BACKGROUND

The Changing American Family and its Consequences
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There is literature on the effects of divorce on children and also the family as a whole. American families have been, and still are, drastically impacted by divorce and other circumstances that breaks bonds between relationships and creates many side effects because of these causes. In one of the articles, Bronfenbrenner (1986) found the many effects of environment and external relationships on the development of children. He suggests the importance of the physical environment surrounding the children in their developing years, but also that children are even affected by environments in which their parents spend their time without their kids (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The actions and environments surrounding the parent, whether it is with the children or not, plays an effect on the children’s development growing up. Although many other aspects such as school environment, employment of parents, and support network of families affects the members of the family directly, one of the most influential and concern for the studies of research were those of single-parent households (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This research presents that children from single-parent households have a strong correlations with “adult disapprove activities (such as smoking, school misbehavior, and delinquency),” and this correlation is largely due to the “decision-making prevailing in the two types of family structure, with more unilateral decisions predominating the single-parent setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p.727). Support networks are found to be very important in the development of a family, with this in mind, mothers who have more support during a pregnancy were reported with “lower levels of stress anxiety, and depression, a better marital adjustment, and more positive attitude toward their pregnancy” (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p.730). This is also very important for a father figure to support the family; the mother would not have a strong base of support needed to carry out a family on her own. Jensen & McKee (2003) researched the direct impacts on children’s mindsets and change within their environments as they have to prepare for a divorced household. From a child’s perspective, a divorce usually happens when they are young; a divorce process is hard to cope with. Children do not get a chance to prepare for a divorce, whether that be emotionally or physically, and a proper explanation to the children is rarely given to explain what to expect (Jensen & McKee, 2003). Often times, the parents are too caught up in their own emotions and sufferings during the period of divorce that they forget to confront the children and make sure that they are not suffering more greatly. Parents feel a need to protect their children from what is going on, but in reality they leave their child confused with an uncertain view of the future (Jensen & McKee, 2003). Also during the period of divorce, parents are unable to be a support network for their children, and therefore the children need another way of coping (Jensen & McKee, 2003). This is crucial to the development and psychological sense of the child, for they need to find positive influences that can support them during this low point in their life. After a divorce is settled down, research is shown that children have a hard time adjusting to their new environments, and often times are distraught and confused for many periods after the divorce takes place (Jensen & McKee, 2003). It can be seen that after a divorce takes place, divorced parents need to make a great effort of negotiating and teamwork in order to make it easier for the children. This is often an arduous task, for the cause of divorce was negative and inevitable; therefore the divorced parents do not want to be associated together anymore. This is where professional help can be even through the Healthy Families Program. “Social workers can play an instrumental role in guiding divorce parents” and to give advice based “in the best interest of the child” (Gertz, 2011, p.22). Their roles would be to “listen, guide, advocate,” and provide additional resources and guidance (Gert, 2001, p.223).

After reading and researching these articles, I have been able to ask further questions regarding this topic and to further research, how is the current changes of the American family playing direct impact on this current generation? What changes can we make in order to help these broken families and relationships? How can divorce be avoided in the future for American families?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Half of All U.S. Marriages Fail
Divorce has been steadily rising in America since the late 20th century. More than half of all U.S. marriages fail.

Minority of Children Live in intact Families
Less than half of America’s children live in a traditional “two-marriage-two-parent” household in 2010. Since the 1970’s, more than a million children a year have seen their parents divorce.

Divorce Rates in the U.S.: One Nation Indivisible
One in every four marriages since the 1970s have resulted in a divorce, a 50% increase in the past decade.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


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