



The Family

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- the structure and function of families
- problems and trends in the American family
- how families are changing

Few families resemble those on television. Most family members aren't running off to exotic places or tracking down murderers. Neither is conversation around the dinner table a series of one-liners. What is a family? Is there such a thing as a "typical" family? In this chapter, you will learn about the most important social institution, the family.

Throughout their lifetimes, individuals belong to different families. Different societies as well as groups within a society hold quite different values and beliefs about families. These can affect how children are raised, how mates are selected, and how descent is traced. Sociologists are interested in what functions families play in society, how power is distributed, and what interactions govern family members' negotiations.

Over the past several decades, there has been an increase in the types of families accepted as "normal" by society. These include families where divorced parents with children marry, creating stepfamilies, and single-parent families.

Family Organization

The **family** is the most basic social institution in all societies. It is a relatively permanent group of people connected by ancestral lineage, marriage, or adoption. It is a very sturdy social unit that has survived and adapted through time. A variety of different types of family organization can be found throughout the world.

Nuclear and Extended Families

Although the concept of family seems fairly simple, it is really quite complex. Siblings, cousins, grandparents, and step-parents describe just some of the statuses family members hold.

The Nuclear Family

The **nuclear family** consists of parents and their children who live together but apart from other family members. People in nuclear families actually belong to **two** families.

1. **Family of Orientation**—the family to which a person belongs as a child, where he or she receives the initial orientation to society.
2. **Family of Procreation**—(also called the family of marriage)—the family people form as adults when they marry.

When sociologists study the nuclear family, they look at its relationship to other family members. They have examined how

its values may differ from those of a wider family network and are interested in how the nuclear family prepares children for certain lines of work.

The Extended Family

The **extended family** is composed of family members of several generations who share a household and are economically and emotionally bound to one another. The extended family may include grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles in addition to parents and children.

EXAMPLE: In rural America, it wasn't uncommon for siblings to stay on the farm after they were married. They sometimes built homes on the same land and worked together to make their living from the farm. This can be called a *joint* extended family.

EXAMPLE: Today, aging parents often live with their adult children and their families—three generations living in the same residence. This is a *vertical* extended family.

Modern Families

Most U.S. families today are **modified extended families**. Different generations do not necessarily live under the same roof, but very important contacts are maintained. The telephone and e-mail make it easy for people to stay in touch, even when they live very far apart geographically. Family members provide practical assistance with a whole range of daily concerns from how to manage a sick member's fever to how to get a college loan.

Kinship Groups

A **kinship group** is a complex network of people whose social relationships are based on common ancestry, marriage, and adoption. Affiliates such as godparents may also be included.

Kinship groups differ from extended families in that they include all one's relatives, including those who may live far apart or rarely see one another. People speak of "close kin"—those with whom they frequently interact—and "distant kin"—those they may see only at weddings, at family reunions, or on holidays. The chart below defines types of family relationships.

Family Relationships	
Consanguineal	People related by biological ties, such as siblings, parents, or grandparents.
Affinal	People related by marriage, such as in-laws and step-relatives.
Adopted	People related through the adoption process.
Fictive	People related through special ties of ritual or friendship, such as godparents.

Patterns of Descent

If you were to do genealogical research, would you start with your father's name, your mother's name, or both? The way people trace their descent is based largely on culture.

EXAMPLE: Navajo children describe their lineage in terms of their mother's kinship group, rather than that of their father.

In some cultures, lineage is a very important part of the social structure. It can determine the control of property and the eligibility of marriage partners.

Unilineal Descent

Unilineal descent traces ancestry through only one parent. Property and names are passed from father to son or mother to daughter. It takes **two** forms:

1. **Patrilineal descent** traces lineage through the male line—your father, your father's father (your grandfather), his father, and so forth. Patrilineal descent is common in cultures where the men provide most of the necessary resources for the family.
2. **Matrilineal descent** traces heritage through the female line—your mother, your mother's mother (your grandmother), her mother, and so forth. Matrilineal descent is less common. It can be found in cultures where women grow the crops and are therefore more responsible for maintaining the family.



