TENTH EDITION

# Families as Partners in Education

## FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS WORKING TOGETHER

Eugenia Hepworth Berger ◇ Mari Riojas-Cortez

# Families as Partners in Education

This page intentionally left blank

Tenth Edition

# Families as Partners in Education

## Families and Schools Working Together

**Mari Riojas-Cortez**
*Professor, The University of Texas at San Antonio*

**Eugenia Hepworth Berger**
*Professor Emerita, Metropolitan State College of Denver*

Pearson

**Director and Publisher:** Kevin Davis
**Executive Portfolio Manager:** Aileen Pogran
**Portfolio Assistant:** Maria Feliberty
**Executive Field Marketing Manager:** Krista Clark
**Executive Product Marketing Manager:** Christopher Barry
**Content Producer:** Megan Moffo
**Development Editor:** Krista McMurray
**Operations Specialist:** Deidra Headlee
**Cover Design:** Pearson, CSC
**Cover Art:** Valarti/Fotolia
**Media Producer:** Autumn Benson
**Editorial Production and Composition Services:** Pearson, CSC
**Editorial Project Manager:** Mirasol Dante, Pearson CSC
**Full-Service Project Manager:** Prince John William Carey, Pearson CSC
**Printer/Binder:** LSC Communications, Inc./Willard
**Cover Printer:** Phoenix Color/Hagerstown
**Text Font:** Palatino LT Pro



Acknowledgments of third party content appear on appropriate pages within text.

**Photo Credits:** Mari Cortez-Riojas, p. 3; Chris Robbins/Photodisc/Getty Images, p. 3; VOISIN/PHANIE/Alamy stock photo, p. 3; Kian Khoon Tan/Alamy Stock Photo, p. 3; Carla Mestas. Pearson Education, Inc., p. 4; Photodisc/Getty Images, p. 5; Chubykin Arkady/Shutterstock, p. 8; Mari Riojas-Cortez, p. 12; Fuse/Corbis/Getty Images, p. 13; logoboom/Shutterstock, p. 18; Armando Cortez, p. 18; Guy Cali/Corbis/Getty Images, p. 22; ZouZou/Shutterstock, p. 25; Noam Armonn/Shutterstock, p. 29; Szefei/Shutterstock, p. 29; Jupiterimages/Stockbyte/Getty Images, p. 41; Mari Riojas Cortez, p. 43; Thinkstock/Stockbyte/Getty Images, p. 43; PacoRomero/E+/Getty Images, p. 51; Comstock Images/Stockbyte/Getty Images, p. 59; Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock, p. 61; Lloyd Smith/Shutterstock, p. 69; Eugenia Berger, p. 71; Eugenia Berger, p. 72; Istomina Olena/Shutterstock, p. 72; Bettmann/Getty Images, p. 75; Dean Mitchell/Getty Images, p. 79; David Kostelnik/Pearson Education, Inc., p. 90; Armando Cortez, p. 92; Judy Bellah/Alamy Stock Photo, p. 98; Pearson Education, p. 101; Exactostock-1557/Superstock, p. 109; Merrill Education, p. 111; Mari Riojas-Cortez, p. 128; Studio 8/Pearson Education Ltd, p. 131; matka_Wariatka/Shutterstock, p. 134; Steve Debenport/E+/Getty Images, p. 137; Shorrocks/Getty Images, p. 149; Kali Nine LLC/Getty Images, p. 150; Ariel Skelley/Blend Images/Alamy, p. 162; Jim West / Alamy Stock Photo, p. 164; Merrill Education, p. 174; Mark Bowden/Getty Images, p. 181; Rawpixel.com/Shutterstock, p. 190; Studio 8/Pearson Education Ltd, p. 190; Merrill Education, p. 195; Gideon Mendel/Corbis/Getty Images, p. 198; David Mager/Pearson Education, p. 201; Oleg Kozlov/shutterstock, p. 202; Stockbyte/Getty Images, p. 219; Jupiterimages/Stockbyte/Getty Images, p. 227; Chad Baker/Jason Reed/Ryan McVay/getty Image, p. 239; Diyana Dimitrova/Shutterstock, p. 240; Robin Sachs/Photo Edit, p. 241; George Dodson/Pearson Education, p. 245; Denis Kuvaev/Shutterstock, p. 254; Mari Riojas-Cortez, p. 256; Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock, p. 261; Suzanne Clouzeau/Pearson Education, Inc, p. 265; Denis Kuvaev/Shutterstock, p. 278; Armando Cortez, p. 291; Jules Selmes/Pearson Education Ltd, p. 292; Scott Camazine/Alamy Stock Photo, p. 299; Mediscan/Alamy Stock Photo, p. 304; Karen Grigoryan/Shutterstock, p. 304; st-fotograf/Shutterstock, p. 304; Stephanie Rausser/The Image Bank/getty Image, p. 305; SPL/Science Source, p. 305; GIRAND/BSIP SA/Alamy Stock Photo, p. 305; Geo Martinez/Shutterstock, p. 325; Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock, p. 329; Creativa Images/Shutterstock, p. 332; Wavebreakmedia/Shutterstock, p. 332



**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Riojas-Cortez, Mari, author. | Berger, Eugenia Hepworth, author.
Title: Families as partners : families and schools working together / Mari Riojas-Cortez, Professor, The University of Texas at San Antonio, Eugenia Hepworth Berger, Professor Emerita, Metropolitan State College of Denver.
Description: Tenth edition. | Boston : Pearson Education, Inc., [2019] | Previous edition (9th) entitled Parents as partners in education and entered under: Eugenia Hepworth.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018052082| ISBN 9780135196724 | ISBN 0135196728
Subjects: LCSH: Home and school—United States. | Education—Parent participation—United States.
Classification: LCC LC225.3 .R56 2019 | DDC 371.19/20973—dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018052082

1 18

ISBN 10: 0-13-519672-8
ISBN 13: 978-0-13-519672-4

Dedicated with cariño (affection) to all families who are separated by different circumstances. May kindness and humanness be granted.

*—Mari Riojas-Cortez*

# About the Authors

**MARI RIOJAS-CORTEZ** became interested in family engagement when she was a bilingual teacher working with young children in San Antonio, Texas. She learned early in her career that families play a very important role in children's development, and she developed strong relationships by welcoming families to her classroom and inviting them to participate in different aspects of their children's education. Mari understood the challenges that many Latino families faced because her own parents faced the same cultural and linguistic barriers when they arrived in the United States from Mexico. After completing a master's degree in educational leadership, Mari's interests in early childhood education and bilingual education led her to The University of Texas at Austin, where she received a doctorate in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in early childhood education and bilingual education in 1998. Currently, she is Professor of Early Childhood Education at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), where she continues to collaborate with local school districts and early childhood agencies in various capacities. Additionally, Mari's work has been published in a variety of journals including *Journal of Early Childhood Research, International Journal of Early Childhood Education, Young Children, Early Child Development and Care, Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, Language Arts,* and the *Bilingual Research Journal*, among others. Mari Riojas-Cortez also serves as Editor for *Dimensions of Early Childhood* (a journal published by the Southern Early Childhood Association).

**EUGENIA HEPWORTH BERGER** became interested in parent involvement when she and her husband, Glen, became the parents of three children who attended public schools. A professional in early childhood education, sociology, family life education, and parent education for more than 35 years, she has two master's degrees and a Ph.D. in sociological foundations of education. Eugenia has been active in many professional organizations, including the Association for Childhood Education International, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (life member), and the National Council for the Social Studies. She served on the board for the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, the Colorado Association for Childhood Education, the Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children, and was president of the Rocky Mountain Council on Family Relations. After finishing her doctorate at the University of Denver, she became a faculty member at Metropolitan State College. She retired in December 1997 and is now professor emerita of education.

# Preface

This edition of *Families as Partners in Education: Families and Schools Working Together* highlights the changes in U.S. society and effective ways for teachers and other professionals to understand and work with families. For the last 30 years, we have seen major changes in families. In particular, we have seen an increase in the number of diverse families. The beauty of this change reminds us of the diversity of our nation. Learning to work with diverse families, including those with diverse family structures, requires an understanding of who we are as individuals and educators, and that we acknowledge the values and beliefs that our own families have taught us.

Among other themes, this edition still emphasizes the importance of *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992) for children's development and for effective partnerships with families. We have also acknowledged the concept of "funds of identity" as a catalyst for educators to understand their own identity which will in turn help understand and work with others. It is not only important for educators to understand and know child development theories, but also how children develop within the context of their families.

Creating strong partnerships involves the understanding and willingness to work with all families, including families that are different than our own. Once educators understand the value of families for healthy development, they can begin to create strong partnerships to assist children in successful educational experiences. This edition continues to highlight important parent involvement programs and that such programs are often successful because of an asset-based view of families, particularly of those that are diverse, as well as those with children with special abilities.

## New to this Edition

This edition includes updated material and additional coverage of many subjects. Of particular interest are

- Updated measurable learning outcomes (every chapter) on which to focus.
- Updated tables and figures.
- Real voices of families.
- Description of family theories (Chapter 1).
- Expanded explanation regarding diversity of families (Chapter 3).
- Inclusive historical overview of families (Chapter 4).
- Expanded section on school climate in order to create positive partnerships with families (Chapter 5).
- Focus on leadership for teachers working with families (Chapter 7).
- Updated information regarding school- and home-based family engagement programs (Chapter 8).
- Updated information regarding child abuse and domestic violence (Chapter 11), as well as newer photos.
- Revised chapter on advocacy based on the concept of social justice (Chapter 12).

## Guidelines and Strategies for Working with Families

The tried-and-true how-to ideas and means to help parents and educators join together include:

- Communication, an essential element in providing an environment where learning and caring coexist.
- An understanding of diversity in different contexts.
- Ideas to help build a partnership of home, teacher, and school.
- Ways to set up an environment that is respectful to cultural, linguistic, and ability diversity where learning can take place.
- Historical development of views on children and how those views affect family life.
- Activities and programs to enrich parent–school collaboration.
- Awareness of the needs of special abilities or special needs for families.
- Methods needed to welcome families in the schools.
- Practices to develop working relationships with diverse families.

## Orientation to the Text

***Interdisciplinary Approach.*** The text studies family engagement from an interdisciplinary approach and looks at home–school partnerships from educational, anthropological, sociological, and psychological perspectives. In this edition, there is a strong effort to view families from a diverse perspective.

***Theory and Research.*** Theory and research underpin each chapter of the text. New research emphasizes the need for home–school partnerships, particularly as they relate to culturally and linguistically diverse families.

***Practical Application.*** A parent, student, teacher, or administrator can pick up this book and find suggestions and descriptions of specific programs that will enable collaboration between families and schools.

***Readability.*** Reviewers and students have commented on the readability of the text in its comprehensive coverage. An easy-to-read style makes it convenient to share ideas from the book directly with parents who are not professional educators.

***Figures and Tables.*** Numerous helpful figures and tables are included in the text to help illustrate content.

***Photos.*** Many new photographs that depict culturally and linguistically diverse children, families, and teachers, as well as families with children with special needs, enrich the content of the book.

## Special Features

***Situational Vignettes.*** Vignettes bring alive situations that typically occur in parent–school relationships. Co-author Mari Riojas-Cortez has woven some personal vignettes throughout the book based on her experience from her professional work with children and families as well as her personal experience. Other examples are also highlighted to demonstrate inclusion and diversity.

***Diverse Families.*** Suggestions and activities about how to work with diverse families, including a special focus on families affected by autism, are given.

***Immigrant Families.*** Descriptions and explanations of situations that affect immigrant families are provided, including suggestions on how best to develop partnerships.

***Advocacy.*** Preparation and suggestions on advocating for children give families and educators the knowledge they need to encourage them to be actively involved in advocacy issues.

***Historical Outline.*** A historical outline highlights education and parent education milestones, and succinctly illustrates family engagement throughout different eras in the U.S.

## Instructor's Resources

The following ancillaries are available for download to adopting professors via www.pearson-highered.com from the Educators screen. Contact your Pearson sales representative for additional information.

**Instructor's Resource Manual.** This manual contains activity ideas to enhance chapter concepts.

**Test Bank.** The test bank includes a variety of test items, arranged by chapter.

**PowerPoint Slides.** PowerPoint slides highlight key concepts and strategies in each chapter and enhance lectures and discussions.

## A Note About Census Data

Although every effort was made to include up-to-date information in this 10th edition, we strongly suggest that readers check the American Fact Finder on the U.S. Census website for the latest data.

## Acknowledgments

Eugenia Hepworth Berger had a vision when she developed *Families as Partners in Education: Families and Schools Working Together*. Her vision carried this book through seven editions—30 years of sharing ideas with educators and administrators on how to enhance parental involvement to strengthen home–school partnerships. I hope to expand her vision in this tenth edition where we further our understanding of collaborating with diverse families, and I offer my sincere gratitude for her trusting me again with her book.

I want to thank all of the previous contributors to the book as well as my university students who provide me with opportunities to stay informed regarding the realities of many families.

I want to thank the staff of Pearson for their guidance, patience, and support, and in particular: Aileen Pogran, Executive Portfolio Manager, for her trust, patience, guidance, and encouragement although we just met for this edition; Krista McMurray for providing guidance and feedback on chapter content although she was herself starting a family, and congratulations on

her baby; and Mirasol Dante, project manager at SPi Global, Inc., as well as the amazing copyeditors for the production services.

I also want to thank all the reviewers who took the time to read and provide feedback for this edition. Their diverse insights and expertise have strengthened it: Gwen Walter, Forsyth Technical Community College, Retired; Robin Fox, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater; and Tisha Rivera, California State University, Fullerton.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my husband, Armando Cortez, and our three extraordinary children Marisol, Rodrigo, and Miguel for their love, patience, and understanding while this project was completed, they are my inspiration.

*—Mari Riojas-Cortez*

This page intentionally left blank

# Brief Contents

This page intentionally left blank

# Contents

# Chapter 1

# Family—Essential for a Child's Development

*The family is the entity that assists children in their development. Families bond as they guide children in their development using their funds of knowledge.*

Mari Riojas-Cortez

## Learning Outcomes

*This chapter stresses the importance of the family as the main influence in children's development. Respecting and valuing families acknowledges their importance for children's healthy development. After completing the chapter, you should be able to do the following:*

- **1.1** Identify the influence of families on children's development.
- **1.2** Discuss and examine the concept of funds of knowledge as it relates to children's development and families.
- **1.3** Identify and describe different attachment theories in relation to child development and families as systems of support.
- **1.4** Analyze the role of the family in a child's brain development.

## The Influence of Families on Children's Development

Families play a major role in their children's development. They provide food, shelter, care, love, opportunities for play, education, and much else. Families that provide these necessities are strong families. Strong families are essential because they help create a nurturing society, transforming the society by actively participating in systems that in turn help them, the family members, have a healthy, successful life. Regardless of how nurturing the society, sometimes even strong families face difficulties that test their well-being, such as parents working multiple jobs to meet the basic needs of their children, or facing the challenges of divorce. Although family stressors such as these are difficult for children, families that are strong are often resilient and learn to work out problems because they care for each other, particularly their children. This strength allows families to help children in their development.

### Defining the Term *Parent*

Throughout this book, the term **parent** includes those who act in a primary caregiver or parent role, whether they are the biological parent, a relative, adoptive parent, foster parent, or nonrelated caregiver. In fact, parents can be one person or a group of individuals, such as those that form part of support systems, who help meet the cognitive, linguistic, physical, socioemotional, and cultural needs of children.

## The Role of the Extended Family

The role of the extended family has evolved over time. The extended family often focuses on gathering on major occasions such as *quinceañeras*[1], weddings, bar mitzvah celebrations, or religious holidays. Today many families "gather" on social media and send congratulatory messages, and some even communicate through Instagram or Facebook. How often have you encountered *Abuelita*[2] or Grandma give advice to new parents? How often does an auntie provide care for her sister's children while her sister works? Because families are so important, resources must be provided to support their needs, specifically their children's needs. Extended family members like grandparents, who often have the responsibility of taking care of the children, are an important support for families. However, their role is also to provide guidance and *consejos*[3] or advice to ensure children are cared for appropriately, largely based on their own cultural practices. The support that the extended family provides helps create a caring environment for children.

