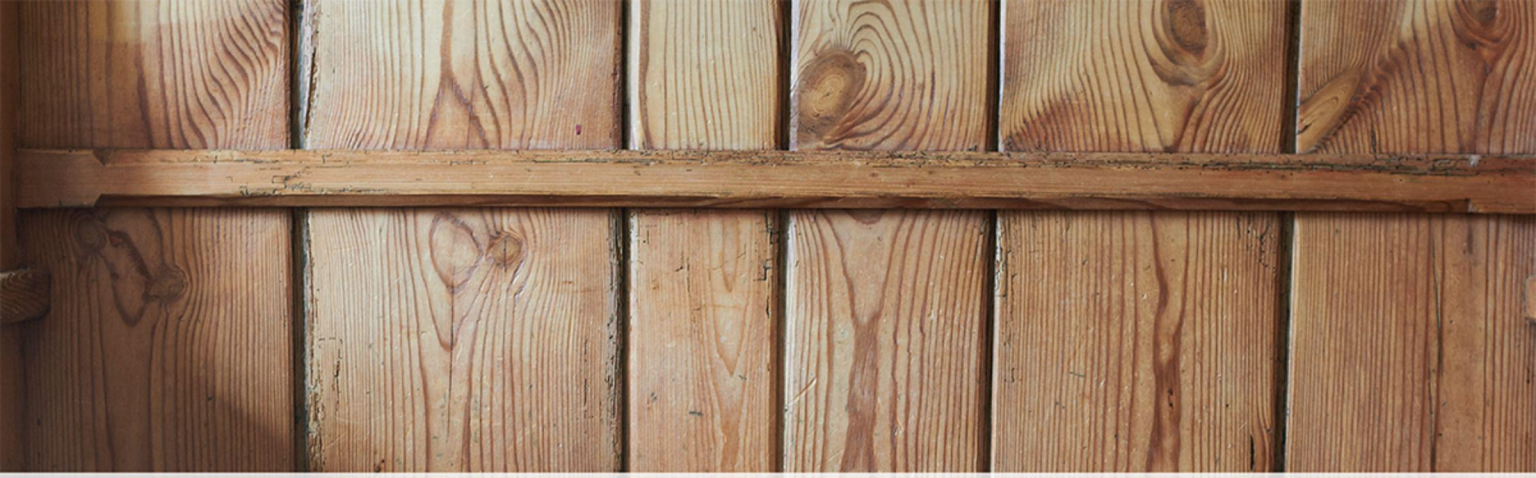

Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families

NICK STINNETT • NANCY STINNETT
MARY KAY DEGENOVA • F. PHILIP RICE

NINTH EDITION

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families

Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families

NINTH EDITION

NICK STINNETT
NANCY STINNETT
MARY KAY DEGENOVA
F. PHILIP RICE

New York Oxford
Oxford University Press

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Rice, F. Philip, author. | Stinnett, Nick, author. | Stinnett, Nancy M., author. | DeGenova, Mary Kay, author.
Title: Intimate relationships, marriages & families.
Other titles: Intimate relationships, marriages, and families
Description: Ninth edition / Nick Stinnett, Nancy Stinnett, Mary Kay DeGenova, F. Philip Rice. | New York : Oxford University Press, [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016011465 | ISBN 9780190278571 (pbk.: alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Family life education—United States.
Classification: LCC HQ10.5.U6 R53 2017 | DDC 372.37/4—dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016011465

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed by R.R. Donnelley, United States of America

Brief Contents

Contents

Boxed Features

At Issue Today

Cultural Perspective

A Question of Policy

Personal Perspective

Family Strengths Perspective

Coping Feature

Preface

In the ninth edition of *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families*, various theoretical perspectives (such as symbolic interaction theory, structural functional theory, conflict theory, and developmental theory) are utilized to help understand marriage and family dynamics and to interpret changes taking place in families. Systems theory is integrated throughout the text to illustrate the interdependence of marriage and family members and to provide insights concerning how marriage and family interactions are influenced by culture, law and policy, work, economics, coping and interpersonal skills, and the degree of family strengths.

All people share a fundamental drive to form intimate relationships with other human beings, although these relationships may take a variety of forms. As you go through life, your needs for intimacy constantly change. An infant needs to be fed and cuddled; a school-age child needs to have friends; an adolescent begins exploring sexuality; most adult men and women seek a partner, marry, and have children; and many elderly people need assistance from family in the later years of life.

When people are in relationships, it is almost inevitable that there will be challenges. Few long-term intimate relationships exist without some degree of friction. For most people, it takes considerable effort to create and maintain healthy, fulfilling relationships; for others, it is a constant struggle. And although relationships can be a source of pain, they also can be our biggest source of joy in life, bringing happiness, satisfaction, and even exhilaration. In the end, most people would agree that experiencing intimate and family relationships is the true essence of life and the abiding force that sustains and transforms them. The goal of this textbook—and likely your course overall—is to help you learn to develop the skills to achieve relationships that are warm, close, and enriching.

Each of you has tremendous capacity to grow and change; and the choices in regard to relationships are abundant today. To choose wisely and in ways that are best for you, you need a cognitive understanding of what is involved, what choices you have, and what the consequences of these choices may be. It is here that the information provided by the social and behavioral sciences can help. As a student using this text, you will have the opportunity to learn from thousands of research studies examining many facets of relationships. Objectively studying many different kinds of relationships can help you understand and make better choices in your own relationships and clarify your own personal attitudes and values.

The more you understand about the vast array of relationships and different kinds of challenges they present, the better able you are to be objective and tolerant of others. You will learn from this text that marriage and family patterns are tremendously diverse and that no one way is ideal for everyone. Also, as we study different relationship patterns, we learn that some of our own behavior patterns actually may be more widespread than we would have imagined.

It also is important to understand how your actions as a citizen impact intimate relationships and families on a societal level. When you vote, you elect officials who write laws and policies that determine such things as who can get married or how much funding after-school programs receive. Many public policy issues such as these directly affect families. Each chapter in this book explores a public policy issue and its relationship to families. These issues, like so many family issues, are often controversial. This text adopts neither a liberal nor a conservative view, but it presents different sides of an issue and challenges you to find your own individual values and answers to these important questions.

As you examine relationships over the life course, you will see that they are dynamic. One thing for sure is that change, although it is some people's biggest fear, is inevitable in life. People change, situations change, relationships change. The love you feel today may not be exactly the same as the love you will feel 10 years from now. The person you were in high school changed into the person you are today.

At the same time, there is also continuity to life, and what happens now greatly influences tomorrow. What ***happened*** in your families when you were children impacts what will happen in your families when you are adults. This book illustrates that there is similarity in the ways humans develop and cope with changes, but there is also diversity. An important aim of this book is to show students what may be expected at a particular life stage, how others have responded, and how those responses have affected the quality of their intimate relationships.

Organization

The text begins with an examination of the trends and changes taking place in marriage and family today and how different theoretical perspectives interpret those changes (Chapter 1). The concepts of gender and gender roles are examined and some of the influences on their development are described in Chapter 2.

Chapters 3 through 5 explore relationships before marriage ranging from singlehood to dating to partner selection. Marriage brings with it a new set of demands for growth and change. Chapter 6 considers first the qualities essential to happy and successful marriages, and Chapter 7 discusses changes in marital relationships over the life cycle. Chapters 8 and 9 explore work and family roles and the effect of economic status and power, decision making, and communication. The nature of sexuality, sexual relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual disorders are discussed in Chapter 10.

Chapters 11 to 14 focus on parenthood. The decisions involved in parenthood and family planning are discussed in Chapter 11, and Chapter 12 follows from conception through pregnancy and the preparations made by the family for a new baby. Chapter 13 examines parent–child relationships, whereas Chapter 14 considers relationships among members of the extended family, especially aging relatives.

Most families at one time or another experience some conflict or face a period of crisis. The text explores conflict and family crises in Chapter 15, the causes and effects of divorce in Chapter 16, and the special challenges of remarriage and stepparenting in Chapter 17.

New to the Ninth Edition

All chapters were carefully revised and updated to incorporate current research and statistics and newly emerging topics. Careful attention is given to the coverage of cultural diversity, which is not set aside in a separate chapter but integrated throughout the text. Research studies that included a culturally diverse sample are discussed wherever possible.

Recent trends in marriage and families are examined using current U.S. statistics. Among the topics discussed are the following:

- The increase in cohabitation
- Grandparents raising their grandchildren
- Marital delay and lifelong singlehood
- Gay and lesbian families
- Cultural diversity in the United States
- Attachment styles
- Addiction and the effect on families
- Violence in dating relationships
- Internet dating services
- The influence of technology and media on gender roles and families
- The increase in single parenthood
- The increase in interracial, interethnic and interfaith marriages
- Elder care and elder abuse

A careful review of literature that focused on positive aspects of family life and qualities of fulfilling and satisfying intimate relationships was conducted. Among the topics covered are the following:

- Characteristics of strong families
- The importance of couples' rituals and family time
- Qualities of a successful marriage
- Sex and a happy marriage
- The impact of premarital education
- The need for families to have more time together
- Family happiness and material wealth
- Healthy and happy stepfamilies

The ninth edition expands and updates information on the relationship between family life and

economics, and it also deals with the increase in the number of families struggling financially. The financial burden of and misconceptions about student loans are new additions. Some of the subjects included are as follows:

- The increase in family and consumer debt
- Student loans
- The shrinking dollar
- Poverty, the working poor, and family life
- The widening gap between rich and poor
- Work, stress, and the family
- Characteristics of dual-earner families
- Household labor
- Financial needs of families
- Homelessness
- The rising cost of health care
- Family-friendly policies in the workplace
- Financial management

New to the eighth edition were the following two features, which have been retained and, where necessary, updated:

Coping Feature is a unique box that provides helpful information in each chapter concerning effective coping strategies and how coping patterns impact relationships. The **Coping Feature** is consistent with one of the text's major premises—that change happens and requires us to cope.

Family Strengths Perspective is also a distinctive perspective throughout the book that provides students with a model for understanding positive functioning in families. It is based on research from thousands of strong families in diverse cultures.

Chapter-by-chapter changes:

Chapter 1

The section "Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Families" has been updated.

Chapter 2

The Coping Feature "Coping with Depression" has been expanded and updated. Substantially more updated material has been added to the discussion of gender identity and roles.

Chapter 4

The section "Attraction and Dating" has been updated to address date rape on campus and the relationship of this issue to Title IX. In addition, this section includes new material on the brain chemistry of attraction as well as the biological basis for mate selection.

Chapter 5

This chapter includes expanded emphasis and current research on attachment styles.

Chapter 8

A substantially expanded treatment of financial management provides practical suggestions and insights. Three new sections, "Student Loan Debt," "General Debt," and the "Shrinking Dollar," address the economic challenges that contemporary families face.

Chapter 9

Expanded information on communication and material on psychological games are included.

Chapter 10

A discussion on models of sexual response, a discussion of factors contributing to fulfilling sexual relationships, insights into aging and sexuality, information about sexual disorders and sexually transmitted diseases, and a discussion of the effects of alcohol and drugs on sexual response are included. The newly developed second vaccine for human papillomavirus is also discussed.

Chapter 11

Expanded and updated material concerning contraceptive methods is included.

Chapter 12

The section on prenatal care is updated and includes information on teratogens, including new research on the impact of addictive drugs as neonatal abstinence syndrome. The discussion of fetal alcohol syndrome disorders is expanded and updated.

