to the standards for living through the pandemic is another.
- p. 47, The *Research in the Real World* feature concerns the use of carefully preserved databases of the U.S. Census to study historical trends in family life. Since 2020 is a Census year (with a recently announced delay into 2021), how will the current Census data collection provide information that researchers and the public could use to understand the impact of the pandemic on families? If students could collect data right now that future studies could use to understand life during the pandemic, what would they want to collect?
- p. 65, The chapter ends with three conclusions about the shifting nature of family life across historical eras (e.g., one about economic impact, one about the construction of family ideals, and one about the connection between power and family norms). Each of these conclusions can be discussed explicitly in relation to the current crisis and its aftermath as a historical era, both in terms of what we see happening now and what we expect to (or fear will) happen in the future.

Chapter 3. The Long Arm of the Law: Legal Constructions of Family

- p. 70, The opening section discusses three types of welfare regimes in Western countries (see especially Figure 3.1). Students can discuss how countries associated with each regime (e.g., Norway, Germany, U.S.) are they are responding to the pandemic in terms of policy and how their populations are faring in terms of health and other outcomes.

- p. 85, Figure 3.7 offers three different types of welfare programs in the U.S. (income insurance, income assistance, and health and human services). Which program should play the biggest role in providing support to families during this crisis? Where do the government relief programs already enacted (e.g., Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation) fit into this welfare program categorization?
- p. 90, Child custody arrangements have gotten increasingly complex in recent decades, both reflecting and influencing legal changes in custody. How have the pandemic and the various responses to it restricting movement and contact complicated something already complicated? How are families handling custody now? How should they?
- p. 98, There is a discussion of child care policies that also draws on Figure 3.10 (which graphs early child care expenditures). What are the ramifications of this policy climate for families during a pandemic that is stretching need for child care, making it harder to get, and reducing parents' means for paying for it? What does that mean for parents' ability to work (including from home) and children's own wellbeing?

Chapter 4. The Haves and the Have-Nots: Families, Economics, and Inequality

- p. 116, The family process model (also featured in Figure 4.2) is depicted here as demonstrating the how the effects of family SES on children are filtered through family dynamics. The model was original formulated to explain the effects of major economic recessions (such as the Great Depression) for children, and it applies to ways that any major historical event can affect the lives of individual people. How does the model apply to the current pandemic, which is clearly a major historical event?
- p. 119, Similarly, the section "Impact of Hard Times" covers the ways that economic recessions affect families and young people. Since the pandemic has now caused a major recession with massive unemployment, it is a great example for illustrating the income effect and substitution effect described in this section. They are especially relevant to the case of college students during difficult economic times.
- p. 127, Figure 4.4 provides the historical trend in the U.S. poverty rate. As this crisis continues, we will be able to extrapolate what its effect on the rate will be. A great resource to draw on for this discussion will be the Institute for Research on Poverty's COVID page (<https://www.irp.wisc.edu/poverty-and-covid19/>).
- p. 137, The major thrust of welfare reform legislation was to tie income assistance for families more directly to maternal employment. What are the implications of this change for today, when unemployment is at the highest level since the Great Depression?
- p. 141, The *Private Life as Public Policy* feature describes the basic logic behind two-generation programs to reduce poverty. How can this logic be applied to helping families during the pandemic?

Chapter 5. Conflict or Balance? The Interplay, of Gender, Work, and Family Life

- p. 153, This sections on work and parenting can be discussed through the lens of the pandemic in terms of how parents manage work without child care or on-site school and while they are working under social distancing rules, often from home. How especially does this change reflect the culture of intensive mothering?
- p. 159, The whole idea of work-family conflict is predicated on a separation between the work domain and the home domain and how that separation creates tensions between the two, but what is the impact of the blurring of lines between work and home during the shelter-in-place rules of the pandemic in most places?

- p. 162, Figure 5.5 lists three different types of tensions that create or exacerbate work-family conflict (time-based, strain-based, behavior-based). Where does the pandemic—and the complications it is creating in family life and work life—fit into this categorization?
- p. 175, the end of the chapter discusses different policy supports for reducing work-family conflict (parental leave, affordable child care, and workplace flexibility), each of which can be discussed in the context of the pandemic and its effects on work, schooling, and children.