The definition of the extended family depends on the cultural background of the family. For example, many countries in Africa and Asia consider what we know in the U.S. as extended family to be their nuclear family. In the following example, Ndimande describes the concept of Family of the Zulu people of South Africa (where he is from):

> *Zulu people do not use the Western notion of traditional family, although now things are gradually changing. But when I was growing up, for example, my uncle, antie, especially grandparents would live with us. They were not regarded as "extended" family. They were family, period. So, the notion of nucleus family was fluid, it was not defined by biological parents. But also we did not have old age homes as we are now beginning to have. This is the reason I like that your Mama lives with you and Armando. So, for Zulu people, she is family, not necessarily extended. The same goes to the children of your brothers, sisters (if they live with you, they are your children). You did not need an authorization from the government or anything. The good thing about this type of extended family, individuals retained their original last names, irrespective of who they live with. And it makes the family stronger.*

It is clear from this example that what is considered the extended family in the U.S. is not considered seen the same way in some cultures in Africa. A strong family seems to be one that takes care of each other regardless of biological ties.

In some societies, such as in some Asian Indian cultures, the success of individuals comes from having strong ties to the family as explained by Kalpana, a mother of two teenagers and who is from India but has lived in the U.S. for many years:

> *Asian Indian people, along with their immediate family (i.e. parents, siblings, and grandparents) attribute their success and achievements to extended family members. Indians live in a system called joint family (which is the opposite of the western nuclear family system), where there is space/scope for lateral relationship building for psychological well being of the young adults. Indian culture is complex and intricate with influences from outside of the family that they refer to as extended family support.*

For Kalpana, family has also a different definition and the family functions as a system that is complex. In the Indian culture there appears to be a cohesive system where many members have the responsibility to support young children.

Latinos in the United States regard the extended family as being just as close as the nuclear family; the members have strong bonds and attachments with each other. When I was growing up in Mexico, my *madrina*, or godmother, came to our house every day. My mother and she would spend hours talking. In fact, my *madrina* was an influential person for my sisters and I to attend kindergarten, or *jardín de niños*, because as my mother put it, "*era muy importante el jardín de niños para que pudieran aprender más*" [kindergarten was very important so that you all could learn more].

The extended family influence extends from intangible things such as values, traditions, concepts, and principles but also to tangible things such as housing and adult- and childcare. For example, household composition varies not only depending on the cultural background but also on the resources that are available within a household. The extended family often assists when other resources are not available (LaFave & Thomas, 2014) this is particularly true for low-income families, immigrant families (with and without documents), and those who have children with special needs.

[1]Celebration of a girl's 15th birthday throughout Latin America and Latinos in the U.S.
[2]Abuelita is a Spanish term for Grandmother.
[3]Consejos is a Spanish term for advice.

# Funds of Knowledge

Caretaking and teaching other people's children are tremendous tasks. Teachers must have the desire to teach children who come from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as children who are not developing typically. Often teachers are told that they need to be aware of the differences in language and culture of the children they teach, but merely being aware of cultural and linguistic differences is not sufficient to work effectively with families. Awareness implies knowledge but not action. When working with culturally and linguistically diverse children, teachers must know about the children's families, including but not limited to their cultural practices, childrearing practices, traditions, and each individual family's **funds of knowledge**.

A family is a child's first teacher, passing on their concepts, or funds of knowledge, to help them grow and thrive (Moll et al., 1992). These concepts can be passed along from generation to generation, and new ones can be developed as new families are formed.

For early childhood educators, the importance of understanding the concept of funds of knowledge is crucial, because they must understand why families do the things they do. Often educators criticize parents if their ways of raising their children are different from theirs, and this creates a dissonance that prevents teachers from truly collaborating with parents. We must remember that children learn from their parents first, and the learning and teaching that occur in the home are great assets for children in school—particularly when teachers value the children's funds of knowledge. When teachers value parents' funds of knowledge they encourage parent engagement (Gregg, Rugg, & Stoneman, 2012) because parents feel valued and respected.

Mari Cortez-Riojas

Chris Robbins/Photodisc/Getty Images

VOISIN/PHANIE/Alamy stock photo

Kian Khoon Tan/Alamy Stock Photo

Strong families influence, nurture, socialize, and educate and teach their children through funds of knowledge.

## Examples of Funds of Knowledge

I have seen funds of knowledge "in action" in different settings. For example, while eating at a local restaurant, a father was observing his son, who had Down syndrome, figure out the amount of tip to leave for the server. This exercise taught the young man an important social skill while fostering his independence. When I was a teacher, many parents would send their preschool children to school dressed in their Sunday best. Girls would wear black patent shoes and ruffled dresses, while the boys would wear dressy pants and a nice shirt. After my initial meeting with them before school started, I knew they valued education, and by sending their children to school looking their best, they were asserting this value. This truly was "funds of knowledge" in action. By understanding a family's funds of knowledge, teachers are also engaging in social justice because they want to create opportunities for those children and families who are often underrepresented and marginalized.

Part of my funds of knowledge include my father's teaching regarding the value of social justice while growing up in Mexico. He taught me the value of being fair and equitable, particularly with those who work with and for you. My father, who was actively involved in the *sindicato obrero*, or the "blue collar" union, fought for workers' rights. My sisters and I were used to listening to my father talk about how to make sure the workers would get treated fairly, which is something that has become part of my philosophy of teaching—providing fair opportunities so all children can learn.

Carla Mestas/Pearson Education, Inc.

Funds of knowledge can be passed along from generation to generation, and new ones can be developed as new families are formed.

Another example of funds of knowledge is derived from an interview with an African American family. The interview showed that the family wanted to teach their children about "Black pride"—they wanted their children to know their history so they would continue to advocate for each other. They taught their children about different African American historical figures, but they also talked about their own family and how they make a difference in their community. The funds of knowledge learned by the children in this family included the need to participate in advocacy for their community.

Families who immigrate to the United States often use their funds of knowledge to learn to live in a new culture, but oftentimes, the child takes the role of the teacher and the parent the learner. When visiting a school on the east side of Austin, Texas, I recall listening to a mother having a conversation with her young daughter, who was probably about 10 years old, regarding the papers needed to register her, the child, in school. The child spoke English and had to translate the process to register for school for the mother. Another time, I witnessed a family at an auto parts store, and the young son was translating for his father what the salesperson was telling him in English. The father was a mechanic. In both instances, the children had knowledge of the vocabulary used in their native language (in both cases it was Spanish).

Examples of funds of knowledge vary between cultures, as well as between individual families. Funds of knowledge can be observed in different situations. In schools or childcare centers, examples can be found in children's play that include language, values and beliefs, ways of discipline, household care, and the value of education (Riojas-Cortez, 2001). Teachers can observe children during play, particularly sociodramatic play, to recognize cultural traits and identify funds of knowledge. For instance, a teacher who arranges the dramatic play area to reflect the children's experiences, such as setting up the area to resemble a neighborhood restaurant, creates an opportunity to observe a family's funds of knowledge. Children's family backgrounds are indeed the basis for their development.

# Attachment Theories in Relation to Child Development and Families as Systems of Support

It is important to understand how children develop in order to work better with families. However, it is also important to understand family theories as they help us understand families' ways of being. Child development theories often help us understand the basis for educational and childrearing practices (Charlesworth, 2014) while family theories help with the understanding that families are dynamic groups that change for a variety of reasons.

Rosalind Charlesworth, Professor Emerita of Child and Family Studies, explains that in recent years, the cultural relevance of child development theories has been criticized. The way to interpret the theory is to look at its premise and then adapt it to the child's situation in the United States. The adaptation of the theory is crucial so that the child is not assessed from a deficit perspective. The theories described in this chapter focus on the role the family has in child development. In particular, the emphasis is on attachment theories and child development.

## Attachment Theory

Ecological systems should be nurturing environments where children have opportunities to develop socially and emotionally. A nurturing environment allows children to create bonds and attachments. The development of positive parent–child relationships is based on the quality of attachments the child has developed. **Attachment** is defined as a form of behavior that has its "own internal motivation distinct from feeding and sex, and of no less importance for survival" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 27).

Since the 1930s, there has been increasing research on bonding and attachment. Experts recognize attachment as an essential ingredient for a healthy personality. Attachment behavior is the behavior a person exhibits to obtain and maintain proximity to the attachment figure, generally the mother, but also the father—and in the absence of either parent, someone the child knows; in many culturally and linguistically diverse families, the grandparents may take that role. This attachment is strongest when the child is sick, tired, or frightened, but is crucial throughout the life cycle.

Psychoanalysts Skeels, Spitz, and Bowlby recognized the importance of the first few years in the development of attachment, as evidenced through studies of children who did not thrive. These psychoanalysts did not conduct controlled studies that gave some children love and withheld it from others, but instead they looked at what had happened to children who had failed to thrive. Why had this happened? What did these children lack that the other children had?

## Skeels

During the 1930s, questions about the importance of human attachment in young children were raised. Harold Skeels, a member of the Iowa Group of child researchers, studied the effect of environment on the

Photodisc/Getty Images

Eye contact between father and child fosters human attachment, a necessary component for healthy development.

development of children during a period when most researchers (e.g., Gesell and Watson) were studying maturation or behaviorism. One study, a natural history investigation, had startling findings (Skeels, 1966). Skeels placed 13 infants and toddlers from a children's home in a mental health facility. The 13 children—10 girls and 3 boys—ranged from 7.1 to 35.9 months and had IQs from 36 to 89, with a mean IQ score of 64.3. Children in the control group of 12—also chosen from children in the children's home, between 12 and 22 months old—had IQs of 50 to 103, with a mean IQ of 86.7 points. The children placed in the mental health facility were showered with attention by the attendants and supervisors. They were cared for, played with, loved, and allowed to go along on excursions. Almost every child developed an attachment to one person who was particularly interested in the child and his or her achievements. The control group of children in the children's home, however, received traditional care with no special treatment. When retested, after varying periods from 6 to 52 months, the children in the mental health facility had gained 27.5 IQ points, but those left in the orphanage had lost an average of 26.2 IQ points.

Although the research could be criticized because variables were not controlled—there were more girls than boys placed in the homes—and changes in IQ can be partially explained by statistical regression, the results were so dramatic and unexpected that the effect of early environment had to be considered. Skeels (1966) followed up on the subjects of this research almost 20 years later and found evidence to reinforce his initial findings. Of the 13 children in the experimental group who had been transferred to the mental health facility, 11 had been adopted and reared as typically-developing children. Twelve of the 13 had become self-supporting adults, achieving a median education level of 12 years of schooling. Of the control group of children who had been left in the orphanage, four were still in institutions, one was a gardener's assistant, three were employed as dishwashers, one was a floater (performed different types of jobs as needed), one was a part-time worker in a cafeteria, and one had died. Only one individual had achieved an educational level similar to that of the experimental group—a man who as a child had received different treatment from the others. He had been transferred from the children's home to a school for the deaf, where he received special attention from his teacher.

The children who had been placed in an institution and later adopted received love and developed human attachments. They had achieved a lifestyle more typical of children outside the orphanage, whereas those left in the orphanage had only a marginal existence. Evidence strongly supports the importance of a nurturing early environment and also indicates that a poor initial environment can be reversed by enriched personal interaction (Skeels, 1966). Interestingly, these findings also indirectly support the importance of funds of knowledge, which are gained through nurturing interactions between the child and immediate and/or extended family in a caring environment, regardless of income level and cognitive ability.

## Spitz

In *The First Year of Life* (1965), René Spitz describes his research into and observations of the psychology of infants. He studied babies in different situations: private families, foster homes, an obstetrics ward, a well-baby clinic, a nursery, and a foundling home.

Both the nursery and foundling home were long-term institutions that guaranteed constancy of environment and dramatically illustrated the necessity of human attachment and interaction. Both institutions provided similar physical care of children, but they differed in their nurturing and interpersonal relationships. Both provided hygienic conditions, well-prepared food, and medical care. The foundling home had daily visits by a medical staff, whereas the nursery called a doctor only when needed. The nursery was connected to a penal institution where what they called "delinquent girls," pregnant on admission, were sent to serve their sentences. Babies born to them were cared for in the nursery until the end of their first year. The mothers were primarily socially challenged minors. In contrast, some of the children in the foundling home had well-adjusted mothers who were unable to support their children. Others were children of single mothers who were asked to come to the home and nurse their own and one other child during the first 3 months.

Spitz (1965) filmed a representative group of the children he studied in both institutions. He studied 203 children in the nursery and 91 in the foundling home. The major difference in the care of the two sets of children was the amount of nurturing and social interaction. The nursery, which housed 40 to 60 children at a time, allowed the mothers or mother-substitutes to feed, nurse, and care for their babies. The infants had at least one toy, and they were able to see outside their

cribs and to watch the activities of other children and the caregiving mothers. These babies thrived. In the foundling home, however, the babies were screened from outside activity by blankets hung over the sides and ends of their cribs, isolating them from any visual stimulation. They had no toys to play with, and the caretakers were busy tending to other duties rather than mothering the children. During the first 3 months, while they were breast-fed, the babies appeared to be developing typically. Soon after separation, however, they progressively deteriorated. Of the 91 foundling home children, 34 died by the end of the second year.

Spitz (1965) continued to follow up on 21 children who remained in the foundling home until they were 4 years old. He found that 20 could not dress themselves, 6 were not toilet trained, 6 could not talk, 5 had a vocabulary of two words, 8 had vocabularies of three to five words, and only 1 was able to speak in sentences. Spitz attributed the deterioration of the infants to lack of mothering. Although the children in the nursery had mothering, those in the foundling home did not, thus finding themselves in an emotional starvation stage (Spitz).

## Bowlby

In 1951, John Bowlby reviewed studies of deprivation and its effects on personality development. In a systematic review for the World Health Organization, he described those works that supported theories on the negative aspects of maternal deprivation. In a monograph, Bowlby (1966) stated: "It is submitted that the evidence is now such that it leaves no room for doubt regarding the general proposition that the prolonged deprivation of the young child of maternal care may have grave and far-reaching effects on his character and so the whole of his future life" (p. 46).

**DEVELOPMENT OF ATTACHMENT.** Bowlby (1982) described attachment in a family setting. Most babies about 3 months old show more attention and are more responsive to their primary caregiver than to others by smiling at, vocalizing to, and visually following their parent or other primary caregiver. At about 6 to 8 months of age, infants develop stranger anxiety. They become concerned about being near their caregiver and fearful of those they do not know. This attachment to primary caregivers continues and strengthens in intensity from 6 to 9 months, although when the child is ill, fatigued, hungry, or alarmed, the intensity increases. During the same period, the infant demonstrates attachment to others as well, primarily the father, siblings, and caregivers. Attachment to others does not reduce the attachment to the mother or primary caregiver. At 9 months, most children try to follow primary caregivers when they leave the room, greet them on return, and crawl to be near them. This behavior continues throughout the second year of a child's life and into the third. When children reach about 2 years 9 months to 3 years of age, they are better able to accept a parent's temporary absence.

Bowlby (1966) emphasized that the greatest effect on personality development is during the child's early years. The earliest critical period was believed to be during the first 5 or 6 months, while the mother figure and infant are forming an attachment. The second vital phase was seen as lasting until near the child's third birthday, during which time the mother figure needs to be virtually an ever-present companion. During the third phase, the child is able to maintain the attachment even though the nurturing parent is absent. During the fourth to fifth year, this tolerable absence might extend from a few days to a few weeks; during the seventh to eighth year, the separation could be lengthened to a year or more. Deprivation in the third phase does not have the same destructive effect on the child as it does in the period from infancy through the third year.

## Maternal or Human Attachment?

Prominent child psychiatrists Rutter (1981) and Bower (1982) questioned whether the term *maternal deprivation* was too restrictive to cover a wide range of abuses and variables. They suggested that maternal deprivation was too limited a concept—that human attachment and multiple attachments should be considered and that warmth as well as love be regarded as vital elements in relationships. Rutter argued that the bond with the mother was not different in quality or kind from other bonds. In addition, individual differences among children resulted in some children being more vulnerable to mother deprivation.

## Tizard and Hodges

Questions regarding the irreversibility of deprivation were raised. Would sound childrearing reverse early deprivation? It appeared that good childrearing practices and a good environment would be of some help to the child, but early deprivation continued to be a problem, and deprived infants often remained detached. Tizard and Hodges (1978) studied children raised in an

institution to see if the lack of personal attachment had lasting effects. Children who were adopted did form bonds as late as 4 or 6 years of age, but they exhibited the same attention and social problems in school as those who remained in the institution: "Being one in a class of many other children may for the child have repeated some of the elements of the nursery 'family group,' leading to a similar pattern of competitive attempts to gain the attention of the teacher and poor relationships with other children" (Hodges, 1996, p. 71).

