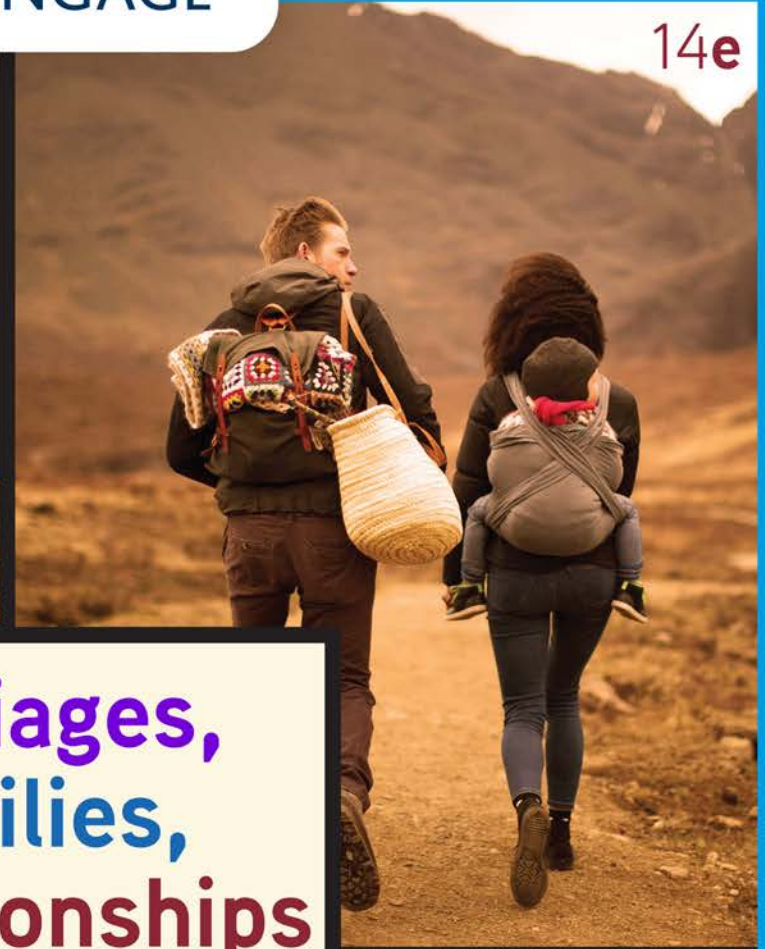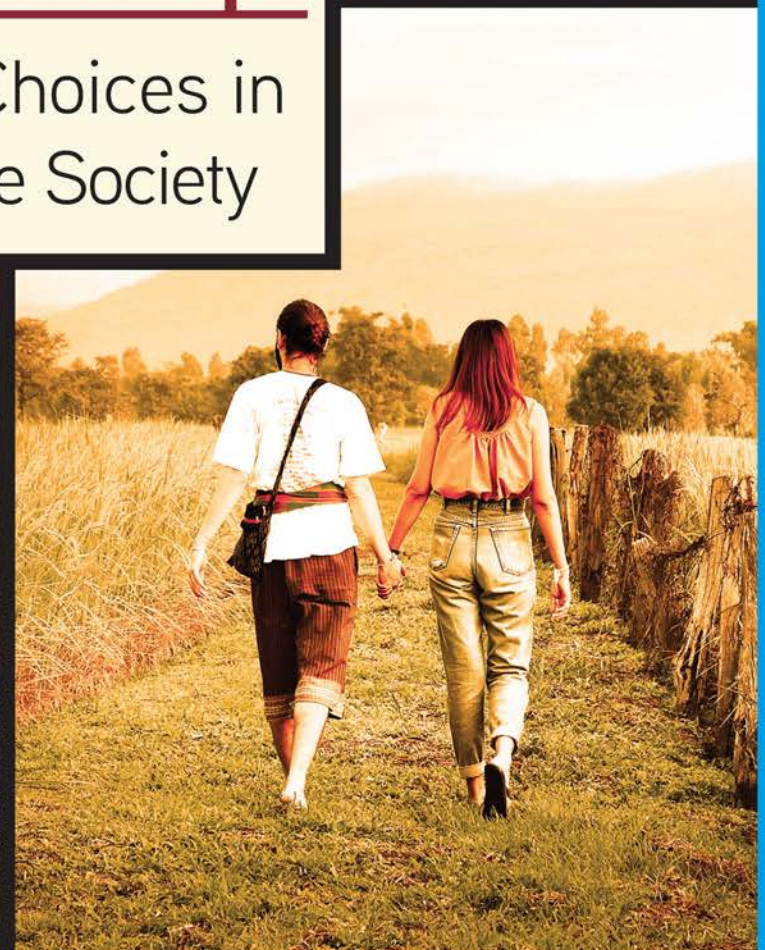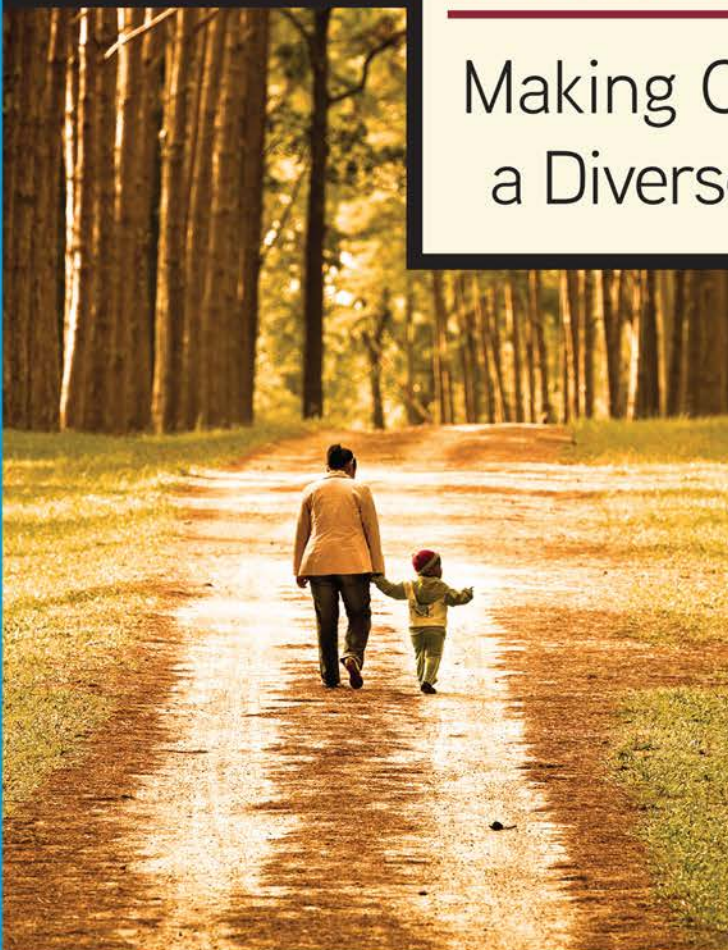Mary Ann **Lamanna**
Agnes **Riedmann**
Susan D. **Stewart**