U.S. Culture Connection

Changing Surnames

Some American women choose to combine their maiden name with their husband's surname to create a new last name for themselves and their children. What happens when those children marry? If Esther Woo-Jones marries Joe Avila-Lee, what surname will they use?

One answer is for male children to take the father's surname and female children the mother's surname. In that way, both family names are carried on, provided that the marriage produces children of both sexes.



Nonlinear Descent

Nonlinear descent traces ancestry through both parents. It also has **two** forms:

1. **Bilateral descent** traces heritage equally through both the men and women on both the mother's and father's sides of the family.
2. **Double descent** traces heritage through the male ancestors of the father's side and the female ancestors of the mother's side.

Patterns of Authority

Gender differences can define the power base in families. The more powerful gender holds the purse strings, makes the major decisions, and often has the laws of society to support his or her power base:

- * **In a patriarchy**, the father or grandfather holds the authoritative position in the family. It is common in many societies.
- * **In a matriarchy**, the female has the legal and moral authority. This pattern is prevalent in some cultures and in many single-parent families in the United States.

* **In egalitarian families**, authority is shared equally between spouses. In families where both parents earn income, this sharing of authority has become common.

Residence

In some societies, living patterns reveal which family line is the more powerful. There are **four** patterns:

1. **Patrilocal residence**, in which married couples live with or near the husband's family. One study of more than 550 world societies showed that more than two-thirds practiced patrilocal residence. In most of these societies, women had little authority or control.

2. **Matrilocal residence**, in which families live with or near the wife's family. This pattern is found in societies organized around matrilineal descent.

3. **Bilocal residence**, in which the husband and wife have equal say in choosing which family to be near. It is associated with egalitarian authority.

4. **Neolocal residence**, in which families establish their own homes without regard for where their families of orientation live. This is common in industrialized societies.

One important consequence of residence patterns is that they determine which family of orientation will have the greatest influence on the new family of procreation, particularly in the area of child rearing. Children in families living far from either the mother's or father's parents experience less multigenerational influence.

When grandchildren live near grandparents, that family has the opportunity to pass on its values. ▶



Marriage

Societies differ in their norms for the number of spouses you may have at one time and also in their rules about whom you can and cannot marry.

Types of Marriage

The most common and, in many industrial societies, the only socially and legally accepted form of marriage is **monogamy**—the practice of being married to only one person at a time. Custom in monogamous societies is for the marriage to be for a lifetime. With divorce and remarriage increasing, people are sometimes said to practice “serial monogamy.”

While people in most societies are monogamous, some of the world’s societies allow or prefer **polygamy**—a form of marriage where a person has more than one spouse. (Polygamy is illegal in the United States.) There are **two** types of polygamy:

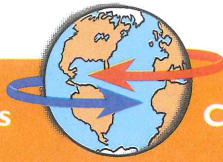
1. **Polyandry**—in which a woman marries two or more men. Few societies practice this form of marriage.
2. **Polygyny**—in which a man marries two or more women. While this form is more common, few men in most polygynous societies have the wealth or social status to support multiple wives and their children. Even here, monogamous marriages are more often the rule.

Selecting a Partner

The way families are formed differs in various societies, but **two** sets of rules define which partners are socially acceptable.

1. **Exogamy** specifies which individuals are *not* acceptable as marriage partners. Relationships among close family members (incest) are almost universally prohibited, both legally and socially. Marriage outside the family encourages biological and social diversity and limits the genetic defects that accompany inbreeding.
2. **Endogamy** specifies the class of persons with whom marriage is both legal and socially encouraged. In large, complex societies, endogamous rules are often related to race, religion, ethnicity, or social class. While there may be no prohibition against marrying outside of these groups, family expectations often limit the selection process.

Exogamy and endogamy together define the pool of socially acceptable potential marriage partners. The rules governing this vary from culture to culture. Although incest is unacceptable in most cultures, marriage between members of different races or religions is no longer uncommon in Western society. Many traditional cultures, however, maintain very rigid rules of eligibility.