## Ainsworth

Mary Ainsworth's (1973) seminal work regarding classifications of attachment provides a deeper understanding of Bowlby's critical period of attachment. Ainsworth identified three classifications of attachment—avoidant/insecure, ambivalent/insecure, and securely attached—during a controlled experimental procedure known as the Strange Situation procedure (Shore, 1997).

## Brazelton and Yogman

In their extensive studies of infants, Brazelton and Yogman (1986) analyzed the process of early attachment and wrote specifically about the interaction between infant and parent, covering even the effects of experiences in utero. The child appears to be born with predictable responses, including the ability to develop a reciprocal relationship with the caregiver.

Brazelton and Yogman (1986) described four stages vital to the parent–infant attachment process, which lasts from birth to 4 or 5 months. In the first stage, the infant achieves homeostatic control and is able to control stimuli by shutting out or reaching for stimuli. During the second stage, the infant is able to use and attend to social cues. In the third stage, usually at 3 to 4 months, the reciprocal process between parent and child shows the infant's ability to take in and respond to the information as well as to withdraw. During the fourth stage, the infant develops a sense of autonomy and initiates and responds to cues. If the parent recognizes and encourages the infant's desire to have control over the environment, the infant develops a sense that leads to a feeling of competence. This model is based on feedback and reciprocal interaction and allows for individual differences (Brazelton & Yogman, 1986).

**Classifications of Attachment**

| Attachment Classification | Description | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Avoidant/insecure | Child shows no reaction when separated from the mother. | Child is dropped off at daycare and shows no reaction to mother leaving. |
| Ambivalent/insecure | Child shows high levels of distress when separated from the mother. | Child cries himself to sleep when mother drops him off at daycare. |
| Secure | Child shows signs of distress. | Child is comforted by caregiver. |

Chubykin Arkady/Shutterstock

The brain is affected by nourishment, care, and stimulation. Early attachment and nurturing are essential for a child's development.

## The Brazelton Institute

The Newborn Behavioral Observation (NBO) is a family-centered observation set that is designed to be used by clinicians at the Brazelton Institute as they focus on individual infants and observe their individuality and competencies, because early months of infancy, from birth until the third month, are important periods in the infant's adaptation to his or her environment. In addition to strengthening the relationships between infant and parent as well as parent and clinician, the NBO provides information to the parents that helps them be better caregivers. The parents learn to read their baby's communication cues, understand their baby better, and are able to respond with appropriate care (Brazelton Institute, 2005).

## Challenges

Although most families successfully develop attachments with their children, a few find different

challenges for a variety of reasons. Five groups of parents may typically face challenges when developing parent–child attachments. The first group are parents who have never had models of good parenting or have been reared in abusive homes. They need help in learning how to nurture and care for children as well as eliminate violence from their lives. Organizations such as the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence provide useful resources for families. The second group contains parents who tend to be isolated and insecure and do not have a support system. These groups could be helped by home-based programs such as Parents as Teachers, HIPPY, and Project CARE. The third group includes parents who are busy and away from home for extended periods and must find trusting caregivers for their children. The fourth group consists of parents who are raising a child with a special need and need financial and emotional assistance. Such parents may be able to get help from organizations such as Easter Seals (children's services) or Through the Looking Glass Project (see Colmer, Rutherford, & Murphy, 2011). The fifth group contains adolescent (teen parents) parents. The majority, if not all, of the parents in this group need guidance in prenatal care and early maternal-infant attachment (Feldman, 2012).

The importance of early bonding and attachment development is so critical that parents must be aware of the consequences of not devoting time to their young children. Children who lack attachment from infancy on may have enormous difficulty with social interaction. This can result in them having difficulties making and keeping relationships, not only between a parent and a child with insecure attachments, but also with peers. These children are often aggressive in their relationships with other children in a school setting. The attachment process and the early life of a child are the first steps in the child's total growth. They provide the necessary emotional trust that allows the child to continue to develop relationships. Providing parents with helpful tools to enhance their understanding of how to interact with and relate to their child is important. Researchers Zeanah, Berlin, and Boris (2011) provide a list of different types of attachment interventions that may help families, including Child–Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), Video-based Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting (VIPP), The Circle of Security (COS), and Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC).

## Culture and Attachment

The research regarding attachment across cultures is still scarce according to Mesman et al. (2016). Because attachment theory developed in the Western world, it is important that other studies are conducted with families in non-western cultures. Interestingly the Mesman et al. study focused on 26 cultural groups from 16 countries. The researchers found (not surprisingly) that cultural group membership remains a significant predictor of variations in maternal sensitivity (p. 385). Socioeconomic background and demographic factors also contributed to the variation. Of importance are the findings regarding cultural specific aspects. Although at times we may not understand different cultural aspects, we as educators must find ways to learn about them to better understand children and families.

## Family Theories

Family theorizing involves discussing different perspectives regarding family behavior or ways of being. Families are dynamic systems that change and evolve over time. Knowing different theories allows teachers to better understand families and such understanding helps creates stronger partnerships between home and school. Each theory has its own focus so it is difficult to prescribe to one but it is important to be aware what each one theorizes. Table 1.1 provides a brief overview of some family theories.

## Family Ecological Systems Theory

One of the family theories that educators often refer to is the Family Ecological Systems Theory. This theory will be discussed in the context of this book. It is well known that both children and parents are affected by the family system in which they participate. Family systems are guided and influenced by their cultural and historical backgrounds. When a family undergoes a transitional event such as the birth of a child, a move to a new location, or an illness of a family member, the system will need to adapt to accommodate the change. Change occurs in a variety of ways. It may be sudden or gradual, positive or negative. The change may be minimal or shattering. Divorce is one common change that causes children to lose the family system as they knew it and adapt to an entirely new one. Changes may also occur at the local, state, or federal government level.

**Table 1.1** Family Theories

| Theory | Concepts | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Social Exchange Framework | Focus is on individuals making selections for the ultimate rewards. Thibaut & Kelley, 1959 | Families sending children to school for an education in order to get a better job and contribute to the family income. |
| Symbolic Interaction | Focus is on a person's consistent interaction, with significant others in particular (Potts, 2015). | Husband-wife conversation during family dinnertime. |
| Life Course Development | Focus is on the life trajectories and changes that occur but influenced by social and cultural constraints (Elder, 1998). | Oldest son graduating from high school and first in family attending college. |
| Critical Theory | Focus is on how to overcome the oppression and marginalization of people (Horkheimer, 1972). | Advocating for DACA or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program to keep families together. |
| Ecological Framework | Focus is on adapting to changes but support is given or provided by systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). | Grandparents taking care of children while parents work. |

Teachers need to know not only what is happening in a student's family but also how changes in policies may affect children and families, so they can respond in an appropriate manner and be helpful to the child.

**LEVELS OF ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS.** A child's development is related to experiences in the entire environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) recognized five levels, as shown in Figure 1.1.

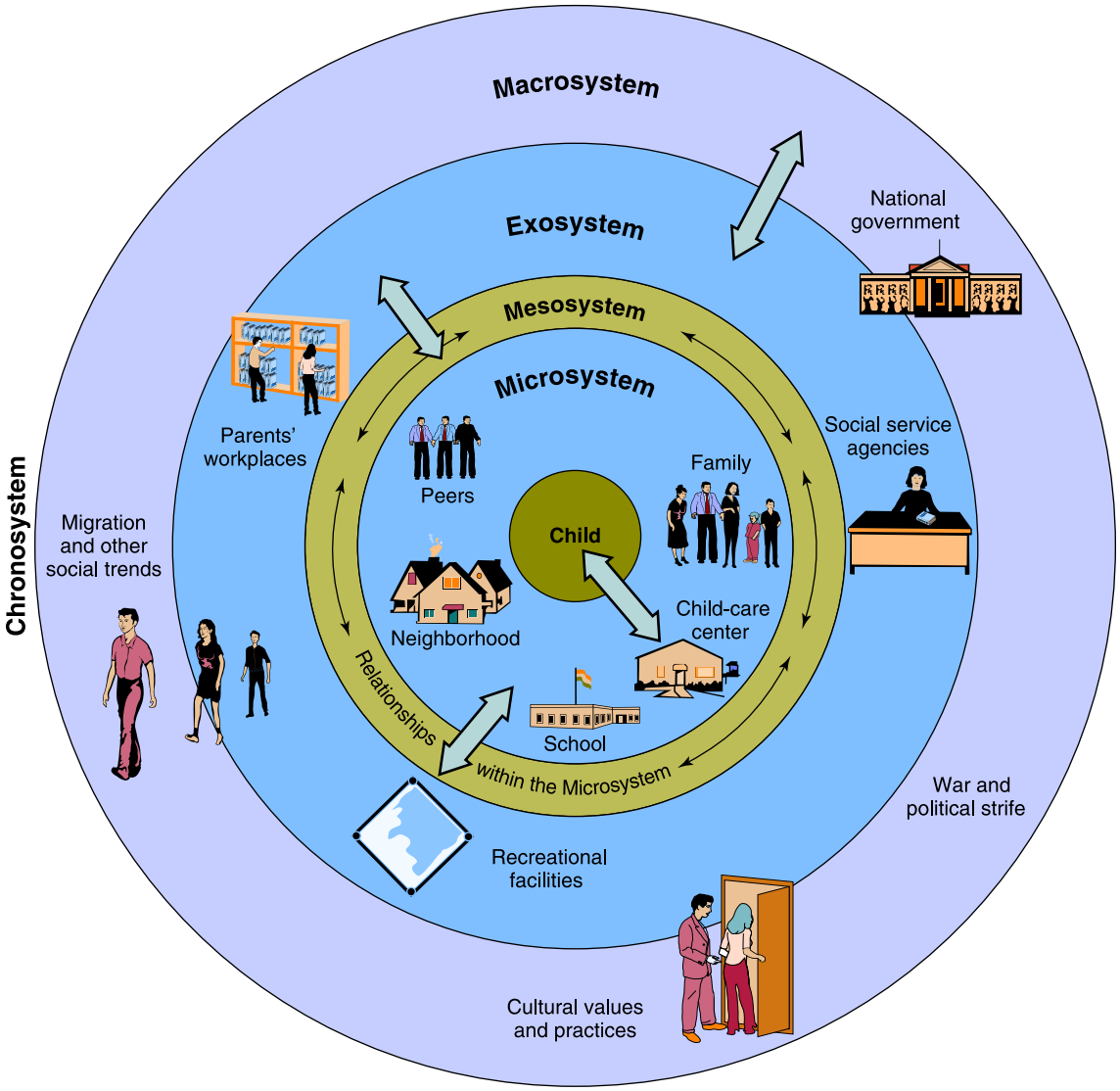
1. The microsystem includes face-to-face relations with family and peers, with parents as the major influence on a child's interactive ecological system (O'Callaghan, 1993). Examples include interactions with parents, peers, or teachers.
2. The mesosystem involves face-to-face relationships with more formal organizations. Examples include school, family, peers, health-care services, religious institutions, and the playground.
3. The exosystem, although further removed from personal interaction, still influences children through their parents. Examples include the parents' employment and government actions.
4. The macrosystem includes the attitudes and ideologies of the culture. Examples include environmental events and cultural traditions, laws, and customs.
5. The chronosystem includes the element of time as it relates to changes in a child's environment. Examples of the chronosystem include the child getting older and the aging or death of a parent or family member.

The parents' role in their children's early years is significant in many ways, but it requires the support of different systems as stated by Bronfenbrenner. The support systems have a tremendous responsibility to meet the needs not only of the child but the family as well. For example, the needs of families who are living with high levels of stress due to violence, homelessness, and chemical dependence (Swick & Williams, 2006) are different from those of families that also have high stress due to different circumstances—such as a child with a special need, a parent who works two jobs, parents that have demanding jobs, families who are not authorized to live in the U.S., and families whose first language is not English.

For children from culturally and linguistically diverse families, some of the systems may not work so successfully (Riojas-Cortez, 2017). A criticism of this theory is that for culturally and linguistically diverse children, the mesosystem and the exosystem often do not value their culture, and their funds of knowledge are considered deficits. For example, a study found that resiliency in nine Native American teenagers was influenced by individual and environmental factors related to the family and extended family support (Feinstein, Driving-Hawk, & Baartman, 2009) or microsystem, but there was no mention of how the mesosystem and exosystem have helped Native American children. In another study, Chen and Abenyega (2012) found that conflicts between entities in the mesosystem prevented parents of kindergarten students in China from truly becoming involved in their children's education.

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, it is important to acknowledge how family theories help us understand the different behaviors that occur within the family. As educators we must develop this understanding in order to be better prepared to develop partnerships with families, allowing the entities within the microsystem to better work for children.

**Figure 1.1** Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory




**Source:** Based on *Making Human Beings Human: Bioecological Perspectives on Human Development*, U. Bronfenbrenner, 2005, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

# Families Influencing Brain Development

Families indeed play a significant role in the development of children and their behavior and the dynamics need to be strong for children to have healthy development. Children's lifelong learning depends on how well their brain has developed. Genes play an important part in brain development as well as the environment and early experiences. Children's early learning experiences provide the foundations of learning (Petersen, 2012).

Research on brain development emphasizes the importance of the first years of life and the role that families play when interacting with their children (Bernier, Calkins, & Bell, 2016). Stressful conditions such as poverty affect brain development (Dike, 2017). Brain research uses different technologies such as ultrasound to study fetal brain development and neural functioning and scanning techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) to learn how the brain works after the child is born. "Functional MRI provides information about changes in the volume, flow, or oxygenation of blood that occur as a person undertakes various

tasks, including motor activities, such as squeezing a hand, but also cognitive tasks, such as speaking or solving a problem" (Shore, 1997, p. 8). Another noninvasive way of studying activity in the brain can be through the use of neuropsychological tools such as electroencephalograms and magnetic encephalography. In these methods, the brain is studied indirectly by giving a child a task and examining which part of the brain is active, and also observing the child's level of activity in response to different stimuli (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

A PET scan, employed when a child is thought to have neurological problems, requires an injection of a tracer chemical, making it an invasive procedure, which researchers generally avoid. Since PET scans cannot be considered noninvasive, the research comes from situations in which the child has needed the scan for medical reasons. By analyzing the results of PET scans, researchers have furthered scientific knowledge: "Scientists can visualize not only the fine structures of the brain, but also the level of activity that is taking place in its various parts" (Shore, 1997, p. 9). Prior to these technological advances, brain research was accomplished only when operations were performed or people had strokes, and neither situation revealed what was happening in the brain at specific times.

## Brain Development

The brain and spinal cord begin their developmental journey just a few days after conception and continue to develop in overlapping phases, with the brain cells multiplying and migrating according to where they are needed: "Once nerve cells are formed and finished migrating they rapidly extend axons and dendrites and begin to form connections with each other, called synapses" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 186). The nerve cells are able to communicate with one another. The synapses are refined through maturation and pruning followed by myelination, the formation of a protective and supportive tissue surrounding the cells.

The brain does not develop one area and then the next in a straight, linear pattern. It develops in an integrated and overlapping fashion. Structures that control cognition (thinking), perception (sensing), and action (moving) develop at the same time but not in lockstep fashion. They are linked by a network of interconnections, separate but functioning parallel to one another (Goldman-Rakic, 1996).


Mari Riojas-Cortez

The brain of an infant develops at an exhilarating rate.

The development of the brain proceeds at an exhilarating rate. The number of neurons peaks before birth (new neurons are produced throughout life, though far less rapidly). Brain size also increases more gradually. A newborn's brain is only about one-quarter the size of an adult's. It grows to 80% of adult size by 3 years of age and 90% by age 5. Its growth is largely due to changes in individual neurons, which are structured like trees. Thus, each brain cell begins as a tiny sapling and only gradually sprouts its hundreds of long, branching dendrites. Brain growth, measured either by weight or volume, is primarily due to the growth of these dendrites, which serve as the receiving point of synaptic input from other neurons. Another way of measuring brain growth is speed processing. Newborns are considerably slower than adults—16 times less efficient—and the brain does not reach maximum size until about 15 years of age (Zero to Three, 2001).