CENGAGE

14**e**

Marriages, Families, &Relationships

Making Choices in a Diverse Society

MARRIAGES, FAMILIES, and RELATIONSHIPS

Making Choices in a Diverse Society

Fourteenth Edition

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University of Nebraska, Omaha

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Iowa State University

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To our families, especially

Larry, Valerie, Sam, Janice, Simon, and Christie

Bill, Beth, Natalie, Alex, and Livia

Gwendolyn, Gene, Lee, Christine, Mom

   and Dad

About the Authors

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PREFACE

As we complete our work on the fourteenth edition of this text, we become aware of how suddenly society and family life can change. If ever there was a dramatic example of how the social environment affects personal and family life, the global pandemic Covid-19 has unfortunately provided it. We had finished revising much of this edition before Covid-19 changed life as we knew it. By the time we were finishing our revision of Chapter 16, however, the virus had quieted cities and overwhelmed hospitals. We recognize the pandemic in Chapter 16 with a new box, "As We Make Choices: Want to Call or Visit an Isolated Senior?"

So many questions and hypotheses come to mind regarding how Covid-19 is likely to impact families. We, your authors, are already beginning to think about how this monumental pandemic will impact the content of future editions. We imagine that Covid-19 will focus greater attention on what family means to us as well as on the critical importance of traditional family functions such as raising children and providing practical and social support to family members. How will Covid-19 impact families' motivation and ability to perform these functions? In what ways might we expect family theory and research respond to Covid-19? Will this pandemic affect our choices about our preferred family forms? Will people be more likely to marry than to cohabit, for instance? Or will their decisions go in other directions? How might parenting concerns, issues, and behaviors change? What about the work–family interface? How do families fare when one or more family members suddenly begin working from home? Or later, when home-based workers return to work?

How will mandatory quarantines affect romantic relationships? It was only a matter of time before researchers would look into the impact of Covid-19 on sex. Only weeks after the virus, psychologist Jessica Zucker explored this in "Health, Sex and Coronavirus: How Does Sexual Intimacy Change During a Pandemic?" In an Instagram poll, whereas 50 percent of respondents said their sex life had improved, 50 percent said their sex life had worsened—the "six feet apart rule" would make sex difficult to achieve for those not already living with a partner. It's important to point out, however, that the research on "baby booms" following natural disasters, such black-outs and hurricanes, is mostly mythology. In general, people avoid bringing children into the world when economic times are uncertain.

Then too, how might family power relations change? We're seeing a divide between how older Americans view this pandemic and how a number of young adults perceive the danger and what it requires of them. We've all seen the images of young people partying on the beach during Spring Break in the midst of social distancing.

Will this divide affect family life? And if so, in what ways? Moreover, unfortunately we're hearing about domestic violence during quarantine. An example is Wendy Patrick's (J.D., Ph.D.) article in the March 19, 2020, online *Psychology Today* blog, "Domestic Abuse During Quarantine: When the Threat is Inside, What Victims Trapped at Home with an Abuser Need to Know" (psychologytoday.com).

