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The Changing Family



OUTLINE

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Two generations ago, the typical American family consisted of a father, a mother, and three or four children. In contrast, in a recent survey that asked respondents what constitutes a family, a woman in her 60s wrote the following:

My boyfriend and I have lived together with my youngest son for several years. However, our family (with whom we spend holidays and special events) also includes my ex-husband and his wife and child; my boyfriend's ex-mother-in-law and her sister; his ex-wife and her boyfriend; my oldest son who lives on his own; my mom and stepfather; and my stepbrother and his wife, their biological child, adopted child, and "Big Sister" child. Needless to say, introductions to outsiders are confusing (Cole, 1996: 12, 14).

Clearly, contemporary family arrangements are more fluid than they were in the past. Does this shift reflect changes in individual preferences, as people often assume? Or are other forces at work? As you will see in this chapter, individual choices have altered some family structures, but many of these changes reflect adaptations to larger societal transformations.

DATA DIGEST

- The “**traditional**” family (in which the husband is the breadwinner and the wife is a full-time homemaker) has declined from 60 percent of all U.S. families in 1972 to 29 percent in 2007.
- Almost 19 million American **singles ages 30 to 44 have never been married**, representing 31 percent of all people in that age group.
- Today, the **median age at first marriage** is higher than at any time since 1890: 27.5 years for men and 25.6 years for women.
- On average, **first marriages that end in divorce** last about eight years.
- The percentage of **children under age 18 living with two married parents** fell from 77 percent in 1980 to 67 percent in 2008.
- **Single-parent American households** increased from 11 percent of all households in 1970 to 29 percent in 2007.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, Tables 56, 580, and 1293; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2008, Table MS-2; U.S. Census Bureau Press Releases, 2008. Based on Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2009.



ASK YOURSELF

How Much Do You Know about Contemporary Family Life?

True False

1. Teenage out-of-wedlock births have increased dramatically over the past 20 years.
2. Cohabitation (living together) promotes a happy and lasting marriage.
3. Singles have better sex lives than married people.
4. The more educated a woman is, the less likely she is to marry.
5. People get married because they love each other.
6. Divorce rates have increased during the past few decades.

True False

7. Having children increases marital satisfaction.
8. Married couples have healthier babies than unmarried couples.
9. Generally, children are better off in stepfamilies than in single-parent families.
10. Family relationships that span several generations are less common now than they were in the past.

(The answers to these questions are on page 5.)

You will also see that despite both historical and recent evidence to the contrary, we continue to cling to a number of myths about the family. Before we examine these and other issues, we need to define what we mean by *family*. First, test your knowledge about current trends in U.S. families by taking the quiz above.

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

It may seem unnecessary to define a familiar term such as *family*, but its meaning differs from one group of people to another and may change over time. The definitions also have important political and economic consequences, often determining family members' rights and obligations. Under Social Security laws, for example, only a worker's spouse, dependent parents, and children can claim benefits based on the worker's record. Many employers' health and dental benefits cover a spouse and legal children, but not adults, either heterosexual or homosexual, who are unmarried but have long-term committed relationships, or children born out of wedlock. And in most adoptions, a child is not legally a member of an adopting family until social service agencies and the courts have approved the adoption. Thus, definitions of family affect people's lives by expanding or limiting their options.

Since you asked . . .

- Does it *really* matter how we define *family*?

Since you asked . . .

Some Traditional Definitions of the Family

There is no universal definition of the family because contemporary household arrangements are complex. Traditionally, *family* has been defined as a unit made up of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption; live together; form an economic unit; and bear and raise children. The U.S. Census Bureau defines the family simply as two or more people living together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Since you asked . . .

- Are people who live together but don't have children a family?

Many social scientists have challenged such traditional definitions because they exclude a number of diverse groups that also consider themselves families. Social scientists have asked: Are child-free couples families? What about cohabiting couples? Foster parents and their charges? Elderly sisters living together? Gay and lesbian couples, with or without children? Grandparents raising grandchildren?

Some Current Definitions of the Family

For our purposes, a **family** is an intimate group of two or more people who (1) live together in a committed relationship, (2) care for one another and any children, and (3) share activities and close



In *Hannah Montana*, a popular television show, mom has died and dad is raising the kids. The show portrays a nontraditional family, but is it representative of most American families, especially single-parent households?

emotional ties. Some people may disagree with this definition because it doesn't explicitly include marriage, procreation, or child rearing, but it is more inclusive than traditional views of a wide variety of family forms.

Definitions of the family may become even more complicated—and more controversial—in the future. As reproductive technology advances, a baby might have several “parents”: an egg donor, a sperm donor, a woman who carries the baby during a pregnancy, and the couple who intends to raise the child. If that's not confusing enough, the biological father may be dead for years by the time the child is actually conceived because his sperm can be frozen and stored (see Chapter 11).

Our definition of the family could also include **fictive kin**, nonrelatives who are accepted as part of the family because they have strong bonds with biological family members and provide important services and care. These ties may be stronger and more lasting than those established by blood or marriage (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 1993). James, an African American in his forties and one of my former students, still fondly recalls Mike, a boarder in his home, who is a good example of fictive kinship:

Mike was an older gentleman who lived with us from my childhood to my teenage years. He was like a grandfather to me. He taught me how to ride a bike, took me fishing, and always told me stories. He was very close to me and my family until he died. When the family gets together, we still talk about old Mike because he was just like family and we still miss him dearly (Author's files).

Fictive kin have been most common among African American and Latino communities, but a recent variation involves single mothers—many of whom are unmarried college-educated women—who turn to one another for companionship and help in child care. For example, they take turns watching one another's kids (including taking them to Saturday-morning gymnastics classes and on short summer vacations), help during crises (such as a death in the family), and call each other constantly when they need advice about anything from a child who is talking late to suggestions on presenting a paper at a professional conference (Bazelon, 2009).



Answers to How Much Do You Know about Contemporary Family Life?

All the answers are **false**.

1. Teenage out-of-wedlock births have decreased over the past 20 years, especially in the early 2000s (see Chapters 10 and 11).
2. Couples who are living together and plan to marry *soon* have a good chance of staying together after a marriage. In most cases, however, “shacking up” decreases the likelihood of marriage (see Chapter 9).
3. Compared with singles, married people have more and better sex and enjoy it more, both physically and emotionally (see Chapter 7).
4. College-educated women tend to postpone marriage but are more likely to marry, over a lifetime, than their non-college-educated counterparts (see Chapters 9 and 10).
5. Love is not the major or even the only reason for getting married. Other reasons include societal expectations, economic insecurity, or fear of loneliness (see Chapters 6, 10, 16, and 17).
6. Divorce rates have been dropping since the early 1980s (see Chapter 15).
7. The arrival of a first baby typically pushes mothers and fathers apart. Generally, child rearing lowers marital satisfaction for both partners (see Chapters 11, 12, and 16).
8. Social class is a more important factor than marital status in a baby's health. Low-income mothers are less likely than high-income mothers to have healthy babies, whether or not they are married (see Chapters 11–14).
9. Income levels are usually higher in stepfamilies than in single-parent families, but stepfamilies have their own set of problems, including interpersonal conflicts with new parent figures (see Chapter 16).
10. Family relationships across several generations are more common and more important now than they were in the past. People live longer and get to know their kin, aging parents and grandparents often provide financial support and child care, and many relatives maintain ties with one another after a divorce or remarriage (see Chapters 3, 4, 12, 16, and 17).

MAKING CONNECTIONS



- Ask three of your friends to define *family*. Are their definitions the same as yours? Or are they different?
- According to one of my students, “I don’t view my biological family as ‘my family’ because my parents were abusive and didn’t love me.” Should people be able to choose whomever they want to be as family and exclude their biological parents?

HOW ARE FAMILIES SIMILAR ACROSS SOCIETIES?

The institution of the family exists in some form in all societies. Worldwide, families are similar in fulfilling some functions, encouraging marriage, and trying to ensure that people select the “right” mate.

Family Functions

Families vary considerably in the United States and globally but must fulfill at least five important functions to ensure a society’s survival (Parsons and Bales, 1955). As you read this section, think

Since you asked . . .

Do we really need families?

about your own family. How well does it fulfill these functions?

REGULATION OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY Every society has **norms**, or culturally defined rules for behavior, regarding who may engage in sexual relations, with whom, and under what circumstances. In the United States, having sexual intercourse with someone under age 18 is a crime, but some societies permit marriage with girls as young as 8. One of the oldest rules that regulate sexual behavior is the **incest taboo**, cultural norms and laws that forbid sexual intercourse between close blood relatives, such as brother and sister, father and daughter, uncle and niece, or grandparent and grandchild. Sexual relations between close relatives can increase the incidence of inherited genetic diseases and abnormalities by about 3 percent (Bennett et al., 2002). Incest taboos are based primarily on social conditions, however, and probably arose to preserve the family, and do so in several ways (Ellis, 1963):

- They minimize jealousy and destructive sexual competition that might undermine a family’s survival and smooth functioning. If family members who are sexual partners lose interest in each other, for example, they may avoid mating.
- Because incest taboos ensure that mating will take place outside the family, a wider circle of

people can band together in cooperative efforts (such as hunting), in the face of danger, or in war.

- By controlling the mother’s sexuality, incest taboos prevent doubts about the legitimacy of her offspring and the children’s property rights, titles, or inheritance.

Most social scientists believe that incest taboos are universal, but there have been exceptions. The rulers of the Incan empire, Hawaii, ancient Persia, and the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt practiced incest, which was forbidden to commoners. Cleopatra is said to have been the issue of at least 11 generations of incest; she in turn married her younger brother. Some anthropologists speculate that wealthy Egyptian families practiced sibling marriage to prevent losing or fragmenting their land. If a sister married her brother, the property would remain in the family in the event of divorce or death (Parker, 1996).

PROCREATION AND SOCIALIZATION Procreation is an essential function of the family because it replenishes a country’s population. Some married couples choose to remain child free, but most plan to raise children. Some go to great lengths to conceive children through reproductive technologies (see Chapter 11). Once a couple becomes parents, the family embarks on socialization, another critical function.

Through **socialization**, children acquire language; absorb the accumulated knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values of their culture; and learn the social and interpersonal skills they need if they are to function effectively in society. Some socialization is unconscious and may be unintentional, such as teaching culturally accepted stereotypical gender traits (see Chapter 5). Much socialization, however, is both conscious and deliberate, such as carefully selecting preschoolers’ playmates or raising children in a specific religion.

We are socialized through **roles**, the obligations and expectations attached to a particular status or position in society. Families are important role-teaching agents because they delineate relationships between mothers and fathers, siblings, parents and children, and other relatives and nonfamily members.

Some of the rights and responsibilities associated with our roles are not always clear because family structures shift and change. If you or your parents have experienced divorce or remarriage, have some of the new role expectations been fuzzy or even contradictory? For example, children may be torn between loyalty to a biological parent and to a stepparent if the adults compete for their affection (see Chapter 16).