Chapter 13

A new section, "Stress and Children," has been added, and the discussion of discipline styles has been expanded.

Chapter 14

Practical suggestions for improving in-law relationships and an exploration of the issue of grandparents' rights are discussed.

Chapter 15

A levels-of-conflict model provides insights into managing conflict. The "Crisis of Addictions" section is extensive and timely. The topic of overcoming addiction has been expanded into two parts: "Overcoming Addiction: The Addicted Person" and "Overcoming Addiction: The Family and Addicted Person Working Together." In addition, the "Crisis of Violence and Abuse" section is extensively expanded and updated to include discussion of child maltreatment and elder abuse.

Chapter 16

The topic of emotional trauma for adults in response to divorce is expanded. The discussion of children who experience the divorce of their parents has been expanded and reorganized.

Chapter 17

A major section on the challenges of remarriage is thoroughly developed. The section "Divorce or Success in Remarriage?" provides a family strengths perspective for developing success and resilience in remarried families. This reflects a fresh, positive focus on the strengths of remarried families rather than emphasis on their challenges.

Pedagogical Aids

In addition to the changes already mentioned, we include plentiful, current photographs to make the book inviting and relevant for students. Carefully updated tables and figures highlight and amplify the text coverage. Chapter outlines, objectives, marginal definitions, and review sections combine with a comprehensive glossary to help students master the material. And to maintain student interest and spotlight important current issues, we also include a number of innovative features in this edition:

- *A Question of Policy*—This end-of-chapter section, designed to foster debate and develop students' critical thinking abilities, introduces the public or social policy implications of an emerging, often controversial family issue.
- *Cultural Perspectives*—In keeping with the text's emphasis on diversity, these boxes illuminates diversity research and issues—highlighting topics such as cultural conflict and acculturation, racism, family strengths across cultures, and more.
- *Personal Perspective*—In each chapter, a piece titled "Personal Perspective" presents an interview or comments from individuals on a particular topic of discussion. These are designed to help students connect real lives, and possibly their own, to issues.
- *At Issue Today*—Another thought-provoking box type, these focus student attention on some of today's most pressing challenges—date rape drugs, the rising cost of health care, grandparents who parent their grandchildren, and more.
- *Coping Feature*—This unique feature provides helpful information in each of the chapters concerning effective coping strategies. This feature helps students understand that the ways they choose to address problems, deal with stress, and appraise situations have great impact on the quality of their intimate relationships. Change is inevitable; how we cope with it makes all the difference.
- *Family Strengths Perspective*—Throughout the book, this distinctive perspective provides a positive model and insights for understanding the characteristics of strong families and practical, real-life suggestions for implementing them in students' own intimate relationships. This feature is based on many research studies over 4 decades with thousands of families from all over the world.

Supplements

Ensuring Student Success

Oxford University Press offers students and instructors a comprehensive ancillary package for *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families.*

For Students

Companion Website

Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families is accompanied by an extensive **companion website (www.oup.com/us/stinnett)**, which includes materials to help students with every aspect of the course. For each chapter, you will find:

- Chapter Outlines
- Flashcards and Glossary
- Additional links and further reading
- Self-grading review questions

For Instructors

Oxford University Press is proud to offer a complete and authoritative supplements package for both instructors and students. When you adopt *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families*, you will have access to a truly exemplary set of ancillary materials to enhance teaching and support students' learning.

Ancillary Resource Center (ARC) at www.oup-arc.com is a convenient, instructor-focused single destination for resources to accompany *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families*. Accessed online through individual user accounts, the ARC provides instructors with access to up-to-date ancillaries at any time while guaranteeing the security of grade-significant resources. In addition, it allows OUP to keep instructors informed when new content becomes available.

The ARC for *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families* includes:

- Digital copy of **Instructor's Manual**, which includes:
  - Chapter outlines
  - Learning objectives
  - Key terms and definitions
  - PowerPoint slides
  - Web links
  - In-class activities and project assignments
  - Suggestions for class discussion
- Computerized Test Bank including:
  - Multiple-choice questions
  - True/false questions
  - Fill-in-the-blank questions
  - Short answer and essay prompts

Acknowledgments

A special acknowledgment goes to the late F. Philip Rice for his years of hard work and commitment to writing this textbook. We thank him for his insight and valuable instruction on marriage and the family, and we are grateful his ideas and writings live on in this text.

This text would not have been possible without the assistance and cooperation of many people. We thank our editor, Sherith Pankratz, and her assistants, Katy Albis and Meredith Keffer, for their support, expertise, and valuable suggestions for improving this edition.

The authors thank the following people who have reviewed and offered guidance and suggestions for the ninth edition:

Anita Glee Bertram, University of Central Oklahoma;

Lillian J. Breckenridge, Oral Roberts University;

Diana Cutchin, Virginia Commonwealth University;

Linda Emerson, College of the Desert;

Carolyn Grasse-Bachman, Penn State University ;

Gladys J. Hildreth, University of North Texas;

Christine Nortz, Florida Gateway College;

Daniel Romesburg, University of Pittsburgh;

Bahira Trask, University of Delaware;

and one anonymous reviewer

About the Authors

NICK STINNETT received his Ph.D. from Florida State University and has taught in the area of family studies at Oklahoma State University, the University of Nebraska, Pepperdine University, and the University of Alabama. Stinnett is a nationally and internationally recognized leader and researcher in the area of family strengths. In addition to his work on *Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families*, he is coauthor with Nancy, his wife, and James Walters of *Relationships in Marriage and the Family*. He is also coauthor, with Joe Beam, of *Fantastic Families: 6 Proven Steps to Building a Strong Family*, as well as *Secrets of Strong Families*, which he coauthored with John DeFrain.

NANCY STINNETT has a master's degree from Oklahoma State University. She has taught classes on marriage, parenting, and lifespan human development at the University of Alabama, serving as lead teacher for the university's Infant/Toddler Laboratory for 17 years. Nancy and Nick have coauthored a number of books on marriage and family, including *Magnificent Marriage* (with Donnie Hilliard) and *Loving and Caring—Always and Regardless*. Nick and Nancy have been married since 1968; they have two sons and seven grandchildren; they live in Northport, Alabama.

MARY KAY DEGENOVA received her Ph.D. in 1992 from Purdue University in child development and family studies. She was an associate professor of family studies at Central Michigan University and the University of New Hampshire and has taught various courses on marriage and the family. Her work on this text is a direct result of her experiences in the classroom and her *experiences* with diversity, including work as a Peace Corps volunteer in West Africa and a Fulbright scholar in Chile. In addition to her work on this text, DeGenova has written *Families in Cultural Context: Strengths and Challenges in Diversity* published by Mayfield. Her principal areas of research and scholarly writing include regrets in later life, women's identity development, family insight through literature and drama, and the development of critical thinking skills through teaching.

F. PHILIP RICE (deceased) was Professor Emeritus at the University of Maine-Orono, where he taught courses in the field of Marriage and Family for many years.

Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families

CHAPTER 1

Intimate Relationships, Marriages, and Families in the Twenty-first Century

CHAPTER OUTLINE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

AFTER READING THE CHAPTER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Define *family* and describe various family forms.
- Explain the changes in family philosophy and emphasis: the change from institution to companionship and from patriarchy to democracy.
- Outline the basic trends in marriage rates, median age at first marriage, birth rates and family size, working mothers, one-parent families, cohabitation, and gay and lesbian families.
- Summarize the basic trends in divorce rates, remarriage, and blended families.
- Define *ethnicity* and *culture* and describe the composition of the U.S. population by race.
- Describe Hispanic American, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander American, and Native American families.
- Explain behavior and patterns in families using family theories and models.
- Describe different types of research design and ways in which to analyze data.

Ann lives with her life partner, Sarah, and their adopted daughter, Olivia. They have been together for 21 years; 11 years ago they declared their love and commitment to each other in a public ceremony. After the ceremony, they no longer hid their relationship, began referring to each other as spouses, and noted that other people recognized the significance of their bond. Ann remarks,

> I have some fears about the lack of support from the legal system. We have power of attorney documents and wills that clearly name each other. We have explicitly told our siblings that we want each other to handle legal, medical, and parenting issues as the need arises. But our attorney warned us that all these documents may not be upheld if tested in a court of law. This is a concern for us, and when either one of us goes to the hospital, we bring along all the proper documents.
>
> I am the legal adoptive parent for Olivia, and while the legal documents state that if something happened to me, Sarah would be responsible for her, legally Sarah is treated like someone outside the family. Also I am concerned about the fact that Sarah will not be entitled to my Social Security benefit or pension. Although I would really like for Sarah to stay home with our daughter, I can't make this choice because Sarah needs a job with her own health insurance.
>
> I would like people to know we are not different. We are creating a family. We have jobs and a dog and go on vacation. We drive a mini-van. We need the support of friends and community to keep our relationship healthy.

Families are universal and yet each is unique. In an ever-changing world, families cannot remain static. Thus, families as we know them today differ from those of previous generations—in structure, composition, size, and function. The reasons people marry and their marital expectations have changed. Changes also have occurred in how families are governed, in who supports families, and in how people behave sexually. An analysis of marriage rates and ages, fertility rates, the percentages of working wives and mothers, numbers of one-parent families, cohabitation rates, numbers of gay and lesbian families, divorce and remarriage rates, and the numbers of blended families reveals some significant trends.

In this chapter we examine some of these changes and trends and their effects on society and the individual. In addition, it is important to consider how these changes have affected us personally.

What Is a Family?

What makes a family? Do its members have to be related by blood? By marriage? Do they have to share the same household? We examine a few of the countless definitions of *family* that have been formulated in recent decades, and then we look at some of the variations in types of families that have been identified by psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists.

Some Definitions

The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2016) defines a family as a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. In the census count, the number of families is equal to the number of family households. However, the count of family members differs from the count of household members because household members include any nonrelatives living in the household. By this definition, the family may consist of two persons who are not necessarily of different genders: two brothers, two female cousins, a mother and daughter, and so on. They may also be of different genders: a husband and wife, a mother and son, a brother and sister, and so on. If the family includes two adults, they may or may not have children. The common characteristics included in this definition are twofold: (1) the individuals must be related by blood or law, and (2) they must live together in one household. Thus, according to the Census Bureau, if adult children move out of their parents' household and establish families of their own, they are no longer considered a part of their parents' family.

Other definitions have been proposed. Winch (1971) defined the family as a group of persons related to each other by blood, marriage, or adoption and whose basic function in society is replacement. But this definition seems to limit family functions to childrearing. Burgess and Locke (1953, 7–8) defined the family as "a group of persons united by

ties of marriage, blood, or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles (husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister); and creating and maintaining a common culture." This definition would eliminate those individuals who are cohabiting, although not legally related or married. The definition seems to assume as well that individuals in a family must conform to some sort of prescribed social roles.

None of these definitions seems to cover all types of family situations, particularly nonmarried cohabiting couples and, until recently, gay or lesbian couples who could not marry legally. A more comprehensive definition is used in this book: a **family** is any group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption or any sexually expressive relationship in which (1) the adults cooperate financially for their mutual support, (2) the people are committed to one another in an intimate interpersonal relationship, (3) the members see their individual identities as importantly attached to the group, and (4) the group has an identity of its own.