How might theory and research on family stress and crisis—which assuredly this pandemic causes!—help us to understand what's going on in ourselves, our families, our communities, and our world? What can research findings tell us about what helps families to pull together during a crisis such as this? How might Covid-19 impact the divorce rate? On the one hand, stress puts added strain on couple relationships, and couples with poor relationship quality who are forced together for months may realize they should not stay together. On the other hand, couples under mandatory quarantine may rediscover what they love about each other and may count their blessings in an uncertain world. This remains to be seen. On another front, in what ways does Covid-19 impact aging families, their younger relatives, and caregivers? We were nearly finished revising Chapter 16 when this pandemic broke out and had time to write a box relating to this unprecedented Covid-19 outbreak: "As We Make Choices: Want to Call or Visit an Isolated Senior?"

Covid-19 aside, we authors look back with pride over thirteen earlier editions. Together, these represent more than forty years spent observing and rethinking American families. Not only have families dramatically changed since we began our first edition but also has social science's interpretation of family life. It is gratifying to be a part of the enterprise dedicated to studying families and sharing this knowledge with students.

Our own perspective on families has developed and changed as well. Indeed, as marriages and families have evolved over the last four decades, so has this text. In the beginning, this text was titled *Marriages and Families*—a title that was the first to purposefully use plurals to recognize the diversity of family forms—a diversity that we noted as early as 1980. Now the text is titled *Marriages, Families, and Relationships*. We added the term *relationships* to recognize the increasing incidence of individuals forming commitments outside of legal marriage. At the same time, we continue to recognize and appreciate the fact that a large majority of Americans—now including same-sex couples—are married or will marry.

Hence, we consciously persist in giving due attention to the values and issues of married couples. Of course, the concept of marriage itself has changed appreciably. No longer necessarily heterosexual, marriage is now an institution to which same-sex couples across the United States and in a growing number of other nations have legal access.

Meanwhile, the book's subtitle, *Making Choices in a Diverse Society*, continues to speak about the significant changes that have taken place since our first edition. To help accomplish our goal of encouraging students to better appreciate the diversity of today's families, we present the latest research and statistical information on varied family forms (including those with lesbian, gay, transgender, and other non-cisgender family members) and families of diverse race and ethnicity, socioeconomic, and immigration status, among other variables.

We continue to take account not only of increasing racial and ethnic diversity but also of the fluidity of the concepts *race* and *ethnicity* themselves. We pay attention to the socially constructed nature of these concepts. We integrate these materials on family diversity throughout the textbook, always with an eye toward avoiding stereotypical and simplistic generalizations and instead explaining data in sociological and sociohistorical contexts. Interested from the beginning in the various ways that gender plays out in families, we have persistently focused on areas in which gender relations have changed and continue to change, as well as on areas in which there has been relatively little change.

In addition to our attention to gender, we have studied demography and history, and we have paid increasing attention to the impact of social structure on family life. We have highlighted the family ecology perspective in keeping with the importance of social context and public policy. We cannot help but be aware of the cultural and political tensions surrounding families today. At the same time, in recent editions and in response to our reviewers, we have given heightened attention to the contributions of biology and psychology and to a social psychological understanding of family interaction and its consequences.

We continue to affirm the power of families as they influence the courses of individual lives. Meanwhile, we give considerable attention to policies needed to provide support for today's families: working parents, families in financial stress, single-parent families, families of varied racial and ethnic backgrounds, stepfamilies, same-sex couples, and other nontraditional families—as well as the classic nuclear family.

We note that, despite changes, marriage and family values continue to be salient in contemporary American life. Our students come to a marriage and family course because family life is important to them. Our aim now, as it has been from the first edition, is to help students question assumptions and reconcile conflicting ideas and values as they make choices throughout their lives. We enjoy and benefit from the contact we've had with faculty and students who have used this book. Their enthusiasm and criticism have stimulated many changes in the book's content. To know that a supportive audience is interested in our approach to the study of families has enabled us to continue our work over a long period.

THE BOOK'S THEMES

We developed the book's themes by looking at the interplay between findings in the social sciences and the experiences of the people around us. Ideas for topics continue to emerge, not only from current research and reliable journalism, but also from the needs and concerns we perceive among our own family members, students, and friends. The attitudes, behaviors, and relationships of real people have a complexity that we have tried to portray. Interwoven with these themes is the concept of the life course—the idea that adults may change by means of reevaluating and restructuring throughout their lives. This emphasis on the life course creates a comprehensive picture of marriages, families, and relationships and encourages us to continue to add topics that are new to family texts. Meanwhile, this book makes these points:

- People's personal problems and their interaction with the social environment change as they and their relationships and families grow older.

- People reexamine their relationships and their expectations for relationships as they and their marriages, relationships, and families mature.

- Because family forms are more flexible today, people may change the type or style of their relationships and families throughout their lives.

These themes appear throughout this text: People are influenced by the society around them as they make choices, social conditions change in ways that may impede or support family life, there is an interplay between individual families and the larger society, and individuals make family-related choices throughout adulthood.