**GENES AND THE ENVIRONMENT.** The environment and the genes play a very important role in brain development. Interactions between the genes and the environment are crucial for brain development and they play different roles. Genes form all cells and make general connections for the brain regions and they help children adapt to their environment (Zero to Three, 2001, p. 1). According to Diamond (2009), it is

experience that helps to wake up the dormant genes; therefore "the environment participates in sculpting expression of the genome" (p. 1).

**EARLY INTERACTIONS AND BRAIN DEVELOPMENT.** Engaging children from infancy is extremely important, as it is estimated that the number of synapses reaches adult level by age 2, and by age 3, a child's brain is two and one half times more active than the brain of an adult. It is estimated that by age 3, the child's brain has a quadrillion synapses. The number holds steady for the first decade. After the child reaches 19, the synapses decline in density, and by late adolescence, half of the synapses have been discarded and 500 trillion remain (Shore, 1997). Elimination varies according to the area of the brain. Huttenlocher (1979, as cited in Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) researched the production of synapses and the pruning that reduces the amount of synapses to adult level. He estimated that various areas of the brain have different patterns of synapse development and pruning. The visual cortex production occurs about midway through the first year, followed by a gradual reduction by the middle of the preschool period. The part of the brain responsible for language and hearing is similar but somewhat later. In the prefrontal area, which contains higher-level cognition, the proliferation of synapses begins around the first year, but adult level is not reached until middle to late adolescence.

As infants continue to develop, their need for exploration increases. Soska, Adolph, and Johnson (2010) indicate that the infant's motor and perceptual abilities help with exploration. The more opportunities for exploration and movement the infant is given, the greater the chances for acquisition of new skills. Therefore, the early experiences that parents provide for their children are crucial for their development, though individual experiences for children will vary depending on their families.

Fuse/Corbis/Getty Images

For children to achieve their potential, it is essential for families and educators to show support and caring.

## The Wiring of the Brain

Experience is critical in the "wiring" of a child's brain. When a stimulus activates a neural path, the synapses receive and store a chemical signal. If synapses are used repeatedly, they are strengthened, reach a threshold level, and become permanent. If not used repeatedly, they are pruned and eliminated (Shore, 1997).

## The Importance of Family Interactions for Brain Development

Parenting experiences for young children help shape children's brain development (Morgan, Shaw, & Forbes, 2014). Children learn and develop on their own timetable, but they need interaction with their caregivers, mothers, fathers, and others to help in that development. When one realizes how rapidly the newborn infant's brain develops, a question emerges: How should the mother, father, and caregivers respond to best aid the child's development?

**LANGUAGE INTERACTIONS WITH PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS.** Providing a safe environment helps infants and young children as well as families feel valued and respected. It is also important to develop a secure and positive relationship with the infant by holding him or her in a loving and comforting manner. Babies need cradling, gentle touching, and eye contact. They also need to hear a voice, whether singing or talking to them, while they are being dressed or fed. Be sure to respond to the baby's sounds; they too will try to imitate the sound they hear. This will help them develop a sense of language.

It is also important for families to continue to share their cultural values with their children, because these values are assets to their children's development. For example, parents can play culturally relevant music for their children. Interestingly, Soley and Hannon (2010) found that infants appear to prefer music that has culture-specific meaning—music from their native culture. Nursery rhymes in the child's heritage language assist young children in learning the sounds of that language. For example, many families in the U.S. recite Mother

Goose rhymes which help increase language awareness and are fun to repeat! Young children also enjoy looking at colorful picture books and reading books with their caregivers, particularly when they can relate to the book themselves. A great example is Sandra Cisneros's book *Hairs/Pelitos*, in which the main character talks about the different types of hair of family members.

Providing a safe environment is important so that infants and young children, as well as families, feel valued and respected. It is also important for families to continue to share their funds of knowledge with their children because these are assets to their children's development.

**EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE INTERACTIONS WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS.** According to Dowling (2010), there is a link between feelings and brain development that is crucial in the early years. Children who have healthy emotional development have supportive families that guide them through different emotions in order to develop strong cognitive skills such as problem solving, perception, and reasoning.

Six levels of developing emotional and intellectual health in children are described by Greenspan (2002). At the first level, when a familiar caregiver touches and talks with the infant, the child responds with interest and pleasure. This helps the child develop a feeling of security and also helps the child organize his or her senses and motor responses. When children do not receive interaction from their caregiver, they withdraw and become apathetic and despondent.

The second level of development occurs by 4 months, when infants begin to respond to a parent's smile. Emotional responses precede the child's motor ability. These emotional responses can be observed by watching a 4- or 5-month-old baby smile in response to another's smile. By 9 months, there are early forms of communication and thinking. Two-way communication, with the mother talking and the baby responding, occurs.

The emotional abilities developed earlier become the building blocks in the third level at 12 to 18 months. The child has a greater ability to problem solve. The fourth level focuses on the toddler who increasingly needs to develop the use of emotional cueing, more often referred to as affect cueing.

The fifth level includes symbols that have purpose and meaning, as seen in make-believe play. The sixth level finds the child able to use cause-and-effect thinking, recognizing others' ideas with his or her own intentions and feelings. This level allows impulse control, judgment, and reality testing (Greenspan, 2002).

## Positive Environment, Healthy Families, and Children

As already discussed, a child's brain is not fixed at birth but rather is affected by the nourishment, care, and stimulation it receives. The interactions that children have with their families and other support systems are crucial for a healthy development.

Because the environment has an impact on the brain even before birth, trauma and abuse can harm it and interfere with its development. For example, exposure to nicotine, alcohol, or other drugs affects the child before and after birth. It influences not only the child's general development but also the wiring of the brain. For educators, it is important to understand that early experiences such as interactions help stimulate brain activity. Nourishing young children means that adults actively engage with them. With new technologies, caution should be taken since early exposure to screen media may have negative effects for young infants (Napier, 2014). All this shows the importance of promoting nourishing, caring, responsive environments for healthy brain development.

## Early Experiences

Children are primed for learning during the early years. Their experiences in the first three years affect their growth and abilities for the rest of their childhood and as adults. According to Newman (1996), "Early stimulation is essential to normal development" (p. 15)—both normal brain development as well as emotional development. This is because when the environment is nurturing and stimulating, it results in both neurological brain development and human attachment (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000). Parents must be able to read their babies' cues and respond to infants' feelings, knowing when they need stimulation, when they need to be left alone, and when they need comforting.

## Summary

Strong families have strong parents who know how to meet the needs of their children regardless of the stressors they face. Families need to know that what they offer their children—their funds of knowledge—are valued by the school and other extended systems. In order to identify funds of knowledge, teachers must know the family's cultural and social background. When working with diverse families in an early childhood program, it is very important to keep in mind ethnicity and national origin, language, religion or spiritual practice, special needs, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, as these characteristics of families help in the creation of funds of knowledge. It is important to keep in mind too the different family theories in order to understand the situations that vary related to the circumstances in the family.

Parents are their child's first educators and are responsible for providing an environment that facilitates attachment and brain development in their child, but parents often rely on the entire family to assist with the development.

Child attachment theories help teachers and parents identify appropriate and quality interactions for children. Theories of attachment help parents understand that when they provide children with strong attachments from birth, children will develop a healthy understanding of friendships and relationships that may last a lifetime. The Ecological Systems Theory provides parents and educators with a blueprint regarding how the community, the school, the teacher, and the family work together to promote children's overall development.

## Suggested Class Activities and Discussions

1. Make a list of the funds of knowledge that have been given to you by your family. Interview two families different than your own. Make a list of their funds of knowledge. Find similarities and differences between families. Share with the class.
2. Using the book *Cuadros de Familia* (or *Family Pictures*) by Carmen Lomas Garza, make your own book with your family pictures. You can draw the pictures or use real photographs. Write in the text that describes your family's traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices. Develop an attachment statement that shows how your family creates attachments. Share with the class.
3. Using Family Ecological Systems Theory concentric circles, look for resources in your community that collaborate with families. Make a list including addresses, phone numbers, and websites to begin creating a Support Systems Resource Guide. Add information as needed.
4. Take the quiz regarding brain development on the Zero to Three website to test your knowledge of brain development.

## Useful Websites

National Center for Families Learning
Zero to Three
National Association for the Education of Young Children

## Glossary Terms

**Attachment:** Bond created between mother/father with baby.
**Funds of knowledge:** Those skills that families pass to their children to help them survive and thrive.
**Parent:** Someone who takes care and provides for a child, can be biological or adoptive.

# Chapter 2
# The Diversity of Families

*Understanding, valuing, and respecting diversity of families helps teachers create a nurturing and inclusive environment for children and promotes family engagement.*

Mari Riojas-Cortez

## Learning Outcomes

*In this chapter on the diversity of families, you will find information that will help you examine the strengths and challenges of diverse families. After completing the chapter, you should be able to do the following:*

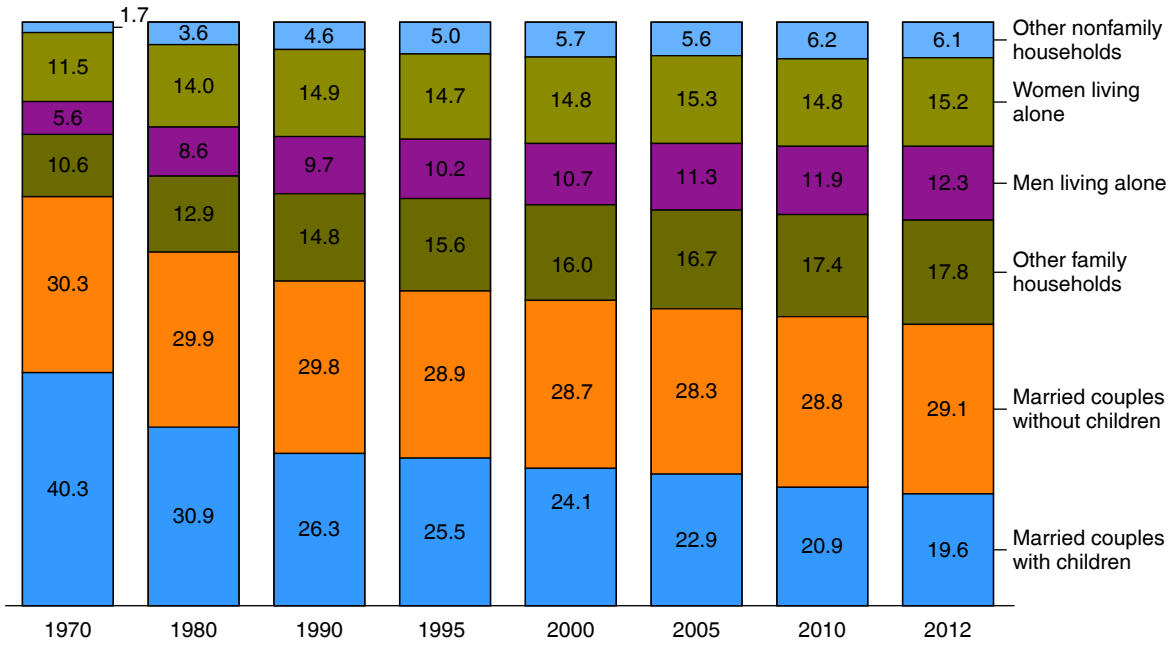
- **2.1** Define the term *family*.
- **2.2** Examine the diversity of families.
- **2.3** Identify current trends within the diversity of families.
- **2.4** Describe the functions of families.
- **2.5** List and describe the five stages of parenthood.

## Families

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) defines a **family** as "a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption," while a **household** is defined as "all people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence" (see Figure 2.1 for different types of households from 1970 to 2012). The percentage of married households has declined in the U.S. since the 1940s and nonfamily households have seen a steady increase (see Figure 2.2). Families live within households and vary significantly. Since the family is a socially constructed concept (Weigel, 2008), the variations are endless and depend on variables such as nationality, culture, traditions, and socioeconomic status, among others. As such, these families are diverse and dynamic. This definition of *family* fits many families today, and includes those that are culturally and linguistically diverse, come from diverse backgrounds, and those who are raising children with special needs.

The importance of the family unit in the socialization of children cannot be overstated. It is essential that children have a supportive, interactive environment that provides loving, caring relationships so that children develop emotionally, intellectually, and physically. Although families in the United States and around the world must live with change, the essence of the family remains stable. Family members need a permanent relationship on which they can count for consistency, understanding, and support. Qiu, Schvaneveldt, and Sahin (2013) found in a cross-cultural study that children believed that the function of a family was to provide "affection, nurturance, interaction, and support" (p. 10). If the family provides for the basic needs of its members and its members are connected, reducing isolation and alienation, then the family will flourish. Nothing is more important than the family as the provider for and socializing agent of children. Regardless of the structure, the family is a viable, working system that gives the nurture and support needed by its members. The school needs to respect families in this role.

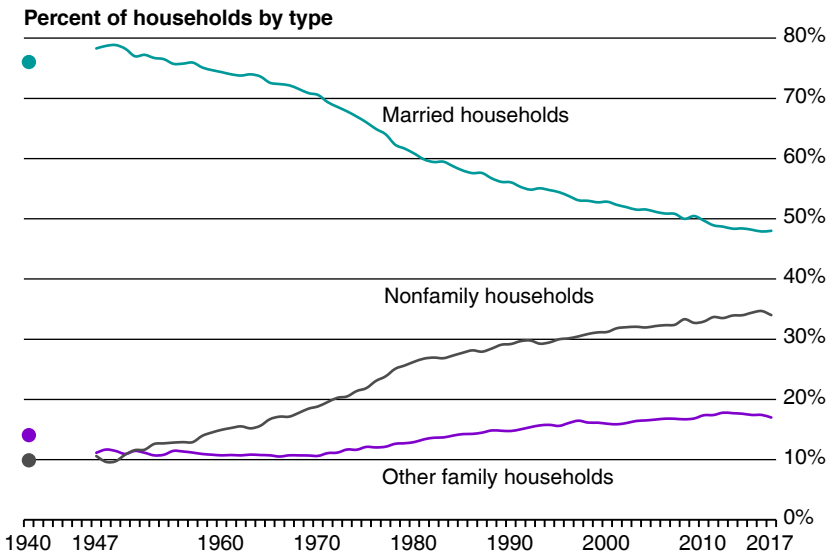
**Figure 2.1** Different Types of Households from 1970 to 2012




**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1970 to 2012.

Families across cultures have different ways of displaying affection, but children cannot thrive physically or emotionally without the nurturance of those who love and care for them. This is particularly true of children with special needs. For example, my son, who has autism, does extremely well when people who work with him praise him and respond to his hugs. This is important to note, because in our family we like to give hugs and praise one another as part of our funds of knowledge. Depending on the age of the child, though,

**Figure 2.2** Percentage of Married Households Since 1940s




**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1940, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1968 to 2017.

logoboom/Shutterstock

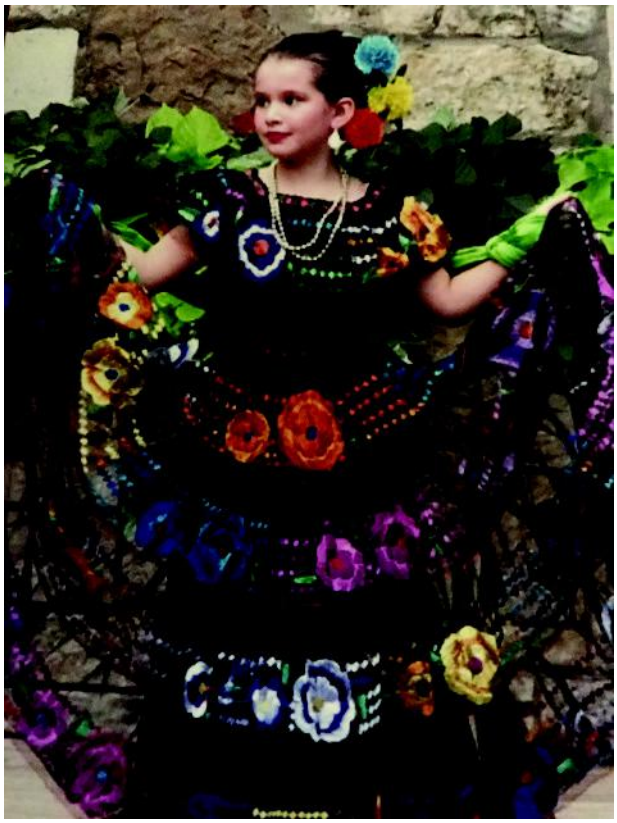
Unity helps families operate within a variety of systems.

hugs might not be appropriate. In the case of my son, when a reassuring hug might have been out of place or unwelcome, teachers would show him social stories[1] about who is appropriate to hug. His teachers asked us for pictures of family members and a social story was created for him. This type of solution helps educators increase their cultural understanding of a family's socialization practices in order to collaborate with them and thus provide safe and healthy experiences to assist in the child's development (Casper, Cooper, & Finn, 2003; Nelson, Leerkes, Perry, O'Brien, Calkins, & Marcovitch, 2013). Understanding a family's socialization practices will help create stronger bonds between families and educators.