ECONOMIC SECURITY The family is also an important economic unit that provides financial security and stability. Families supply food, shelter, clothing, and other material resources that ensure the



The family provides the love, comfort, and emotional support that children need to develop into happy, healthy, and secure adults.

family's physical survival. Especially during the economic downturn beginning in 2008, many families have relied on their kin for loans to pay off credit debts or rent; help in caring for children while searching for a job after being laid off; and a place to live, such as with parents or grandparents, after a home foreclosure (see Chapters 13 and 17).

In traditional families, the husband is the breadwinner and the wife does the housework and cares for the children. Since the 1980s, however, many mothers have been in the labor force. The traditional family, in which Mom stays home to raise the kids, is a luxury that most families today simply can't afford. Because of high unemployment rates, depressed wages and salaries, and job insecurity, many mothers must work outside the home whether or not they want to (see Chapters 5 and 13).

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT A fourth function of the family is to give its members emotional support. American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) proposed the concept of **primary groups**, those characterized by close, long-lasting, intimate, and face-to-face interaction. The family is a critical primary group because it provides the nurturance, love, and emotional sustenance that its members need to be happy, healthy, and secure. Our close friends are usually members of our primary groups, but they may come and go (especially when they move to another state). In contrast, our family is usually our steadfast and enduring emotional anchor throughout life.

Sociologists later introduced the concept of **secondary groups**, those characterized by impersonal and short-term relationships in which people work together on common tasks or activities. Members of secondary groups, such as co-workers, have few

emotional ties to one another, and they typically leave the group after attaining a specific goal. While you're taking this course, for example, you, most of your classmates, and your instructor make up a secondary group. You've all come together for a quarter or a semester to study marriage and the family. Once the course is over, most of you may never see one another again.

You might discuss your course with people in other secondary groups, such as co-workers. They will probably listen politely, but they usually don't really care how you feel about a class or a professor. Primary groups such as your family and close friends, in contrast, usually sympathize, drive you to class or your job when your car breaks down, offer to do your laundry during exams, and console you if you don't get that much-deserved "A" in a course or a promotion at work.

I use a simple test to distinguish between my primary and secondary groups: I don't hesitate to call the former at 3:00 A.M. to pick me up at the airport because I know they'll be happy (or at least willing) to do so. In contrast, I'd never call someone from a secondary group, such as another faculty member with whom I have no emotional ties.

SOCIAL CLASS PLACEMENT A social class is a category of people who have a similar standing or rank in society based on their wealth, education, power, prestige, and other valued resources. People in the same social class tend to have similar attitudes, values, and leisure interests. We inherit a social position based on our parents' social class. Family resources affect children's ability to pursue opportunities such as higher education, but we can move up or down the social hierarchy in adulthood depending on our own motivations, hard work, connections, or even luck by being at the right place at the right time (see Chapter 12).

Social class affects many aspects of family life. There are class variations in when people marry, how many children they have, how parents socialize their children, and even how partners and spouses relate to each other. Middle-class couples are more likely than their working-class counterparts to share housework and child rearing, for example. And as you'll see in later chapters, families on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder face greater risks than their middle-class counterparts of adolescent nonmarital childbearing, dropping out of high school, committing street crimes, neglecting their children, and being arrested for domestic violence (see Chapters 10, 12, and 13).

Marriage

Marriage, a socially approved mating relationship that people expect to be stable and enduring, is also universal. Countries vary in their specific norms and



Some religious groups, such as Orthodox Jews in the United States, are endogamous because they require that couples marry within their own faith.

laws dictating who can marry whom and at what age, but marriage everywhere is an important rite of passage that marks adulthood and its related responsibilities, especially providing for a family. To be legally married in the United States, we must meet specific requirements, such as a minimum age, which may differ from one state to another.

U.S. marriages are legally defined as either ceremonial or nonceremonial. A *ceremonial*

Since you asked . . .

- Does living together mean that someone has a common-law marriage?

marriage is one in which the couple must follow procedures specified by the state or other jurisdiction, such as buying a license, getting blood tests, and being married by an authorized official.

Some states also recognize **common-law marriage**, a *nonceremonial* relationship that people establish. Generally, there are three requirements for a common-law marriage: (1) living together for a significant period of time (not defined in any state); (2) presenting oneself as part of a married couple (typically using the same last name, referring to the other as “my husband” or “my wife,” and filing a joint tax return); and (3) intending to marry. Common-law marriages are legal in nine states and the District of Columbia. Another seven states recognize common-law marriage only under certain conditions, such as those formed before a certain date (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2009).

In both kinds of marriages, the parties must meet minimum age requirements, and they cannot engage in **bigamy**, marrying a second person while a first marriage is still legal. When common-law marriages break up, numerous legal problems can result, such as a child’s inheritance rights and the father’s responsibility to pay child support. Even when common-law marriage is considered legal, ceremonial marriage usually provides more advantages (such as health benefits for spouses and social approval). In addition, the rights and benefits of common-law

marriages are usually recognized only in the state that has legalized them.

Endogamy and Exogamy

All societies have rules, formal or informal, about the “right” marriage partner. **Endogamy** (sometimes called *homogamy*) requires people to marry or have sexual relations within a certain group. These groups might include those that are similar in religion (such as Muslims marrying Muslims), race or ethnicity (such as Latinos marrying Latinos), social class (such as the rich marrying the rich), or age (such as young people marrying young people). And, in many countries, marrying cousins is not only commonplace but desirable (see the box “Why Does Cousin Marriage Matter in Iraq?”).

Exogamy (sometimes called *heterogamy*) requires marriage outside the group, such as not marrying one’s relatives or members of the same clan or tribe. In the United States, for example, 24 states prohibit marriage between first cousins, even though violations are rarely prosecuted. Even when there are no such laws, cultural traditions and practices, as well as social pressure, usually govern our choice of sexual and marital partners. In those jurisdictions in India in which most people still follow strict caste rules, the government is encouraging exogamy by offering up to a \$1,250 cash award if a male or female marries “down.” This is a hefty sum when the annual income in many areas is less than half that amount (Chu, 2007).

HOW DO FAMILIES DIFFER ACROSS SOCIETIES?

Despite similarities, there are also considerable worldwide variations in family form. Some include the structure of the family and where married couples live.

Nuclear and Extended Families

Western societies tend to have a **nuclear family** that is made up of married parents and their biological or adopted children. In much of the world, however, the most common family form is the **extended family**, which consists of parents and children as well as other kin, such as uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, cousins, and grandparents.

As the number of single-parent families increases in industrialized countries, extended families are becoming more common. By helping out with household tasks and child rearing, extended families make it easier for a single parent to work outside the home. Because the rates of unmarried people who are living together are high, nuclear families comprise only 23 percent of all U.S. families, down from 40 percent in 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

Cross-Cultural and Multicultural Families

Why Does Cousin Marriage Matter in Iraq?

According to some of my students, “It’s disgusting to even think about marrying a cousin.” Why, then, are such endogamous marriages prevalent in parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia? For example, half of all marriages in Iraq, Pakistan, and Nigeria are between first or second cousins.

This form of marriage is both legal and even preferred (instead of marrying outside of one’s group) in societies in which families are organized around clans with blood relationships rather than outsiders. Each clan is a “government in miniature” that provides the services and social aid that Americans routinely receive from their national, state, and local governments.

The largest and most unified clans have the greatest amount of power and resources. These, in turn, motivate people not to trust the government, which is often corrupt, but to be attached to the proven support of kin, clan, or tribe.

Cousin marriages in Iraq (as in many other societies) create intense internal cohesiveness and loyalty that strengthen the clan. If, for example, a man or woman married into another clan, he or she would deplete the original clan’s resources, especially property, and threaten the clan’s unity. In addition, cousins who marry are bound tightly to their clans because their in-laws aren’t strangers but aunts and uncles who know them best and

have a strong interest in supporting the marriage.

Sources: Based on Bobroff-Hajal, 2006, and Michels, 2008.

❖ Stop and Think . . .

- What functions do endogamy and cousin marriages serve in Iraq?
- “Clan loyalty . . . strengthened by centuries of cousin marriage was always bound to undermine President Bush’s fantasy of creating a truly democratic government in Iraq. Never again should the United States blithely invade a country knowing so little about its societal fabric” (Bobroff-Hajal, 2006: 9). Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?



Residence and Authority

Families also differ in where they live, how they trace their descent, and who has the most power. In a **patrilocal** residential pattern, newly married couples live with the husband’s family. In a **matrilocal** pattern, they live with the wife’s family. In a **neolocal** pattern, the newly married couple sets up its own residence.

Around the world, the most common pattern is patrilocal. In industrialized societies such as the United States, married couples are typically neolocal. Since the early 1990s, however, the tendency for young married adults to live with the parents of either the wife or husband—or sometimes with the grandparents of one of the partners—has increased. At least half of all young couples can’t afford a medium-priced house, whereas others have low-income jobs, are supporting children after a divorce, or just enjoy the comforts of a parental nest (see Chapters 10 and 12).

Residence patterns often reflect who has authority in the family. In a **matriarchy**, the oldest females (usually grandmothers and mothers) control cultural, political, and economic resources and, consequently, have power over males. Some American Indian tribes were matriarchal and in some African countries, the eldest females have considerable authority and influence. For the most part, however, matriarchal societies are rare.



In China’s Himalayas, the Mosuo may be a matriarchal society. For the majority of Mosuo, a family household consists of a woman, her children, and the daughters’ offspring. In a practice called “walking marriage,” women choose no-strings-attached lovers for a night or a lifetime. An adult male will join a lover for the evening and then return to his mother’s or grandmother’s house in the morning. Any children resulting from these unions belong to the female, and it is she and her relatives who raise them (Barnes, 2006).

A more widespread pattern is a **patriarchy**, in which the oldest males (grandfathers, fathers, and uncles) control cultural, political, and economic resources and, consequently, have power over females. In some patriarchal societies, like Saudi Arabia,

women have few rights within the family and none outside the family, including not being able to vote, drive, work outside the home, or attend college. In other patriarchal societies, like Qatar, women can vote and run for a political office, but need permission from a husband or male relative to get a driver's license (see Chapter 5).

In **egalitarian family** structures, both partners share power and authority about equally. Many Americans think they have egalitarian families, but our families tend to be patriarchal. Employed women, especially, often complain that their husbands don't always consult them before making important decisions such as when to buy a home or new car (see Chapter 10).

Monogamy and Polygamy

In **monogamy**, one person is married exclusively to another person. When divorce and remarriage rates are high, as in the United States, people engage in

Since you asked . . .

- Is serial monogamy a modern version of polygamy?

serial monogamy. That is, they marry several people, but one at a time—they marry, divorce, remarry, redi-
vorce, and so on.