The process of creating and maintaining marriages, families, and relationships requires many personal choices; people continue to make family-related decisions, both big and small, throughout their lives. Making decisions about family life begins in early adulthood and lasts into old age. People choose whether they will adhere to traditional beliefs, values, and attitudes about

gender roles or negotiate more flexible roles and relationships. They may rethink their values about sex and become more informed and comfortable with their sexual choices.

Women and men may choose to remain single, to form heterosexual or same-sex relationships outside of marriage, or to marry. They have the option today of staying single longer before marrying. Single people make choices about their lives ranging from decisions about living arrangements to those about whether to engage in sex only in marriage or committed relationships, to engage in sex for recreation, or to abstain from sex altogether. Many unmarried individuals live as cohabiting couples, often with children. Once individuals form couple relationships, they have to decide how they are going to structure their lives as committed partners. Will they have children? Will other family members live with them—siblings or parents, for example, or adult children later?

Couples will make these decisions not once, but over and over during their lifetimes. Within a committed relationship, partners also choose how they will deal with conflict. Will they try to ignore conflicts? Will they vent their anger in hostile, alienating, or physically violent ways? Or will they practice supportive ways of communicating, disagreeing, and negotiating—ways that emphasize sharing and can deepen intimacy?

How will the partners distribute power in the marriage? Will they work toward relationships in which each family member is more concerned with helping and supporting others than with gaining a power advantage? How will the partners allocate work responsibilities in the home? What value will they place on their sexual lives together? Throughout their experience, family members continually face decisions about how to balance each one's need for individuality with the need for togetherness.

Parents also have choices. In raising their children, they can choose the authoritative parenting style, for example, in which parents take an active role in responsibly guiding and monitoring their children. However, how much guidance is too much? At what point do involved parents become *over* involved parents—that is, "helicopter parents"?

Many partners face decisions about whether to separate or divorce. They weigh the pros and cons, asking themselves which is the better alternative: living together as they are or separating? Even when a couple decides to separate or divorce, there are further decisions to make: Will they cooperate as much as possible or insist on blame and revenge? What living and economic support arrangements will work best for themselves and their children? How will they handle the legal process? The majority of divorced individuals eventually face decisions about forming relationships with new partners. In the absence of firm cultural models, they choose how they will define remarriage and stepfamily relationships.

When families encounter crises—and every family will face *some crises*—members must make additional decisions. Will they view each crisis as a challenge to be met, or will they blame one another? What resources can they use to handle the crisis? Then, too, as more and more Americans live longer, families will "age." As a result, more and more Americans will have not only living grandparents but also great grandparents. And increasingly, we will face issues concerning giving—and receiving—family elder care.

In the past, people tended to emphasize the dutiful performance of social roles in marriages and families for others. Today, people view committed relationships as those in which they expect to find companionship, intimacy, and emotional support for themselves. From its first edition, this book has examined the implications of this shift and placed these implications within social scientific perspective. Individualism, economic pressure, time pressures, social diversity, and an awareness of committed relationships' potential impermanence are features of the social context in which personal decision making takes place. With each edition, we recognize again that, as fewer social guidelines remain fixed, personal decision making becomes both more open and perhaps more challenging.

An emphasis on knowledgeable decision making does not mean that individuals can completely control their lives. People can influence but never directly determine how those around them behave or feel about them. Partners cannot control one another's changes over time, and they cannot avoid all accidents, illnesses, unemployment, separations, or deaths. Society-wide conditions may create unavoidable crises for individual families. However, families can control how they respond to such crises. Their responses will meet their own needs better when they refuse to react automatically and choose instead to act as a consequence of knowledgeable decision making.

Tension frequently exists between individuals and their social environment. Many personal troubles result from societal influences, values, or assumptions; inadequate societal support for family goals; and conflict between family values and individual values. By understanding some of these possible sources of tension and conflict, individuals can perceive their personal troubles more clearly and work constructively toward solutions. They may choose to form or join groups to achieve family goals. They may become involved in the political process to develop state or federal social policy that is supportive of families. The accumulated decisions of individuals and families also shape the social environment.

KEY FEATURES

With its ongoing, thorough updating and inclusion of current research and its emphasis on students' being able to make choices in an increasingly diverse society, this book has become a principal resource for gaining insights into today's marriages, relationships, and families. Over the past twelve editions, we have had four goals in mind for student readers: first, to help them better understand themselves and their family situations; second, to make students more conscious of the personal decisions that they will make throughout their lives and of the societal influences that affect those decisions; third, to help students better appreciate the variety and diversity among families today; and fourth, to encourage them to recognize the need for structural, social policy support for families. To these ends, this text has become recognized for its accessible writing style, up-to-date research, well-written features, and useful chapter learning aids.

Up-to-Date Research and Statistics

As users have come to expect, we have thoroughly updated the text's research base and statistics, emphasizing cutting-edge research that addresses the diversity of marriages and families, as well as all other topics. In accordance with this approach, users will notice several new tables and figures. Revised tables and figures have been updated with the latest available statistics—data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other governmental agencies, as well as survey and other research data.