Just like educators and parents, extended family members such as grandparents and other elders provide support for children. Grandparents often take on the responsibility of teaching child-rearing practices (Backhouse & Graham, 2012). In the Latino community, for example, this can be done through *consejos* which means advise in English (Valdés, 1996), or cultural narratives such as *dichos* which means "sayings", that elders within the family provide not only to maintain traditions but also to help in the healthy development of children. My father used to "speak in *dichos*"—he would provide consejos or advice through such cultural narratives. The following includes some examples of the *dichos or sayings* my father would give us.

1. "*El que mucho abarca poco aprieta*" means that if you do a lot you may not do anything right so it's best to take time and do fewer things well.
2. "*A la fuerza ni los zapatos entran*" means that you can't force anything to happen; events will take their course.
3. "*El que mucho se despide pocas ganas tiene de irse*" means that the more you say goodbye, the less you want to leave (from a special place).

Many cultures have sayings. In my culture, families use them to teach their children morals and values during different developmental milestones. Such dichos or sayings help guide children in their socioemotional development. Teachers can find out if the families that they work with have sayings or consejos that guide children's socioemotional development.



Armando Cortez

Immigrant families try to maintain traditions for the socioemotional well-being of their children.

[1]Social stories include photos or pictures that create a narrative to help children on the autism spectrum with different social situations.

# The Diversity of Families

The structure, stage of family development, religion or faith, family size, socioeconomic background, language, culture, ages, and gender of children contribute to the makeup of each unique family. According to Knopf and Swick (2007), families in today's society are very different from those of previous generations. With the increase of diversity in families, it is imperative not only to increase awareness but also engagement as this will help to create stronger partnerships.

The families presented in the following vignettes represent a few examples of the diversity—especially the diversity of structure—encountered in many families. Think about your own family and the families you work with and see if any are similar to the ones presented in these examples.

## The Single-Parent Family

Tina is a young divorced mother with one son, Tommy, age 3. They live with Tina's parents. In addition to working part-time at a department store, Tina takes 6 hours of classes at a community college. Each morning she prepares breakfast for Tommy and herself, bundles him into his coat during cold weather, hopes that her aging automobile will start, and heads into her long day. First, she drops Tommy off with her sister, Georgia, who runs a family childcare facility in her home. She feels fortunate to have a relative who enjoys children to care for Tommy, who has been anxious ever since his father left. The security of spending his days at Aunt Georgia's helps compensate for his loss.

Tina's ex-husband, Ted, does not send support money consistently, and Tina knows her parents' resources are limited. As she works as a clerk in the department store, she dreams of the time when she will earn enough money to give Tommy the home and opportunities he needs. Tina figures that with family help and her part-time job, she will be able to graduate in a little more than two years, just about the time Tommy will start school.

## The School-Age Mother

As Sherrill thinks back, she can't remember when she didn't want a baby. "When I have a baby," she thought, "I'll be treated like an adult by my mother, and I'll also have a baby all my own who will love me." At 3 months, though, Gerald has already become more than she can handle.

Sherrill turned 15 yesterday, and instead of being able to hang out with her friends, she had to take care of Gerald. "If only my mother hadn't had to work," Sherrill complained, "I would have had a couple of hours between feedings just to get out. I never dreamed a baby would be so demanding. What makes him cry so much?"

The school down the street offers a program for teen mothers and their infants. Sherrill is on the waiting list and plans to enroll at the end of summer. "I never thought I'd want to go back to school," she says, "but they help out by caring for my baby while I'm in class and my mother says that I need to be able to make a living for Gerald. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families will help me for only 24 months. I really don't like school, but I guess I'd better go. If only Gerald would start being more fun."

## The Two-Parent Family Experiencing Homelessness

When Barbara married Jed, the future looked good. Young, handsome, and hardworking, Jed thought his job at the plant would last forever. Who would have expected the layoffs? Jed's father worked at the plant for 25 years before he retired. Now Jed and Barbara, along with Jessie, age 2, and Bob, age 6, are moving west in hopes of finding work.

It's hard to live out of a car. Barbara worries about Bob because he is missing first grade. She and Jed put him in school whenever they are in a city for any length of time, but schools want his permanent address. It embarrasses Barbara to say their family is homeless, so she finds out the name of a street near the school and pretends they live there. Bob doesn't like school anyway. He says the children make fun of him and the teacher gives him seatwork that he doesn't understand.

Jed feels as if he has failed as a father and provider for his family. If he could just find a good job, his family would not be homeless. Minimum wage doesn't give him enough to pay for rent, let alone buy clothing and food. Last month they spent time at a church-run mission for the homeless. Jed was glad they were in a town far from home so that none of his old school friends would recognize him and Barbara. Jed hopes that maybe a good factory job will turn up, but the fact that he does not have technology skills or a high school diploma presents a challenge.

## The Two-Income Family

"Joe, the alarm. It's your turn to get up and start breakfast," Maria says as she turns over to get 10 more minutes of sleep before the drive to school. Each day, Maria teaches 28 second-graders in the adjoining school district. Joe teaches mathematics at the local middle school. Their children, Karen and Jaime, stay with a neighbor until it is time for them to walk to school. Joe and Maria take turns dashing home early enough in the afternoon to supervise the children after school.

At times, the stress of work and the demanding days get to Joe and Maria. Some days their schedules do not blend and they scurry to find someone to care for the children after school. Karen and Jaime occasionally have been latchkey children, providing for themselves with no adult supervision in the afternoon. Neither Joe nor Maria want the children to be left on their own. They see too many children in their classrooms in similar situations who feel as if no one cares. Joe tries to be a nurturing father who helps with the home, but he relies on Maria to clean, shop, and cook.

Summers are the best time for the family. Joe works for a summer camp and Maria is able to spend more time at home, enjoying the children and organizing for the coming year. Periodically, she thinks about how much easier it would be for her to quit teaching, but then reality sets in. They could not make the house payments if they were not a two-income family.

## The Immigrant Family

The Gonzalez family moved to the United States from San Luis Potosí, México, ten years ago when their two older children were very young. After Juan and Leticia married, they decided to move to the United States to provide a better life for their children. Although lacking proper documents, the newlywed couple decided to venture to a new country where life is very different from their life in rural Mexico. Juan found work in construction, while Leticia worked as a babysitter for children from an affluent neighborhood. Because Leticia and Juan work long hours, they have not been able to attend English as a Second Language, or ESL, classes at their local church, although they have tried. Their two oldest children have to translate for them when they receive notes from school or go to the doctor. Juan and Leticia have thought about going back to their home country, but they know life would be harder. Here, they live in a community close to their own family, and Leticia's aunt takes care of their youngest two children. The Gonzalez family is saving money in order to hire an immigration attorney to help them get the necessary papers to obtain permanent residency but with the current immigration policy and the reversal of the DACA or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, they are living in fear of being deported.

## The Grandparents Family

Wolf is a sixth-grader who is being raised by both maternal grandparents. Wolf's parents divorced when she was very young and her grandparents were given custody of her and her two siblings. She also has stepsiblings who live with other family members. Wolf's mother became involved with drugs when she married her husband, and was arrested and sent to prison. Unable to take care of the children, she gave up her parental rights to her parents. Although Wolf's grandparents are actively engaged in her education, Wolf often shows negative behaviors that get her in trouble with her teachers. She also appears to have difficulty interacting with other children. The grandparents are worried and have been talking with the school counselor and social worker to get her the help she needs, to try to prevent these behaviors from becoming more difficult as she gets older.

## The LGBTQ Family

Rosie and Linda met in college but married other people. After they had children and their marriages ended, they moved in together and decided to raise the children from their previous marriages as a family. Although neither family was supportive of Rosie and Linda's lifestyle at first, their respective families eventually understood that they needed to be a part of the children's lives. Often Rosie and Linda find themselves in difficult situations particularly at school because some teachers and other parents do not agree with their lifestyle. Sometimes their children do not understand why others do not invite them for play dates and birthday parties.

## The Family with a Child of Special Abilities

Alan and Miranda were very excited to have a boy as they already had a daughter, and Johnny was the perfect baby boy when he was born. Both parents worked, so Miranda's parents took care of Johnny. Nothing seemed to be out of the ordinary until Johnny was around 10 months. His

family noticed he wouldn't point or babble or turn when they called him like other children his age. Johnny's parents communicated this to his pediatrician, who referred them to one of the local organizations for screening. In the meantime, the doctor asked them to go to the Autism Speaks website to learn the signs of autism and take the M-CHAT-R, the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (Revised) available on that site. Alan and Miranda have to take turns taking Johnny to different specialists, causing them to ask for time off from work.

### The Family of Muslim Faith

Fatima and her husband Ahamed are Muslim. They have two children: a daughter Noor who is 5 years old, and a son Hassan who is 8. Both children love attending school but are often bullied because of their faith. The children laugh at Noor when they see her wearing a hijab. Fatima's daughter is now asking not to wear the hijab to school because she doesn't want others to laugh at her. For Fatima and Ahamed, faith is very important and they are considering switching their children to another school, even a private one.

### The Co-Parent Family

Susan and Kevin were inseparable. People often used to refer to them as the perfect couple. After three children, completion of graduate school, the death of a parent, and financial stress, things began to change. The arguments in the household increased. Both Susan and Kevin felt that it was better to divorce, particularly for their children, than to live in constant stress. After a very difficult divorce Susan and Kevin began the process of co-parenting. For about two years, they had to learn to live with each other but separately and with respect. Family dinners were still a ritual on Sunday evenings but their children spent their time split between Kevin's apartment and Susan's house. The children had to learn to live in two homes but have accepted the situation and are happy that they get to see both parents every day.

**KNOWING DIVERSE FAMILIES.** The preceding examples show some of the variety in family structure. The vignettes are based on real-life family situations. Regardless of the structure, most families have support groups such as extended family to provide love and care when parents are not present. Even when families deal with difficult situations, strong families learn to cope with difficulties because they want to see their children succeed in school. Unfortunately, not all families have support systems to help them in difficult situations. It is imperative that the schools find ways to support families for the healthy development of children.

It is important for educators to understand how each of these structures, and others not discussed, affects families. All families need guidance but in different ways, depending on their needs and family structure. For instance, families not familiar with the school system, such as immigrant families, will need more guidance to understand the school's expectations. Teachers should ensure that information is relevant for all families, regardless of their structure. Teachers can make things easier for parents by making school routines and procedures parent-friendly. It is never a good idea to scold parents who do not follow procedures, because this only creates barriers between the home and the school.

## Current Trends in the Diversity of Families

The next section provides more information regarding current issues of the diversity of families. At this point, it is important to remember that diversity goes beyond culture and language, although both are of critical importance. Diverse families face similar situations and challenges. However, diversity of families is a broad spectrum of situations. The real-life vignettes provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their perceptions of diverse structures within families. Our perceptions as educators build a positive or negative foundation for the development of family partnerships.

### Fatherhood

The National Center for Fathering (2018) lists the following situations for many fathers in the United States today: adoptive dad, at-home dad, divorced dad, noncustodial dad, single dad, stepdad, traveling dad, special needs–kids dad, and urban dad. Also very important is the married dad. Regardless of their specific circumstance, fathers play an important role in a child's development. From before Puritan times until well after industrialization, a "good" father was the breadwinner and provider of moral guidance. Fathers have long held these two roles, but in the 20th century, the importance of fathers' roles in their children's development underwent change based on social conditions and beliefs as well as research in child development. In

Guy Cali/Corbis/Getty Images

All children need a nurturing relationship with their fathers.

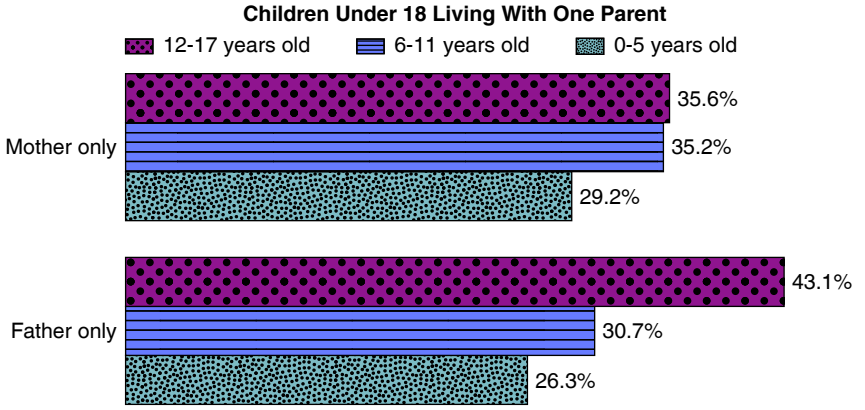
the 21st century, fathers exhibit a willingness to expand their role, becoming companions, caregivers, standard setters, guidance counselors, play partners, teachers, providers, and role models.

The Children's Bureau, established in 1912, provides information to families about caring for their infants in their publication *Infant Care*. Historically, although fathers were mentioned in the publication, the advice was directed to mothers. Fathers were not considered as important to the child's development until the 1940s. Awareness of the father as a gender role model came about toward the end of World War II, but it was not until the 1970s that the role of nurturant father was emphasized (Lamb, 1997). In the last two decades, the number of intervention and support programs for fathers has increased (Bronte-Tinkew, Burkhauser, & Metz, 2012).

Some advocates for fathers argue that in the 20th century fathers were viewed as superfluous: "The retreat from fatherhood began in the 1960s, gained momentum in the 1970s, and hit full stride in the 1980s" (Horn, 1997, p. 24). In the 1990s, however, organizations that focused on fathers emerged, including the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Development, Promise Keepers, National Center for Fathering, and the National Fatherhood Initiative. These groups responded to data about the negative aspects of being raised without a father, including that children are "three times more likely to fail at school, two to three times more likely to experience emotional or behavioral problems requiring psychiatric treatment . . . three times more likely to commit suicide as adolescents . . . five times more likely to be poor" (p. 27). Even when the families came from the same socioeconomic background, children without a father present had more challenges than those who had both parents (Horn, 1997). In two-parent families, it is important that family members are supportive of one another and that conflict and abuse be absent. For children growing up without a father, having a male as a father figure, such as an uncle or grandfather, has a positive effect on their lives.

In today's society, many fathers are looking for ways to get involved (Goldberg, Tan, Davis, & Easterbrooks, 2013) as research shows, father involvement has positive outcomes such as higher IQs, advanced language and cognitive skills (Ancell, Bruns, & Chitiyo, 2018). The number of children living only with fathers in 2017 increased (see Figure 2.3). Indeed, the presence of the father is significant in children's lives.

**Figure 2.3** Children Under 18 Living with One Parent




**Source:** 2017 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement www.census.gov/topics/families.html.

Current studies suggest that fathers' involvement can help offset negative effects on child development when mothers are not as supportive (Martin, Ryan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). Even when mothers are supportive, research shows that fathers' more physical style of interacting with their children supports and adds to the nurturing and verbal style of the mother (Horn, 1997; Lamb, 1997). As a father's parental role grows beyond just that of a breadwinner, so do the father's attitudes toward parenting. In a national survey conducted by Zero to Three (2010), it was found that fathers today are not satisfied with their work/family balance, find challenges in a variety of parenting situations, and need more information regarding social development. Modern day fathers show increased engagement and affection, which help children with their socioemotional development (American Psychological Association, 2018).

High levels of father involvement indicate positive outcomes in cognitive and socioemotional development (Halme, Astedt-Kurk, & Tarkka, 2009). The Fathering Indicator Framework (Gadsden, Fagan, Ray, & Davis, 2001) provides six positive fathering indicator categories: 1) father presence, 2) caregiving, 3) children's social competence, 4) cooperative parenting, 5) father's healthy living, and 6) material and financial contribution. Operational categories accompany the fathering indicator categories. These are used by programs to guide research regarding the importance of a father in a child's life, as well as how a father's participation creates a change of behavior in the child and family, and how these effects are threaded together to help men become more positively involved in their children's lives (National Center on Fathers and Families, 2011).