Courtship among the Hausa

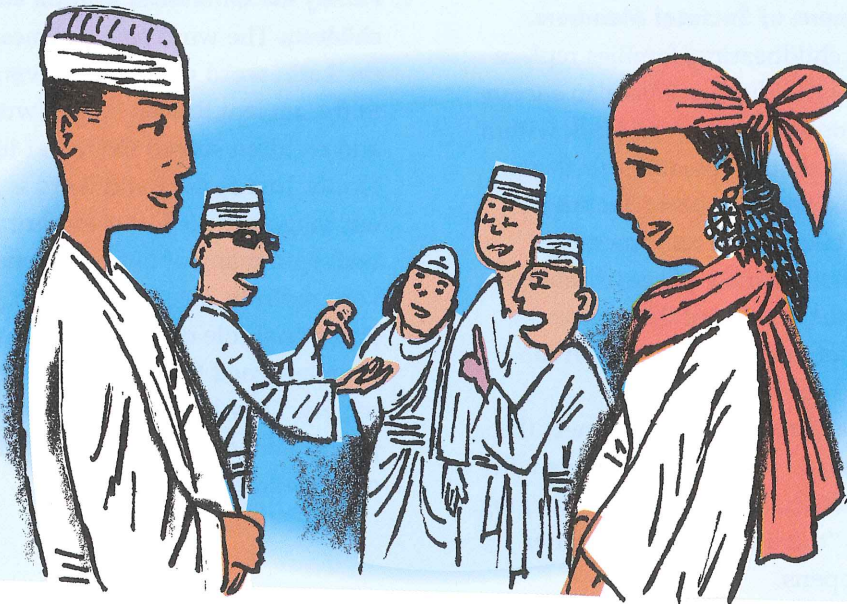
The Hausa people live in northwestern Nigeria and southwestern Niger in Africa. Among the Hausa, marriage is considered a union between two families, not between individuals. Potential marriage partners must undergo a thorough background check.

Couples must follow a strict set of rules during courtship:

- * The boy introduces himself to the girl and tells her who his parents and ancestors are. If she is interested, she smiles or nods.
- * The couple dates. If the boy touches the girl in any way, he is considered to have a bad character. Eventually, the boy asks

the girl to marry him. She arranges a formal meeting with her father and elder relatives.

- * At the meeting, the oldest member of the girl's family questions the boy about his ancestors. Later, the girl's family discusses what they know about the boy's family and investigates that family thoroughly.
- * The boy's family carries out a similar investigation of the girl's ancestors. Only when both families are satisfied is the marriage approved.
- * Before marrying, the boy's family must pay a bride price to the girl's family. This compensates them for the loss of their daughter's work. Only then does the marriage take place.



Sociological Views of the Family

Sociologists bring their different perspectives to their study of families. Each looks at the family in somewhat different ways.

Functionalist View

According to functionalist theory, the family forms the foundation of social order because it performs the following basic functions for society:

- * **Socialization.** Families shape the attitudes, values, and beliefs of children. They pass along society's norms and assure continuation of the social structure.
- * **Regulation of Sexual Activity.** Marriage provides an approved outlet for the sexual drive, and, in addition to assuring continuation of the society, it protects the community from disease and weaknesses in the gene pool.
- * **Replacement of Societal Members.** Through childbearing, families replace members who die. Families also encourage the continuation of the work within the society that its members perform.
- * **Protection and Economic Security.** Families take care of their members who cannot, because of age, disability, or disease, take care of themselves. Family members help each other in times of trouble.
- * **Emotional Support.** Families meet the emotional needs of their members with love, affection, and a sense of belonging. They are "there for them" no matter what happens.

- * **Social Placement.** Families stabilize society by providing individuals with an initial social identity and standing in the community.

Functionalists of the mid-20th century argued that the nuclear family met important needs of an industrial society. That idea, however, has been rejected as further research has shown modern American families are not really nuclear, but are modified extended families.