Box Features

The several themes described earlier are reflected in the special features.

Former users will recognize our box features. The following sections describe our four feature box categories:

As We Make Choices We highlight the theme of making choices with a group of boxes throughout the text—for example, "Rethinking Virginity," "Ten Rules for a Successful Relationship," "Disengaging from Power Struggles," "Selecting a Childcare Facility—Ten Considerations," "Rules for Successful Co-Parenting," "Tips for Step-Grandparents, and" **"**Want to Call or Visit an Isolated Senior?"

These feature boxes emphasize human agency and are designed to help students through crucial decisions.

A Closer Look at Diversity In addition to integrating information on cultural and ethnic diversity throughout the text proper, we have a series of features that give focused attention to instances of family diversity—for example, "African Americans and 'Jumping the Broom,'" "Diversity and Childcare," "Family Ties and Immigration," "Straight Parents and LGBTQ+ Children," and " Do You Speak Stepfamily?" among others.

Issues for Thought These features are designed to spark students' critical thinking and discussion. As an example, the Issues for Thought box in Chapter 16 explores "Filial Responsibility Laws" and encourages students to consider what might be the benefits and drawbacks of legally mandating filial responsibility. The box "When One Woman's Workplace Is Another's Family" invites students to consider how women's work differs across social class, race and ethnicity, and immigration status.

Facts about Families This feature presents demographic and other factual information on focused topics such as "How Family Researchers Study Religion from Various Theoretical Perspectives," "The Changing Language of Gender," on "Researching at the Kinsey Institute," on "Legal Same-Sex Marriage as a Successful Social Movement," and on "Foster Parenting," among others.

Chapter Learning Aids

A series of chapter learning aids help students comprehend and retain the material.

- Each chapter begins with a list of **learning objectives** specifically formulated for that chapter.
- **Chapter Summaries** are presented in bulleted, point-by-point lists of the key material in the chapter.
- **Key Terms** alert students to the key concepts presented in the chapter. A full glossary is provided at the end of the text.
- **Questions for Review and Reflection** help students review the material. Thought questions encourage students to think critically and to integrate material from other chapters with that presented in the current one. In every chapter, one of these questions is a policy question. This practice is in line with our goal of moving students toward structural analyses regarding marriages, families, and relationships.

KEY CHANGES IN THIS EDITION

In addition to incorporating the latest available research and statistics—and in addition to carefully reviewing every word in the book—we note that this edition includes many key changes, some of which are outlined here. We have worked to make chapter length more uniform throughout the text.

We are streamlining the material presented whenever possible and to ensuring a good flow of ideas. In this edition, we continue to consolidate similar material that had previously been addressed in separate chapters. **Meanwhile, we have substantially revised each and every chapter.** Every chapter is updated with the latest statistics and research throughout. Now that same-sex marriage is legal throughout the United States, we continue to conscientiously revisit all our chapters to make sure we're in line with this major family change. We mention some (but not all!) specific and important changes here.

Chapter 1, Making Family Choices in a Changing Society, continues to present the choices and life course themes of the book, as well as points to the significance for the family of larger social forces. Figure 1.1 is new with data on where Americans find meaning. HINT: their families. Figure 1.3 is new as well. All the boxes have been reworked. We paid special attention to rethinking and reworking the Closer Look at Diversity box in Chapter 1, with updated treatment of immigration due to the immigration crisis at our southern border. As faculty users, students, and casual readers have come to expect, all research and statistics are conscientiously updated. This goes for the entire book.

Chapter 2, Exploring Relationships and Families, continues to portray the integral relationship between family theories and methods for researching families, with new examples designed to better drive home the theoretical perspectives. Examples in the research section of this chapter include more recognition that major surveys are conducted globally, not just in the United States.

Chapter 3, Gender Identities and Families, continues to reflect evolving and expanding understandings of gender and sexual identity as fluid and non-binary, driving by the more progressive attitudes of Millennials and Gen Z. We introduce and define a variety of new terms related to gender and sexuality and discuss, for example, how states are facing political pressure to provide more gender options on birth certificates. We note challenges to toxic masculinity and increased representation of women in politics.

Chapter 4, Our Sexual Selves, continues its exploration into the range of sexual attitudes and behavior that exists in American society with special focus on gender differences, culture, history, politics, and technology. Notable since the last edition is the #MeToo Movement and women increasingly challenging previously taken-for-granted behaviors of men, such as sexual harassment and even sexual assault. In this chapter we broaden our discussion of consent, bystander education, and dispel myths about sexual assault. With increased attention to fluidity in sexual identity and behavior, we discuss the question of what it means to be a virgin. We take a tour of the famous Kinsey Institute and discuss the ethics of conducting sexuality research. Finally, we provide updated statistics on sexual behavior, infidelity, HIV/AIDS, and pornography use.