This definition has a number of advantages. It includes a variety of family structures: for example, the traditional married couple with or without children, single-parent families, or families consisting of blood relatives (such as two widowed sisters or a multigenerational extended family). It also includes persons not related by marriage, blood, or adoption who have a sexual relationship: an unmarried cohabiting couple, for example. Because this definition insists that the persons be committed and in an intimate interpersonal relationship, it eliminates cohabiting couples who live together for practical reasons, without commitment, and those who have only a casual relationship although they may have sex together. The members must see their individual identities as importantly attached to the group, and the group must have an identity of its own.

Family Forms

We can categorize families according to their structure and the relationships among the people in them.

A **voluntarily childless family** is a couple who decide not to have children. (Some people refer to this as a child-free family.)

A **single-parent family** consists of a parent (who may or may not have been married) and one or more children.

A **nuclear family** consists of a father, a mother, and their children. This type of family as a proportion of all families has been declining as the family form has become more diverse.

A **family of origin** is the family into which you are born and in which you are raised. The family consists of you, your parents, and your siblings.

A **family of procreation** is the family you establish if you have children of your own.

An **extended family** consists of you, possibly a partner, any children you might have, and other relatives who live in your household or nearby. It would include grandparents who are helping care for grandchildren, for example.

A **blended, or reconstituted, family** is formed when a widowed or divorced person, with or without children, remarries another person who may or may not have been married before and who may or may not have children. If either the husband or the wife has children from a former marriage or previous relationship, a **stepfamily** is formed.

family Any group of people united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption or any sexually expressive relationship in which (1) the adults cooperate financially for their mutual support, (2) the people are committed to one another in an intimate interpersonal relationship, (3) the members see their individual identities as importantly attached to the group, and (4) the group has an identity of its own.

voluntarily childless family A couple who decide not to have children.

single-parent family A parent (who may or may not have been married) and one or more children.

nuclear family A father, a mother, and their children.

family of origin The family into which you are born and in which you are raised.

family of procreation The family you establish if you have children of your own.

extended family An individual, possibly a partner, any children the individual might have, and other relatives who live in the household or nearby.

blended, or reconstituted, family A family formed when a widowed or divorced person, with or without children, remarries another person who may or may not have been married before and who may or may not have children.

stepfamily A remarried man and/or woman plus children from a former marriage.

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

A Long 15 Inches

Will you have success in your intimate relationships? Does that depend on circumstances and luck? Or can you "do" anything to help? This book is based on the following ideas:

1. You can be successful in your intimate relationships.
2. You can learn principles that can help you experience success in your relationships.
3. It is not enough to learn the principles—you must apply them.

The last statement can be a challenge. You can learn about relationships completely enough to make an A in this class and still treat people badly or have an intimate relationship fail. An important question for each of us, then, is, "How do we move the knowledge we have about relationships the 15 inches from our heads (cognitive, unemotional, impersonal realm) to our hearts (affective, emotional, personal realm)?"

Following are some responses students like you gave to that question:

"It takes a conscious decision to put the principles we learn into action. Actions become easier with practice. We also need patience. We didn't learn to walk in a single day!"

"To move from your head to your heart, you have to care about people and put some effort into it."

"I believe that maturing is the main thing that helps me."

"Think before you act about how your action is going to affect the other person and the relationship. It takes some self-control."

"If you practice long enough it becomes natural and stays in your heart."

"Be respectful—no matter how you feel."

A **binuclear family** is an original family divided into two families by divorce. It consists of two nuclear families: (1) the maternal nuclear family headed by the mother and (2) the paternal family headed by the father. The families include whatever children were in the original family and may be headed by a single parent or two parents if former spouses remarry (Ahrons and Rodgers 1987).

A **polygamous family** is a single family unit based on the marriage of one person to two or more mates. If the man has more than one wife, a **polygynous family** is formed. If a woman has more than one husband, a **polyandrous family** is formed. Polyandry is rare, but polygyny is practiced in some African and Asian countries. Both are illegal in the United States.

A **patriarchal family** is one in which the father is head of the household, with authority over other members of the family.

A **matriarchal family** is one in which the mother is head of the household, with authority over other members of the family.

A **gay or lesbian family** consists of a couple of the same sex who are living together and sharing sexual expression and commitment. Some gay or lesbian families include children, usually the offspring of one of the partners.

A **cohabiting family** consists of two people of the opposite sex who are living together and sharing sexual expression and who are committed to their relationship without formal legal marriage.

When talking about the family, then, we must understand the type to which we are referring. With such a wide variety of family forms, we can no longer assume that the word *family* is synonymous with *nuclear family.*

Changes in Family Philosophy and Emphasis

Because the structure and the function of the family have changed over the years, it is important to have a historical perspective to better understand the present and possible future characteristics of the

family. Two major changes that have influenced many characteristics of the family have been shifts from institution to companionship and from patriarchy to democracy.

From Institution to Companionship

One of the most important changes in family function has been a shift in emphasis. Traditional views emphasized the role of the family as an institution whose function was to meet the needs of society or the physical needs of society (for example, the bearing and socialization of children to continue the culture) or the physical needs (such as food, shelter, and protection) of family members; this is the **instrumental role** of the family. More modern views of the family tend to emphasize its role in fulfilling emotional and social needs (companionship, belonging, and affection, for example) of family members; this is the **expressive role** of the family. One explanation for this shift is that U.S. society has become highly industrialized.

In an industrial society in which the majority of people live in urban areas, neighbors remain strangers, and it becomes harder for people to find friendship, companionship, and emotional support. Many people are mostly involved in *secondary relationships*—relationships that are superficial and easily replaced. For example, a person may know a little about a coworker in the next cubicle or a friendly server at a favorite café, but true intimacy or friendship is lacking. They may be pleasant people to chat with or to wish "Have a nice weekend," but if they move away, they are soon replaced.

When affectional needs are not met, an individual can feel isolated and alone although he or she is surrounded by millions of people. Erik Erikson (1959) and others have suggested this is because humans long for the profoundly affirming experience of genuine intimacy. Such intimacy is found in *primary relationships*—relationships characterized by breadth and depth of knowledge about someone plus warmth, honesty, and openness. Spouses (or best friends) who know each other's dreams, goals, and fears (as well as favorite color and football team)—and who feel comfortable and safe together—exemplify intimacy. In a highly impersonal society, it becomes more necessary to find intimacy—belonging and emotional security—in the family itself.

The conventional idea of a family is two parents and one or more children, but in reality, there are many varieties of family structure.

There has been some shift, therefore, in family functions. In the 1800s, people openly admitted to marrying to obtain economic security, to provide

binuclear family An original family divided into two families by divorce.

polygamous family A single family unit based on the marriage of one person to two or more mates.

polygynous family A man married to more than one woman/wife.

polyandrous family A woman married to more than one man/husband.

patriarchal family A family in which the father is head of the household, with authority over other family members.

matriarchal family A family in which the mother is head of the household, with authority over other family members.

gay or lesbian family Two people of the same sex who are living together, having sex, and being mutually committed.

cohabiting family Two people of the opposite sex who are living together and sharing sexual expression and who are committed to their relationship without formal legal marriage.

instrumental role The role of the family in meeting the needs of society or the physical needs of family members.

expressive role The role of the family in meeting the emotional and social needs of family members.

goods and services for one another, to attain social status, to reproduce, and to raise children. Now people marry for love, companionship, and happiness. Rearing healthy, happy children and having economic security are still important goals in marriage, but love, affection, and personal happiness are people's primary expectations in marriage today.

This shift has changed the family itself. When people establish a family for love, companionship, and personal satisfaction but do not find happiness, they may become disappointed or frustrated. Sometimes expectations are charged with so much romantic fantasy that fulfillment is impossible. This is one reason for the high divorce rate; couples often separate because personal needs and expectations are not met.

The family pictured here was once considered the ideal. The father was traditionally the head of the household, with authority over all the family members.

From Patriarchy to Democracy

Throughout most of our history, the American family was patriarchal. The father was considered head of the household, with authority over and responsibilities for other members of the family. He was the supreme authority in making decisions and settling disputes. He was entitled to the deference and respect of other family members, who were expected to be submissive and obedient.

As head of the household, he owned the property, which was passed to the next generation through the male line. This is known as **patrilineal descent**. The wife and children were expected to reside with the husband and with or near the husband's family, according to his choice. This is **patrilocal residence**. However, as noted earlier, some families are matriarchal, meaning the mother is the head of the household. The terms that refer to female descent and residence are **matrilineal descent** and **matrilocal residence**. This practice was seen in traditional Iroquois society, in which men were expected to move to the female household, and important lines of descent were traced through the female.

Generally, in the 1950s and earlier, one characteristic of the traditional patriarchal family was a clear-cut distinction between the husband's and wife's roles in the family. The husband was the breadwinner and was responsible for clearly defined chores that were considered "man's work," such as making house repairs or mowing the lawn. The wife was responsible for "woman's work," including housecleaning, cooking, and caring for the children.

With the cultural climate of activism of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and the women's rights movement in the 1960s, the ideals of the patriarchal family were challenged. The patriarchal family was replaced by the democratic family, in which women were treated more as equals and demanded a greater voice in family governance.

This change had several causes. First, with the rise of the feminist movement, women gained some economic power and freedom. The feminist movement in the United States was launched at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, with the first women's rights convention. Starting with almost no political leverage and no money and with conventional morality against them, the suffragists won enactment of the Married Women's Property Act in the latter half of the nineteenth century and ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. The Married Women's Property Act recognized the right of married women to hold property

and borrow money. As some economic power gradually shifted to women, they gained more power and authority in family governance as well. Property could now be passed on through **bilateral descent** (through both the father and the mother).

Second, in the 1960s and 1970s, increasing educational opportunities for women and the gradual increase in the percentage of married women working outside the home encouraged the adoption of more egalitarian gender roles in the family. As more wives earned an income, more husbands were asked to bear equal responsibility for homemaking and child care. Although sharing responsibilities was the ideal, it was not always followed in practice, and working wives continued to do most of the housework (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). The general trend, however, is toward a more equal voice in decision making and a more equitable and flexible distribution of family responsibilities (see Chapters 2 and 8 for a detailed discussion). Democratic, egalitarian, dual-career families often prefer a **neolocal residence**—a place where both spouses choose to live—rather than living with either spouse's family.

Third, in the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for equality of sexual expression resulted from the recognition of the sexual needs of women. With such recognition, marriages could be based on the mutual exchange of love and affection. Development of efficient contraceptives also freed women from unwanted childbearing and enabled them to have greater personal and professional choices.

Fourth, the child study movement after World War II catalyzed the development of the child-centered family. No longer was it a matter of what children could do to serve the family; rather, it became a matter of what the family could contribute to the total development of the child. The rights and needs of children as important members of the family were emphasized.

The net result of these and other changes has been the development of a democratic family ideal that emphasizes egalitarian rights and responsibilities in a group concerned with the welfare of all. This ideal has not always been achieved, but family philosophies, forms, and functions continue to change as new needs arise.

After years of protest, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, women won the right to own property and borrow money with the enactment of the Married Women's Property Act. Women who fought for the right to own property may have been arrested for the cause.

