

Feb. 10, 2004

**STUDY QUESTIONS ON SKOLNICK (LIFE COURSE), DEMOS,  
MORGAN, AND COTT**

1. List some of the characteristics of families in past times that we have “escaped.” (Skolnick)
2. How many children would a mother have to give birth to in order to see 4 survive to adulthood prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century? (Skolnick)
3. How did the declining rates of infant and child mortality affect the image of childhood during the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
4. Skolnick speaks of “lethal” child-rearing practices in earlier times. What does she mean?
5. Despite our high divorce rates today, a couple marrying today is more likely to celebrate which wedding anniversary than couples around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
6. Ariès argues that the notion of childhood didn’t appear till the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and became stronger during the 19<sup>th</sup>—in other words, a relatively recent invention. What are the reasons he gives?
7. What are some of the changes that happened to the way youth (teen-agers) were thought of during the last 300 years?
8. What is a “mid-life crisis?”
9. Demos says that the family was very linked to the larger community. What were some of the consequences of this?
10. What were some of the functions performed by the premodern family no longer performed? (Demos)
11. Were “extended households” (containing more than one married couple) ever the norm in colonial America? (Demos)
12. How were marriages arranged in colonial America? (Demos)
13. What was the position of women like in colonial America? (Demos)
14. What were the attitudes toward sexuality, according to Demos?
15. What changes occurred during the 19th century, according to Demos?

16. Morgan and Demos make similar points about the Puritans and sex. What are they?
17. What do we learn from studying 18th century divorce laws? (Cott)
18. How did Puritan divorce law differ from England's? (Cott)
19. What were grounds for annulment in the civil courts of Massachusetts in the 17th century? Grounds for dissolving a marriage? (Cott)
20. Why was desertion particularly hard on women? (Cott)
21. Why did changes in the treatment of male adultery probably come about in the 18th century in America? (Cott)
22. What is "the marriage portion" mentioned by Cott?
23. What does the concept of alimony teach us about marriage? (Cott)
24. What does the rise in divorce petitions during the Revolutionary period teach us? (Cott)
25. What do New England funeral sermons tell us about changes in expectations about marriage during the 18th century? (Cott)
26. What historical sources did Cott use for her analysis? What are the drawbacks to these sources, do you think?

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