Conflict View

Those who hold a conflict perspective are interested in the areas of family that some might call dysfunctional. Conflict theorists describe families as arenas of conflict where family members compete for power, wealth, and prestige. They point to the following **four** ways in which family life encourages the exploitation of society's weaker members by its stronger ones.

1. **Family life diminishes women and children.** The word *family* comes from the Latin word meaning "servant," and, in the ancient Roman world, women and children served the father in the family. Just as the Latin word is found in our language, so do the ancient ideas underpin many of our traditions. Until very recently, most women accepted the traditional role of homemaker and nurturer assigned them by a patriarchal society. They had little influence or power either within the home or outside of it. Children have even less.

Functions of Families

Socialization



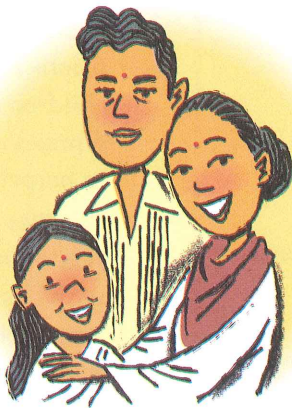
Social Placement



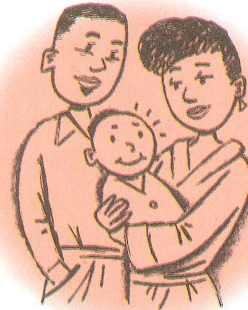
Regulation of Sexual Activity



Emotional Support



Replacement of Societal Members



Protection and Economic Security



Did You Know?



Domestic Violence

- * Although women and children are the most frequent victims of domestic violence, about 5 percent of reported cases involve battered men. The number may be higher because many men fail to report such incidents.
- * The American Medical Association estimates that more than 4 million women are victims of severe assaults by boyfriends and husbands each year.
- * In more than 50 percent of all domestic violence situations, children are also abused.
- * Domestic violence is not limited to certain levels of society. Approximately one-third of the men counseled for battering are professionals who are well respected in their workplaces and communities. These persons accused of domestic violence have included doctors, psychologists, lawyers, ministers, and business executives.

2. **Family life permits violence.** In many societies, it is acceptable for husbands and wives to beat children and for husbands to beat wives. About one-third of female murder victims in the United States are killed by current or former partners. Wife-against-husband abuse, while much less acknowledged, occurs as well.
3. **Families perpetuate social stratification.** Functionalists say that the family serves to stabilize society by perpetuating social placement. In the conflict view of sociology, that stability is seen as undesirable because it reduces social mobility and limits a person's opportunities. Conflict theorists see the advantages of children raised in upper- or middle-class families as evidence that families serve to perpetuate inequalities in society.
4. **Families limit lifestyle choices.** The predominance of the traditional image of the family makes other lifestyles unacceptable. A family wages an uphill battle against community norms when it chooses that the wife be the breadwinner and that decisions be shared among both spouses and with reasoning children. In general, conflict theorists argue that the traditional family should not be a model for everyone because it limits choices for women and men, stifles creativity and productive change, and prevents individuals from moving through society to improve their lot in life.

Interactionist View

Interactionists see family life as a series of ongoing negotiations. They are interested in what those interactions are and how they change.

Husbands and Wives

What expectations does each partner have about the other's role in the family? Jesse Bernard wrote in *The Future of Marriage* that husbands and wives often bring different understandings to the relationship depending on the dynamics in the family in which they were raised. Those differences include:

- * Who makes the decisions.
- * What responsibilities each has in support of the family.
- * Child-rearing practices.

These differences require negotiation if the marriage is to succeed.

EXAMPLE: In a little over four percent of U.S. families, couples decide the husband will stay home with the children while the wife will earn the family income.

Answers to questions about the dynamics of family interactions are important to people who are trying to form social policy.

EXAMPLE: Does improving access to child care improve family economic strength? Or does it merely increase the pressure on mothers to give up a fulfilling mothering role to join the "rat race"? Sociologists research such questions.