Changes in Marriage and Parenthood

As we will see, marriage and parenthood have undergone various changes in recent decades. The marriage rate has gone down, the age at which people marry has gone up, and the number of children per family has declined. Another controversial change is the very definition of marriage.

patrilineal descent Inheritance that is traced through the male line.

patrilocal residence A residential pattern in which a newlywed couple resides with or near the man's family.

matrilineal descent Inheritance that is traced through the female line.

matrilocal residence A residential pattern in which newlyweds reside with or near the woman's family.

bilateral descent Inheritance is passed through both the male and the female line.

neolocal residence A residential pattern in which newlyweds leave their parents' homes and reside in a new location of their choice rather than with either family.

Historically, marriage in the United States has been defined as being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband and wife in a consensual and contractual relationship that is recognized by law. In recent decades, the idea that a legal marriage can exist only between a male and female has been challenged. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. Constitution guarantees same-sex couples the right to marry. Furthermore, states cannot prohibit same-sex marriages and must recognize such marriages performed in other states (World Almanac 2016).

Marriage Rates

The marriage rate is the number of persons who marry during the preceding 12 months per 1,000 population. The rate depends on economic and political conditions, as well as on the percentage of persons of marriageable age in the population.

The rate reached a peak of 16.4 per 1,000 population in 1946, just after World War II, and then declined rapidly to 8.5 per 1,000 in 1960. The rate varied at a fairly high level for two decades and then began to fall again in 1980, after most of the baby boom babies had married (see Figure 1.1). Today the rate is 6.8 per 1,000 (National Center for Health Statistics 2016). Some of the decline results from the delaying of first marriages until older ages, the increase in unmarried cohabitation, and a small decrease in the tendency of divorced persons to remarry (Popenoe 2007).

Median Age

One of the dramatic trends in marriage patterns over the decades has been the postponement of marriage to a later age. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the median age at first marriage started a decline that ended in the mid-1950s, reaching a low of 22.5 years for males and 20.1 years for females. Since then, the estimated median age has been rising, with especially rapid increases since 1980. In 2014, the median age was 29.3 for males and 27.0 for females (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016). Figure 1.2 shows this trend. The gap between males and females has also narrowed over the years, but on average, men are still 2 years older than women the first time they marry.

A higher age at marriage is associated with longer periods of school enrollment. In 2003, 85% of American adults had a high school diploma, compared with 75.2% in 1990, and 27% had earned a bachelor's degree or more in 2000, compared with 21% in 1990 (*Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2012). The delay in marriage is also associated with the decline in negative attitudes toward remaining single, a longer life expectancy, more career options for women, increased opportunities for nonmarital

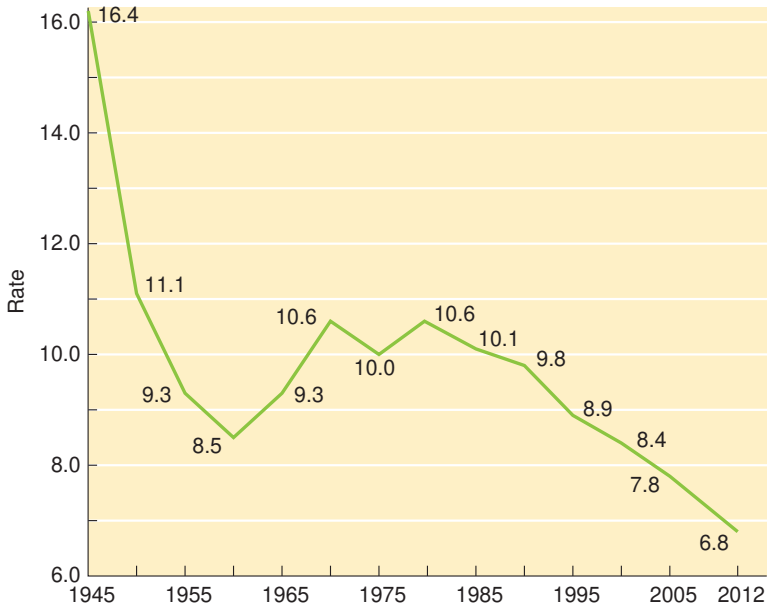

FIGURE 1.1 Marriage Rate per 1,000 Population

Note: From Statistical Abstract of the United States, *2012. U.S. Bureau of the Census. http://www.census.gov.*

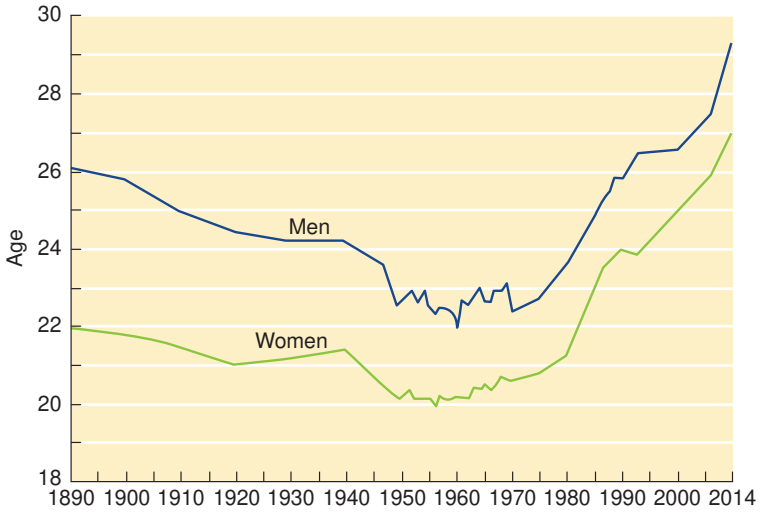

FIGURE 1.2 Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890–2014

Note: Data from Vital Statistics of the United States, *by U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), annual, 1890–2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2016. http://www.census.gov.*

sexual intercourse, and increased acceptance of nonmarital cohabitation.

This trend is significant because those who wait until they are in their middle or late twenties to marry have a greater chance of marital success than do those who marry earlier. In fact, one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of the propensity to divorce is the age at which persons marry. Virtually every study of marital dissolution undertaken since the late 1960s has found both spouses' age at marriage to be statistically significant with respect to the probability of divorce (South 1995). The delay of marriage also has resulted in large numbers of unmarried young adults in the population. In 2010, for example, 88.7% of men and 79.3% of women ages 20 to 24 were never married, and 62.2% of men and 47.8% of women ages 25 to 29 were never married (*Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2012). See Figure 1.3 for a detailed breakdown of marital status for all ages.

Family Size

Over the past 100 years, American family and household sizes have been shrinking. (The U.S. Bureau of the Census measure of family size excludes unrelated people living in the household. Consequently, the family/household numbers differ slightly.) In 1915, the average number of people sharing a home was 4.5; by 1960, the average family size had dropped to 3.65 (3.39 for household size). By 2010, family size had reached 3.14 (2.58 for households) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2012).

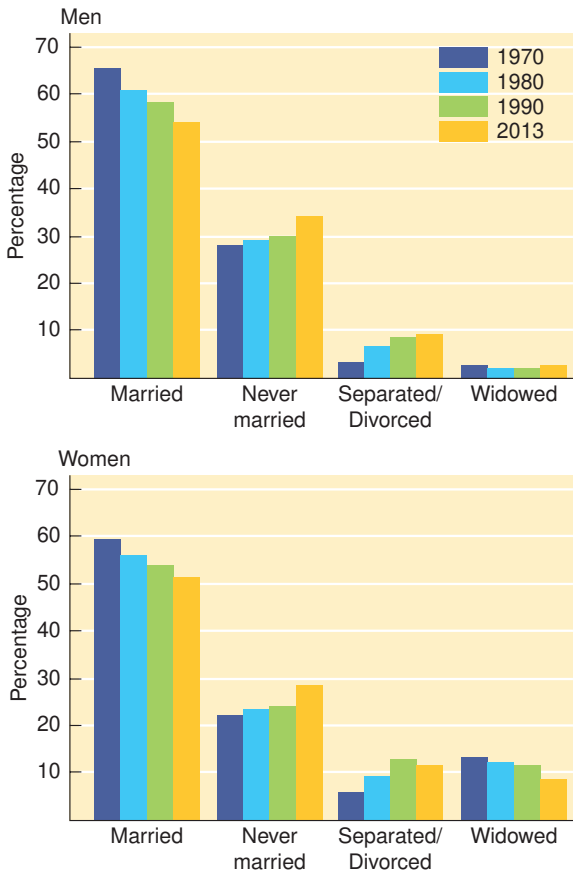

FIGURE 1.3 Marital Status of the Population 15 Years and Older, by Sex: Selected Years, 1970–2013 (in percentages)

Note: From J. Fields (2004), U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2003;* Statistical Abstract of the United States, *2015, U.S. Bureau of Census. http://www.census.gov.*

The decline in family/household size can be attributed to several factors, including changes in fertility, marriage, and divorce patterns. For example, the numbers of single-parent families and child-free families have increased, resulting in fewer people per family. Divorce generally reduces the size of households by separating one household into two smaller ones.

A decline in overall fertility has been a significant factor in families becoming smaller. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the average married woman had five children. At that time, large families were considered not only a blessing but also an economic asset: more hands were available to work the family farm or business. Furthermore, reliable birth control methods were largely unavailable. In fact, federal and state laws made it illegal even to provide information about birth control.

As families moved from farms to cities and became consumers rather than producers, providing for large numbers of children became financially difficult. Also, women began to work in factories and offices and could not take care of large families. Day care for young children was not widely available.

Federal and state laws prohibiting the dispensing of contraception information and methods were gradually repealed. More efficient means of contraception became available; couples were more willing to use them.

The **fertility rate** (number of live births per 1,000 women 15–44 years of age) shows the ongoing decline in fertility since 1960, when it was 118 per 1,000 women, to 62.9 now. Another way of measuring fertility patterns is to assess the **birth rate** (live births per 1,000 population). The birth rate has declined from 23.7 in 1960 to 12.5, which is a record low (National Center for Health Statistics 2016) (see Figure 1.4). Perhaps an even clearer way to measure fertility is to determine the average number of births per woman. Currently, in the United States, the average number of births per woman hovers near 2 (Monte and Ellis 2014; World Bank 2016).

The declining pattern of fertility in America is influenced by a number of current factors. These include (a) the pattern of delaying marriage until later ages; (b) the pattern of delaying becoming parents until later ages (the longer one delays having a first child, the less the chances of having a second or third child); and (c) the economic recession, unemployment, and shrinking middle-class jobs, which have created uncertainty about the future—thus influencing people to have fewer children or to delay parenthood.

The decline in births has affected family composition as well as family size. It has been estimated that 75% of households in the middle 1800s involved children under the age of 18. By 1960, only about half of households did; by 2005, about 32% contained children; and by 2010, approximately 24% contained children under 18 years of age (Popenoe 2007; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2011). This means that adults are less likely to be

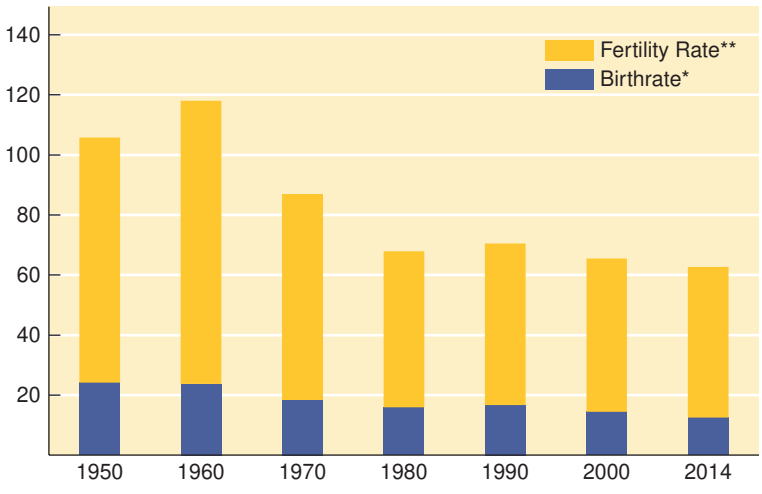

FIGURE 1.4 Birth Rates and Fertility Rates: 1950–2014

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2016.