Polygamy, in which a man or woman has two or more spouses, is subdivided into *polygyny*—one man married to two or more women—and *polyandry*—one woman with two or more husbands. Nearly 1,000 cultures around the world allow some form of polygamy, either officially or unofficially (Epstein, 2008). There are no known cases of polyandry today, but the practice might have existed in societies in which property was difficult to accumulate. Because there was a limited amount of available land, the kinship group was more likely to survive in harsh environments if there was more than one husband to provide food (Cassidy and Lee, 1989).

The Todas, a small pastoral tribe that flourished in southern India until the late nineteenth century, illustrate polyandry. A Toda woman who married one man became the wife of his brothers—including brothers born after the marriage—and they all lived in the same household. When one of the brothers was with the wife, “he placed his cloak and staff outside the hut as a warning to the rest not to disturb him” (Queen et al., 1985: 19). Marital privileges rotated among the brothers; there was no evidence of sexual jealousy; and one of the brothers, usually the oldest, was the legal father of the first two or three children. Another brother could become the legal father of children born later.

In contrast to polyandry, polygyny is common in many societies, especially in Africa, South America, and the Mideast. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Osama bin Laden, who orchestrated the 9/11 terrorist



Law enforcement officers escort FLDS children—some of them mothers under age 18—to a temporary housing facility in San Angelo, Texas, after allegations of young girls' being sexually abused and forced into marriage.

attacks, has 4 wives and 10 children. His father had 11 wives and 54 children. No one knows the rate of polygamy worldwide, but some observers believe that polygyny may be increasing (Nakashima, 2003; Greenberg, 2006; Coll, 2008).

Western and other industrialized societies forbid polygamy, but there are pockets of isolated polygynous groups in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) banned polygamy in 1890 and excommunicates members who follow such beliefs. Still, an estimated 300,000 families in Texas, Arizona, Utah, and Canada are headed by males of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), a polygamous sect that broke off from the mainstream Mormon church more than a century ago. These dissident leaders maintain that they practice polygamy according to nineteenth-century Mormon religious beliefs. The leaders perform secret marriage ceremonies and marry girls—as young as 11—to older men (who are sometimes in their 50s and 60s) at the first sign of menstruation (Divoky, 2002; Madigan, 2003).

In 2008, state troopers raided an isolated 1,700-acre ranch near Eldorado, Texas, that housed members of the FLDS. State officials believed that the FLDS forced girls younger than 16 into sex and marriage with older men, and, in some cases, into multiple marriages—both illegal in Texas. The state won the right to remove more than 400 children from the compound to protect them from abuse, but the Texas Supreme Court ordered Child Protective Services to return the children from foster care to their parents, ruling that child welfare officials had not proven that the children were in any immediate danger.

Wives who have escaped from these plural families report forced marriage, sexual abuse, child rape, and incest. Why don't these girls refuse to marry or try to

escape? They can't. Among other things, they're typically isolated from outsiders: They live in remote rural areas and their education is cut off when they're about 10 years old. Their parents support the marriages because elderly men, the patriarchs, have convinced them that "This is what the heavenly father wants" (Egan, 2005; Jones, 2009). Sexual abusers are rarely prosecuted and, even then, receive remarkable leniency. A father who was convicted of regularly molesting his five daughters spent only 13 days in jail. The presiding judge said that the abuse was really just "a little bit of breast touching" (Kelly and Cohn, 2006).

Some church elders have banished hundreds of teenage boys—some as young as 13—to reduce the competition for young wives. Gideon, 17, is one of these boys. He is one of 71 children born to his 73-year-old father, who has eight wives. Because most of the boys don't attend school past the eighth grade, they have few skills to fend for themselves after being expelled from the community (Kelly, 2005; Knickerbocker, 2006).

Some African and Middle Eastern families that immigrate to other countries continue to live in polygamous families but often run into problems. The French government, which declared polygamy illegal in 1993, estimates that there are about 20,000 polygamous families within the nation's borders. Because they are not legal residents and are not entitled to any form of social welfare such as public housing, the families end up living in crowded and impoverished conditions. Also, "tensions arise with French neighbors who tend to be flabbergasted when confronted with families consisting of a husband, two or more wives, and as many as 20 children" (Renout, 2005: 17). Whether the families immigrate to Europe or the United States, wives are reluctant to report domestic violence because they fear deportation or being branded a bad woman by family members in their native country (Bernstein, 2007; Wilkinson, 2008; Kelly, 2009).

Why is polygyny widespread in some countries? A study of marriage patterns in South Africa concluded that there is often a shortage of men (usually because of war), that poor women would rather marry a rich polygamist than a poor monogamist, that wives often pool incomes and engage in cooperative child care, and that rural wives often contact urban wives when they're looking for jobs. Thus, polygyny is functional because it meets many women's needs (Anderson, 2002).

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Most people are born into a biological family, or *family of origin*. If a person is adopted or raised in this family, it is her or his **family of orientation**. By

leaving this family to marry or cohabit, the individual becomes part of a **family of procreation**, the family a person forms by marrying and/or having or adopting children. This term is somewhat dated, however, because in several types of households—such as child-free or gay and lesbian families—procreation isn't a key function.

Each type of family is part of a larger **kinship system**, a network of people who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption. In much of the developing world, which contains most of the earth's population, the most common family form is the extended family.

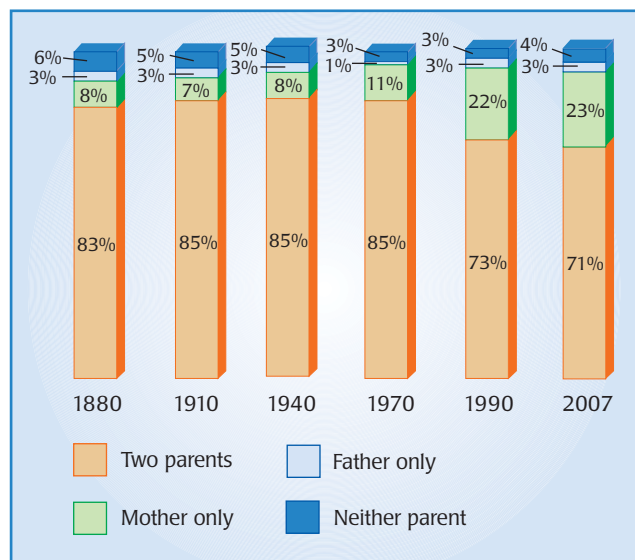
For nearly a century, the nation's family structure remained remarkably stable. Between 1880 and 1970, about 85 percent of all children lived in two-parent households. Then, in the next three decades, the numbers of divorces and single-parent families skyrocketed. By 2007, almost one in four children was living in a mother-only home (see *Figure 1.1*).

Some people are concerned that the nuclear family has dwindled. Many social scientists contend, however, that viewing the nuclear family as the only normal or natural type of family ignores many other household forms. One researcher, for example, identified 23 types of family structures, some of which include only friends or group-home members (Wu, 1996). Family structures have varied not only across cultures and eras but also within any particular culture or historical period (see Chapter 3).

Since you asked . . .

- Are TV depictions of family structure realistic?

FIGURE 1.1 Where American Children Live: Selected Years, 1880–2007



Sources: Based on Fields, 2001, Figure 7; and U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, Table 68.

As reflected in many television shows, diverse family structures are more acceptable today than ever before. At the same time, some of the most popular programs are rarely representative of real families. For example, in *Hannah Montana* and *Two and a Half Men*, a single dad is doing most of the child rearing; in *iCarly*, an older brother is taking care of his sister; and in *True Jackson VP*, the parents apparently don't exist or aren't very important in the girl's life. In reality, most American children live with both parents or only with the mother (see *Figure 1.1* on p. 11).

Clearly, there is much diversity in family arrangements both in the United States and around the world. As families change, however, we sometimes get bogged down by idealized images of what a "good" family looks like. Our unrealistic expectations can result in dissatisfaction and anger. Instead of enjoying our families as they are, we may waste a lot of time and energy searching for family relationships that exist only in fairy tales and TV sitcoms.

MAKING CONNECTIONS



You may not even remember some of the television shows that came and went in the 1990s. Some, such as *Married . . . with Children*, *Mad about You*, *Home Improvement*, *Frasier*, and *The Bill Cosby Show*, are now syndicated. Others, such as *Life with Derek*, *Two and a Half Men*, and *The New Adventures of Old Christine*, offer a wide variety of family forms.

- How many of the TV programs—in the past or now—are representative of most U.S. families? Or of your own family?
- Do past and current shows shape our ideas about what our families should be like?

SOME MYTHS ABOUT THE FAMILY

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Were families happier in the past than they are now?
- Is marrying and having children the natural thing to do?
- Are good families self-sufficient, whereas bad families rely on public assistance?
- Is the family a bastion of love and support?
- Should all of us strive to be as perfect as possible in our families?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you—like most Americans—believe some of the myths about marriage and the family. Most of these myths are dysfunctional, but some can be functional.

Myths Can Be Dysfunctional

Myths are *dysfunctional* when they have negative (though often unintended) consequences that disrupt a family. The myth of the perfect family can make us miserable. We may feel that there is something wrong with *us* if we don't live up to some idealized image. Instead of accepting our current families, we might pressure our children to become what *we* want them to be or spend a lifetime waiting for our parents or in-laws to accept us. We may also become very critical of family members or withdraw emotionally because they don't fit into a mythical mold.

Since you asked . . .

- Do myths affect me and my family?

Myths can also divert our attention from widespread social problems that lead to family crises. If people blame themselves for the gap they perceive between image and reality, they may not recognize the external forces, such as social policies, that create difficulties on the individual level. For example, if we believe that only bad, sick, or maladjusted people beat their children, we will search for solutions at the individual level, such as counseling, support groups, and therapy. As you'll see in later chapters, however, and as millions of Americans have experienced since 2008, numerous family crises come from large-scale problems such as racism, greedy corporate executives in financial industries, economic downturns, and unemployment.

Myths Can Be Functional

Not all myths are harmful. Some are *functional* because they bring people together and promote social solidarity (Guest, 1988). If myths give us hope that we can have a good marriage and family life, for example, we won't give up at the first sign of problems. In this sense, myths can help us maintain emotional balance during crises.

Myths can also free us from guilt or shame. For instance, "We fell out of love" is a more face-saving explanation for getting a divorce than "I made a stupid mistake" or "I married an alcoholic."

The same myth can be both functional and dysfunctional. Belief in the decline of the family has been functional in generating social policies (such as child-support legislation) that try to keep children of divorced families from sinking into poverty. But this same myth is dysfunctional if people become unrealistically preoccupied with finding self-fulfillment and happiness.