PART II: Family Structure and Status

Chapter 6. The Family? Children’s Lives across Diverse Family Structures

- p. 189, The section on single parent families lists many of the strains on family life associated with having only one parent available to manage children on a daily basis and only one economic provider, and these strains (e.g., time constraints, child care demands, financial pressures) can be discussed in terms of how they are being exacerbated by the pandemic.
- p. 193, The section on stepparent families delves into the ways that the nature of many stepparent relations (e.g., family boundary ambiguity, incomplete institutionalization) make it harder for such families to consistently serve the needs of children and/or avoid conflict, and these challenges (e.g., perceived lack of stepparent authority, resentment of stepparents, custody complications) can be discussed in terms of how they are being exacerbated by the pandemic.
- p. 199, The section “Developmental Impact of Changing Family Structures” concerns the importance of instability in family structure and is anchored in the family stress perspective. Understanding how the pandemic may affect the challenges of family instability, either increasing (e.g., reducing the sense of security in a child’s life) or lessening (e.g., reducing the come and go of family members) would be an interesting point of discussion.
- p. 209, The section “Extended Families with Children” touches on many family arrangements (co-residential extended and skipped-generation households) that are relevant to how families may shelter-in-place, share child care, buffer the damage of unemployment during the pandemic, particularly for families of color with a longer history of such arrangements and who have been hit harder by the pandemic than the general population.

Chapter 7. Partnering: How and Why People Marry and Cohabit

- p. 227, The section “Marriage Market Dynamics” describes a way of thinking about how people find partners. How do the basic tenets of this market perspective work in a pandemic climate that greatly restricts physical movement and in-person interactions as well as employment, health, and criteria that affect supply and demand?
- p. 231, The discussion of marriage and health covers the health benefits of being married as well as the toll of women on caretaking for sick spouses, both of which are relevant to discussing how people fare during a global health crisis.
- p. 233, Figure 7.4 shows four different types of cohabitation (alternative to marriage, precursor to marriage, trial marriage, co-residential dating) that arise for different reasons and serve different purposes. Which do you think is best positioned for life during the pandemic, both in terms of enduring and its effects on people?
- p. 242, The section “Gender and the Path to Formal and Informal Unions” covers the development of relationships in adolescence, young adulthood, and adulthood. This development in each stage of life can be discussed in the context of the pandemic (e.g., adolescent dating when school is out, finding a young adult partner when physical movement is restricted, the relative importance of online dating during adulthood).

- p. 248, The *Research in the Real World* feature on online dating is especially ripe for a discussion of dating and relationship formation during a historical moment where many people are not going to work, unable to go to social events, etc.

Chapter 8. Becoming a Parent: Societal and Personal Trends in Fertility and Infertility

- p. 256, The chapter opens with a discussion of the total fertility rate and how and why it has dropped over time across the globe, which can set up a conversation about what the implications of the pandemic will be for this rate in different types of countries (especially those with variable impact of the pandemic on health and mortality).
- p. 262, The discussion of the declining fertility rate touches on its implications for the aging population and the aging of families, especially in affluent countries. Given that the pandemic disproportionately affects older people, has this population change facilitated the deadly impact and spread of the virus?
- p. 268, Figure 8.5 depicts stages in the transition into parenthood and the risks that can complicate this transition as well as the supports that can buffer against it. Based on this figure, students can discuss the pandemic as a source of risk in this transition and brainstorm about the different kinds of support needed for people to overcome this risk.
- p. 269, Child effects are described in terms of the ways that children elicit parenting from their parents. What kinds of child effects might arise during the pandemic, both in terms of family members getting sick and in terms of families adapting to general life during the pandemic?
- p. 276, The section on abortion includes a discussion of new restrictions on abortion access. Some states have attempted to increase those restrictions during the pandemic (e.g., Texas designation abortions as non-essential procedures that cannot be performed amidst shelter-in-place conditions), and, although challenging, this topic could allow exploration of the changing nature of abortion law and abortion-related attitudes in recent years.
- p. 284, The section on multipartner fertility focuses on inequality, and the disadvantages (or advantages?) of being a parent of child in a family rooted in multipartner fertility during the pandemic is a way of understanding the role of family structure in inequality.