Chapter 5, Love and Choosing a Life Partner, increases attention to defining love in all its forms and, in particular, the limitations of American's Society's undue focus on romantic love. We continue to examine the changing nature of dating in the United States, not only in terms of new dating patterns, but also dating preferences, such as urban versus rural residence, political ideology, race, and religion. In addition, we draw increased attention to the heteronormative bias in love and dating and include more information on LGBTQ+ couples and gender inequality in relationships. We draw attention to arranged marriages, child marriage, and transnational marriages in the United States. We provide new information on what is known about the link between cohabitation, marital quality, and divorce.

Chapter 6, Nonmarital Lifestyles: Living Alone, Cohabiting, and Other Options, discusses demographic, economic, technological, and cultural reasons for the increasing proportion of unmarrieds, with updated statistics on unmarried men and women in America. New to this edition is a discussion of generational differences in attitudes about the advantages and disadvantages of being single, integrating the attitudes of the youngest generation of Americans, Gen Z, who are just now reaching young adulthood and who have a wide array of lifestyles available to them. We have expanded our discussion of the *transition to adulthood*, which in these tough economic times has continued to lengthen, and is responsible for part of the increase in multigenerational households we are seeing.

Chapter 7, Marriage: From Social Institution to Private Relationship, has been thoroughly updated in accordance with developments after the 2015 legalization of same-sex marriage and also with new statistics and research findings. This chapter explores the changing picture regarding marriage, noting that cohabitation may now be becoming more similar to marriage than it used to be as more couples choose to cohabit. We review the social science debate regarding whether this changing picture represents family change or decline. We thoroughly explore the selection hypothesis versus the experience hypothesis with regard to the benefits of marriage known from research.

Chapter 8, Deciding about Parenthood, continues its focus on the complex process through which couples have children and different infertility patterns by race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual identity and other variables. We provide data on the rising costs of children with a special focus on childcare. We also have expanded our discussion of the social and emotional costs of children, which has led to an increased number of women

opting to remain childfree. New in this edition is attention to medicalization of childbirth in the United States and our high rate of caesarean sections relative to other industrialized societies. We continue to provide the latest information available on reproductive technologies, adoption, involuntary and nonmarital fertility, adolescent pregnancy and childbearing, multipartnered fertility, contraception, abortion, and the political debate surrounding these issues.

Chapter 9, Raising Children in a Diverse Society, like all the chapters in this edition, has been thoroughly updated with the most current research. As in recent editions, after describing the authoritative parenting style, we note its acceptance by mainstream experts in the parenting field. We then present a critique that questions whether this parenting style is universally appropriate or simply a white, middle-class pattern that may not be so suitable to other social contexts. We also discuss challenges faced by parents who are raising religious- or ethnic-minority children in potentially discriminatory environments.

We continue to emphasize the challenges that all parents face in contemporary America. We have expanded sections on single mothers, single fathers, and nonresident fathers. We have given more attention to relations with young-adult children as more and more of them have "boomeranged" home in this difficult economy.

New to this chapter are recognition and discussions of gender fluidity as related to parenting. For instance, the section "Gender and Parenting" includes discussion of parenting as a lesbian, gay male, or transgender parent. As just one example of something brand new, a fourteenth-edition Issues for Thought box explores the ironic phenomenon of heteronormative bias within the LGBTQ+ community.

Chapter 10, Work and Family. All research and statistics are updated. An example of now incorporating same-sex families into discussions throughout the text involves a study that examined work-home spillover specifically among dual-earner lesbian and gay parents. Concepts introduced for the first time or given considerably more attention due to their growing salience include the idea of the *greedy career*—one that expects 24/7 digital and other availability—coupled with the social development over the past two decades of increasingly intensive (some say relentless) expectations for parenting. These two phenomena, taken together, do much to explain how gender influences the workplace.

Chapter 11, Communication in Relationships, Marriages, and Families, continues its focus on positive communication strategies among couples and families. The mechanisms through which people communicate are rapidly changing and terminology is evolving in response. Since the last edition, research on digital communication and social media has exploded and

we know much more than we did about the positives (online support groups) and negatives (social laziness) of new forms of communication. We extend the implications of digital communication to Gen Z, who have never not known life without social media and truly sees it as an extension of their social identity. Meanwhile, a traditional venue for family communication has always been the evening meal—just make sure to put down your phone or you'll be accused of *phubbing*. As always, John Gottman's research remains a powerful force in understanding interpersonal communication between couples.

Chapter 12, Power and Violence in Families, maintains its ongoing emphasis on power relations within the context of growing family racial and ethnic diversity. This chapter now presents the latest research findings regarding power and decision-making issues among same-sex married couples. Domestic violence among same-sex couples is now explored in this chapter rather than elsewhere in the text. As an example of our keeping not only research findings and statistics up to date but also paying attention to evolving concepts and terminology, we note the development of the concept *coercive control*, formerly termed *intimate terrorism*, itself formerly termed *patriarchal terrorism*. All research and statistics have been thoroughly updated.