Myths about the Past

We often hear that in the good old days there were fewer problems, people were happier, and families were stronger. Because of the widespread influence of



Like these Nebraska homesteaders, many families in the so-called good old days lived in dugouts like this one, made from sod cut from the prairie.

movies and television, many of us cherish romantic notions of life in earlier times. These highly unrealistic images of the family were presented in television shows such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver* in the 1950s and early 1960s; *The Partridge Family* and *The Brady Bunch* during the 1970s; and the strong, poor, but loving rural family presented in television shows such as *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie* in the 1970s and *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* in the late 1990s. More recently, popular television shows such as *7th Heaven* and *Life with Derek* are probably appealing because they have resurrected images of the family in the good old days when its members solve all of their problems quickly and live happily ever after.

Many historians maintain that such golden days never existed. We idealize them only because we know so little about the past. Even in the 1800s, many families experienced out-of-wedlock births or desertion by a parent (Demos, 1986; Coontz, 1992).

Family life in the good old days was filled with deprivation, loneliness, and dangers, as the “Diary of a Pioneer Daughter” box illustrates. Families worked very hard and often were crushed by accidents, illness, and disease. Until the mid-1940s, a much shorter life expectancy meant that parental death often led to the placement of children in extended families, foster care, or orphanages. Thus, the chances of not growing up in a nuclear family were greater in the past than they are now (Walsh, 1993).

People who have the nostalgia bug aren’t aware of several facts. For example, teenage pregnancy rates were higher in the 1950s than they are today, even though a higher proportion of teen mothers were married (many because of “shotgun marriages”). Until the 1970s, few people ever talked or

wrote about child abuse, incest, domestic violence, marital unhappiness, sexual harassment, or gay bashing. Many families lived in silent misery and quiet desperation because these issues were largely invisible. In addition, parents spend more time with their children today than they did in the good old days (see Chapter 12).

Myths about What Is Natural

Many people have strong opinions about what is natural or unnatural in families. Remaining single is more acceptable today than it was in the past, but there is still a lingering sus-

picion that there’s something wrong with a person who never marries (see Chapter 9). And we sometimes have misgivings about child-free marriages or other committed relationships. We often hear, for instance, that “It’s only natural to want to get married and have children” or that “Gays are violating human nature.” Other beliefs, also surviving from so-called simpler times, claim that family life is natural and that women are natural mothers (see Chapter 5).

The problem with such thinking is that if motherhood is natural, why do many women choose not to have children? If homosexuality is unnatural, how do we explain its existence since time immemorial? If getting married and creating a family are natural, why do millions of men abandon their children or refuse to marry their pregnant partners?

Myths about the Self-Sufficient Family

Among our most cherished values are individual achievement, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency. The numerous best-selling self-help books on topics such as parenting, successfully combining work and marriage, and having great sex also reflect our belief that we should improve ourselves, that we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps.

We have many choices in our personal lives, but few families—past or present—have been entirely self-sufficient. Most of us need some kind of help at one time or another. Because of unemployment, home foreclosures, economic downturns, and recessions, the poverty rate has increased by 40 percent since 1970, and many of the working poor are two-parent



Diary of a Pioneer Daughter

Many scholars point out that frontier life was anything but romantic. Malaria and cholera were widespread. Because of their darkness, humidity, and warmth, as well as the gaping windows and doors, pioneers' cabins were ideal environments for mosquitoes. Women and children have been described as doing household tasks with "their hands and arms flailing the air" against hordes of attacking mosquitoes (Faragher, 1986: 90).

Historian Joanna Stratton examined the letters, diaries, and other documents of pioneer women living on the Kansas prairie between 1854 and 1890. The following selection is from the diary of a 15-year-old girl:

A man by the name of Johnson had filed on a claim just west of us and had built a sod house. He and his wife lived there 2 years, when he went to Salina to secure work. He was gone 2 or 3 months and wrote home once or twice, but his wife grew very homesick for her folks in the east and would come over to our house to visit Mother.

Mother tried to cheer her up, but she continued to worry until she got bedfast

with the fever. At night she was frightened because the wolves would scratch on the door, on the sod, and on the windows, so my mother and I started to sit up nights with her. I would bring my revolver and ammunition and ax and some good-sized clubs.

The odor from the sick woman seemed to attract the wolves, and they grew bolder and bolder. I would step out, fire off the revolver, and they would settle back for a while when they would start a new attack.

Finally the woman died and mother laid her out. Father took some wide boards that we had in our loft and made a coffin for her. Mother made a pillow and trimmed it with black cloth, and we also painted the coffin black.

After that the wolves were more determined than ever to get in. One got his head in between the door casing, and as he was trying to wriggle through, mother struck him in the head with an ax and killed him. I shot one coming through the window. After that they quieted down for about half an hour, when they came back again. Their howling was awful. We fought these wolves five nights in succession. . . .

When Mr. Johnson arrived home and found his wife dead and his house badly torn down by wolves he fainted away. After the funeral he sold out and moved away (Stratton, 1981: 81).

Rebecca Bryan Boone, wife of the legendary pioneer Daniel Boone, endured months and sometimes even years of solitude when Boone hunted in the woods or went on trading trips. Besides doing household chores, she chopped wood, cultivated the fields, harvested the crops, and hunted for small game in the woods near her cabin. Although Rebecca was a strong and resourceful woman, she told a traveling preacher that she felt "frequent distress and fear in her heart" (Peavy and Smith, 1994: xi).

❖ Stop and Think . . .

- Do historical descriptions of pioneer life differ from those that we've seen on television shows such as *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie*?
- If we had time machines, would you want to be transported to the good old days of pioneers?

families (see Chapter 13). From time to time, these families need assistance to survive.

The middle class isn't self-sufficient, either. In the 1950s and 1960s, for example, many middle-class families were able to prosper not because of family savings or individual enterprise but as a result of federal housing loans, education payments, and publicly financed roads linking homes in the suburbs to jobs in the cities (Coontz, 1992).

Currently, all people age 65 and older, whether poor or rich, are eligible for Medicare, and the government provides numerous tax cuts for middle-income and affluent families (see Chapters 13 and 17). Even if you're in the middle class, you or other family members have probably collected unemployment payments after being laid off from a job. In addition, state-based merit scholarships are more likely to subsidize the college costs of students from rich families than those of students from poor and minority families (Fischer, 2008).

The Myth of the Family as a Loving Refuge

One sociologist has described the family as a "haven in a heartless world" (Lasch, 1977: 8). That is, one of the major functions of the family is to provide love, nurturance, and emotional support. The home can also be one of the most physically and psychologically brutal settings in society. An alarming number of children suffer from physical and sexual abuse by family members, and the violence rates between married and cohabiting partners are high (see Chapter 14).

Many parents experience stress while balancing the demands of work and family responsibilities. In addition, the U.S. unemployment rate surged from 4 percent in 2006 to almost 10 percent in mid-2009 and is expected to increase to about 12 percent in 2010 (see Chapter 13). If 1 in 10 Americans is unemployed, the anxiety underlying that unemployed person's ability to provide for his or her family is bound

to negatively affect the family's dynamics and to decrease the feeling that the family is a loving refuge.

Also, family members are often unrealistic about the daily strains they encounter. For example, if people expect family interactions to always be cheery and pleasant, the level of tension may surge even when routine problems arise. And especially for families with health or economic problems, the home may be loving, but it's hardly a haven in a heartless world.

Myths about the Perfect Marriage, the Perfect Family

Here's how one woman described the clash between marital expectations and reality:

Marriage is not what I had assumed it would be. One premarital assumption after another has crashed down on my head. . . . Marriage is like taking an airplane to Florida for a relaxing vacation in January, and when you get off the plane you find you're in the Swiss Alps. There is cold and snow instead of swimming and sunshine. Well, after you buy winter clothes and learn how to ski and learn how to talk a new foreign language, I guess you can have just as good a vacation in the Swiss Alps as you can in Florida. But I can tell you . . . it's one hell of a surprise when you get off that marital airplane and find that everything is far different from what one had assumed (Lederer and Jackson, 1968: 39).

This observation was made in 1968, but it's still very relevant today (see Chapter 10). Even if partners live together and believe that they know each other well, many may find themselves in the Swiss Alps instead of Florida after tying the knot. Numerous marriages dissolve because the partners cling to myths about conjugal life. After the perfect wedding, the perfect couple must be everything to each other: good providers, fantastic sexual partners, best friends, sympathetic confidantes, stimulating companions, and spiritual soul mates (Rubin, 1985). Are such expectations realistic?

Myths about the perfect family are just as pervasive as those about the perfect marriage. According to historian John Gillis (1996, 2004), we all have two families: one that we live *with* (the way families really are) and another that we live *by* (the way we would like families to be). Gillis maintains that people have been imagining and reimagining the family since at least the late Middle Ages because the families we are born and marry into seldom satisfy most people's need for a sense of continuity, belonging, unity, and rootedness.

MAKING CONNECTIONS



- Do media images of the family affect your perceptions? When you watch some TV shows, for example, do you feel disappointed in your own family? Or better than them?
- Do you believe any (or all) of the myths about marriage and the family that you have just read? If so, are these beliefs functional or dysfunctional in your life? How?

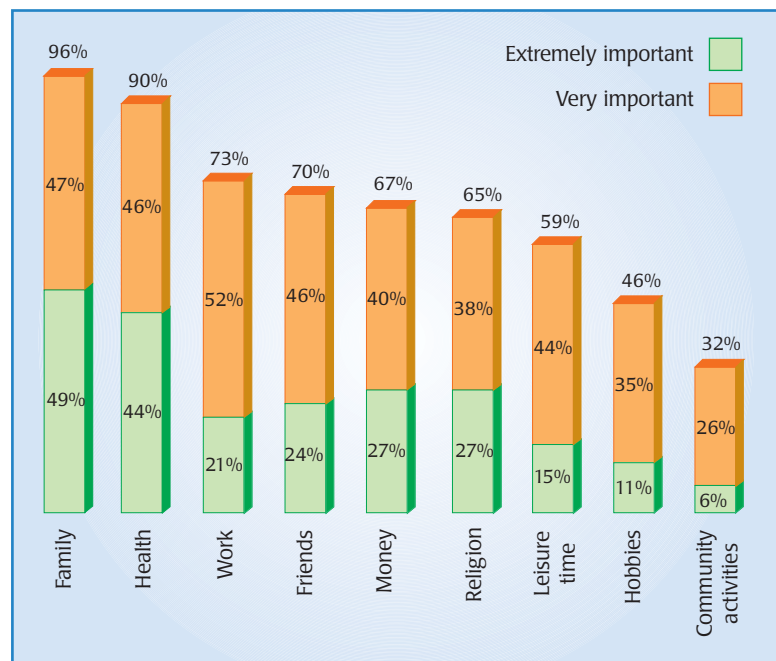
FAMILY VALUES: THREE PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHANGING FAMILY

We began this chapter by defining the family, examined how families are similar and different, and then considered some of the current myths about family life. Let's now look at the major theme of this chapter—how the American family is changing.