Interactions and Happiness

In 1994, John Gottman identified **three** main types of interactions that occur in families. These include:

1. **Validating interactions**, in which participants compromise, show mutual respect, and accept their differences.
2. **Conflict-avoiding interactions**, in which participants make light of their differences rather than confronting and resolving them.
3. **Volatile interactions**, in which conflict erupts, resulting in loud, emotional disputes.

Family interactions



Gottman found that in families where validating interactions predominate, there is a greater sense of “happiness” as reported by family members. Volatile interactions produce the lowest sense of happiness.

Interactions that influence happiness can also be described as:

* **Positive.** Interactions that demonstrate thoughtfulness and friendliness are positive interactions.

EXAMPLES: Touching, smiling, paying sincere compliments.

* **Negative.** Interactions that demonstrate thoughtlessness and nastiness are negative.

EXAMPLES: Ignoring, criticizing, or name-calling.

Gottman found that families in which there are at least five positive interactions for every one negative interaction are generally happy. The degree of happiness decreases as this ratio decreases.

Patterns in Family Life

Family life encompasses several stages: the newlywed or pre-parental stage, the parental stage, the post-parental or “empty nest” stage, and the retirement stage. Changes in modern families have influenced these stages:

- * More than 20 percent of people 18 years or older have never married.
- * Many people are delaying marriage into their late 20s, their 30s, and even longer.
- * Mothers are having children at an older age than they used to.
- * Some couples choose to remain childless.
- * Two-income families are common.
- * High divorce rates and remarriage have added to the complexity of family life.
- * With improved health care, people remain employed and active longer.



Theories of Mate Selection	
Social Exchange Theory	Each person brings certain assets to a relationship. Partners choose each other depending on what one has to offer and what the other offers in return.
Equity Theory	People choose partners with whom there is a fair exchange of assets. If a person feels he or she brings more to the partnership than the other person, the relationship may not last or the weaker partner becomes the other's victim.
Complementary Needs Theory	A person chooses a mate who provides for his or her individual needs.
Psychodynamic Theory	Individuals choose partners who satisfy emotional needs arising from earlier life experiences.

Courtship and Marriage

Most Americans seek out “romantic love” as they search for a mate. It remains a central theme of books, television, movies, and music. Intimacy in marriage is a fairly new phenomenon, as sociologist Philippe Aries pointed out in his book *Centuries of Childhood*. Love for a potential mate often makes “leaving the nest” easier.

Physical attractiveness is a factor in choosing a mate, but it is not nearly as important as the media make it appear.

Sociologists look at mate selection as a series of “trade-offs” or social exchanges. The chart above summarizes four theories of mate selection.

Two kinds of mate selection have been prevalent in many of the world’s societies:

1. **Homogamy**, in which individuals or their families select a mate from the

same group as their own—someone with similar education, race, religion, age, and social class. This practice has been the norm throughout the world.

2. **Heterogamy**, in which a mate is chosen without regard for such characteristics. In postindustrial societies, this practice has been on the rise. In cities, in the workplace, and in social groups with mixed populations, unmarried people are meeting potential mates who are outside their usual group.

The social stigma of interracial marriages and, especially, of marriages between people of different faiths has lessened considerably.

EXAMPLE: In only 30 years, from 1960 to 1990, the number of Jewish people in the United States married to non-Jews rose from 6 percent to more than 50 percent.

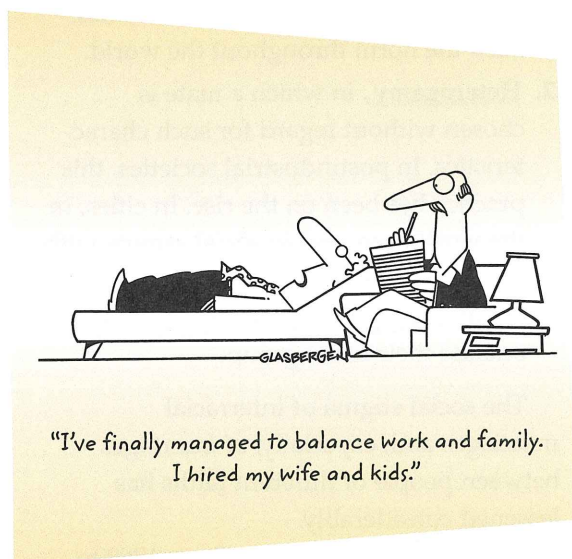
Challenges of Parenthood and Work

Few events produce such a total change in social roles as parenthood. The addition of children turns a couple into a family. Being a parent necessarily broadens interests and brings people into contact with other social institutions such as schools or clubs.