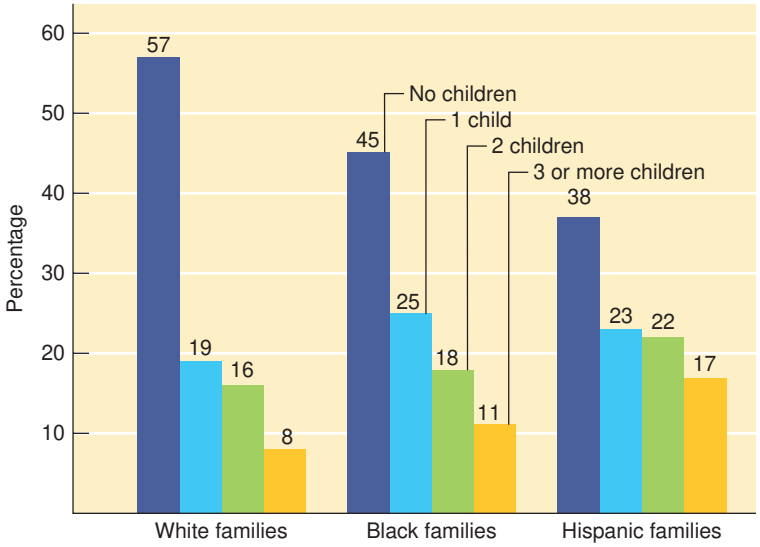

FIGURE 1.5 Percentage Distribution of Families by Number of Own Children under 18 Years Old and by Ethnic Group, 2006

Note: Data from Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2008 *(Table 60), by U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2008, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.*

living with children and that neighborhoods are less likely to have children (see Figure 1.5). The welfare, needs, and concerns of children may be receiving less consideration by both family members and the broader culture (Popenoe 2007).

Working Wives and Mothers

Another important change in family living has been the large influx of married women into the workforce. Until the early 1980s, married women with no children under age 18 had higher labor force participation rates than did those with children under age 6. This long-standing pattern began to change during the 1980s and has now reversed. Currently, primarily because of economic necessity, less than half of all mothers are stay-at-home parents. Now, about 61% of mothers with children under the age of 3 are in the labor force, a significant increase from 38% in 1980 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014).

Research has revealed some demographic, social, and attitudinal differences between married women who work outside the home and those who do not. Those who do not are more likely to hold traditional attitudes regarding marital roles, mothers' employment outside the home, and sexuality. Married women who are not employed full-time have more children and live in households with less income. Married women who are employed full-time are better educated and have fewer children and more income than married women who are not employed (Glass 1992; United States Department of Labor 2014).

Women enter the workforce for both economic and noneconomic reasons. The major reason is financial need: factors such as inflation, the high cost of living, and the desire for a higher standard of living pressure families to have two incomes. Employment opportunities for women also have increased. Noneconomic reasons for employment are important as well. Large numbers of women want to work for reasons of personal fulfillment.

In some ways, paid employment has added to women's burdens. Most working wives must meet the usual demands for housework and family care in addition to working outside the home. Although more husbands help with household and parental chores, research indicates that a wife's employment has only a minimal effect on her husband's involvement. Consequently, many employed wives feel that they start the "second shift" when they get home (Cox 2009). In addition, increased employment for mothers has intensified the demand for child care. This trend will be discussed in Chapters 8 and 13.

fertility rate The number of live births per 1,000 women 15–44 years of age.

birth rate The number of live births per 1,000 population.

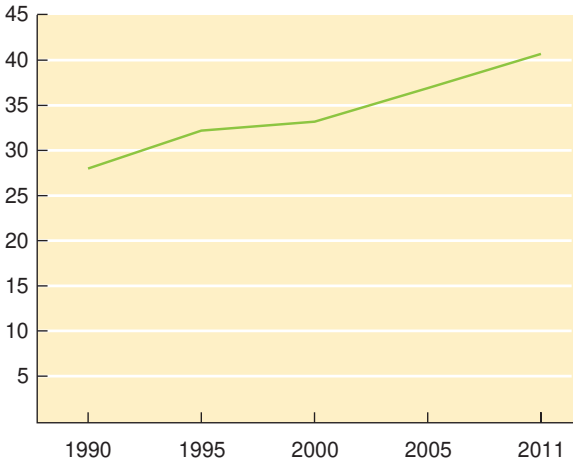

FIGURE 1.6 Percentage of U.S. Births to Unmarried Women, 1990–2013

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2016.

One-Parent Families

One major change in families since the 1970s has been the increase in the number of families that consist of a single parent maintaining a household with one or more children. The percentage of families headed by a single parent has increased from 11% in 1970 to 19%; 16% headed by moms and 3% headed by dads (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016).

Another perspective on this change is to consider that since 1970, the percentage of children living in single-parent families has more than doubled. In 1970, just less than 12% of children under age 18 lived in a single-parent home compared with 28% now. Of those children living in a single-parent family, most (more than 80%) are with their mothers (Dawn 2015; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016).

High rates of separation and divorce as well as the increased number of births to single women have contributed to the large increase in this family type. The large increase in births to unmarried women represents one of the most profound family changes in the past 50 years. Currently, about 41% of all U.S. births are to single women compared to only 28% in 1990 (National Center for Health Statistics 2016). Figure 1.6 illustrates this trend.

Overall, about 30% of American children live in a single-parent family. Black children, however, are disproportionately represented in this family form. Some 56% of black children compared to 22% of white and 31% of Hispanic children under age 18 live in a single-parent family (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015).

One of the major problem areas associated with the rise in single-parent families is economic because many single-parent households do not have adequate income to support children. Single mothers have a higher rate of unemployment than do married mothers (Bianchi 2011). Financial pressure is one of the most common complaints among single parents, and single-parent families are more likely than two-parent families to live in poverty. For example, nearly 31% of single-mother and 16% of single-father families live in poverty compared with about 7% of married-couple families with children (Dawn 2015; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016). Research has shown that even when controlling for the effects of education, single fathers are better off economically than single mothers, and white single parents fare better economically than African American single parents (Dawn 2015; Zhan and Pandey 2004). Single-parent families and the impact of economic hardship on a child's development will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 8.

Family life is an important source of life satisfaction for African Americans, especially if the family has a comfortable and steady income.

Cohabitation

One of the most significant changes in family form has been the huge increase in the number of opposite-sex couples who live together and share sexual intimacy without having a legal marriage. As Figure 1.7 shows, the number of cohabiting couples increased from less than 500,000 in 1960 to slightly more than 7 million in 2014. Most cohabitants are young

adults; the number of cohabiting couples drops sharply after age 30 (Kreider 2008; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016).

At first glance it might appear that cohabitation is replacing marriage. Instead, it is more likely that cohabitation has become part of the mate-selection process (Manning, Longmore, and Giordano 2007). Today, between 50% and 60% of opposite-sex couples who plan to marry live together first, up from 10% in 1965 (Guzzo 2009; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2012).

Although cohabitation is convenient and offers an antidote to loneliness, cohabitants tend to have poorer relationship quality—lower levels of happiness and well-being and more depression—than do married couples (Kline et al. 2004; Rhoades et al. 2006). Also, those who cohabited before marriage are more likely to divorce and/or to consider the possibility of divorce, with the divorce rate being highest among serial cohabiters (Jose, O'Leary, and Moyer 2010; D. T. Lichter and Qian 2008). However, cohabiters who report plans to marry their partners are involved in unions that do not differ significantly from marriage.

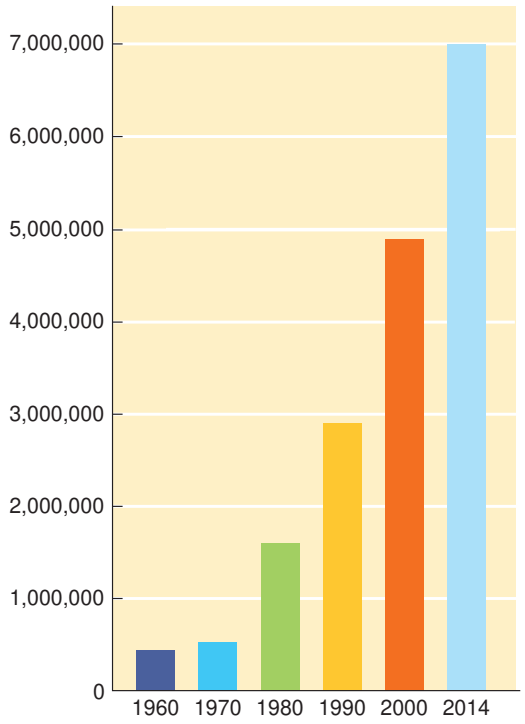

FIGURE 1.7 Number of Unmarried Couples Cohabiting, 1960–2014

Note: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. Households and Families: 2016. http://www.census.gov.

Furthermore, although many young people believe it is a good idea to live with a person before marrying, numerous studies indicate that living together is not a good way to prepare for marriage or to avoid divorce. Instead, cohabitation increases both the risk of breaking up after marriage and the risks of domestic violence for women and physical and sexual abuse for children. A woman is nine times more likely to be killed by a partner in a cohabiting relationship than by a husband (S. L. Brown and Bulanda 2008; Rhoades et al. 2006; Shackelford and Mouzos 2005).

It is hard to know exactly why cohabitation is not better preparation for marriage. Researchers speculate that overall commitment is less in cohabiting relationships than in marriage and that cohabitation offers less certainty of a lifetime partnership. Lower levels of commitment seem to change the day-to-day dynamics of the relationship. Certainly, cohabiting couples who encounter difficulties or who decide they just do not want to be together may find it easier to end the relationship when commitment is lacking.

It is also possible that it is not the experience of cohabiting that increases marital difficulties and the risk of divorce, but rather the expectations, attitudes, and values of the people who choose cohabitation. Cohabitation is perceived as "different" from marriage—as involving less commitment and relationship quality. Cohabitation may be chosen because it is viewed as practical—a way to share expenses and have a steady sex partner—but with lower expectations of an enduring, satisfying relationship (J. M. Reed 2006).

The increase in cohabitation is a large reason why nonmarital childbearing has increased substantially in the United States. The percentage of live births to unmarried women has increased from 10.7% in 1970 to about 41% today (National Center for Health Statistics 2016; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2008b).

It is estimated that 40% of all children today will spend some time in a cohabiting household. The effect on these children depends a great deal on the quality and harmony of the cohabiting relationship—and on the quality of the relationship that the adults in the household establish with the children. Children need love, affection, security, and guidance in their lives. If the cohabiting relationship supplies these needs, children will

AT ISSUE TODAY

Children Not Living with Married Biological Parents

The increased diversity of family forms in recent decades has raised concerns about the well-being of children growing up in them. Research over the past 20 years supports the idea that, generally speaking, children do best when reared by their two married, biological parents who have a low-conflict relationship (Amato 2005; M. Parke 2003). However, most children reared in other types of family forms grow up without serious problems—thus raising questions about whether the risks are a result of family form and marital status or are caused by other factors such as poverty or the quality of the adults' relationship. Understanding the implications of the findings is complicated by the fact that many children live in more than one family form in the course of childhood and that the risks vary according to family form.