Several national surveys show that we place a high value on family. For example,

- Americans rank their family as the most important aspect of life, above health, work, money, and even religion (see *Figure 1.2*).
- Among high school seniors, 82 percent of girls and 70 percent of boys say that having a good marriage and family life is “extremely important” (“The State of Our Unions,” 2007).

FIGURE 1.2 How Important Is Family Life?



Note: Results of Gallup Poll conducted December 5–8, 2002.
Source: David W. Moore, 2003, Gallup Poll Analysis.

- Almost 77 percent of first-year college students (both women and men) say that raising a family is “very important” in their lives (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2008).
- Nine in 10 millennial teens (those born after 1982) say that they trust and feel close to their parents and describe themselves as happy, confident, and positive (Howe et al., 2000).

Despite such upbeat findings, many Americans worry that the family is falling apart. Some journalists and scholars refer to the “vanishing” family, “troubled” marriages, and “appalling” divorce statistics as sure signs that the family is disintegrating. Others contend that such hand-wringing is unwarranted.

Who’s right? There are three schools of thought. One group contends that the family is deteriorating; a second group argues that the family is changing but not deteriorating; and a third, smaller group maintains that the family is stronger than ever (see Benokraitis, 2000, for a discussion of these perspectives).

The Family Is Deteriorating

More than 100 years ago, the *Boston Quarterly Review* issued a dire warning: “The family, in its old sense, is disappearing from our land, and not only are our institutions threatened, but the very existence of our society is endangered” (cited in Rosen, 1982: 299). In the late 1920s, E. R. Groves (1928), a well-known social scientist, warned that marriages were in a state of “extreme collapse.” Some of his explanations for

Since you asked . . .

- Most of the families we know seem to be loving and close knit. So why do many people think that the family is in trouble?

what he called the “marriage crisis” and high divorce rates have a surprisingly modern ring: self-indulgence, a concern for oneself rather than others, financial strain, and incompatible personalities.

Even some of those who were optimistic a decade ago have become more pessimistic because of recent data on family changes. Some of these data include high rates of divorce and children born out of wedlock, millions of latchkey children, an increase in the number of people deciding not to get married, unprecedented numbers of single-parent families, and a decline of parental authority in the home (see Chapters 5, 12, and 13).

Why have these changes occurred? Those who believe that the family is in trouble echo Groves, citing reasons such as individual irresponsibility, minimal commitment to the family, and just plain selfishness. Many conservative politicians and influential academics argue that the family is deteriorating because most people put their own needs above family duties. This school of thought claims that many adults are unwilling to invest their psychological and financial

resources in their children or that they give up on their marriages too quickly when they encounter problems (Popenoe, 1996; Wilson, 2002).

Adherents of the family decline school of thought point out that marriage should exist for the sake of children and not just adults. Simply telling children we love them is not enough. Instead of wasting our money on a divorce industry that includes lawyers, therapists, and expert witnesses, the argument goes, we should be investing in children by maintaining a stable marriage (Whitehead, 1996).

Many of those who endorse the “family is deteriorating” perspective contend that numerous long-term trends have weakened marriage and family life. For example, fewer adults are married, more are divorced or remaining single, more are living outside of marriage or alone, and more children are born out of wedlock and live with a single parent (Popenoe, 2007).

Others maintain that if women spent more time finding husbands who are good providers, they could “devote their talents and education and energy to the rearing of their children, the nurturing of family relationships, and the building of community and neighborhood” (Gallagher, 1996: 184). The implication is that the deteriorating family could be shored up if fathers were breadwinners and mothers were homemakers.

Many of those who believe that the family is deteriorating are communitarians, people who are politically more moderate than conservatives on some family issues. For example, they accept the idea that many mothers have to work outside the home for economic reasons. Communitarians claim, however, that because many adults focus almost exclusively on personal gratification, traditional family functions such as the care and socialization of young children have become a low priority (Glenn, 1996). They contend that there has been a general increase in a sense of entitlement (what people believe they should receive from others) and a decline in a sense of duty (what people believe they should give to others).

The Family Is Changing, Not Deteriorating

Others argue that the changes we are experiencing are extensions of long-standing family patterns. For example, more women have entered the labor force since 1970, but the mother who works outside the home is not a new phenomenon. Mothers sold dairy products and woven goods during colonial times, took in boarders around the turn of the twentieth century, and held industrial jobs during World War II (see Chapter 3).

Many analysts also contend that family problems such as desertion, out-of-wedlock birth, and



Some cities and towns have refused to give unmarried partners, such as the ones pictured here, a “permit of occupancy” because they and their children are not a family. City officials say that the laws prevent overcrowding. Others argue that such laws are legislating morality by defining the family as a married, heterosexual couple and their children.

child abuse have *always* existed. Family literature published in the 1930s, for example, included issues such as divorce, desertion, and family crises resulting from discord, delinquency, and depression (Broderick, 1988).

Similarly, there have always been single-parent families. The percentage of single-parent households has doubled in the past three decades, but that percentage tripled between 1900 and 1950. Divorce, also, is not a recent phenomenon because it became more common in the eighteenth century. Among other changes at that time, parents had less control over their adult married children because there was little land or other property to inherit and the importance of romantic love increased (Cott, 1976; Stannard, 1979).

There is no question, however, that a greater proportion of people divorce today than they did several generations ago. As a result, the decision of many singles to postpone marriage until they are older, are more mature, and have stable careers may be a sound one (see Chapters 9 and 15).

Families are changing but are also remarkably resilient, despite numerous adversities. They cope with everyday stresses and protect their most vulnerable members: the young, old, ill, or disabled. They overcome financial hardships. They handle everyday conflict and tension as children make a bumpy transition to adolescence and then to early adulthood (Conger and Conger, 2002; Patterson, 2002).

Those who hold that the family is changing, not deteriorating, point out that most poor families have stable and loving relationships despite constant

worries and harsh economic environments. And many gay and lesbian families, despite rejection by much of mainstream society, are resilient and resourceful in developing successful family relationships (Oswald, 2002; Secombe, 2002).

Many researchers maintain that there is little empirical evidence that family change is synonymous with family decline. Instead, data support both perspectives—the belief that the family is in trouble as well as the notion that most families are resilient despite ongoing changes in gender roles, divorce rates, and alternatives to marriage such as living together (Amato, 2004).

The Family Is Stronger than Ever

Do our nostalgic myths about the past misinterpret the contemporary family as weak and on the decline? Yes, according to a third school of thought. These social scientists assert that family life is much more loving today than it was in the past. Consider the treatment of women and children in colonial days: If they disobeyed strict male authority, they were often severely punished. And, in contrast to some of our sentimental notions about the good old days, only a small number of white, middle-class families enjoyed a life that was both gentle and genteel:

For every nineteenth-century middle-class family that protected its wife and child within the family circle . . . there was an Irish or a German girl scrubbing floors in that middle-class home, a Welsh boy mining coal to keep the home-baked goodies warm, a black girl doing the family laundry, a black mother and child picking cotton to be made into clothes for the family, and a Jewish or an Italian daughter in a sweatshop making “ladies” dresses or artificial flowers for the family to purchase (Coontz, 1992: 11–12).

Some social scientists argue that despite myriad problems, families are happier today than in the past because of the increase in multigenerational relationships. Many people have grandparents, feel closer to them, and often receive both emotional and economic support from these family members. The recent growth of the older segment of the population has produced four-generation families. More adults in their 60s may be stressed out because they are caring for 80- to 100-year-old parents. On the other hand,

more children and grandchildren grow up knowing and enjoying their older relatives (see Chapter 17).

Some claim that families are stronger now than in the past because family members have more equitable roles at home and are more accepting of diverse family forms (such as single-parent homes, unmarried people who live together, and same-sex couples). And most Americans still believe that marriage is a lifetime commitment that should end only under extreme circumstances, such as domestic violence (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001; see, also, Chapter 15).

Despite a sharp increase in the number of two-income families, mothers and fathers spend more time interacting with their children today than they did in 1965, at the height of the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker family. Single mothers have less time to spend with their families than do married mothers, but they, too, have significantly increased their time with children. Even childless and unmarried individuals are doing immense amounts of family work, with one in four American workers spending seven hours or more each week caring for an aging parent (Coontz, 2007). Thus, some maintain, most American families may be stronger and more satisfying today than in the past.

Each of the three schools of thought provides evidence for its position. Which perspective, then, can we believe? Is the family weak, or is it strong? The answer depends largely on how we define, measure, and interpret family weakness and strengths, issues we address in Chapter 2. For better or worse, the family has never been static and continues to change.

MAKING CONNECTIONS



- Which of the three perspectives on the family is closest to your own views? Why?
- Some of my students refuse to believe that many parents spend more time with their children than did earlier generations. Others agree with the studies because they believe that today's parents spend more quality time with their children. What do you think?

TRENDS IN CHANGING FAMILIES

The family is changing, but how? And why? Demographic transitions, shifts in the racial and ethnic composition of families, and economic transformations all play a role in these changes.

Demographic Changes

Two demographic changes have had especially far-reaching effects on family life. First, U.S. birthrates

have declined. Since the end of the eighteenth century, most American women have been bearing fewer children, having them closer together, and finishing child rearing at an earlier age. Second, the average age of the population has risen from 17 in the mid-1800s to nearly 37 in 2007. Both of these shifts mean that a large proportion of Americans now experiences the empty-nest syndrome—the departure of grown children from the home—at an earlier age, as well as earlier grandparenthood and prolonged widowhood. In addition, as Americans live longer, many adults must care for both children and elderly parents (see Chapters 11, 12, and 17).

We see other changes in the composition of households as well: large numbers of cohabiting couples, higher divorce rates, and more one-parent families and working mothers (see *Figure 1.3*). We'll look at these changes briefly now and examine them more closely in later chapters.

