

# 9. The Family

## Objectives

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

## Vocabulary

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egalitarian family	family of orientation	matriarchy	nuclear family
endogamy	family of procreation	modified extended family	patriarchy
exogamy	heterogamy	monogamy	polygamy
extended family	homogamy	nonlineal descent	unilineal descent
family	kinship group		

## Background

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Students can gain insight into their own family structures and family structures in America as a result of this chapter's in-depth, sociological examination of the family.

They begin by learning that families, the most basic and important social units, are organized in a variety of forms, such as nuclear, extended, and modified extended families. They learn about family structures based on lineage, examine ways in which gender and residence determine the power base of a family unit, and discover that types of marriages and their rules differ from culture to culture. This information might broaden their views of the "normal" traditional family.

Students next study the main perspectives that presently influence the ways in which sociologists study and regard families. Functionalists hold that families make up the foundation of social order and perform important functions, like supporting, regulating, and protecting society. Students weigh these views against the conflict theorist view of families as conflicted, competitive, and exploitative of weaker members of society. Students also consider the interactionist perspective, which focuses on how family members negotiate their differences and vie for power.

Next, students learn about the stages that make up the family life cycle and recent changes and theories that influence and guide mate selection or courtship in today's societies. Students move on to consider information about two-career couples, childcare, latchkey children, and the common factors that lead many marriages to divorce.

Finally, students look at how families are changing in the U.S. Whereas nuclear families used to be commonplace, students learn of the rise in single-parent and blended families that have gained society's acceptance as more and more "normal." They examine many long-term trends that suggest that, in the future, "typical" U.S. families are likely to be smaller and more socially diverse.

### Further Resources

- Coontz, Stephanie. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.
- Goldscheider, Frances K. and Linda Waite. *New Families, No Families? Studies in Demography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991.

## For Discussion

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### Review

1. What are the two types of families to which people of nuclear families belong?
2. What two forms does unilineal descent take?
3. What are society's four living patterns?
4. What are the four types of single parents?

### Critical Thinking

1. Of the three types of families—nuclear, extended, and modified extended—which do you think is the ideal? Why?
2. Why are residence patterns important to the family of orientation and the new family of procreation? Support your answer with examples.
3. Why do you think the U.S. has made polygamy illegal? Do you agree with this policy? Why or why not?
4. Why is it important that the differences that husbands and wives bring to a marriage be negotiated? Support your answer.
5. In what ways does being a two-career couple dictate certain roles for parents and introduce new challenges?

## Activities

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### 1. Family Tree

Ask students to create a family tree, using as a basis the "Family Relationships" chart on page 165. It can include godparents and very closely bonded friends of the family. Discuss the completed trees in class.

### 2. Interview: Looking at Family Life

Ask each student to interview a neighbor or family friend who has children. Guide them in creating a list of questions based on issues such as one-career families vs. two-career families and the challenges, pressures, and problems of family life and child care. Have them present their findings and reactions to the class for discussion.

### 3. Internet: Teen Marriage

Direct students to use the Internet to research teen marriage in America today. Have them compile statistics and information on teen marriages and divorce, and find information on the causes of teen marriage, reasons for divorce, child impact, etc. Present results for class discussion and debate.

### 4. Special Sources: Domestic Abuse

Divide students into groups of four. Have each group member research magazines and newspapers (in the library and online) for articles on domestic abuse. Ask each person to find an article they consider important and present it to their group for discussion.

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## 9. The Family

As you read Chapter 9, write an answer to each question below.

1. Explain the difference between nuclear, extended, and modified extended families.

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2. What are the three patterns of authority in a family? Explain.

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3. According to conflict theorists, what are the four ways in which family life encourages the exploitation of society's weaker members by its stronger members? Explain.

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4. What are the three main types of interactions that occur in families, as identified in 1994 by John Gottman? Explain.

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5. What are four theories of mate selection? Support your answer.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 9. The Family

Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

1. Which term is defined as a relatively permanent group of people connected by ancestral lineage, marriage, or adoption?
  - a. family of orientation
  - b. modified extended family
  - c. kinship group
  - d. family
2. In what kind of family is authority shared equally between spouses?
  - a. nuclear family
  - b. extended family
  - c. egalitarian family
  - d. modified extended family
3. In what kind of family do members of several generations share a household and are economically and emotionally bound to one another?
  - a. family of procreation
  - b. extended family
  - c. kinship group
  - d. egalitarian family
4. What is referred to as a family into which a child is born and receives an initial orientation into society?
  - a. nonlineal descent
  - b. unilineal descent
  - c. family of orientation
  - d. egalitarian family
5. What is a family that people form as adults when they marry (also called family of marriage)?
  - a. family of procreation
  - b. modified extended family
  - c. exogamy
  - d. endogamy
6. What is the correct term for a social system in which the mother is head of the family and descent is traced through the mother's side?
  - a. patriarchy
  - b. matriarchy
  - c. monogamy
  - d. homogamy
7. What is the term that means different generations do not necessarily live in the same household but do maintain regular contact and support each other with daily life issues?
  - a. extended family
  - b. modified extended family
  - c. polygamy
  - d. nuclear family
8. What is the practice of being married to only one person at a time?
  - a. monogamy
  - b. polygamy
  - c. homogamy
  - d. exogamy
9. What is it called when parents and their children live together but apart from other family members?
  - a. egalitarian family
  - b. extended family
  - c. nuclear family
  - d. kinship group
10. Which term refers to a social system in which the father is head of the family and descent is traced through the father's side?
  - a. polygamy
  - b. monogamy
  - c. endogamy
  - d. patriarchy

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## 9. The Family

Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. A kinship group is a complex network of people whose social relationships are based on common \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. ancestry, marriage, and adoption
  - b. ancestry, social circles, and location
  - c. paternal grandparents and paternal cousins
  - d. patterns of descent
2. Nonlinear descent traces ancestry through both parents. Its two forms are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. bilateral/double
  - b. multilateral/single
  - c. unilateral/intermittent
  - d. bilateral/single
3. Exogamy and endogamy together define the pool of \_\_\_\_\_ potential marriage partners.
  - a. unacceptable
  - b. universally acceptable
  - c. socially acceptable
  - d. family approved
4. According to functionalists, families pass along society's \_\_\_\_\_ and assure continuation of the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. laws/rules
  - b. norms/social structure
  - c. concerns/correct behavior
  - d. folkways/mores
5. John Gottman found that families in which there are at least \_\_\_\_\_ positive interactions for every \_\_\_\_\_ negative interaction are generally happy.
  - a. three/one
  - b. four/one
  - c. five/one
  - d. six/one
6. Most Americans look for \_\_\_\_\_ in a mate.
  - a. money
  - b. social status
  - c. common family backgrounds
  - d. romantic love
7. People who marry early, especially in their teens, are much more likely to \_\_\_\_\_ than other people.
  - a. divorce
  - b. stay together
  - c. have multiple children
  - d. live with extended family
8. Of over 42,000 adoptions in 1998, \_\_\_\_\_ percent were to single females and \_\_\_\_\_ percent were to single males.
 

a. 25/3	c. 45/5
b. 30/2	d. 48/4
9. In a blended family, children may experience \_\_\_\_\_.
 

a. resentment or anger	c. pressure
b. isolation	d. homesickness
10. Sociologists suggest that there may no longer be a "typical" U.S. family. If the trends continue, families will grow smaller, get more socially diverse, and more people will choose to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. move away from family
  - b. adopt
  - c. remain single
  - d. work longer hours

### Essay Question

What purpose does family serve in your life? How important is it to you? Do you think most people agree with your view? Why or why not?