Chapter 13, Family Stress, Crisis, and Resilience, continues to emphasize and expand discussion of the growing body of research on resilience in relation to family stress and crises and has been updated with many new examples. As one instance, the chapter expands its exploration of family members' stress related to discrimination against minority race or ethnic groups. Recognizing that family systems are comprised of individuals, this chapter now includes some exploration of individuals' biological stress responses involving complex physiological reactions in the brain and hormonal system. This chapter also addresses what individuals can do to manage personal stress responses—a practice that impacts family responses to crises.

Chapter 14, Divorce and Relationship Dissolution, includes updated statistics on divorce rates, which have continued their decline since the Great Recession, and speculate why this is happening. We continue our discussion of the ever expanding divorce divide and add information on divorce among LGBTQ+ couples, especially those who married after 2015 when marriage became legal across the nation. We have updated all statistics related to divorce as well as information that has changed related to the determinants of divorce, such as cohabitation and women's employment. This chapter continues to highlight the effects of divorce on adults and children and factors that can lessen the negative effects. The implications of different custody arrangements for children and families and child support are

also examined and we include a new section on potential ways of improving divorce outcomes, such divorce mediation.

Chapter 15, Remarriages and Stepfamilies, continues to stress diversity within stepfamilies, reflecting continued growth of nonmarital childbearing, cohabitation, father custody, racial and ethnic diversity, and same-sex couples with stepchildren. We continue to provide the most up-to-date statistics on remarriage, stepfamilies, and living arrangements in the United States. We continue to pay attention to microlevel stepfamily dynamics such as dating with children, the process through which people become stepparents, and the challenges of day-to-day living in stepfamilies. We've enhanced our discussion of the rewards and challenges of relationships between step-grandparents and grandchildren. Finally, in an environment set up for first-married, biological parent families, we provide a comprehensive discussion of financial, legal, and policy issues stepfamilies must grapple with every day, from talking with teachers and doing their taxes to custody decisions and how to divide inheritances.

Chapter 16, Aging and Multigenerational Families, continues to place a thematic emphasis on multigenerational families, ties, and obligations in a cultural content of individualism and includes a discussion of caregiver ambivalence coupled with multigenerational families as safety nets for all generations. Like all the others, this chapter benefits from the most current statistics and research. By the time we reached this chapter in this fourteenth-edition revision process, the global pandemic, Covid-19 and its consequences had become consequential to American families in countless ways, some foreseen at this writing and others yet to be understood. We were able to address Covid-19 to some extent in this chapter and look forward to discussing impacts of this global pandemic thoroughly in our next, the fifteenth, edition.

MindTap for Marriages, Families, and Relationships, Fourteenth Edition

MindTap engages and empowers students to produce their best work—consistently. By seamlessly integrating course material with videos, activities, apps, and much more, MindTap creates a unique learning path that fosters increased comprehension and efficiency.

- MindTap delivers real-world relevance with activities and assignments that help students build critical thinking and analytical skills that will transfer to other courses and their professional lives.
- MindTap helps students stay organized and efficient with a single destination that reflects what's important to the instructor, along with the tools students

need to master the content. MindTap empowers and motivates students with information that shows where they stand at all times—both individually and compared with the highest performers in class.

In addition, MindTap allows instructors to:

- Control what content students see and when they see it with a learning path that can be used as is or matched to their syllabus exactly.
- Create a unique learning path of relevant readings and multimedia and activities that move students up the learning taxonomy from basic knowledge and comprehensions to analysis, application, and critical thinking.
- Integrate their own content into the MindTap Reader using their own documents or pulling from sources like YouTube videos, websites, Google Docs, and more.
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Instructor Resources

Instructor's Resource Center Available online, the Instructor's Resource Center includes an instructor's manual, a test bank, and PowerPoint slides. The instructor's manual will help instructors organize the course and captivate students' attention. The manual includes key learning objectives, lecture outlines, in-class discussion questions, class activities, extensive lists of reading, video, and online resources, and suggested Internet sites and activities. The test bank includes multiple-choice, true/false, and essay questions, all with answers and text references, for each chapter of the text. The PowerPoints include chapter-specific presentations, including images, figures, and tables, to help instructors build their lectures.

Cengage Testing Powered by Cognero Cognero is a flexible, online system that allows instructors to:

- Import, edit, and manipulate test bank content from the Marriages, Families, and Relationships test bank or elsewhere, including their own favorite test questions.
- Create multiple test versions in an instant.
- Delivery tests from their LMS, classroom, or wherever they want.

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Nadine Ballard developed the overall design of the book, one we are very pleased with. Once it is completed, our textbook needs to find the faculty and students who will use it. Tricia Salata, Marketing Manager, captured the essence of our book in the various marketing materials that present our book to its prospective audience.

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Fourteenth Edition Reviewers

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Of Special Importance

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1
MAKING FAMILY CHOICES IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

Learning Objectives

1   Explain why researchers and policy makers need to define family.

2   Explain the ways that family structure or form is increasingly diverse.

3   Describe the various society-wide structural conditions that impact families.

4   Discuss why the best life course decisions are informed ones made consciously.

5   Explain how families provide individuals with a place to belong.

6   Demonstrate why there is a tension in our culture between familistic values and individualistic values.

7   Identify how global situations and events affect family life in the United States.

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3

This text is different from others you will read. Although it could help you in a future career, this text has four other goals as well—to help you: (1) appreciate the variety and diversity among families today, (2) become more sensitive to family issues, (3) understand your past and present family situations and anticipate future possibilities, and (4) be more conscious of the personal decisions you make throughout your life and of the societal influences that affect those decisions.