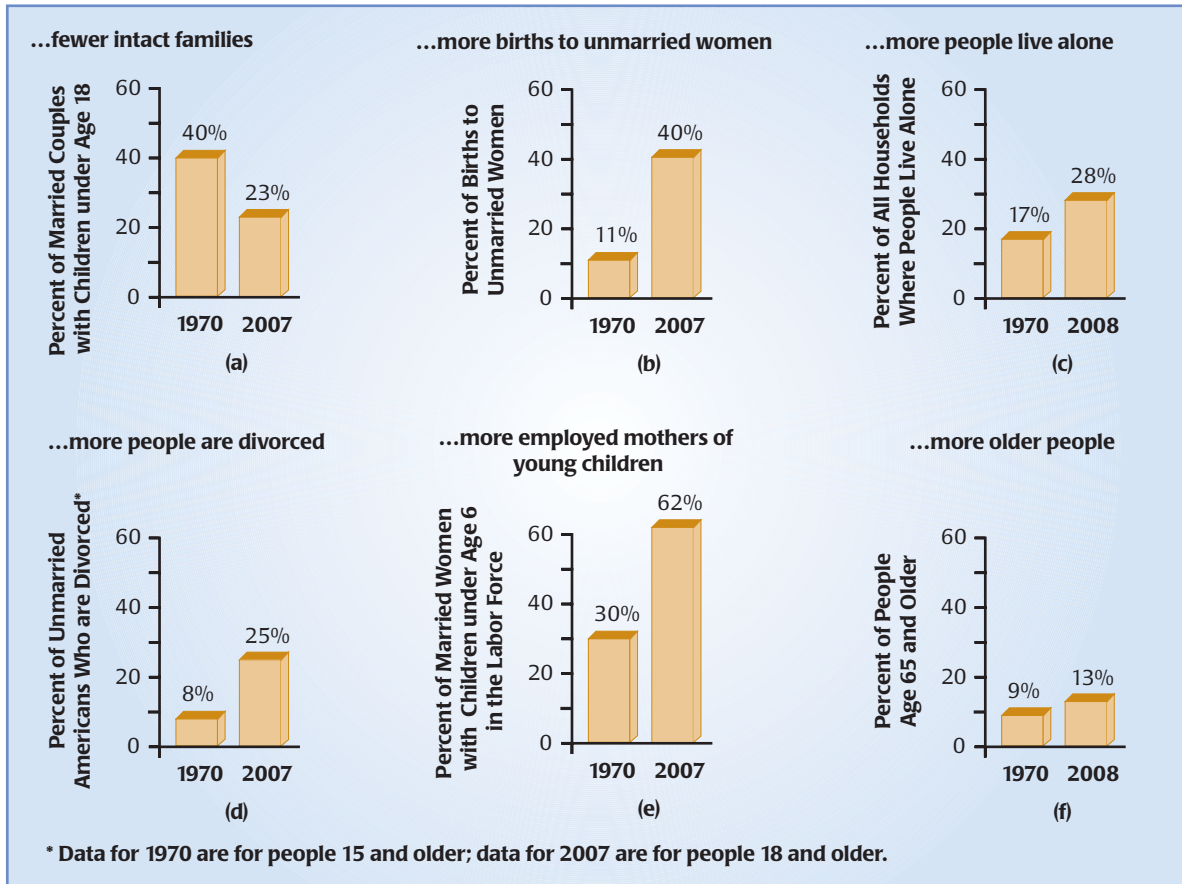
CHANGES IN FAMILY AND NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLDS

The U.S. Census Bureau divides households into two categories: family and nonfamily. A *family household* consists of two or more people living together who are related through marriage, birth, or adoption. *Nonfamily households* include people who live alone or with nonrelatives (roommates, boarders, or cohabiting couples). In 2007, 32 percent of all households were nonfamily households, a substantial increase from 19 percent in 1970 (Fields, 2004; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The number of married-couple households with children under age 18 declined from 40 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 2007 (see *Figure 1.3a*). The percentage of children under age 18 living in one-parent families more than doubled during this same period (see *Data Digest*). Part of the increase in one-parent families has resulted from the surge of births to unmarried women (see *Figure 1.3b*).

SINGLES AND COHABITING COUPLES Singles make up one of the fastest-growing groups for three reasons. First, many young adults are postponing marriage. Second, and at the other end of the age continuum, because people live longer, they are more likely than in the past to outlive a partner. Third, older women who are divorced or widowed remarry at much lower rates than do older men, which increases the number of singles in their later years (see Chapters 16 and 17). Also, singles are now more likely than in the past to live alone (see *Figure 1.3c*) because they have the income to do so and enjoy their privacy (see Chapters 9 and 17).

The percentage of cohabiting couples has also climbed since 1970. This number will probably grow because there is greater societal acceptance of unmarried couples living together (see Chapters 8 and 9).

FIGURE 1.3 Some Changes in American Families since 1970

Sources: Based on data in Fields, 2004; Purcell and Whitman, 2006; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2009; Kinsella and He, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau News, "Unmarried and Single...", 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, Tables 10, 55, 58, 62, 84, 578, and 580.

MARRIAGE—DIVORCE—REMARRIAGE The number of divorced people rose between 1970 and 2007 (see *Figure 1.3d*). Divorce rates have *decreased* since 2000, but almost one out of every two first marriages is expected to end in divorce. Teen marriages and marriages entered into because the woman became pregnant are especially likely to unravel (see Chapter 15).

Stepfamilies are also becoming much more common. About 12 percent of Americans are currently in their second, third, or fourth marriage. One of three Americans is now a stepparent, a stepchild, a stepsibling, or some other member of a stepfamily. We'll examine marriage, divorce, and remarriage in Chapters 10, 15, and 16.

ONE-PARENT FAMILIES As more adults remain single into their 30s and because divorce rates are high, the number of children living with one parent has increased (see Data Digest). The proportion of children living with a never-married parent rose

from 4 percent in 1960 to 42 percent in 2000 (Hobbs and Stoops, 2002). And, of all one-parent households, 81 percent are mother-child families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). We'll look at one-parent households more closely in several later chapters.

EMPLOYED MOTHERS The high participation of mothers in the labor force since the 1980s has been one of the most striking changes in American families. The percentage of two-earner married couples with children under age 18 rose from 31 percent in 1976 to 66 percent in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002, 2008).

In addition, six out of every ten married women with children under age 6 are in the labor force (see *Figure 1.3e*). This means that many couples are now coping with domestic and employment responsibilities while raising young children. We'll examine the characteristics and constraints of working mothers and two-earner couples in Chapter 13.

OLDER PEOPLE Americans are living longer than ever before. The 4 percent increase of people age 65 and older since 1970 may seem small (see *Figure 1.3f*), but this population rose from 19 million to 37 million between 1970 and 2008. This means that many children will enjoy having grandparents well into their own adulthood, but our aging population is also placing significant strains on family caregiving for the elderly (see Chapter 17).

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

What do you call a person who speaks three languages? Multilingual.

What do you call a person who speaks two languages? Bilingual.

What do you call a person who speaks one language? American.

As this joke suggests, many people stereotype (and ridicule) the United States as a single-language and a single-culture society. In reality, it's the most multicultural country in the world: Diversity is booming, ethnic groups speak many languages, and foreign-born families live in all the states.

ETHNIC FAMILIES ARE BOOMING The nation's foreign-born, 37.5 million people, account for almost 13 percent of the total U.S. population, up from 8 percent in 1990. America's multicultural umbrella includes about 150 distinct ethnic or racial groups among more than 305 million inhabitants. By 2025, only 58 percent of the U.S. population will be white—down from 86 percent in 1950 (see *Figure 1.4*). By 2050—just a few generations away—whites may make up only half of the total population because

Latino and Asian populations are expected to triple in size (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

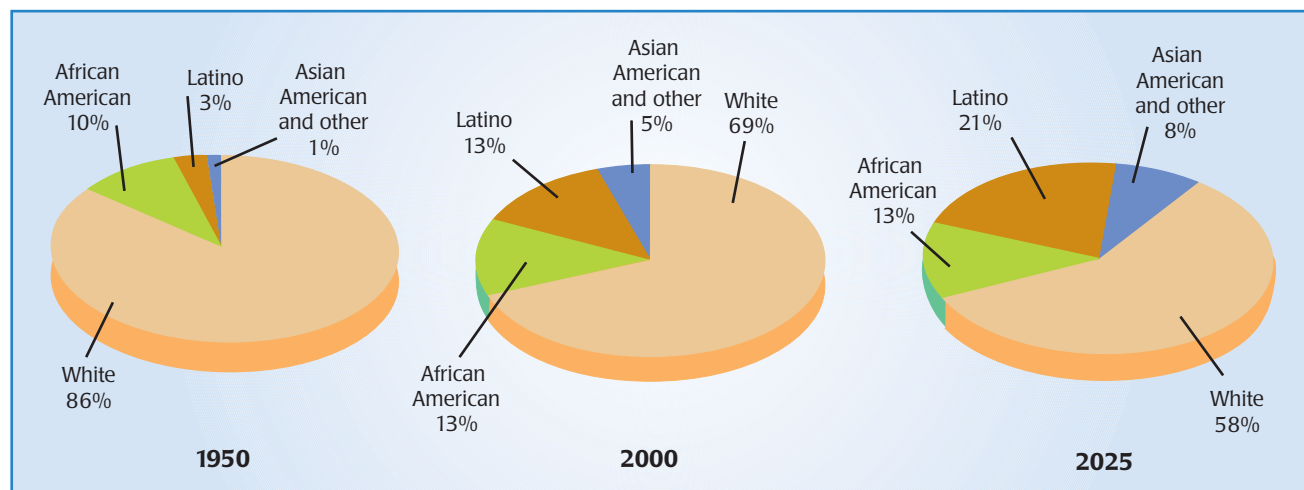
Because of huge immigration waves, one in five people are either foreign born or first-generation U.S. residents. Chinese, Filipinos, and Japanese people still rank as the largest Asian American groups. Since 1990, however, Southeast Asians, Indians, Koreans, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis have registered much faster growth. Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans are the largest groups among Latinos, but people from Central and South American countries—such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, and Honduras—have been immigrating in very high numbers.

ETHNIC FAMILIES SPEAK MANY LANGUAGES

Despite the earlier joke about Americans speaking only one language, approximately 336 languages are spoken in the United States. About 20 percent—almost 56 million people—speak a language other than English at home. The largest group, 13 percent, speaks Spanish. Next are those whose primary language at home is Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, French, or German (each is less than 1 percent). Other languages include Italian, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, Navajo, Korean, Japanese, and Hindi (Shin and Bruno, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

In the largest cities of some states—especially those in California and Texas—the percentages of people who *don't* speak English are higher than those who *do* speak English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). With the advent of *globalization*—the process of integrating economic, political, and cultural systems worldwide—being bilingual or multilingual is an asset in traveling abroad or conducting business. On the other hand, as you'll see in Chapter 4, not knowing a country's native language, such as English, can block many immigrants' educational achievement and ability to find a good job.

FIGURE 1.4 Racial and Ethnic Composition of the U.S. Population, 1950–2025



Source: Based on U.S. Census and Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, August 14, 2008, www.census.gov/population/www/projections/tablesandcharts.html (accessed September 9, 2008).

WHERE ETHNIC FAMILIES LIVE Except for some areas of the Midwest, ethnic families live in all parts of the country but tend to cluster in certain regions (see *Figure 1.5*). Such clustering usually reflects employment opportunities and established immigrant communities that can help newcomers find housing and jobs. In some cases, however, past federal government policies have encouraged some communities to accept refugees from Southeast Asia, forced many American Indians to live on reservations, and implemented a variety of exclusionary immigration laws that limited certain Asian groups to specific geographic areas (see, for example, Kivisto and Ng, 2004).