Research findings indicate some specifics:

- Single-parent families have a much higher poverty rate (26%) than two-parent, biological families (5%) or stepfamilies (9%).
- The risk of dropping out of school is lower in two-parent, biological families than in single-parent or stepparent families (11% vs. 28% for whites; 17% vs. 30% for blacks; and 25% vs. 49% for Hispanics).
- Children of unmarried mothers are most at risk for poverty and not completing their education.
- Children of widowed parents fare best of all categories of children of single parents.
- Children living with a parent or parents who cohabit are at great risk for unstable living situations. The average cohabiting relationship lasts 2 years.
- School achievement and behavioral problems are similar among children living with two biological parents—whether married or cohabiting.
- Children in stepfamilies are more likely to have negative behavioral, health, and educational outcomes and to leave home earlier than children living with both married biological parents.
- Children living with same-sex parents tend to have challenges no more difficult than their counterparts reared in heterosexual *divorced* families.
- Children who grow up in married families with high conflict experience lower emotional well-being than those in low-conflict homes.

likely benefit; if it does not, children will be affected negatively (Artis 2007). Children in cohabiting households face a risk five times greater than children in married households that the couple will break up (Manning 2002; Osborne, Manning, and Smock 2007).

In the event of the ending of a cohabiting relationship, property is considered to belong to the person who owned it or bought it; property is not considered to be "common" unless both parties' names appear on a deed or title. Neither is considered to have any responsibility for the financial support of the other (unlike in a divorcing situation where an ex-spouse with financial resources may be required to pay alimony). When children are involved, the father may have to prove paternity to claim visitation/custody rights with his offspring. And a mother may have to prove paternity of the child to claim child support from a non-custodial father (Find Law 2016).

Gay and Lesbian Families

As stated previously in the chapter, broadening the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples is controversial today. Recent national opinion polls indicate that most (47% to 60%) of the American public supports same-sex marriage (Burke 2015;

McCarthy 2015). Gays and lesbians regard legal marriage as important to them for the same reasons that heterosexuals do.

Same-sex couples who want to be in long-term, committed, and legally recognized relationships have three options. In June 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that same-sex couples can marry. With this historic decision, same-sex couples now have the right to marry in all states and have all the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of married heterosexual couples (de Vogue and Diamond 2015).

In some states, same-sex couples can enter into a **civil union** that gives them nearly all the same rights and privileges of married couples. These include joint property rights, inheritance rights, visitation in prison/hospitals, and inclusion in insurance and pensions. A couple must obtain a civil union license and have the union certified by a judge or member of the clergy. If the couple breaks up, they must go through family court to obtain a legal dissolution.

In a third option, a number of states as well as some counties and cities recognize **domestic partnerships**. These partnerships allow same-sex couples and certain heterosexual couples (for example, senior cohabitants) to have some of the rights and privileges as married couples—hospital visitation, emergency health care, funeral arrangements, and inheritance without a will. Some major U.S. corporations (including Apple Computer, IBM, and Disney) began to extend employee health insurance benefits to partners of gay and lesbian employees some time ago.

Laws and policies regarding civil unions and domestic partnerships do not include all the rights of marriage and they vary considerably from state to city to company. Nor do civil unions and domestic partnerships carry federal marriage benefits; they may not be recognized by other states. For these reasons and because same-sex marriage is now allowed in all states, the number of same-sex couples choosing civil unions or domestic partnerships likely will decline.

About one-fourth of same-sex couples are rearing children—either children born during a previous heterosexual relationship or born by donor insemination or children who are adopted (Herek 2006). Even so, same-sex parenting is an issue of controversy. Major concerns center around the possible adverse effects of the parents' homosexuality on the children's overall development. Generally, the studies that have been conducted on children who grow up in gay and lesbian families show that the children develop in a positive manner psychologically, intellectually, behaviorally, and emotionally. They have no greater incidence of homosexuality or substance abuse than do children who grow up in a heterosexual family and show no significantly greater retention in school (Manning, Fettro, and Lamidi 2014, Rosenfeld 2010).

In 2002 the American Academy of Pediatrics called for state laws to allow for gays and lesbians to adopt a partner's children. This would allow for children to be covered under health insurance policies and receive survivor benefits. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has similar views on adoption rights for gay and lesbian parents.

Grandparents as Parents

One notable trend in the evolution of the family in recent decades is the dramatic increase in the number of children (more than 6 million, or 6% of the nation's children) living in households headed by grandparents. This is quite an increase compared to 1970, when 2.2 million (3.2%) children under age 18 lived in their grandparents' homes (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2012). When these households are categorized by the presence of parents, it becomes evident that the greatest increases have occurred in households in which at least one parent is also residing in the home. Since 1970, the number of grandparent-maintained households in which the mother was present more than doubled (Kreider and Fields 2005) (see Figure 1.8). Reasons for this trend include an increase in drug use among parents; higher rates of teen pregnancy, divorce, child abuse, and neglect; and incarceration of parents.

Given the increase in the number of grandparents raising their grandchildren and the impact this arrangement has on both caregiver and child, the government and the community will likely be called on to provide more support (Ellis and

civil union A legally recognized union similar to marriage.

domestic partnership A legal or personal relationship between two people who live together and share a common domestic life but are not joined by marriage or civil union.

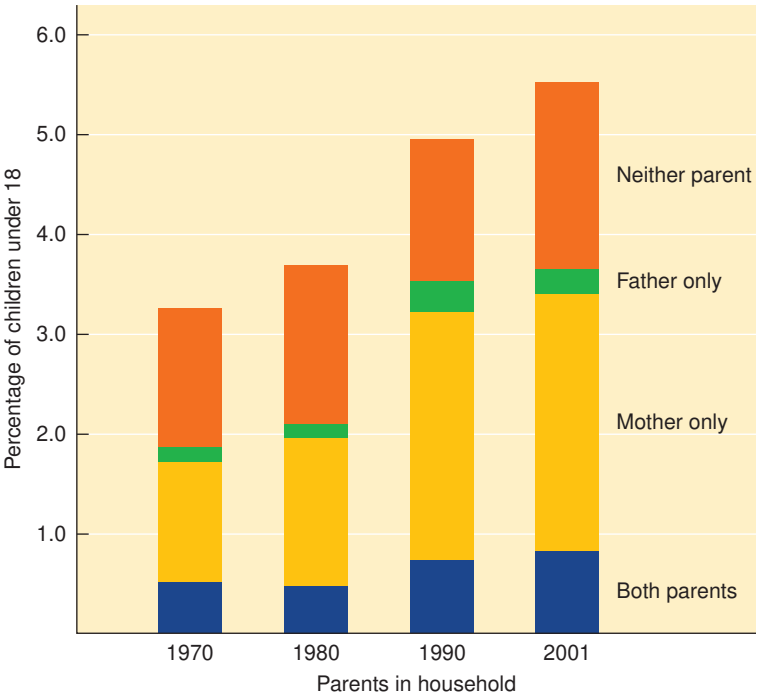

FIGURE 1.8 Grandchildren in Grandparents' Homes by Presence of Parents, 1970–2001

Note: Data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970 and 1980, "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1994" (Table A-6) and "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1997" (Table 4); Kreider and Fields (2005), Living Arrangements of Children: 2001, by U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, *Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.*

Simmons 2014). Policies and programs intended for traditional and foster families could be extended to grandparent-maintained families as well, and employee benefits for grandparents remaining in the workforce could be extended to their grandchildren, for example.

As life expectancy continues to rise, many Americans will find themselves living well into their nineties.

Changes in Life Expectancy

Although there are racial and gender differences in life expectancy, Americans are living longer than ever before and are healthier in later life. In 1970, life expectancy was 67 years for men and 75 years for women. By 2013 these numbers had increased to 76.4 years for men and 81.2 for women (National Center for Health Statistics 2016). The gap in life expectancy between men and women is narrowing (down from 8 years to 5). Racial differences in life expectancy also continue, with blacks having lower life expectancy than whites by about 3 years for women and 4.5 years for men (National Center for Health Statistics 2016).

The increase in life expectancy is impacting marriages and families. More and more families are caring for their elders during the same years that they are rearing their children. This can strain the financial, emotional, time, and energy resources of family members who are already struggling with the demands of career and children.

The implication of longevity on duration of marriage is also a question to examine. A 25-year-old couple marrying today has good prospects of living long enough to celebrate a golden wedding anniversary—if the marriage can survive. (In 1900,

when life expectancy was 47 years, marriages did not have to last as long.) As people grow and change, particularly in a society that is generally tolerant of divorce, many may seek divorce or alternative living arrangements to achieve greater personal fulfillment and happiness.

Changes in Divorce and Remarriage

Another of the dramatic changes in family life over the past four decades has been the increase in the rate of divorce and remarriage, along with the number of stepfamilies. In recent years, rates of divorce and remarriage have declined slightly, but they are still at a relatively high level.

Divorce Rates

An examination of the trends in the proportions of people ever divorced is complicated because that indicator is a function of the proportions both of people getting married and of those getting divorced (Kreider 2005). The U.S. Census defines the divorce rate as the number of people divorced per 1,000 population. Today, the divorce rate is 3.4 per 1,000 individuals (National Center for Health Statistics 2016). Divorce rates increased steadily from 1958 until about 1980, but since then they have declined slightly (see Figure 1.9). Most scholars believe that the divorce rate has stabilized, with about 40% to 50% of new marriages likely to end in divorce. The decline from the all-time high may represent a slight increase in marital stability resulting from the increased age at which people marry for the first time and the higher educational level of those marrying, both of which are associated with greater marital stability (Popenoe 2007; Whitehead and Popenoe 2005). Other background characteristics of people entering a marriage also have major implications for their risk of divorce. If a person is reasonably well educated with a decent income, comes from an intact family, is religious, and marries after age 25 without having a baby first, the chances of divorce are considerably lower (Popenoe 2007; Whitehead and Popenoe 2005). Divorce will be discussed in detail in Chapter 16.

Remarriage Trends

Many of the people who are divorced or widowed marry again. About 40% of new marriages involve a remarriage for at least one of the persons. Another way of looking at this is that about 23% of married adults have been married before (Livingston 2014).

Remarriage happens fairly quickly. The median number of years between divorce and remarriage is about 3 to 4 years (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016). Whites remarry more quickly than African Americans and Latinos and men are more likely than women to remarry. Also, among those who do remarry, men generally do so sooner than women (Livingston 2014). Remarriage rates will be discussed in subsequent chapters. However, since the 1960s, the proportion who remarry appears to be declining among younger adults but increasing among seniors (Livingston 2014).

Redivorce rates for remarried persons also show slight signs of decline from previous years and are becoming similar to those of first divorce. Currently, it is estimated that about 67% of second marriages and 75% of third marriages will end in divorce (compared to 40% to 50% of first marriages) (Banschick 2013). For women, the median duration of second marriages that end in divorce is about 8 years, which is the same as for first marriages. The median duration of second marriages for men is slightly longer, at 9 years (Kreider 2005).