Chapter 9. Breaking Up: Trends in Divorce, Separation, and Family Instability

- p. 301, Figure 9.4 presents two models of the long-term process of divorce (cascade, divorce-stress-adjustment). Where would the strain of the pandemic—either the actual health experience of the accompanying economic distress and social stress—fit into each model?
- p. 301, The effects of a divorce on people’s lives is often discussed in terms of the crisis vs. chronic strain dichotomy, which is applicable to thinking about families will recover from the pandemic. Students can discuss which model they think will apply and why.
- p. 305, Two key explanations for why marriages end in divorce are called the accumulation of risk model and the social exchange model. How would the pandemic and its many consequences factor into each of these two models?
- p. 308, Figure 9.6 lays out three ways of thinking about the links between divorce and health. The pandemic would be best thought of as either a spurious factor in the selection model or as a moderator in the moderation model. Discuss how the pandemic could play both roles separately or at once.
- p. 315, The *Research in the Real World* feature about biology and the effects of parental divorce on children describes two types of children (orchids and dandelions). Discuss how each type of child is likely to fare during the pandemic.

Part III: Family Relationships

Chapter 10. Love, Conflict, and Negotiation: Relationships between Couples

- p. 324, Figure 10.2 depicts the Vulnerability-Stress-Adaptation model of relationship quality, which has three primary components (individual vulnerabilities, exposure to stressful events, adaptive processes). Clearly, the pandemic is an example of stressful life events, so how would it work in relation with the other two components to influence relationship quality.
- p. 334, Communication is likely to be key to protecting relationship quality during the stress and strain of the pandemic, so how would positive communication and negative communication look for a couple living through this crisis?
- p. 337, The concept of partner health maintenance—also discussed in relation to same-sex couples in the *Research in the Real World* feature on p. 338—is key to ways that marriage promotes health. Discuss ways that partners can perform this function for each other for both physical and mental health during the pandemic and how this function might differ by gender.
- p. 343, The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse covers various ways that partner interactions can doom a relationship. What are ways that couples would engage in or avoid these four “horseman” in the specific case of the pandemic?
- p. 345, As the pandemic has erased the boundaries between home and work for many couples, what are ways that the gendered division of household labor may be get more or less unequal?
- p. 349, Infidelity is one of the main threats to a relationship, but the likelihood and nature of infidelity is undoubtedly altered by the pandemic. Discuss how.

Chapter 11. Role of a Lifetime: How We Fulfill and Violate the Parent Role

- p. 355, Figure 11.1 presents four sets of key parenting practices for children and youth (support, investment, protection, and control). Discuss the pandemic-unique challenges to each set of practices and in ways that the pandemic may have made some of these practices easier.
- p. 357, Sensitivity, which concerns parents’ ability to read and respond to children’s needs, is a fundamental component of positive parenting but one that varies in how it is manifested across diverse cultures. Think about the ways that parents might find it harder to be sensitive to their children in the ways that children need and parents want during the pandemic and discuss how those challenges might depend on culture.
- p. 365, The *Research in the Real World* feature describes the ways that children’s genetically influenced traits and behaviors can elicit different kinds of parenting behavior from their parents. Given that the strength of such “child effects” can vary across contexts, one point of discussion is whether child effects are likely to get stronger or weaker in the specific challenges to parenting and stressors on children presented by the pandemic.
- p. 369, Parents have complex ideas about the value of corporal punishment that vary across different socioeconomic and racial/ethnic groups. Could the pandemic exacerbate or dilute such differences in parental attitudes or behaviors?

Chapter 12. Evolving and Adapting: Parents, Children, and Inequality Over the Life Course

- p. 388, Attachments between parents and young children takes many forms, and the form that it takes is a strong influence on child development. What kinds of challenges does the pandemic pose for secure attachment and how might it influence the other forms of attachment?
- p. 393, Cognitive stimulation during early childhood is related to brain development, but it is often a time-intensive activity. The shelter-in-place experience of the pandemic could hinder or promote such activity. How? Does the answer to this question likely vary by family socioeconomic status?