WHY ARE FAMILIES CHANGING?

It's clear that families are changing. These changes reflect both the choices people make (such as deciding to marry later or to divorce) and the constraints

that limit those choices (such as economic problems or caring for elderly parents).

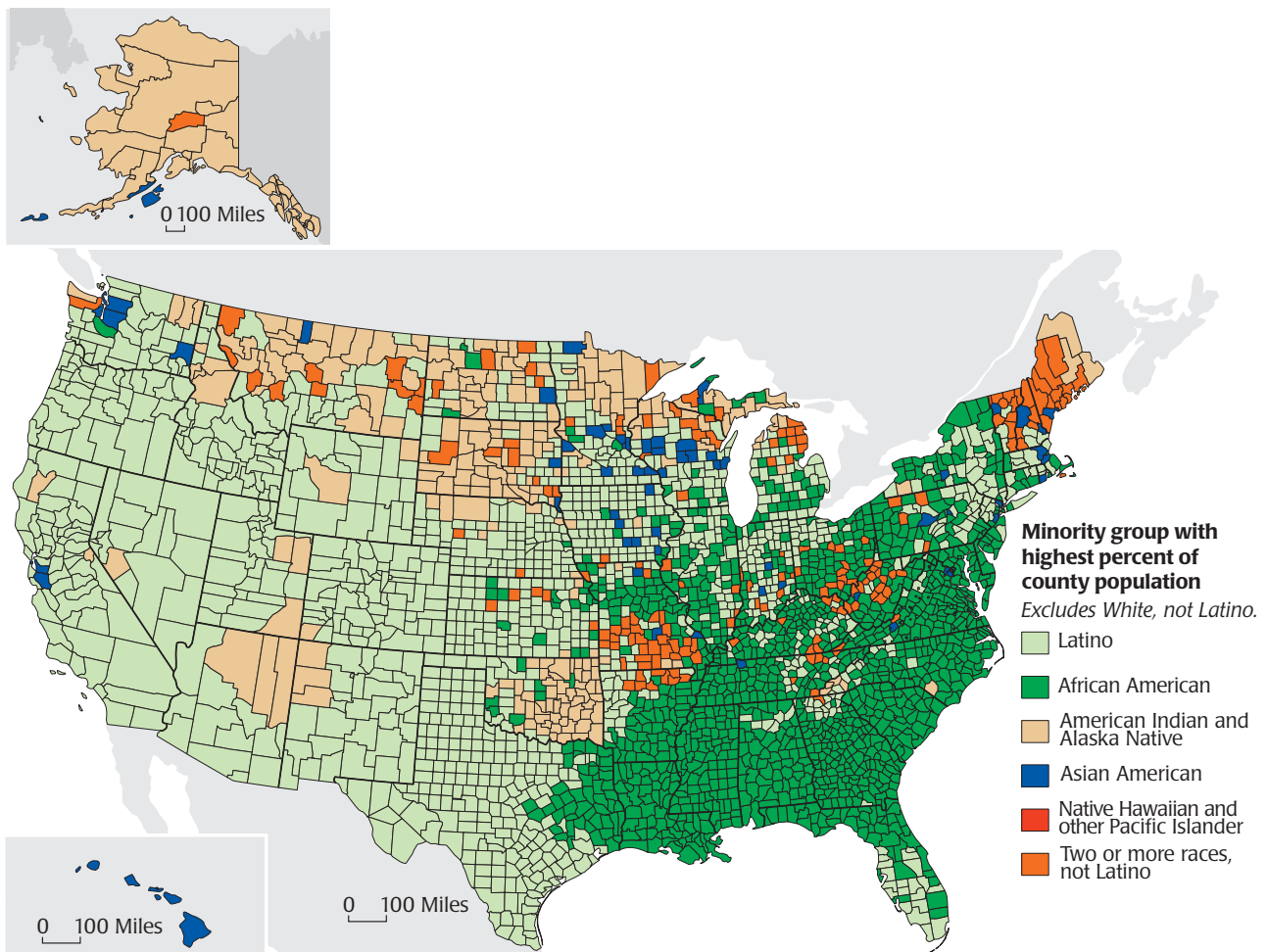
To understand people's choices, social scientists often rely on a **micro-level perspective**, focusing on individuals' social interactions in specific settings. To understand the constraints that limit people's options, they use a **macro-level perspective**, focusing on large-scale patterns that characterize society as a whole. Both perspectives, and the ways in which they are interrelated, are crucial in understanding the family.

Micro-Level Influences on the Family

Consider the following scenario: Two students meet in college, fall in love, marry after graduation, find well-paying jobs, and live the good life, feasting on lobster, driving a Corvette, and the like. Then they have an unplanned child. The wife quits her job to

FIGURE 1.5 Ethnic Diversity in the United States

Look at where minority groups live. Do you see any patterns?



Source: Brewer and Suchen, 2001, <http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/atlas/censr01-1.pdf> (accessed February 26, 2003).

take care of the baby, the husband loses his job, and the wife goes to work part time. She has difficulty balancing her multiple roles of mother, wife, and employee. The stress and arguments between the partners increase, and the marriage ends.

When I ask my students what went wrong, most of them take a micro viewpoint and criticize the couple: “They should have saved some money.” “They didn’t need a Corvette.” “Haven’t they heard about contraceptives?” and so on. Almost all of the students blame the divorce on the two people involved because they were unrealistic or immature or made bad decisions.

There’s much to be said for micro-level explanations. As you’ll see throughout this book, some of the biggest societal changes affecting families began with the efforts of one person who took a stand on an issue. For example, in 1986, Mary Beth Whitehead refused to give up her right to see the baby she had borne as a surrogate mother. The ensuing court battles created national debates about the ethics of new reproductive technologies. As a result, many states instituted surrogacy legislation (see Chapter 11).

On the other hand, micro explanations should be kept in perspective. Many marriage and family textbooks and pop psychology books stress the importance of individual choices but ignore macro-level variables. Micro analyses are limited because they can’t explain some of the things over which families have very little control. For these broader analyses, we must turn to macro explanations.

Macro-Level Influences on the Family

The couple that got a divorce made some unwise personal choices, such as not saving their money and perhaps not using contraceptives at all or effectively. However, their relationship deteriorated, in the end, because of macro-level factors like unemployment and the unavailability of inexpensive high-quality day care services.

Constraints such as economic forces, technological innovations, popular culture, social movements, and family policies limit our choices. These are broad social issues that require macro-level explanations.

ECONOMIC FORCES The Industrial Revolution and urbanization sparked widespread changes that had major impacts on the family (see Chapter 3). By the late eighteenth century, factories replaced the local industries that employed large numbers of women and children. As families became less self-sufficient and their members increasingly worked outside the home, parents’ control over their children diminished.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, many corporations moved their companies to developing countries to increase their profits. Such moves resulted in relocations and unemployment for many U.S. workers. As the U.S. economy changed, millions of low-paying service jobs replaced higher-paying manufacturing jobs. This has wrought havoc with many families’ finances, contributing to the rise in the number of employed mothers. At the other end of the continuum, the higher-paying jobs require at least a college education, so people seeking them tend to postpone marriage and parenthood (see Chapters 9 and 11). The financial crisis in the United States and the rest of the world in the late 2000s resulted in high unemployment rates, reduced work hours, and financial distress, all of which disrupt family life (see Chapter 13).

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS Advances in medical and other health-related technologies have led to a decline in infant death rates and to longer life spans. On the other hand, because the average

Since you asked . . .

- Has technology strengthened or reduced the quality of our family relationships?

American man or woman can now expect to live into his or her 80s and beyond, poverty after retirement is more likely. Medical services can eat up savings, and the middle-aged—sometimes called the *sandwich generation*—must cope both with the demands of raising their own children and helping their aged parents (see Chapters 12 and 17).

Television, digital video discs (DVDs), microwave ovens, personal computers (PCs), and cell phones have also affected families. On the negative side, for example, multiple television sets in a home often dilute parental control over the programs that young children watch because many parents don’t use V-chips to block specific content (Rideout, 2007). On the positive side, television can enhance children’s intellectual development. For example, children ages 2 to 7 who spent a few hours a week watching educational programs such as *Sesame Street*, *Reading Rainbow*, *Mr. Wizard’s World*, and *3-2-1 Contact* had higher academic test scores 3 years later than those who watched many hours of entertainment-only programs and cartoons (Wright et al., 2001).

Some people believe that electronic mail (e-mail), instant messaging (IM), text messaging, iPods, and networking sites such as Facebook are intrusive because such technologies replace close personal relationships with superficial but time-consuming online interactions. For example, people who spend more than ten hours a week on the Internet report a decrease in social activities and less time talking on the phone with friends and family (Nie and Erbring,



"But, sweetie, why don't you just read my blog, like everyone else?"

2000). Either because of computer problems or high usage, 65 percent of Americans spend more time with their computers than with their spouses (PR Newswire, 2007).

On the other hand, e-mail and the Internet have encouraged long-distance conversations between parents, children, and relatives that might otherwise not occur because of busy schedules. Family members who are scattered coast to coast can become more connected by exchanging photos on the Web, organizing family reunions, tracking down distant relatives, or tracing their ancestral roots. In a recent national survey, 25 percent of the parents said that the new communication technologies—including cell phones, e-mail, and the Internet—made their families feel closer than when they were growing up, and 70 percent of all couples felt that daily cell phone and e-mail contact helped them be connected throughout the day (Kennedy et al., 2008).

Also, people in their 80s and 90s say that using e-mail and the Internet makes them more “welllderly” instead of elderly: “Oh my gosh, I’ve never felt so young. I’m sitting around all these young people—they’re on the Web and I’m on the Web. I’m talking to my granddaughter and she’s off in Europe!” (White, 2008: 10B).

POPULAR CULTURE Popular culture—which includes television, the Internet, pop music, magazines, radio, advertising, sports, hobbies, fads, fashions, and movies—is one of our major sources of information *and* misinformation about our values, roles, and family life. Television is especially influential in transmitting both fact and fiction because, in a 65-year lifetime, the average American spends nine years in front of a TV set (see Chapter 5).

Compared with even five years ago, today there are many programs on black families. Asian and

Latino families are huge consumers of prime-time television, but they’re almost invisible on it, except for an occasional show such as *George Lopez*. And, to my knowledge, there isn’t a single family program that features Asian or Middle Eastern families. We’ll examine the effects of popular culture on families in Chapter 5.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS Over the years, a number of social movements have changed family life. These macro-level movements include the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, the gay rights movement, and most recently, a marriage movement.

The *civil rights movement* of the 1960s had a great impact on most U.S. families. Because of affirmative action legislation, members of many minority groups were able to take advantage of educational and economic opportunities that improved their families’ socioeconomic status. Many black and Latino students were accepted at elite colleges and universities, families received money to start small businesses, and a number of productive employees were promoted (see Chapters 4 and 13).