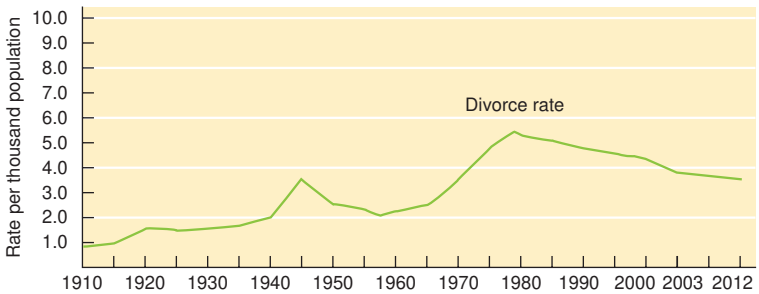

FIGURE 1.9 Divorce Rates, 1910–2012

Note: Data from Vital Statistics of the United States, *by National Center for Health Statistics (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), annual, 1910–1998, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office;* National Vital Statistics Reports *49, no. 6, August 22, 2001; National Center for Health Statistics, 2016.*

However, the incidence of divorce in the United States remains among the highest in the world. The net effect of a high rate of divorce and remarriage is an increase in reconstituted, or blended, families.

Blended Families

Many American marriages are remarriages for one or both of the spouses. When a parent remarries and brings children from a previous marriage into the new family unit, a blended, or reconstituted, family is formed. If the couple has children together, the blended family may consist of children from her previous marriage, children from his previous marriage, and children born to them since they married each other.

Family relationships in a blended family can become complicated. Each parent faces the challenge of forming relationships with stepchildren, with the children of the new marriage, and perhaps with the spouse's ex-spouse. The children face the challenge of adjusting to stepparents and to stepsiblings, as well as maintaining relationships with natural parents both inside and outside their new family unit. If both of their natural parents remarry, the children must adjust to two stepparents and to any stepsiblings in their newly constituted families. Also, both parents and children may have to form new relationships with other relatives on both sides of the families. In short, many adjustments are required. See Chapter 17 for a detailed discussion of remarriage and stepparenting.

Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Families

The United States has long been a country with rich diversity of ethnicity and cultures. Because ethnic and cultural backgrounds strongly influence family life, a multicultural perspective is necessary to understand contemporary family relationships.

Increased Ethnic Diversity

Slightly more than 197 million people (64% of the population) are classified as white non-Hispanic; many of their family trees have European roots that date back 200 or more years. Non-Hispanic blacks number 40 million individuals (12% of the population). Hispanics, whose family roots may be in Mexico, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, or Central and South America, total about 54 million people (16% of the population). About 16 million people (5% of the population) identify themselves as Asians or Pacific Islanders. Non-Hispanic Native Americans from various tribes number about 2.5 million (1% of the population) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015) (see Figure 1.10).

In fact, the United States contains people from virtually all the world's cultures. In a general sense, **ethnicity** can be thought of as the way people define themselves as part of a group through similarities in ancestry and cultural heritage (race, religion, or national origin). **Culture** can be defined as the sum total of ways of living, including the values, beliefs, aesthetic standards, linguistic expressions, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms, and styles of communication that a group of people has developed to ensure its survival in a particular physical and human environment (Hoopes 1979). Ethnicity and culture are not always the same thing because culture can encompass many different ethnicities. For example, American culture is a mixture of the arts, beliefs, customs, and other products of human endeavor and thought created by many different ethnic groups. If people take the time to learn about and benefit from this diversity, the cultural makeup of the nation becomes a significant strength.

The values, beliefs, history, and circumstances of one's ethnic group or ethnic identity result in certain family characteristics (family structure,

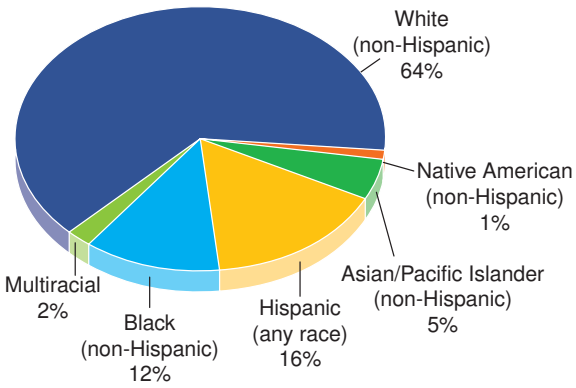

FIGURE 1.10 U.S. Population by Race and Hispanic Origin

Note: Data from "Resident Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin Status" by U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, *2015. http://www.census.gov.*

spousal relationships, power structure, or child-rearing patterns, for example) being different from those of other ethnic groups. Keep in mind, however, that there are a great many similarities across ethnic groups (love of children or values such as honesty, for example) as well as differences within ethnic groups (Asians from Vietnam differ from Asians from China). Research has concentrated on the following ethnic groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian/Pacific Islander Americans, and Native Americans.

Hispanic Americans

The Hispanic population is the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States, currently comprising 16% of the population and expected to grow to 25% of the population by 2050. This is in part a result of high immigration rates and high fertility rates. Traditionally, the Latino family was patriarchal, with the husband/father expected to be dominant as a way of proving his machismo (manhood). Modern Hispanics view machismo in terms of courage, strength, family pride, respect for others, honor, and the proper use of authority (Hamner and Turner 2001; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015).

Role relationships in marriage are still traditional. The man is the head of the household, but is expected to exercise authority in a fair and dignified manner and to show respect for other family members. Although machismo does often characterize Latin American culture, research of Hispanic families in the United States does not indicate a pattern of male dominance. Egalitarianism is demonstrated to a higher degree than is male dominance—especially as wives enter the workforce (Pinto and Coltrane 2009). Good communication, religion, and children are considered very important to marriage success (Skogrand, Hatch, and Singh 2008).

The fertility rate for Hispanics is the highest of any ethnic group in the United States (National Center for Health Statistics 2015; Popenoe 2007). Parent–child relationships are warm and nurturing; fathers tend to be playful and companionable with their children, but the mother–child relationship is primary. The relationship between children and their parents is typically one of respect. It is common for the younger generation to express great deference to elders (Hamner and Turner 2001).

The family is highly valued, and the needs of the family are emphasized above those of the individual. Individuals find their identity in the family group. The extended family is an important source of strength and help: cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and siblings offer assistance as needed. Approximately 69% of Hispanic children live in intact families, and the divorce rate is lower for this group than for non-Hispanic whites or blacks (National Center for Health Statistics 2012).

African Americans

Black Americans are the second largest racial minority in the United States. The African American population has experienced considerable change over the past 25 years, including the rise of a middle class, the rise of an underclass, and the diminishing of the blue-collar working class. This means that although about one-third of blacks are classified as middle class, another 27.4% live below the poverty level (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2012).

Research on black families in recent years helps present a picture of the diversity within this racial group. Some assumptions from earlier years have also fallen. For example, the common assumption that black families are matriarchal is not always true. In reality, the egalitarian pattern is common in intact families and is the norm in middle-class families (Hamner and Turner 2001; R. L. Taylor 2002).

African American women have a history of having worked outside the home (because of economic need), thus giving them incomes and power in the marital relationship. McAdoo (2007) notes that African American couples expect to work together for the good of the marital unit and share equally in decision making. Contrary to the stereotype of the absent black father, many men are involved in the care of their children—especially in families with financial security.

African American women face several unique challenges in finding spouses. First, there are fewer

ethnicity The way people define themselves as part of a group through similarities in an ancestry and cultural heritage.

culture The sum total of ways of living, including the values, beliefs, aesthetic standards, linguistic expressions, patterns of thinking, behavioral norms, and style of communication a group of people has developed to ensure its survival in a particular physical and human environment.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Ethnic Identity and Acculturation

Minority groups often find it difficult to truly be accepted and to fit into mainstream American culture. This can be the case even for those who have lived in the United States all their lives and have adopted all the mainstream cultural habits. Consider the following quotations from the media regarding Asian Americans:

> *"You know, I'm tired of the Kristi Yamaguchis and the Michelle Kwans! They're not American . . . when I look at a box of Wheaties, I don't want to see eyes that are slanted and Oriental and almond shaped. I want to see American eyes looking at me."*
>
> —Bill Handel, popular morning DJ for KFI-AM, one of the nation's most listened-to talk radio stations.

> *"American beats Kwan."*
>
> —MSNBC's erroneous headline after figure skater Tara Lipinski beat Michelle Kwan during the 1998 Winter Olympics. Both women are Americans.

Mia Tuan (1999) has explored what she called the "authenticity dilemma" confronting Asian Americans today. She interviewed 95 third-, fourth-, and fifth-generation Chinese and Japanese Americans living in northern and southern California to (1) determine the content, meaning, and salience of ethnicity in their lives; (2) explore the extent to which they felt that ethnicity was an optional rather than imposed facet of their identities; and (3) examine the role played by race in shaping life experiences. The following excerpts are from her interviews:

Q. HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF?

A. That's a really hard question actually. I guess as an Asian-American. I don't consider myself just Japanese, just Chinese. I don't consider myself just American. I don't know. I kinda like terminology like Asian-American and African-American because it's kinda messy. . . . By blood, I'm Chinese and Japanese. By culture, I don't know if I am so much of either. I don't know. . . . Mom would always tell me I used to get confused growing up. "How can I be Japanese and Chinese and American?" "Well, you are half Japanese, half Chinese, and all American." (108)

A. I don't think I can be just American just for the fact that I look different from the typical American, white. (Why not just Japanese then?) Because I definitely am Americanized, an American raised in America. And I don't always agree with what Japanese, Japan stands for. (109)

A. Usually I say Chinese American because I realize I'm not Chinese. People from China come over here and like, whoa, they're like a foreign species. And I'm not American because just one look and I'm apart. I used to struggle with this question a lot and to make a long story short, Chinese-American is a hybrid of its own. It's kind of like Afro-Americans. Boy, they're not African and they're not American and it's just its own species and that's the way it is. (116)

A. Like my girlfriend, it's kinda funny because she's of Irish descent, but people would never think that or ask where are you from because they see her as being Caucasian. And if they look at me they would say, "Oh where are you from," because I'm perceived as being Asian first. It's like girl, an Asian girl, and anything that follows after that. For my girlfriend it would be like, she's white, she's of Irish descent but it doesn't really matter. It's like way down the list of whatever. (112)

These statements go to the heart of the dilemma many Asian Americans face: they have learned that others view them as outsiders in American society. Although they are lifelong Americans, they are not perceived as such because they do not fit the image of a "real" American. About half the respondents reported having felt out of place or suddenly conscious of their racial background at some time. Reasons for this reaction included stares, comments, and even threats from others who looked on them as strangers or intruders in a

public place. European Americans see it as a matter of personal choice whether to identify along ethnic lines, but the respondents found that not identifying in ethnic or racial terms was problematic in their interactions with non-Asians. Complicating matters for many Asian Americans was that their foreign-born counterparts saw them as "too American" and not knowledgeable enough about Chinese or Japanese ways (Tuan 1999).

Tuan (1999) summarizes:

> *Today, Asian ethnics exercise a great deal of choice regarding the elements of traditional ethnic culture they wish to incorporate or do away with in their personal lives. They befriend whom they please, date and marry whom they please, choose the careers they please, and pursue further knowledge about their cultural heritage if they please. In this sense, ethnicity has indeed become optional in my respondents' personal lives. But in another very real way, being ethnic remains a societal expectation for them despite how far removed they are from their immigrant roots or how much they differ from their foreign-born counterparts. (123)*

black men than women. The problem is compounded for college-educated women because fewer men than women are obtaining college degrees and because women tend not to marry men with less education than themselves.