Two-Career Couples

In many families, women enter marriage with a career. The cost of living also encourages both partners in a marriage to seek employment. By 2000, both parents worked in more than 64 percent of U.S. families with children.

This dictates certain roles for parents and introduces new challenges.



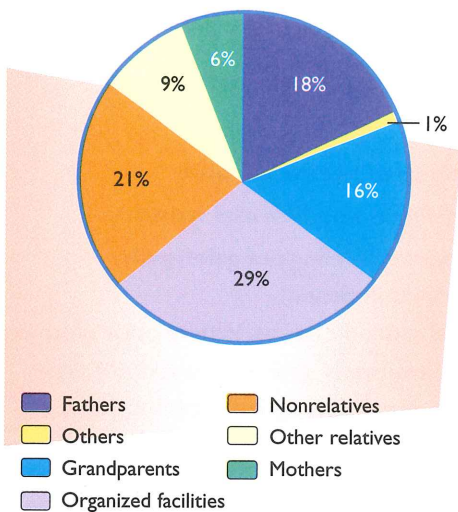
- * Responsibilities of parenthood become more evenly divided between mother and father. If the woman's income exceeds that of the man, the father may remain home and raise the children.
- * Schedules must be juggled to suit the needs of both parents and children, particularly as children begin to engage in activities outside the home.
- * In some cases, the family must maintain two different households in different parts of the country. These commuter marriages increase the challenges of child rearing and care.

Parenthood appears to affect the decision in some families for parents to work from home. In a 1997 study, researchers found nearly 18 percent of the non-agricultural workforce worked at home as all or part of their primary employment. More than 70 percent of these people were members of married-couple families. While the researchers did not investigate why these people worked from home, they did record that the numbers rise several percentage points among couples who have children.

Child Care

The increasing availability of nursery schools, daycare centers, and preschools has helped working parents to some extent. The pie chart at the top of the next page shows the distribution of care for preschoolers whose mothers are employed.

Who Cares for Preschoolers When Mother Works?



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1998)

The downside is that the expense of daycare programs may negate the benefit of having both parents work. Often parents find they have little choice because relatives or suitable programs are simply not available.

Once children enter school, the situation changes. Some parents for whom childcare is unavailable or unaffordable opt to have the child stay alone in the home before and after school. Statistics indicate that between 5 million and 12 million schoolchildren between the ages of 5 and 13 are "latchkey" children.

Did You Know?



Latchkey Children

The term *latchkey children* originated in the 1800s when children wore the keys to their homes around their necks. Some people feel that allowing children to take care of themselves improves their self-esteem and confidence. Others point to problems that can occur, such as:

- * Risk of injury, accident, or victimization.
- * Increased fear, boredom, or loneliness.
- * Increase in delinquent behavior.

- * Increased responsibility placed on the child before he or she is mature enough.

Obviously, the maturity of the child has much to do with the effect of these issues on latchkey children.

Some parents have looked to public libraries to provide a safe place for children after school. Although librarians have concerns over legal liability, medical emergencies, staffing, and security, many have begun programs specifically for latchkey children.