The *women’s movements*—in the late 1800s and especially in the 1970s—transformed many women’s roles and, consequently, family life. As women gained more rights in law, education, and employment, many became less financially dependent on men and started questioning traditional assumptions about gender roles.

The *gay rights movement* that began in the 1970s challenged discriminatory laws in areas such as housing, adoption, and employment. Many lesbian women and gay men (as well as sympathetic heterosexuals) believe that those challenges have resulted in only modest changes so far. There has been progress, however. Children with gay or lesbian parents, for example, are less likely to be stigmatized than they were a decade ago. Numerous companies now provide benefits to their employees’ gay or lesbian partners; a number of adoption agencies assist lesbians and gays who want to become parents; numerous municipalities and states recognize civil unions; and several states have legalized same-sex marriages (see Chapters 8–12).

People who are alarmed by high divorce rates and the increase in cohabitation are joining a burgeoning *marriage movement*. Among other things, the marriage movement seeks to repeal no-fault divorce laws and wants to reduce out-of-wedlock births and state benefits for children born to unmarried low-income mothers. It also promotes abstinence among young people, lobbies for funding for programs that promote marriage, and embraces women’s homemaker roles. In addition, the marriage movement encourages proponents to lobby lawmakers to pass state laws that require couples to take premarital



In 2005, tens of thousands of men converged on Washington, D.C., for the second Million Man March. The purpose of the march was to demand social and economic equality for African American and low-income families and to inspire young men, especially, to be more responsible for their children.

counseling classes and marital skills programs (see Chapter 9). As the box titled “Should Uncle Sam Be a Matchmaker?” shows, however, many people believe that the government should stay out of people’s private lives.

FAMILY POLICIES Family policy refers to the measures that governments take to improve the well-being of families. Thousands of rules and regulations, both civil and criminal—at the local, state, and federal levels—affect practically every aspect of family life: laws about when and whom we can marry, how to dissolve a marriage, how to treat one another in the home, and even how to dispose of our dead. And, as you’ve just seen, the federal government has actively promoted marriage since 2003.

Families don’t just passively accept policy changes. Instead, parents and family members have played critical roles in major social policy changes such as those dealing with the education of children with disabilities, child pornography, joint custody of children after divorce, the right of older people to die with dignity, and better nursing care facilities (see Chapters 7, 12, 15, and 17).

A CROSS-CULTURAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE FAMILY

Why does this textbook include material on subcultures within the United States (American Indians, African Americans, Asian Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and Latinos) and cultures in other

countries? First, unless you’re a full-blooded American Indian, your kin were slaves or immigrants to this country. They contributed their cultural beliefs, and their beliefs and practices shaped current family institutions. The U.S. population today is a mosaic of many cultural, religious, ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups. Thus, a traditional white, middle-class model is not adequate for understanding our marriages and families.

A second reason for this multicultural and cross-cultural approach is that the world today is an “international place” where “the changes facing families are not only national but are also global, encompassing social forces that transcend national and even

Since you asked . . .

- Why should we care about family practices and customs in other cultures?

regional or continental borders” (Karraker, 2008: 2, 5). Compared with even the late 1990s, more people are traveling outside the United

States, more students from abroad attend American colleges and universities, and more exchange programs for students and scholars are offered at all educational levels.

Students value their study-abroad experiences. In a study of students at Northern Arizona University, for example, those who had participated in international study programs described their experiences as eye-opening and memorable in understanding other cultures. Consider, for example, a third-year college student who went to Italy for a year of studies:

When she sat down for dinner with her host family on her very first night, she asked for some water with her meal, a common request in the United States. Yet, the response she got from a 75-year-old Italian was not what she had expected: “Wine is for drinking, water is for washing,” he said. With this, she was welcomed to the world of living and studying abroad (Van Hoof and Verbeeten, 2005: 42).

In the late twentieth century, the Internet changed our communication processes significantly, effectively shrinking the modern world and linking people across continents. As members of the global community, we should be aware of family practices and customs in other cultures.

A third reason for this text’s cross-cultural emphasis is that U.S. businesses recognize the importance of understanding other societies. Since the late 1980s, more companies have been requiring their employees to take courses about other cultures before going abroad. For example, one of my students, who got a job with a *Fortune* 500 company, believed that she had an edge over some very tough competitors because of her knowledge of Portuguese and of Brazilian culture.

Fourth, understanding the customs of other countries challenges our notion that U.S. family forms are



ASK YOURSELF

Should Uncle Sam Be a Matchmaker?

In 2003, Congress passed a bill that allotted \$1.5 billion over five years to promote marriage as part of welfare reform. The money was used for a variety of promarriage initiatives, including the following:

- Encouraging caseworkers to counsel pregnant women to marry the father of the child
- Reducing the rate of out-of-wedlock births
- Teaching about the value of marriage in high schools
- Providing divorce counseling for the poor
- Sponsoring programs that might produce more marriages (Brotherson and Duncan, 2004)

A very vocal marriage movement enthusiastically endorses such initiatives. According to many of its members, government programs should encourage cohabiting parents to marry and discourage married parents from divorcing (Lichter and Crowley, 2002).

Some of the movement's members justify marriage initiatives by pointing to the economic costs—from welfare to child support enforcement—that states incur because of high divorce rates and out-of-wedlock birthrates. Others, such as conservative religious groups, also endorse promarriage legislation. They maintain that the government should pass policies to support and strengthen marriage because “marriage and family are institutions ordained by God” (Wilcox, 2002).

Most recently, President Obama's administration has funded a \$5 million national media campaign that extols the virtues of marriage for 18- to 30-year-olds. The campaign includes ads on Facebook and MySpace, videos on

YouTube, spots on radio talk shows, ads in magazines and public transit, and a new Website, TwoOfUs.org (Jayson, 2009).

There are critics of the marriage initiatives. Some scholars point out that a husband's income is often too low to lift a family out of poverty (Ooms et al., 2004). Others charge that promoting marriage for low-income women stigmatizes them (but not high-income unmarried mothers) and compels them to stay in abusive or unhappy relationships. Many Americans also believe that a U.S. president shouldn't encourage people to marry. Such complaints might be reasonable because researchers don't know how many people are poor because they are unmarried and how many are unmarried because they are poor.

Some directors of fatherhood programs are also opposed to promarriage legislation. They believe that marriage is not a “quick fix” because many poor men have a lot of problems. As Robert Brady of the Young Fathers Program in Denver observed, “I wonder if these conservatives would be so dedicated to marriage promotion if it was their daughters they were trying to marry these guys off to” (Starr, 2001: 68).

❖ Stop and Think . . .

- Should the government pressure low-income mothers to marry? Do you think that such strategies will reduce poverty?
- Is the government meddling in people's private affairs by using tax dollars to promote marriage? Or is it doing what's good for us?

the norm. According to sociologist Mark Hutter (1998: 12),

Americans have been notorious for their lack of understanding and ignorance of other cultures. This is compounded by their gullible ethnocentric belief in the superiority of all things American and not only has made them unaware of how others live and think but also has given them a distorted picture of their own life.

Hutter's perspective—and that of this book—is that understanding other people helps us understand ourselves.

Finally, families are changing around the world. Instead of clinging to stereotypes about other countries, cross-cultural knowledge and information “may result in understanding instead of conflict” (Adams, 2004: 1076).

CONCLUSION

Families are transforming, not destroying, themselves. There have been *changes* in family structures, but families of all kinds seek caring, supportive, comforting, and enduring relationships. There is nothing inherently better about one type of family form than another. Moreover, family structures don't appear by themselves. People create families that meet their needs for love and security.

The greatly expanded *choices* in family structure and function mean that the definition of family no longer reflects the interests of any one social class, gender, or ethnic group. This fluidity generates new questions. How, for example, can parents increase their family time if they experience day-to-day pressures on the job? Who will provide adequate child care when parents are employed? Is it possible to

pursue personal happiness without sacrificing obligations to other family members?

Our choices often are limited by *constraints*, especially at the macro level, because of economic conditions and government policies. To deal with changes, choices, and constraints, we need as much information

as possible about the family. In the next chapter, we'll see how social scientists conduct research on families, gathering data that make it possible for us to track the trends described in this and other chapters, and to make informed decisions about our choices.

SUMMARY

1. The nuclear family—composed of husband, wife, and children—is still predominant in U.S. society, but this definition of *family* has been challenged by those who believe it should include less traditional arrangements such as single parents, child-free couples, foster parents, and siblings sharing a home. Advances in reproductive technology have opened up the possibility of still more varied definitions of the family.
2. The family continues to fulfill basic functions such as bearing and socializing children, providing family members with emotional support, legitimizing and regulating sexual activity, and placing family members in society.
3. Marriages, families, and kinship systems vary in whether marriages are monogamous or polygamous, whether familial authority is vested in the man or the woman or both share power, and whether a new family resides with the family of the man or the woman or creates its own home.
4. Myths about the family include beliefs about the nature of the family in the good old days, the naturalness of marriage and family as human interpersonal and social arrangements, the self-sufficiency of the family, the family as a refuge from outside pressures, and the perfect family.
5. Social scientists generally agree that the family is changing. They disagree, however, on whether it is changing in drastic and essentially unhealthy ways, whether it is simply continuing to adapt and adjust to changing circumstances, or whether it is changing in ways that will ultimately make it stronger.
6. Many changes are occurring in U.S. families: There is more racial and ethnic diversity, family forms are more varied, and there are more single-parent families, stepfamilies, and families in which the mother works outside the home.
7. The reasons for changes in the family can be analyzed on two levels. Micro-level explanations emphasize individual behavior: the choices that people make and the personal and interpersonal factors that influence these choices. Macro-level analyses focus on large-scale patterns that characterize society as a whole and often constrain individual options. Some constraints arise from economic factors, technological advances, popular culture, social movements, and government policies that affect families.
8. Understanding the family requires an appreciation of racial, gender, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, both at home and around the world.

KEY TERMS

family	4	bigamy	8	monogamy	10
fictive kin	5	endogamy	8	serial monogamy	10
norm	6	exogamy	8	polygamy	10
incest taboo	6	nuclear family	8	family of orientation	11
socialization	6	extended family	8	family of procreation	11
role	6	patrilocal	9	kinship system	11
primary group	7	matrilocal	9	micro-level perspective	21
secondary group	7	neolocal	9	macro-level perspective	21
social class	7	matriarchy	9	family policy	24
marriage	7	patriarchy	9		
common-law marriage	8	egalitarian family	10		



MyFamilyLab provides a wealth of resources. Go to www.myfamilylab.com <<http://www.myfamilylab.com/>>, to enhance your comprehension of the content in this chapter. You can take practice

exams, view videos relevant to the subject matter, listen to audio files, explore topics further by using Social Explorer, and use the tools contained in MySearchLab to help you write research papers.