Whereas the number of one-parent families is growing among all ethnic groups, the number of such families is very high among African Americans. About 56% of black children (compared to 22% of white and 31% of Hispanic children) live in households headed by a single parent—usually the mother (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015). Reasons for this include a high divorce rate and the rise in the number of births to unmarried women—currently about 41% of all births in the nation and approximately 72% of all live births in the black population (National Center for Health Statistics 2015).

A number of important strengths of black families have been identified by research (McAdoo 2007; D. Olson, DeFrain, and Skogrand 2014; R. L. Taylor 2002). The factors that help these families function successfully include a love of children, caring parenting, a high degree of religious orientation, strong kinship bonds, a favorable attitude toward elderly individuals, strong motivation to achieve, flexible roles, and egalitarian marriages.

Asian/Pacific Islander Americans

The major subgroups of Asian/Pacific Islander Americans, in order of size, are the Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Koreans. Although they show considerable diversity within their group, two aspects of cultural heritage that are shared are that of the Confucian principle of familism and prescribed role relationships within the family (Hamner and Turner 2001; Knox and Schacht 2016). In Asian/Pacific Islander families, the father is the undisputed head of the family with responsibility for the family's economic support and social status. The mother is responsible for the emotional and psychological care of her husband and children. Children show respect to all elders and satisfy their parents (Kelley and Tseng 1992; C. Lin and Liu 1993).

Familism emphasizes the importance of the family group over individual interests. A top priority is placed on loyalty to the family and obedience. Personal desires are subordinated for the good of the group—perhaps helping explain the lower divorce rate and the emphasis on interdependence (Kao, Guthrie, and Loveland-Cherry 2007; Xiong et al. 2005).

Although traditional childrearing methods were authoritarian, the more acculturated parents have become more permissive. They tend to be warm, affectionate, and somewhat indulgent with very young children. Discipline becomes stricter as children get older. Education and high achievement are emphasized (Hamner and Turner 2001).

familism A social pattern in which the interests of the individual are subordinated to the values and demands of the family.

Strengths of Asian/Pacific Islander families include low divorce rates, fewer births to unmarried women, more conservative sexual values, and high levels of education and income (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Lee 2006). The median income of Asian American families is the highest of any racial/ethnic group and about 50% achieve a bachelor's degree or higher—almost double that of all Americans. There is a strong expectation among Asian American parents that their children will get graduate degrees. When compared to other racial/ethnic groups, Asian Americans have the highest proportion who are married and the lowest proportion who are divorced or separated, as well as the lowest proportion who have births outside of marriage (Lauer and Lauer 2011; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015). In addition, Asian Americans have a solid commitment to the family, including a sense of duty to family and feelings of respect and responsibility for relatives (D. Olson, DeFrain, and Skogrand 2014).

Native Americans

This group includes American Indians as well as Eskimo/Inuit and Aleutians (Knox and Schacht 2016). Native Americans comprise about 1% of the U.S. population and are a diverse group, showing considerable variation among approximately 500 tribal groups. For example, some 200+ languages are reported as well as observable differences in tribal governance, income, religion, and customs (Ogunwole 2006; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2015).

Native American families face a number of challenges. These include achieving higher levels of education, identifying role models, maintaining family traditions, dealing with the conflicting values of the tribe and the broader U.S. culture, facing health challenges such as high rates of alcoholism, and dealing with high poverty rates (Lonczak et al. 2007).

It is difficult to describe a "typical" Native American family because of the diversity within this group. The major source of identity for the individual is the tribe; particular family structure and values vary according to the tribe. For example, some tribes are matriarchal, whereas others are patriarchal. Intermarriage rates are the highest of any racial group. Little stigma is attached to births to unmarried women or to divorce. As women increasingly are employed outside the home, marriages are becoming more egalitarian (McLain 2000).

Family, however, remains the basic unit of Native American society, with extended family ties being strong. *Family* is defined variously in terms of household composition, extended family through distant cousins, and clan membership (several households of relatives).

The extended family is a source of strength and support for Native Americans. For example, children may be reared by relatives living in different households. One distinctive feature of childrearing and socialization is the exposure of children to a wide array of adults with whom they can identify and from whom they can receive nurturance and love. There are important bonding patterns between children and older people; elders are perceived as having great wisdom (Hamner and Turner 2001).

Evidence suggests that Native American children are prepared for independence at earlier ages than are black or white children. Adults rarely hit children and shouting when correcting children is disapproved of. Children are viewed as tribal persons—not merely children. They are included in social activities and encouraged to develop a sense of community, to be responsible, and to meet their share of obligation for community living (Dykeman and Nelson 1995; S. L. Turner et al. 2006).

Certain prominent values serve to guide marriage and family behaviors. Noninterference and self-determination are particularly important. For this reason, any type of intervention by government agencies or social workers is in conflict with deeply held values. Other values and strengths in all the tribal groups include respect for elders, avoidance of personal glory and gain, giving and sharing with multiple generations of relatives, and a love for their land. Native Americans also value collateral relationships in which family involvement, pride, and approval are stressed as opposed to individualism (Hamner and Turner 2001).

In considering Native American and other ethnic groups, we are reminded that it is a mistake for one group to judge another by its own set of values or to believe there is only one ideal family form. The challenge is for people to develop understanding of other groups while maintaining pride in their own. An individual who is proud to be part of a particular cultural group and who is respected by the rest of society can contribute richly to a nation that prides itself on being the world's melting pot.

Theories to Help Explain Family Behavior

As rational creatures, we seek explanations. When a husband and wife divorce, for instance, family and friends look for answers to a variety of questions: What happened? Why are they getting a divorce? What will happen to them and the children after it is all over?

There are dozens of theories related to intimate relationships, marriages, and families. Theories have been formulated to explain why people are attracted to one another, why people fall in love, why people select the partners they do, how gender roles develop, how families make decisions, what causes sexual dysfunctions, how to raise children, and what causes divorce.

Here, we are interested in theories related to the family itself. According to scientific methods, theory building is a process of formulating a problem, collecting data to aid in solving the problem, developing a hypothesis, testing it, and then drawing conclusions, which are stated in the form of a theory. A **theory** is a tentative explanation of facts and data that have been observed (Klein and White 1996).

Psychologists and sociologists have formulated a number of theories about the family. Several important ones have been selected for discussion here: structural-functional theory, family developmental theory, symbolic interaction theory, systems theory, social learning theory, exchange theory, conflict theory, feminist theory, and the International Family Strengths Model. They are certainly not the only theories to help explain family behavior, but they are some of the most often used. Other important theories, such as attachment theory, are discussed in subsequent chapters to help explain certain behaviors or family dynamics.

Structural-Functional Theory

Structural-functional theory looks at the family as a social institution and asks, "How is the family organized, and what functions does it serve in meeting society's needs?" When talking about the family, structural functionalists usually refer to the nuclear family. From this point of view, the family is considered successful to the extent that it fulfills societal expectations and needs.

Family functions have been described in numerous ways. In 1949, Murdock identified four basic functions of the nuclear family: providing a common residence, economic cooperation, reproduction, and sex. Since Murdock's time, the nuclear family has become less common, and some of the functions he identified are not necessarily confined to the family. In an attempt to provide an even more basic definition of the family, sociologists and family theorists have proposed other functions. However, Murdock's four are a good place to start discussing the family's role in society.

COMMON RESIDENCE In recent decades, changes in society have created variations of the function of common residence. In commuter marriages, for example, spouses maintain separate residences for much of the time, seeing each other only on weekends or occasionally during the month. Noncustodial parents and their children share a common residence only some of the time, but they still form a family.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION Economic cooperation is a broad concept that can include a wide range of activities, from cooking, to maintaining a household, to earning an income. It includes the production, allocation, distribution, and management of resources such as money, material goods, food, services, skills, care, time, and space.

Historically, the family was almost self-sufficient. Family members cooperated to grow food and sew clothing, for example. They relied on each other for the care of the infirm or very young.

During and after the Industrial Revolution, many families moved off the family farm and came to depend more on those outside the family for the production of goods and services. As families became consumers rather than producers, earning an income became necessary. Partly because of increasing demands for income, wives also were enlisted in the task of providing a living. Thus, spouses became mutually dependent in fulfilling this task.

The economic functions of the family are still important, but the nuclear family has never been

theory A tentative explanation of facts and data that have been observed.

structural-functional theory A theory that emphasizes the function of the family as a social institution in meeting the needs of society.

Families differ in many ways. In the United States, cultural and ethnic diversity are reflected in differences in family styles and philosophies of childrearing.

able to meet all of them. Some needs have been met by other groups. For example, insurance companies provide health and life insurance, and industries and the Social Security Administration provide pensions for persons who are retired or disabled.

REPRODUCTION Although the reproductive function of the family has always been important, nonmarital reproduction is now common as well. Advances in reproductive technology—in vitro fertilization, for example—have made it possible for fertilization to take place without any sexual contact between a man and a woman.

SEXUAL FUNCTIONS Murdock's (1949) concept of sexuality was synonymous with heterosexual relationships within the family. Obviously, sexual expression, both heterosexual and homosexual, may take place outside a family unit. In the past 40 years, attitudes about nonmarital sexual activity have become much more accepting. Large numbers of single adults are sexually active; many couples cohabit before marriage.

NURTURE AND SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN Sociologists have described other family functions. Reiss (1980) insists that the only universal function of the family (nuclear, extended, or otherwise) is the nurturance and socialization of children. Although schools, churches, and groups such as the Girl and Boy Scouts or the YMCA participate in the socialization process, society agrees that family is primarily responsible. Failure to meet this function constitutes legal grounds for charges of child neglect or abuse. Additional information on the socialization of children may be found in Chapter 13.

The structural-functional theory is also relevant to understanding mate selection and marriage success on an individual level. For example, what is your vision for your marriage? What qualities or functions do you want it to possess? Perhaps companionship and sexual fidelity are at the top of your list. If so, you will be more likely to have a successful marriage with someone who shares these values than with someone who does not.

Family Developmental Theory

Family developmental theory includes several basic concepts. The first is that of the family life cycle, which divides the family experience into phases, or stages, over the life span and describes changes in family structure and roles during each stage. The traditional family life cycle starts with the new/early marriage (with no children), followed by years devoted to childbearing and childrearing, empty-nest years, retirement, and ends with the death of one's spouse and widowhood. Chapter 7 discusses the family life cycle in more detail.

Families exist in a variety of forms, but the nuclear family is still much in evidence. Its most enduring function may be the care and guidance of children.

The second concept is that of developmental tasks, which Duvall (1977) defines as growth responsibilities that arise at certain stages in the life of the family. The successful completion of these tasks leads to immediate satisfaction and approval, as well as to success with later tasks. In contrast, failure leads to unhappiness in the family, disapproval of society, and difficulty with later developmental tasks. Examples of developmental tasks are the need to develop parenting skills when a child is born and the need to make adjustments at the time of retirement. For the family to continue to grow,

family developmental theory A theory that divides the family life cycle into phases, or stages, over the life span and emphasizes the developmental tasks that must be accomplished by family members at each stage as well as the importance of normative order.