Heightened interest in fatherhood goes hand in hand with the increasing number of women who work outside the home. Many young fathers see the expression of love toward their children as a way toward fulfillment in their own lives through meaningful relationships. Some fathers are full-time homemakers and care for the children while their wives work outside the home.

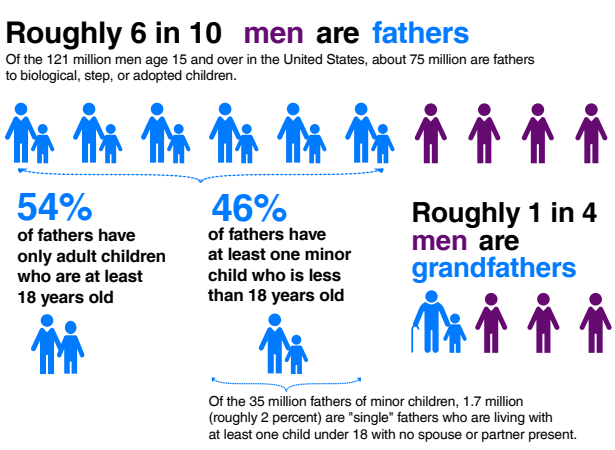
Although fathers and mothers are similar in their connection with their children, fathers tend to be more physically stimulating through unpredictable play, whereas mothers tend toward containment and soft, repetitive verbal expression. Although this will vary depending on the individual. A father's physical play largely benefits the child's socioemotional development (Fletcher, St. George, & Freeman, 2013). Furthermore, fathers of children with special needs have a tremendous responsibility in making sure they bond with the child and yet maintain a strong bond with their other children (Huhtanen & Huhtanen, 2008). Figure 2.4 from the U.S. Census provides a snapshot of today's dads.

In the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited childcare programs, fathers preferred involvement in (a) family activities, (b) Daddy and Me programs, (c) activities for both parents to learn about their child's future, (d) activities for both parents to learn about child development, and (e) sporting events (Turbiville, Umbarger, & Guthrie, 2000). Parker and Livingston from the Pew Research Center (2017) list six important findings regarding fathers: 1) Parenting is central to identity; 2) There has been an increased involvement in childcare; 3) It is now less common to be the breadwinner; 4) Work-family balance is a challenge; 5) Public perceptions of the father's role as opposed to mother's can be challenging; 6) Most adults believe it is important for the father to bond with baby. More than half of the fathers surveyed by the Pew Center indicated that they find parenting essential for their identity, very rewarding, and enjoyable all of the time.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS TO SHARE WITH FATHERS

1. *Be there.* Engage in activities with your child, from the early caregiving bathing and bedroom routines to the later reading, storytelling, and playing together activities.

**Figure 2.4** Fatherly Figures




**Source:** Fatherly Figures: A Snapshot of Dads Today. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved on July 22, 2018 from https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2018/comm/fathers-day.html

2. *Accept your child.* Accept your child for who she or he is. Each child has an individual personality. Trying to change a quiet child into a boisterous one or an uncoordinated child into an outstanding athlete makes the child feel unaccepted.
3. *Use positive parenting.* Praise is better than punishment in guiding children. Help the child express anger constructively.
4. *Share parenting.* Work as a team with your spouse or with the mother of your children.
5. *See fathering as worthwhile and satisfying.* Fatherhood can be a prideful role. Think about how you can influence the future by working positively with your child.
6. *Be there for your children.* Be involved in your children's education from early childhood on. Listen to the needs and interests of your children and show interest in what they like. The PTA (Parent Teacher Association) is a good way to connect to your child's education.

The first step in getting fathers, brothers, uncles, and other male role models involved is to keep in mind that the term *father* extends to all father figures. Because many children do not have a father in the home, the inclusion of father figures is extremely important. Encourage family friends, uncles, grandfathers, stepfathers, and interested others to become support systems for children.

Many schools and centers have developed ways to involve fathers and other male role models. Fourteen of these programs are described in *Getting Men Involved* (Levine et al., 1993), but there are more current examples. For example, there is the National Fathering Network, which has affiliates in 35 states and provides different opportunities for involvement. Another example is the Kindering Center in Bellevue, Washington, a support group for fathers raising children with special needs. The Parents as Teachers program in Ferguson-Florissant, Missouri, has established programs for teenage parents and parents-to-be. The FRED (Fathers Reading Every Day) program focuses on reading. AVANCE also offers a father involvement program that focuses on increasing father interactions with children and decreasing violence in the home (AVANCE, 2018). Another current program is the Fatherhood Project sponsored by the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). The mission of this project is to "improve the health and well-being of children by empowering fathers to be active, informed and emotionally engaged with their children and families" (The Fatherhood Project, 2018). This project provides different opportunities for community organizations to engage parents, workshops, research, and other resources.

## Divorce

The divorce rate in the United States has fluctuated between 2000 and 2011, with the highest rates in 2000 and 2002 (see Figure 2.5). The economic status of parents who divorce changes drastically—about one quarter, or 24.6%, of all custodial parents and their children had incomes below the poverty level in 2007. Issues such as health care and child support that custodial and non-custodial parents face affect their and their children's economic well-being (Grall, 2009).

Divorce involves change for both parents and children but can be particularly difficult for children. Children are usually ashamed of the divorce and feel rejected because of a parent's departure, but the effects of divorce on children are related more to the previous situation and the subsequent events that affect the child than to the divorce itself. Despite most children's negative feelings about their parents' separation, divorce can improve the situation for a child when a successfully reestablished single-parent family or a remarriage provides the child with a good quality of life. Oftentimes, too, children's initial adverse feelings reduce over time; their risk at school is much lower even just a year after the divorce than immediately following it. Parents must continue to do positive parenting, limit conflicts, and increase the quality of parent—child interactions to make separation or divorce less difficult on children (Clark, 2013).

Children of all ages respond to the divorce of their parents; some children are more resilient than others. When I was a teacher, one of the most challenging times I had with a child was when her parents were going through a divorce. The father had decided to go back to his home country so the mother had to go back to work, thus spending less time with her daughter. As a teacher, I had to learn how to adjust my classroom environment to ensure the child felt safe and nurtured by engaging with in her favorite centers which ere the dramatic and art center.

Another part of helping children adjust to divorce is to reassure them they are not the cause of it. They also

**Figure 2.5** Provisional Rate of Divorces and Annulments: United States, 2000–2016

| Year | Divorces and annulments | Population | Rate per 1,000 total population | Year | Divorces and annulments | Population | Rate per 1,000 total population |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2016**[1] | 827,261 | 257,904,548 | 3.2 | **2007**[3] | 856,000 | 238,352,850 | 3.6 |
| **2015**[2] | 800,909 | 258,518,265 | 3.1 | **2006**[3] | 872,000 | 236,094,277 | 3.7 |
| **2014**[2] | 813,862 | 256,483,624 | 3.2 | **2005**[3] | 847,000 | 233,495,163 | 3.6 |
| **2013**[2] | 832,157 | 254,408,815 | 3.3 | **2004**[4] | 879,000 | 236,402,656 | 3.7 |
| **2012**[3] | 851,000 | 248,041,986 | 3.4 | **2003**[5] | 927,000 | 243,902,090 | 3.8 |
| **2011**[3] | 877,000 | 246,273,366 | 3.6 | **2002**[6] | 955,000 | 243,108,303 | 3.9 |
| **2010**[3] | 872,000 | 244,122,529 | 3.6 | **2001**[7] | 940,000 | 236,416,762 | 4.0 |
| **2009**[3] | 840,000 | 242,610,561 | 3.5 | **2000**[7] | 944,000 | 233,550,143 | 4.0 |
| **2008**[3] | 844,000 | 240,545,163 | 3.5 | | | | |

[1]Excludes data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Minnesota, and New Mexico. [2]Excludes data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, and Minnesota. [3]Excludes data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota. [4]Excludes data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, and Louisiana. [5]Excludes data for California, Hawaii, Indiana, and Oklahoma. [6]Excludes data for California, Indiana, New York City, and Oklahoma. [7]Excludes data for California, Indiana, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.

**Note:** Populations are consistent with the 2000 census.

**Note:** The term "provisional" in this context indicates that the statistics are constantly changing.

**Source:** National Center for Health Statistics, CDC. www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm

need to know by the parents' actions and words that they will continue to have their parents' love. Adapt your caring for children to their level of development—their understanding and response are related to their age and maturity (Leon & Cole, 2004).

Teachers and administrators must recognize that during the period of divorce, the family may be in turmoil. Children will bring their distress with them to the classroom. The school can offer the child a stable and sensitive environment—one the child can count on. The school can also provide support and understanding by trying to meet the family's needs. Talk with both parents to help the child feel safe, secure, and accepted. Keep positive expectations for the children. Be kind, but encourage them to keep up with their classwork. Find ways that the child can contribute to the class. Use special projects or activities that may interest the child. Provide a "Talk About Feelings" learning center where children can talk to you about their feelings, or write or draw what they are feeling. The center should also include books about feelings or developmentally appropriate videos to help the children reflect on their feelings. Opportunities to learn about and express their feelings provide children with tools to handle their emotions.

ZouZou/Shutterstock

This single parent supports her child's education by coloring with him.

## Single-Parent Families

Single-parent families are not a new phenomenon. From the 1860s until the mid-1960s, there was no increase in the proportion of single parents because the growing divorce rate was offset by the declining death rate. Young children in the last half of the 1800s and first half of the 1900s were raised in single-parent families, most often because the mother was widowed; 25% had lost a parent to death (Amato, 1994). According to the U.S. Census, in 2011 there were 32 million one-person households in the U.S. (you can also refer

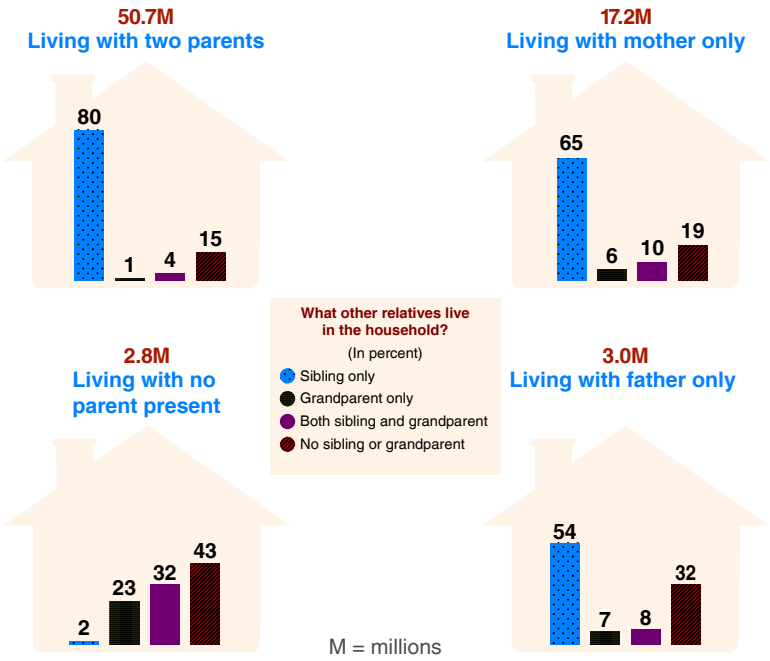
back to Figure 2.3). Grall (2009) indicates that 27% of custodial single mothers and their children live in poverty, whereas 12.9% of custodial single fathers and their children live in poverty. In 2012, 24% of children in the U.S. lived with only their mother, while 4% lived only with their father (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2013).

Gender differences exist for mothers and fathers. For example, during the period that a mother is raising her children alone, she has a much higher risk of poverty. Twelve percent of single parents who work full time find themselves in poverty; 49% of those who work part time are also poor. Almost 74% of single parents who do not work are in poverty, and 79% of single parents are in the labor force (Litcher & Crowley, 2002). Most divorced parents remarry, however, making it possible for 80% of children to live in two-parent homes with a reduced risk of poverty. Figure 2.6 shows living arrangements for children under 18 years old (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Interestingly, the number of children in 2017 who lived with just their father increased to 16.1%.

Teachers need to show empathy for families who are going through life-changing events such as divorce, as this will increase the opportunity for collaboration. In addition, parents' marital status is not for teachers to judge; instead, they must learn how to best work with each parent or important caregiver in a child's life. This empathy is particularly significant in the lives of young children as they are developing attachments with adults.

Parents and teachers need to communicate throughout a child's education, but it is essential during periods of change to know what is happening both at home and at school, and to help children overcome the isolation and distress they might feel. Although approximately only one in every five children will be from a one-parent family at any given time, half of all children will spend part of their childhood in a one-parent family. Thus, it is important for teachers to offer convenient times for parent–teacher conferences, so ask the parents for their best times for availability. It is important to learn parents' names by checking records because the names of the children and the parents might not be the same. Calling the parents by their correct names is a simple gesture of courtesy. Find ways that single parents can be involved without putting great stress on the family. Parents who work outside the home might be able to attend early morning breakfasts, especially if childcare is provided and the children get breakfast, too. Keep the number of parents at each breakfast small so you can talk with each parent individually. Find out how

**Figure 2.6** Living Arrangements for Children Under 18 Years Old




**Source:** U.S Census Bureau. (2018) 2016 Current population survey annual social and economic supplement. Retrieved on November 9, 2018 from https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2016/comm/cb16-192_living_arrangements.html

they would like to be involved, what their needs are, and if they have any ideas for their partnership with the school. Acknowledge their suggestions for improved home–school collaboration.

Acknowledge and communicate with noncustodial parents. If noncustodial parents receive report cards and other information, they likely will be more interested in the child's work and can be better involved with the child. Most noncustodial parents are men, and the percentage of men who pay child support is low. Schools can help sustain or even increase the father's interest by keeping him informed, if such communication is specified in the custody papers.

Use care in communication. In all partnerships with parents, one of the most important elements of cooperation and understanding is the ability to communicate. The first objective is to have effective communication. The second objective is to prepare written materials that project positive and knowledgeable feelings toward the parent. Take care when preparing invitations to programs. Perhaps you may wish to encourage the participation of one particular group, but make sure the child and parent know they do not need to have a father, mother, or grandparent to attend. For example, saying, "Bring your grandparent or a grandfriend to class next week" implies that the visitors, not their titles, are important. At the program, make sure you have some get-acquainted activities so no one feels left out or alone. Activities also encourage networking among parents, and might be the best opportunity for new single parents in the neighborhood to become acquainted with others.

Be aware that if the parent remarries, the child is affected again, and concerns can arise regarding the loss of the parent as the sole caregiver, and a change in the strong relationship that may have developed between parent and child. There could also be issues with relationships between the stepparent and the children.

## Blended Families

There is a complex social organization in blended families. In remarried families, some children might be the offspring of the mother, some of the father, and the remaining might be born to the remarried couple. A child could be living in a home with a brother or sister, a stepbrother or stepsister whose biological parent is the mother or father in the home, and a half-sister or half-brother who is the child of the remarried couple. In addition, they may have a similar situation with their other biological parent and have another set of siblings, stepsiblings, and half-siblings when they are living or visiting there. It is estimated that one in six children lives in a blended family (Parenting in America, 2015). In fact, families could have as many as 30 configurations (Manning & Wootten, 1987). In addition, there is an increase in families that have blended cultures.

When two people marry and one or both have children from a previous relationship, the road to a secure, happy family becomes more challenging. The members of the new family come with different backgrounds, have no family history together, and have no established way of doing things. Building a strong new family can be accomplished, but the initial excitement of the children and acceptance of the new arrangement by ex-spouses are complicated by the realities of the situation. A typical complication occurs because both parent and child have come from single-parent family status (even if the single-parent stage is short-lived). During the single-parent stage, parent and child tend to become extremely close. The parent may have turned to the children for emotional support and decision-making help in the absence of the former spouse. Children of the newly married couple often see the remarriage as a double loss: First they lost a parent through divorce, and now they are losing their special relationship with the other parent by having to share their custodial parent with a new stepparent.