- p. 397, Which approach to education-focused parenting (concerted cultivation, accomplishment of natural growth) is most suited to life during the pandemic, and do you expect the socioeconomic divide around these two approaches to widen or shrink?
- p. 404, Given the discussion of adolescent development, what are the ways that boys and girls might negatively react to the more restricted life of the pandemic, and how will and should parents respond to their adolescents' reactions?
- p. 414, The co-residence of adult children and their parents arises for many reasons and differs by socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. Discuss the kinds of co-residence that might increase during the pandemic as well as for whom and why.
- p. 415, Contact between adult children and their parents has increased in recent years, in part because of technological innovation, but the form and frequency of such contact could change during the pandemic in both positive and negative ways. Discuss how and why.

Chapter 13. Beyond Nuclear: The Evolving Impact of Multigenerational Family Life

- p. 427, The age structure of U.S. families is getting older and more complex. Discuss the ways that this changing age structure could influence students' exposure to the virus and their caregiving and family responsibilities during the pandemic.
- p. 433, Intergenerational relations in the family are often characterized by downward and upward exchanges. Which type of exchange is likely to increase or decrease most during the pandemic? Will the nature, not just the type, of such exchanges change?
- p. 435 and p. 441, The *Private Life as Public Policy* feature and the *Research in the Real World* feature discuss elder care and family end-of-life planning, respectively, in the context of an aging population. How are the challenges of both likely to increase during the pandemic, especially given the heightened vulnerability of the elderly to the virus?
- p. 447, Figure 13.6 presents multiple components of modern grandparent-grandchild relationships. Some of these components are more vulnerable to the pandemic, but others may actually be enhanced. Discuss each one through this lens.

Chapter 14. The Dark Side of Family Life: Shining a Light on Family Violence

- p. 457, Intimate partner violence can take many forms (e.g., physical, emotional, sexual, and recent news reports have suggested a rise across the board. Google some of these articles (here is one example from the *New York Times* in April 2020: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/world/coronavirus-domestic-violence.html>) and use them to discuss the social influences on violence rates.
- p. 470, The *Research in the Real World* feature is an interview with a social scientist who tracks national rates of child maltreatment. How has the pandemic made such data collection more important, and does it challenge collecting good data?
- p. 475, Child maltreatment rates rose during the Great Recession. Could the same thing happen during the pandemic? Would a pandemic-related rise reflect the economic distress caused by the pandemic or could it also reflect aspects of the pandemic not related to economics?
- p. 481, Figure 14.9 depicts the confluence of three factors underlying abuse (vulnerability, trust relationship, old age). Discuss this confluence in the specific context of the pandemic.
- p. 487, The *Application Exercise* at the end of the chapter offers statistics about child maltreatment cases in the U.S. and how they are reported and acted upon by authorities. Discuss the "leakage" in the system illustrated by the accompanying figure and how and why it might worsen during the pandemic for the reasons listed in the 2015 ACF report and for newer reasons.

Chapter 15. Fellow Travelers: Sibling Relations across Time and Place

- p. 500, Sibling relationships follow a development course from childhood to adulthood. How might the pandemic affect each stage of this course, and, depending on when in the “life” of the relationship it hits, may it alter the overall course?
- p. 501, One of the major sources of discord in adult sibling relationships involves sharing (or not) care for aging parents. That is a challenge that likely encompasses many years and evolves over time, but how might the pandemic be a short-term “shock” that makes this challenge harder or possibly even easier?
- p. 507, A positive role that siblings play in each other’s lives is support (see also Figure 15.8). Discuss the ways that this support make take different forms during the pandemic depending on the age of the siblings and other aspects of the sibling relationship (e.g., birth order, gender composition).
- p. 509, Especially during adolescence, siblings can model bad behavior and risk-taking for each other. Might the particular circumstances of being an adolescent during the pandemic encourage risky behavior and, if so, what would be the likely effects on behavioral modeling?
- p. 510, Conflict and violence are significant if often undiscussed components of sibling relationships. The experience of being a child or an adolescent during the pandemic (e.g., out of school, restricted movement) could exacerbate such problems. How? What can parents or other adults do to intervene or control such problems during this crisis?