Divorce

Divorce rates have been declining in the United States. Nonetheless, about 11 percent of the adult population is currently divorced. Twenty-five percent of adults have been divorced at least once in their lifetime. Among people 35 to 54 years of age, about 30 percent have been divorced. Factors that contribute to a high divorce rate include:

- * **Teenage Marriages.** People who marry in their teen years are much more likely to divorce than other people. Divorce rates are two-thirds lower among women married after age 25 than among those married as teenagers. Teens who marry because they are pregnant are at even greater risk of divorce.
- * **Dissimilar Social Background.** Differences in values or lifestyles prior to marriage can magnify problems and lead to divorce.
- * **Increased Emphasis on Personal Happiness and Fulfillment.** Traditionally, people were willing to sacrifice some of their own needs to meet the needs of other family members. This has become less common in modern America.
- * **Ease of Obtaining a Divorce.** Changing divorce laws and availability of “no-fault” divorce have made it easier for some couples to dissolve a marriage than to work things out. Social stigma attached to divorce has lessened.
- * **Dual-earner Families.** When both partners are able to support themselves, it becomes economically possible for women or men to leave unhappy or

abusive relationships. Also, spouses in two-income families may grow apart from each other as each becomes devoted to the active pursuit of a career.

Problems associated with divorce include:

1. **Feelings of personal failure.**
2. **Loneliness and financial hardship.**
3. **Children’s feelings of grief, guilt, and abandonment.**
4. **Child custody issues.** Where once women were routinely granted custody of children, joint custody is becoming more common. It allows children to maintain a relationship with both parents, but the parents may find it a strain to maintain a relationship with a divorced spouse. Working out schedules can be difficult. The need of one parent to move away can pose another problem.



"You caught me at a bad time. Call back after my kids grow up and leave home."

The Changing U.S. Family

Recent years have seen many changes in the makeup of families. Two types are increasingly common.

Single-Parent Families

In 1998, 28 percent of all children under 18 lived with a single parent. Of those, 84 percent lived with their mother. The number of single fathers grew 25 percent from 1995 to 1998.

Types of Single Parents

- * **Divorced Mother or Father.**
- * **Widow or Widower.**
- * **Unmarried Mother.** In 1997, nearly a third of all births were to unmarried women. Many of these mothers were teenage girls, and their pregnancies were unplanned. In addition, some women choose to remain unmarried yet have children. Increased economic independence and reduced stigma attached to single motherhood have contributed to this trend.
- * **Adopting Single Parent.** Of more than 42,000 adoptions in 1998, 30 percent were to single females and 2 percent were to single males.

Problems of Single-Parent Families

While life in a single-parent household can be very rich emotionally, there are social problems associated with such families.

- * The problems in providing adequate childcare are magnified in a single-parent family where the parent is almost always employed.
- * Single-parent families generally have more financial problems, particularly when there is no financial support from another parent.
- * Single-parent children are three to four times more likely than children with two parents to have emotional or behavioral problems. Eighty-four percent of teens hospitalized for psychiatric care come from single-parent homes. Children living without a father's influence were 11 times more likely to exhibit violent misbehavior in school.

Blended Families

A blended family is one in which at least one of the adults is a stepparent. A little more than one in six U.S. families is a blended family. With the number of divorces and remarriages on the rise, some sociologists have estimated that in the 21st century, between one-half and one-third of today's young people will become stepsons and stepdaughters, as well as stepsiblings.

Each parent and his or her children have a shared history that persists after the new family forms. It takes time for the new family to build a similar base of experience that leads to a true feeling of “family” rather than “us versus them.”

Depending on their ages and relationships to their other parent, children may experience resentment or anger, necessitating great patience and flexibility among the new family’s members. It takes time for children to get used to the idea of having three and sometimes four “parents” and a whole host of new relatives.

In the interests of children, programs are being developed to help adults in step-family relationships develop a “parenting coalition” in which all involved parents work cooperatively.

Families of the Future

Sociologists suggest that there may no longer be a “typical” U.S. family. If the trends of the past several decades continue:

- * Families will continue to grow smaller.
- * Families will continue to get more socially diverse.
- * More people will choose to remain single.



New Babies in Blended Families

What happens when the parents in a blended family have a new child? Kay Pasley, Director of Research for the Stepfamily Association of America, has researched this question.

In any marriage, children decrease the likelihood of divorce because the parents consider the effects the divorce may have on the child. Yet along with the joy they bring, children complicate married life, increasing demands on time and money and pitting parenting needs against other needs of the married couple.

