

From the beginning of the course, we have discussed parenting from an interdisciplinary perspective. That is, we have recognized that parenting doesn't happen just at the individual or family level. It occurs within a broader societal context. When parenting goes wrong, it is not just the parent or the child who suffers, society as a whole must deal with the consequences.

For this week's discussion topic, review the assigned readings and answer the thought questions at the bottom of page 331 of the Holden text. Your responses for each question should be 2-3 paragraphs in length and written in your best original writing. You can answer the questions from the chapters, but you can also bring in information you've learned throughout the course. Remember to use citations as appropriate.

This is your last required discussion for the course, so put your best foot forward and show off what you've learned!

parenting. Recent social changes in the United States, including the increase in single mothers, working mothers, and divorce, have put new stresses on child rearing.

It does little good to ignore these social changes because some of the stressed, unstable, and incompetent parents result in a considerable cost to society. The economic consequences of such problems as premature birth (due in part to teenage parenting), failure to immunize infants, childhood obesity, school failure, juvenile delinquents, and child maltreatment cost our nation tens of billions of dollars each year.

A variety of social policies have been initiated, both in the United States and around the world. Many initiatives have been started by child advocates, who seek to promote children's rights. Some programs are aimed at preventing problems whereas others are designed to intervene with at-risk families or address ongoing problems. Home visitation programs appear to have the most promise for changing parenting and improving the outcomes of children. Another effort to help families lies in reinventing the school system so it can better meet the needs of the families in the community. Several controversial ideas intended to combat family-related social problems have also been advanced, including banning physical punishment, enacting parent-responsibility laws, and licensing parents.

Societies depend on parents to nurture and guide the development of children into healthy and competent adults. It is in the best interest of all societies to promote parental success. Disparities in the incidence or burden of problems that exist among families are a problem that everyone needs to address. To paraphrase the observation of attachment theorist John Bowlby (1951), if societies are to value children, parents must be nurtured.

Thought Questions

- Some people believe the American family is in decline, as reflected by the changes in family structure. What do you think?
- Why does the United States lag behind other industrialized countries in supporting the family? How might this be changed?
- Should parents be held accountable for their adolescent's misconduct? Why or why not?
- Do you think licensing parents would be an effective way to address some of the social problems? What organizations would object to this proposal?