Papernow (1993, 1998) breaks down the development of the blended family into three stages: fantasy, which includes fantasy, immersion, and awareness; restructuring; and solidifying. In the first two stages, the family is generally divided according to biological lines, but by the third, the family has created a new bond. During the fantasy phase of the first stage, parents visualize that the new marriage will provide a supportive, loving family; however, the children often want their biological parents back together. Papernow (1993) explains that "because the adults in the new family adore each other, [they assume] stepparents and stepchildren will also" (p. 13). In the second phase of the first stage, immersion, the nonbiological parent becomes the outsider parent, not able to relate in the same way a biological parent does to the biological children. Because of this and other tricky situations in the immersion phase, the parents may be concerned about the family's unity because of the emergence of negative feelings. During the last phase of the first

stage, awareness, parents become more able to understand the dynamics of the new relationship. Once the outsider parent acknowledges the bond between biological parent and child, they are ready to go to the next stage. If parents can recognize the areas of concern in each of the three phases and deal with them successfully, the family will probably thrive, but if they get stuck in any of these first three phases, the family will probably dissolve.

The middle, or restructuring stage, includes mobilization—during which the airing of differences occurs—and action, during which power struggles are resolved and new agreements are made, with resulting changes in family structure and new boundaries. In this stage, "Every family activity is no longer a potential power struggle between insiders and outsiders" (Papernow, 1993, p. 16).

The final stage, solidifying, includes contact, during which intimacy and authenticity in real relationships are forged: "The marital relationship becomes more of a sanctuary and source of nourishment and support, even on step issues" (Papernow, 1993, p. 16). Finally, resolution occurs. Although issues can recur and the family may re-experience the stepparenting cycle, the family is able to go forward. Differences no longer threaten the family.

Though by the final stage the family unit is set, the entire blended-family cycle affects the children. They may go through stages of grief similar to those experienced after divorce, death, or moving away from loved ones. During the first stage, while the children are still feeling a loss, their participation in school often suffers. Children may act out in class, they may be despondent, and they may have no interest in schoolwork. For school-age children, the school is a stable environment and can be a support for them. Staying in the same school with their friends can ease the transition.

The stages of the blended-family cycle affect the adults as well. During the early stage, stepparents become aware that they are not able to nurture children in the same way biological parents do, because biological parents already have a strong bond with their children. Parents develop an awareness of these family pressures. Both partners recognize what they can handle and which attitudes need to be changed. In some cases, the family is never able to restructure their lives, and many of these marriages do not succeed.

The restructuring period of stepfamily development allows for more openness in discussion of change. Parents and children continue to have strong biological ties, but the differences lead to action. In this action phase, family boundaries are clarified and the couple attempts to work together to find solutions.

Keep in mind that blended-family stages cannot be rushed, and that "learning how to work as a team is crucial to stepfamily integration, and usually essential for a close couple relationship to develop and grow" (Visher, 2001, p. 4). The biological parent can help the stepparent become part of the family by showing understanding of the stepparent's position: "Requiring civility within the household allows relationships to have the opportunity to develop, and demonstrating love and caring for both his or her children and new partner is an important element in the success of the family" (p. 3). Be patient with this process—Papernow (1993) found that 4 to 7 years were needed to complete the entire cycle; without patience, some families may never be able to develop their blended family into a strong family. This patience will pay off, because when issues are resolved and the blended family develops into a strong family, children will rebound and will resume normal behavior, including being more engaged in school. For teachers it is important that they are aware of these stages as they will see children experiencing varied behaviors.

## Families Headed by Grandparents

Grandparent caregivers may also be an integral part of a family. In 2000, this role was acknowledged by the U.S. Census, which, for the first time ever, included questions regarding the grandparents' part in childrearing. Results of this census showed that the number of grandparents maintaining families doubled from 2.2 million in 1970 to 4.5 million in 2000, and care for grandchildren was maintained by 2.4 million grandparent caregivers. This equates to 3.9% of all households in 2000. Of these families, 19% had incomes below the poverty level. These are families in which parents may live with the family, but where the grandparents provide the financial support, which is different from families who have a grandparent move in with them (Simmons & Dye, 2003). These statistics mean that schools will have some families in which the children's grandparents are the primary caregivers, oftentimes for extended periods of time. Only 12% had their grandchildren less than 6 months; 11% cared for their grandchildren for 6 to 11 months; 23% for 1 to 2 years; 15% for 3 to 4 years; and the most, 39%, for 5 or more

Noam Armonn/Shutterstock

Funds of knowledge are also transmitted by grandparents, who often take care of children.

years (Simmons & Dye, 2003). In 2009, the U.S. Census reported that the majority of the children who live with only their grandparents live in poverty (Kreider & Ellis, 2011 [U.S. Census report]). It is important to provide resources for grandparents as they become responsible for raising their grandchildren so they can provide a stable, healthy, and nurturing environment for them while confronting interpersonal and environmental challenges (Doggett, Marken, & Caldwell, 2014). In 2018, nearly 1.5 million grandparents must work to support grandchildren as Figure 2.7 shows.

Grandparents need help in obtaining accurate information about, and assistance with, support services for themselves and their grandchildren. These services may include counseling, mentoring, and tutoring for the children. The grandparents might need counseling also, as well as information on legal and financial matters. Information given should be easy to understand. The information needs to be presented so all grandparents, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, or educational backgrounds, can understand and use. When grandparents drop off or pick up their grandchild or grandchildren at school, be available to talk with them, just as you would with other key figures in the child's life. Make telephone calls or send a text to share something the grandchild has done that was a positive contribution. This could include such accomplishments as a painting, drawing, story, or just an interest in a subject. If there is a grandparent support group, encourage the grandparents with children in your class or school to attend. If there isn't a support group in your school, start one or find one nearby. Invite them to visit the class and help out! The experience of grandparents can be used as a great resource for projects.

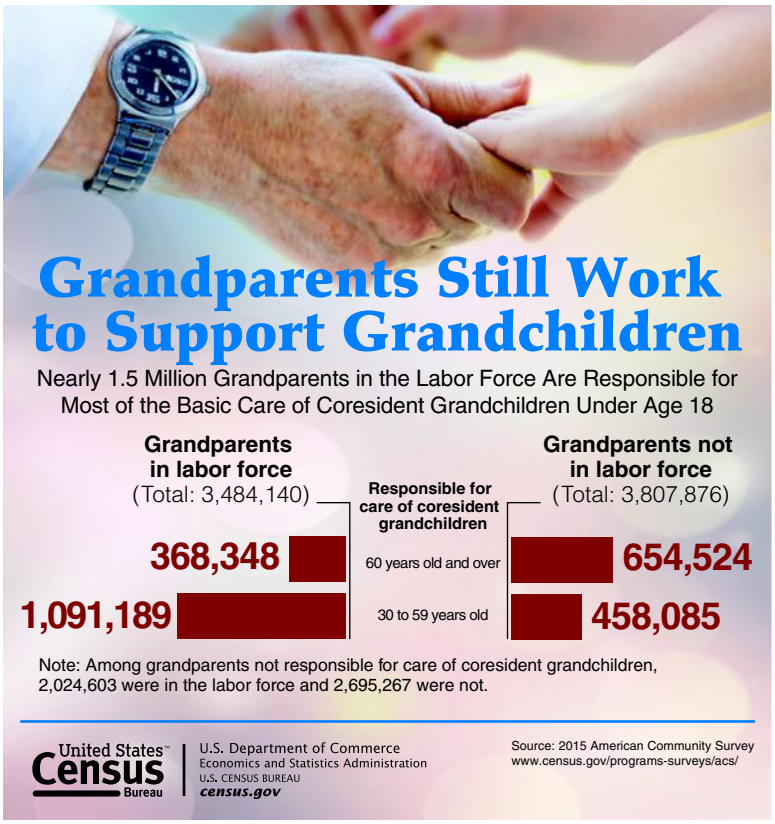
Today, one child in 10 lives with a grandparent; about 41% of those are primarily raised by a grandparent (Livingston & Parker, 2010). By 2009, 2% of White and Hispanic children lived with grandparents (and no parents) and 5% of African American children lived with their grandparents (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). Byers (2010) indicates that Native American grandmothers have the highest percentage of rearing grandchildren than any other ethnic group. The U.S. Census estimates that 51.1% of American Indian and Alaskan Native grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

The research indicates that the majority of grandparent-maintained families differ from households maintained by parents. These differences include the educational level of the grandparent, who may not have graduated from high school, and the grandparent's profession, which may not be high income. Even when grandparents work and have health insurance, the insurance programs often do not cover grandchildren living with them. In 2010, President Barack Obama

Szefei/Shutterstock

Grandparents play a significant role in raising children in different cultures.

**Figure 2.7** Grandparents in the Labor Force
Grandparents must work to support grandchildren.




**Source:** United States Census. (2018). Grandparents still work to support grandchildren. Retrieved on November 9, 2018 from https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/2017/comm/grandparents-day.pdf

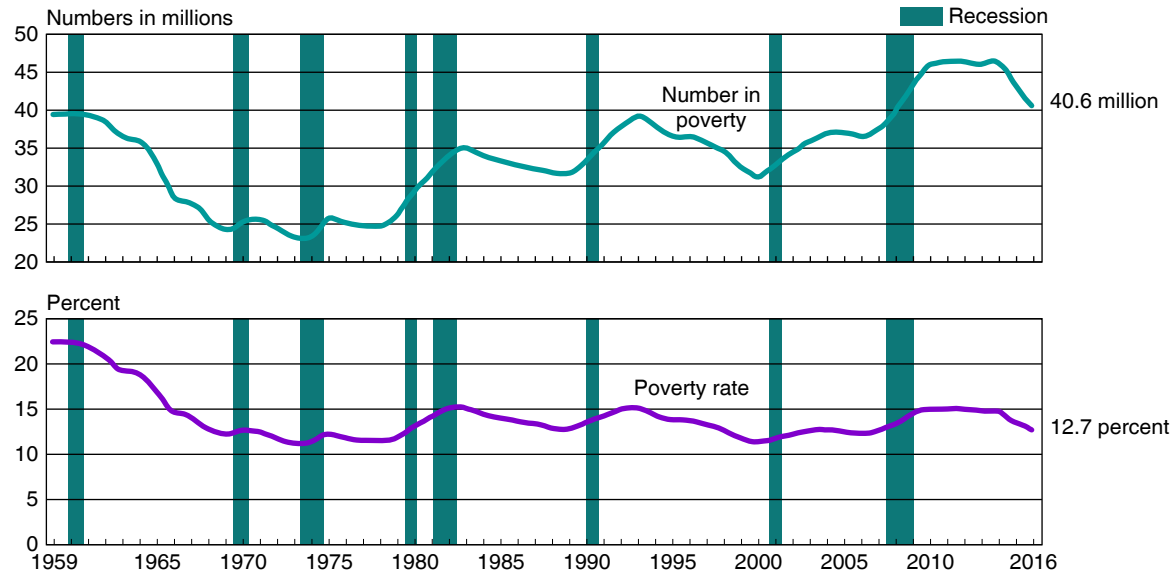
signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This law became highly controversial, but it sought to provide health care insurance for families who otherwise would not be able to obtain coverage.

## Poverty and Families

**Poverty** is defined in the United States according to the income of the person or family. Poverty implies that people lack resources for what they need (Cancian & Reed, 2009). In Figure 2.8, we can see how poverty (number of people and rate) has fluctuated in the United States from 1959 to 2016. The number of children living in poverty increased between 2008 and 2009, from 19% to 20.7% (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010). According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (2018), 21% of all children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level. Many families live in poverty due to unemployment or loss of employment, a change in family structure, lack of education, addictions, or health problems, among other reasons.

The economic downturn in 2007 increased the poverty rate due to the loss of employment and earnings (Cancian & Danziger, 2009). According to Cancian and Reed (2009), researchers associated with the Institute for Research on Poverty, changes in family structure and single-parent homes also increased the likelihood of poverty. In fact, the researchers state that single-mother families are five times as likely to be poor as married families. Most single mothers qualify for government assistance programs, including income support programs such as cash welfare and food stamps. Furthermore, the high rate of divorce and the fact that more people are opting not to marry increase the chances that a family will live in poverty (Cancian & Reed, 2009). Policies that specifically help such families increase their economic well-being open the doors for young children to participate in experiences that will help them grow and develop by obtaining assistance

**Figure 2.8** Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate 1959–2016




**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, current Population Survey, 1960 to 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

through different programs and agencies as their parents struggle to find a better life. Following are a few of the nonprofit organizations that help people live in poverty. An online search will easily locate their websites.

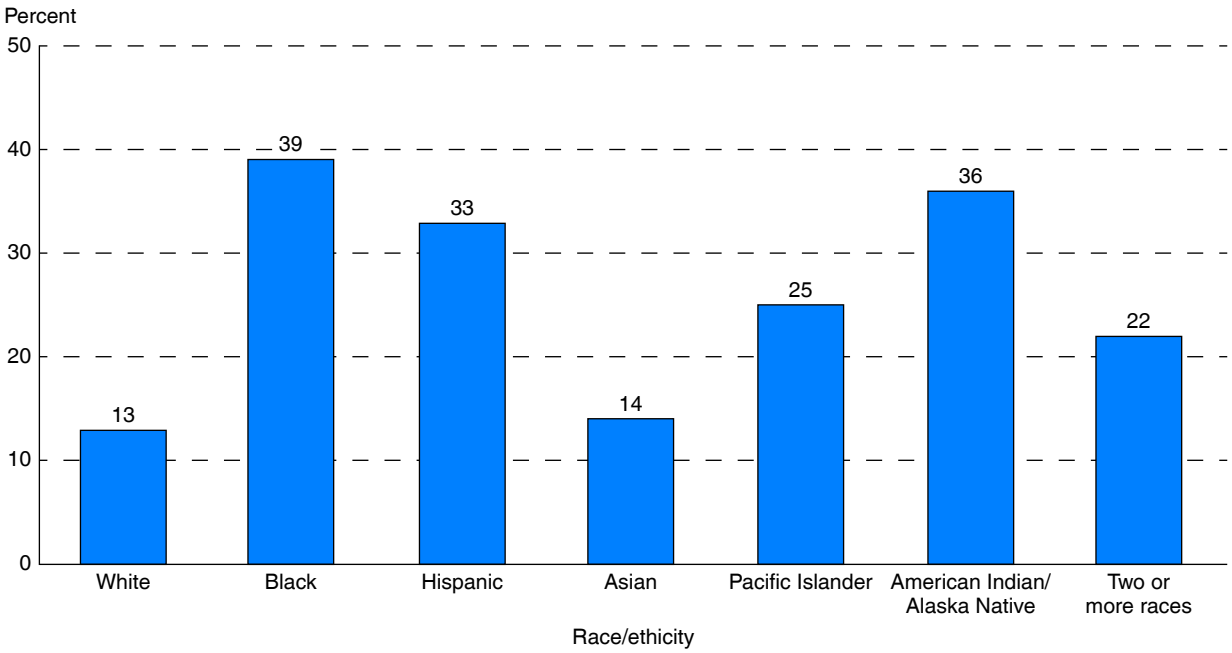
YMCA
Catholic Charities
Salvation Army
American Red Cross
United Jewish Communities
Goodwill Industries International
Boys and Girls Clubs of America
Feed the Children
Habitat for Humanity International
Shriners Hospitals for Children
Food for the Poor

Throughout history, discrimination has had a negative effect on the social and economic well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse families such as African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. According to Cancian and Danziger (2009), half of the nation's poor are African American or Latino. From 2008 to 2009, the poverty rate increased for all groups except for the Asian population, as shown on Figure 2.9 (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2010). According to Ratcliffe and Kalish (2017), poverty is persistent across generations of Black families as compared to white.

Currently, there are about 15 million children living in poverty in the U.S., creating a major health problem (Hanson, Hair, Shen, Shi, Gilmore, Wolfe, & Pollak, 2013). To exist in the culture of poverty often means to feel depressed, powerless to effect change, and unable to control one's destiny. Alienation, anomie, isolation, and depression are common partners of poverty, as well as information processing in infants (Hanson et al.). Although poverty has a look of despair, many families work together to provide the best for their children. Education and training appear to be the keys in helping families in poverty. Many face issues such as lack of insurance and lack of medical care, live in neighborhoods where crime is prevalent, and have negative school experiences due to their socioeconomic status. Many government agencies, such as the Administration for Children and Families, under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provide programs such as Head Start and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to help families survive and hopefully break the cycle of poverty.