In addition, while young stepsiblings often accept the new baby as they would

any new family addition, older children sometimes see the baby as “extra baggage” or as having special status.

The main reason parents in a blended family give for having a child together is the hope that it will “cement the bond” of marriage.

Another reason for having a child together is real or perceived social pressure to be more like “a normal family.”

Partners who have children from a previous marriage recognize potential problems and are more likely to weigh the consequences before deciding to have a mutual child.

- * The number of single-parent families and unmarried couples living together will increase.
- * Patriarchal marriages will decline, replaced by more egalitarian relationships.

Government may play a larger role in the future of the family in terms of:

- * Tax relief or support for families where both parents work.
- * Support for poor families.
- * Childcare and other children's programs.

Other factors will almost certainly influence family structure:

- * **Health Care.** As people live longer lives, the "sandwich generation" of

middle-aged individuals will become increasingly responsible not only for their children but also for their aging parents. One sociologist suggests that this may become a "multi-layered club sandwich" as four- and five-generation families become more common.

- * **Technological Advances.** Such innovations as in vitro fertilization, sperm banks, and perhaps even cloning will offer alternative ways to form families and introduce new moral and legal issues.

Despite the potential changes, sociologists believe that families will remain the cornerstone of society.

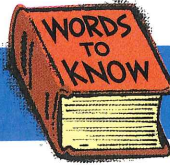
Chapter 9 Wrap-up

THE FAMILY

Families are the most basic and influential social group. Individuals belong to different families—their family of orientation, their family of procreation—as well as to their larger kinship group. Descent patterns and patterns of authority as well as residence differ among the world's societies along gender lines. Marriage norms differ as well.

Different sociological perspectives have informed our understanding of families. Functionalists have pointed to the important functions families serve: socializing children, regulating sexual activity, replacing generations, providing protection and economic security, providing emotional support, and stabilizing society. Conflict theorists have pointed to ways in which families can exploit weaker members of society. Interactionists have looked at the ways family members negotiate their relationships and their needs for power.

Family life is changing in the United States. Where the nuclear, patriarchal family was once the norm, there are now many different types of families, including blended and single-parent families. Families today are confronted with many problems when both parents work or when there is only one parent in the family. Long-term trends in family composition are expected to continue, resulting in smaller and more socially diverse families and a change in the roles of males and females.



- egalitarian family**—family where authority is shared equally between spouses. *p. 167*
- endogamy**—marriage within a particular group in accordance with social custom or law. *p. 168*
- exogamy**—custom of marrying outside the tribe, family, clan, or other social unit. *p. 168*
- extended family**—family members of several generations who share a household and are economically and emotionally bound to one another. *p. 164*
- family**—relatively permanent group of people connected by ancestral lineage, marriage, or adoption. *p. 164*
- family of orientation**—family into which a child is born and receives an initial orientation into society. *p. 164*
- family of procreation**—(also called family of marriage) family that people form as adults when they marry. *p. 164*
- heterogamy**—practice of selecting a mate from among a range of social groups within a society. *p. 175*
- homogamy**—practice of selecting a mate within one's social group; similar characteristics such as education, race, religion, age, and social class govern the choice. *p. 175*
- kinship group**—complex network of people whose social relationships are based on common ancestry, marriage, and adoption. *p. 165*
- matriarchy**—social system in which the mother is head of the family and descent is traced through the mother's side. *p. 166*
- modified extended family**—different generations do not necessarily live in the same household but do maintain regular contact and support each other with daily life issues. *p. 164*
- monogamy**—practice of being married to only one person at a time. *p. 168*
- nonlineal descent**—ancestry traced through both parents. *p. 166*
- nuclear family**—parents and their children who live together but apart from other family members. *p. 164*
- patriarchy**—social system in which the father is head of the family and descent is traced through the father's side. *p. 166*
- polygamy**—practice of having more than one spouse at a time. *p. 168*
- unilineal descent**—ancestry traced through only one parent. *p. 165*