Families who have always been self-sufficient and suddenly find themselves without employment face

**Figure 2.9** Percentage of Children Under Age 18 Living in Poverty, by Race/Ethnicity: 2012




**Note:** The measure of child poverty includes families in which all children are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2012. *See Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, table 102.60.

tremendous psychological adjustments, as well as difficulty in providing shelter and food. Have a resource guide posted on the school's website or on a bulletin board so parents can obtain numbers without feeling embarrassed or ashamed for doing so.

For some families, using social welfare is an acknowledgment of defeat and they would rather do without some necessities than accept such help. If they are open to suggestions, help by providing information on social services. The school can also provide exchange options where outgrown clothes can be substituted for ones that fit.

Recommend community agencies for parents who need additional help. If your school has a parent liaison, put him or her in contact with parents needing help. Children in poverty are likely to have poor health and inadequate care.

**WAYS TO COUNTERACT POVERTY.** Poverty is multifaceted and it is often difficult to end its cycle, which is commonly known as chronic poverty. Stereotypes of families in poverty in the media portray these families as having numerous children, chronic unemployment, and associations with drugs and violence (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2018)

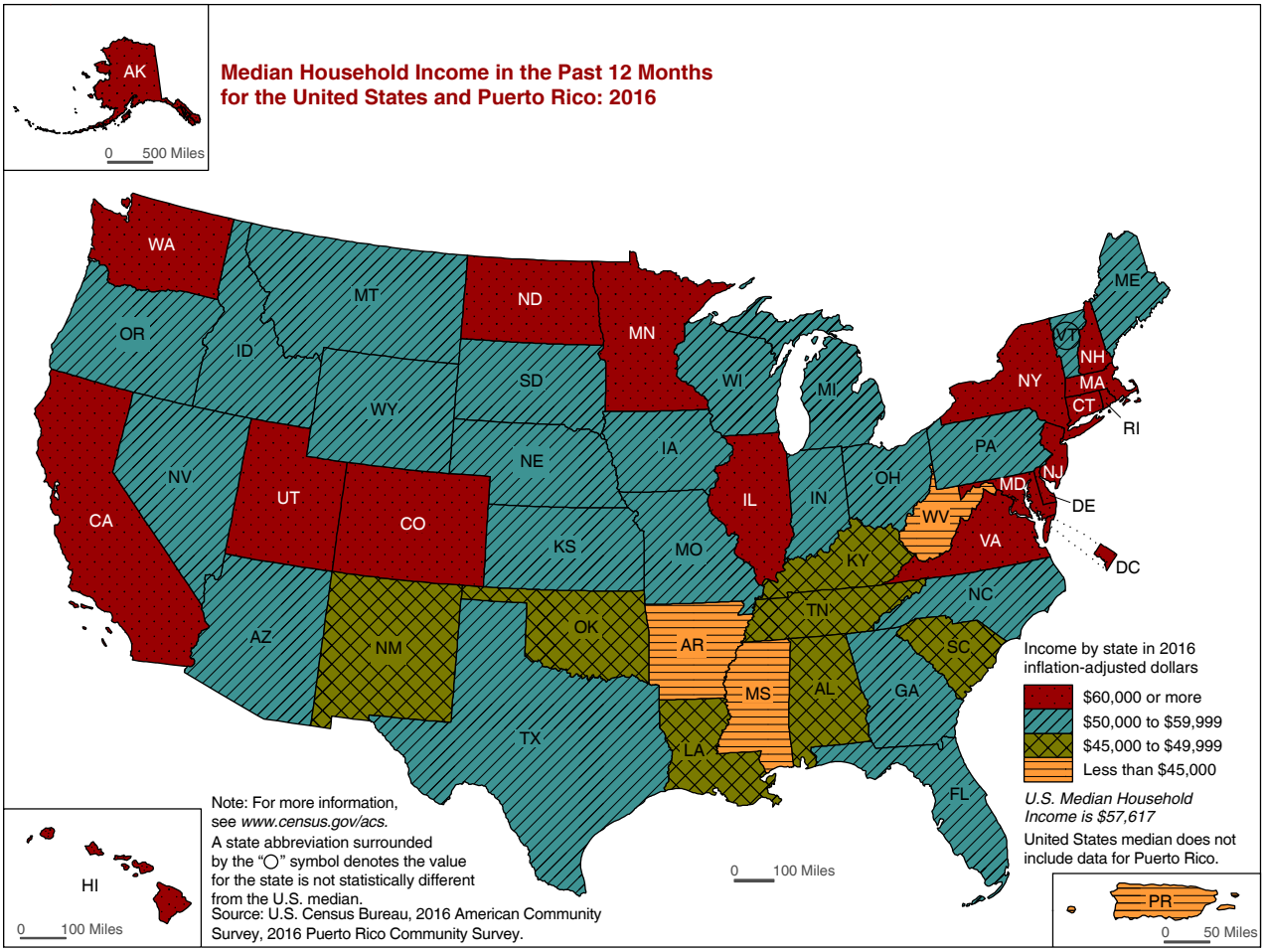
To counteract the stress of poverty on families, parents and children need at least the following:

- A decent standard of living (jobs that pay enough to adequately rear children)

  Families need healthy salaries to provide the basic necessities for their children. For the 21st century, the basic necessities include food, clothing, and shelter, as well as access to running water, electricity, phone, and technology. The median family income varies between states. Figure 2.10 shows the disparities between the states. For example, the median household income in 2016 for Virginia and Maryland was more than $60,000, in contrast with Arkansas and Mississippi, where the average income was less than $45,000. Examine Figure 2.10 and compare the states that have the highest poverty rates with the states that have large number of minority populations, Latino and African American in particular.

- Flexible working conditions so children can be cared for, and flexible childcare hours

**Figure 2.10** Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months for the U.S. and Puerto Rico: 2016




**Source:** Guzman, G. G. (2017). Household income: 2016 American Community Survey Briefs. Retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau, on November 20, 2018 from https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/acs/acsbr16-02.pdf.

It has been said that providing good employment opportunities for women helps children. Flexible working conditions for families—in particular for those that have women as head of the household—are crucial for a family's financial health. I know women who work 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. so that they can be available for their children's school activities. Women working these hours must have systems that help with the children after school, such as after-school programs that help children with their homework, and provide dinner and extracurricular activities. In addition, these women must have a system of support that can pick up their children from the after school program and get them home safely. Families of infants and toddlers also need flexible schedules so that they can maximize the time they can spend with their children. That means that childcare centers must have different schedules to meet the needs of the parents. Large cities often have childcare providers who have flexible schedules as well. When flexible working and childcare hours are not available, at least one parent has to care for the children, and this can lower the family's income.

- An integrated network of family services

  Urie Bronfenbrenner believed in the importance of systems to help children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An integrated framework of services that can assist with children's needs includes systems such as the family, the school, the community, businesses, and the government. Each system needs to provide opportunities particularly for families in poverty so that they can stop the cycle. Children and families must be healthy in order to attend school and

work. Health programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and the Affordable Care Act provide families with access to health insurance at low or no cost. Similarly, providing equitable educational opportunities will help children succeed in school and be ready for college. It is important to move away from tracking systems that lead children of color and living in poverty to the workforce with no hope for a college education. Of importance is funding for non-profit organizations that provide a variety of services for families, such as the YMCA, the United Way, and Family Services Association (among others) because their goal is to empower families and children for a better future. Legal protection for undocumented children and families, particularly those who have DACA status, is imperative although at this time the fate of such families is undetermined.

- Government policies to help families in poverty

  There are government policies that help counteract poverty. Minimum wage laws help workers get better pay from employers because the lowest permissible wage is determined by the government. Increasing the minimum wage can help families live a better life. Social Security benefits can also help families in need. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides families with little to no income with an allowance to buy foods.

- A place to live, preferably on their own

  Affordable housing is a right and not a privilege. However, many families cannot afford a place to live. In addition, families who are poor are often placed in subsidized housing in neighborhoods that are high in crime. Families should be able to live in peaceful neighborhoods where children are safe from violence. Good planning by local governments can provide families with such opportunities. It is important for city officials to create neighborhoods where children who live in poverty have access to clean and environmentally friendly parks so that they can play and stay physically healthy.

## Homelessness and Families

What are your perceptions of people who are homeless? It is important to understand that often people's circumstances can render them incapable of affording shelter, through no fault of their own. The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2018) states that each year 3.5 million Americans experience homelessness, and children make up 23% of the homeless population. A report from the U.S. Conference of Mayors (2016) points out that the three main reasons people experience homelessness are lack of affordable housing, poverty, and unemployment.

According to the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (2018), currently there are over 1.35 million children who are homeless. Children who are homeless have acute and chronic health problems, experience emotional and behavioral problems, and have issues with school performance (Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2010).

Estimates say that families with children make up 40% of those who are homeless. Schools are directly concerned with single- or two-parent families with children who should be in school, as well as children who run away and have dropped out of school. Federal legislation has been passed to help mediate these problems.

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77) was reauthorized in January 2002 as the McKinney-Vento Amendment. The act was designed to ensure that homeless children have access to education. Although it offers incentives and nominal grants to encourage states to provide for homeless children, the responsibility is left to each state (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2002b; Stronge & Helm, 1990). Authorized federal funding is $70 million. The minimum amount of funding any state receives is $150,000 (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2002b).

The National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty recognizes some issues that need to be addressed to help people who are homeless. Less than 30% of the people eligible for low-income housing receive low-income housing. Only 11% of the 40% eligible for disability benefits receive such benefits. Only 37% of homeless people have food stamps, even though most are eligible for them. Similarly, most are eligible for welfare benefits, but only 52% receive them (National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty, 2002a, pp. 1–2).

Children and youth who are considered homeless include those who are living with someone who cannot afford a home or who has lost his or her home, whether that person is a friend, relative, or someone else. It also includes those staying in a motel, hotel, or emergency shelter because they do not have adequate

accommodations (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2002b).

The McKinney-Vento Act states that children without homes must have the same educational services provided to other students. These include Head Start availability, Individuals with Disabilities Education and Child Find for early identification of needs, Title I for those at risk of failing in school, and free and reduced-price meals. Students in homeless situations also have specific protection for school selection (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2002b, pp. 1–6). Regrettably, in spite of the law, 12% of homeless children are still denied their education (National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty, 2002a, pp. 1–2).

When families are dislocated because of losing their home, they might move to various locations, such as shelters or relatives' homes, which may be in other school districts. Not only do the children lack the security of living in a stable environment, but if the school will not accept them because of residency requirements, they also lack the stability provided by attending the same school.

Children who are without homes also have a higher risk of nutritional deficiency and other health problems, including delayed immunization, poor iron levels, and developmental difficulties. In a study of children without homes compared with low-income children who had homes, it was found that the children without homes were delayed in their growth (Fierman et al., 1991). It may be a combination of factors—malnourishment, diarrhea, asthma, elevated lead levels, or social factors including family violence, drug exposure, alcohol abuse, mental disorders, and child abuse and neglect—that affect the child's growth (Bassuk, 1991; Fierman et al., 1991).

Administrators and teachers should be particularly aware of this and other special concerns of homeless children, including the opportunity for education, acceptance by staff and peers, and referrals as needed for special services. They should also be aware that homeless children may suffer from learning difficulties, speech delays, behavioral problems, depression and anxiety, short attention spans, aggression, and withdrawal (Bassuk & Rubin, 1987; Klein, Bittel, & Molnar, 1993; McCormick & Holden, 1992). Children experiencing homelessness who come to school are usually ashamed of living out of a car, tent, or shelter and of not having a home instead. They need support, not blame; they need acceptance, not rejection; and they need a curriculum that allows them to succeed. They may need special tutoring and a buddy assigned to help them learn the routine. If they are continuing in the same school that they attended before becoming homeless, they need to be assured that they are still valued. Administrators and teachers should keep in mind that because the family and children are under a lot of stress, it is better to let them offer information than to inquire into personal concerns.

In a research survey (McCormick & Holden, 1992), parents without homes indicated they would like assistance with transportation, developmentally appropriate childcare, opportunities to share with others, flexible opportunities to be involved, respite opportunities, mental health self-esteem groups, information on services, an easy intake process for preschool participation, and classes.

> The McKinney-Vento Act (Sec. 722[g][4]) offers the following standards for parents:
>
> Standard 4. Parents or persons acting as parents of homeless children and youth will participate meaningfully in their children's education.
>
> 4.1. Parents or persons acting as parents will have a face-to-face conference with the teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker within 30 days of enrollment.
> 4.2. Parents or persons acting as parents will be provided with individual student reports informing them of their child's specific academic needs and achievement on academic assessments aligned with state academic achievement standards.
> 4.3. Parents or persons acting as parents will report monitoring or facilitating homework assignments.
> 4.4. Parents or persons acting as parents will share reading time with their children (i.e., parent reads to child or listens to child read).
> 4.5. Parents who would like parent skills training will attend available programs.
> 4.6. Parents or guardians will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento rights.
> 4.7. Unaccompanied youth will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento rights.

Homes for the Homeless (2011) developed the American Family Inns, where parents and children can live for a year, establishing stability in the family and allowing the parents to become self-sufficient. The American Family Inns program meets the educational

needs of each parent; children have supplemental help to compensate for skills they need to develop; and infants and preschoolers go to child development centers, giving the children a jumpstart. Recreation and cultural programs are also provided. Similar programs have been established across the country. These programs give single mothers and two-parent families the time to develop skills and establish stable lifestyles.

The extra effort works. After a family moves from an American Family Inn to their own permanent housing, they are provided with aftercare services for an additional year. Studies show that approximately 94% of those who lived in an American Family Inn were still self-sufficient and living independently 2 years later (Nuñez, 1996, p. 76). The continuing concerns for families and their children affected by homelessness require giving top priority to schools and programs that help these families survive and flourish. The United States has more of a challenge compared to many other nations: Although the U.S. provides many successful and effective programs to help the poor, more improvement is needed because the United States ranks 21st among industrialized countries for low birth weight rates, 28th in infant mortality rates, and last in relative child poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2011).

All of these suggestions can help the family, but families need time to develop skills and stability. Due to the way homeless shelters are usually set up, the family can stay only a limited time. Some programs have begun to recognize that this does not provide homeless families enough time to gain skills for employment or enough stability to provide for the family.

Teachers should create an environment where children have empathy for all, but particularly for those who need it the most. Establishing a buddy system in the classroom can help promote empathy and collaboration. Providing a place where children can keep their school materials and a supervised area where homework or enrichment activities can be completed at school will help children who are homeless have a place of their own. Encourage parents to become involved. Let the parents of homeless children participate in the classroom. As with all parents, they will need to know how you want them to participate. Plan a workshop for parents, or mentor them individually. Their involvement will not only provide extra help in the classroom, but it can also become an educational program for parents. They may learn more about how they can help their children.

# The Functions of Families

Families have different functions in the development of children. The way that these functions occur is as diverse as the families themselves. Swick (1986) described these roles as "(1) nurturing, (2) guiding, (3) problem solving, and (4) modeling" (p. 72). Cataldo (1987) described similar roles: providing "care, nurturance, and protection"; socialization; "monitoring the child's development as a learner"; and supporting "each youngster's growth into a well-rounded, emotionally healthy person" (p. 28).

The family functions occur at different times and no one function is better than the others. However, it is true that families need first and foremost to provide nurturing by supplying the basic needs of nutrition, protection, and shelter, as well as the emotional needs of interaction, love, and support. The family has a responsibility to see that the child receives adequate care but also a right to rear the child as it sees fit; this is part of guiding children. This is important to remember because families in the United States are becoming more diverse as more families come from different countries and as American families (with children and parents born and raised in the United States) develop new childrearing practices and beliefs, including how to engage in problem solving. For instance, Latino immigrant families living in a bicultural context adapt to a different socialization process where flexibility is key (Aldoney & Cabrera, 2016). African American families focus on racial socialization as parents teach their children positive self-concept even when faced with racism and hostility (Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). Most have to show their children how to find solutions to such issues. Educators need to understand the differences and challenges faced by families. When differences are understood—particularly cultural differences—educators open the door to create partnerships with families to aid in the healthy development of children. It is important for parents to model for their children how to get along and relate well with others.

Part of understanding cultural differences is having knowledge of how parents socialize their children according to their native culture's norms. Socialization varies, depending on the culture. For example, respect for elders is a norm in most cultures, but in others, such as Latino and Asian cultures, it is especially important in the socialization process. Another example is the role the extended family plays in the raising of children—for