About thirty years ago, stating that "the family constitutes the basic unit of society and therefore warrants special attention," the United Nations designated 1994 as the International Year of the Family. Later, the U.N. proclaimed every May 15th the International Day of Families. Across the world, families are central both to society and to people's everyday lives.

Families worldwide take on the pivotal tasks of raising children and providing family members with support, companionship, affection, and intimacy. As shown in Figure 1.1, national survey results show Americans are most likely to say *family* is what gives them meaning in life (Pew Research Center 2018a). Meanwhile, what many of us think of as family has changed dramatically in recent decades. This chapter explores *family* definitions and notes the varied structures or forms that families

take today. This chapter also describes society-wide conditions that impact families: ever-new biological and communication technologies, economic conditions, historical periods of events, and demographic characteristics such as age, religion, race, and ethnicity.

Later in this chapter, we'll note that when maintaining committed relationships and families, people need to make informed decisions. We end this chapter by discussing four themes that characterize this text. You'll see that these four themes comprise the text's four learning goals, listed in the Preface. We begin with a definition of family—one to keep in mind throughout the course.

DEFINING FAMILY

People make a variety of assumptions about what families are and are not. We've noticed when teaching this course that many students, when asked to list their family members, include their pets. Are dogs, cats, or hamsters family members? On a different note, some individuals who were conceived by artificial insemination with donor sperm are tracking down their "donor siblings"—half brothers and sisters who were conceived using the same man's sperm. They may define their "donor relatives" as family members, although others born under similar circumstances may not. Indeed, *family* has many definitions, not only among laypeople but also among family scientists.

We, your authors, have chosen to define **family** as follows: A family is any sexually expressive, parent—child, or other kin relationship in which people—usually related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption—(1) form an economic or otherwise practical unit and care for any children or other dependents, (2) consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group, and (3) commit to maintaining that group over time.

How did we come to this definition? First, caring for children or other dependents suggests a function that the family is expected to perform. Definitions of many things have both functional and structural components. Functional definitions point to the purpose(s) for which a thing exists—that is, what it does. For example, a functional definition of a smartphone would emphasize that it allows you to make and receive calls, take pictures, connect to the Internet, and access media. Structural definitions emphasize the *form* that a thing takes—what it actually is. To define a smartphone structurally, we might say that it is an electronic device, small enough to be handheld, with a multimedia screen and components that allow sophisticated satellite communication. Concepts of the family comprise both functional and structural aspects. We'll look now at how the family can be recognized by its functions, and then we'll discuss structural definitions of the family.

In an open-ended question, % of Americans who mention__when describing what provides them with a sense of meaning

Family	69%
Career	34%
Money	23%
Spirituality and faith	20%
Friends	19%
Activities and hobbies	19%
Health	16%
Home and surroundings	13%
Learning	11%

Percent

FIGURE 1.1 Americans are most likely to mention family when asked what provides them with a sense of meaning. What else do these findings suggest to you?

Source: Survey conducted September 14–18, 2017 among U.S adults. Pew Research Center 2018b.

Family Functions

Social scientists usually list three major functions filled by today's families: raising children responsibly, providing members with economic and other practical support, and offering emotional security.

Family Function 1: Raising Children Responsibly If a society is to persist beyond one generation, adults have to not only bear children but also feed, clothe, and shelter them during their long years of dependency. Furthermore, a society needs new members who are properly trained in the ways of the economy and culture and who will be dependable members of the group. These goals require children to be responsibly raised. Virtually every society assigns this essential task to families.

Traditionally, a related family function has been to control its members' (particularly women's) sexual activity, and this function persists in many parts of the world. Controlling sexuality was historically understood as necessary in order to guarantee responsible childrearing. "Throughout history, marriage has first and foremost been an institution for procreation and raising children. It has provided the cultural tie that seeks to connect the father to his children by binding him to the mother of his children" (Wilcox Marquardt, Popenoe, and Whitehead 2011). However, in the United States and other industrialized societies the child-raising function is more and more often performed by divorced, separated, never-married, or cohabiting parents, and sometimes by grandparents or other relatives. Today researchers talk about "the decoupling of marriage and parenthood" (Hayford, Guzzo, and Smock 2014). Nevertheless, the majority of U.S. births today (about 60 percent) take place within marriage (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, and Drake 2018, p. 5).

Family Function 2: Providing Economic and Other Practical Support A second family function involves providing economic support. Historically, the family was primarily a practical economic unit rather than an emotional one (Shorter 1975; Stone 1980). Although the modern family is no longer a self-sufficient economic unit, virtually every family engages in activities aimed

We can define families by their functions—raising children, providing economic support for dependents, and offering emotional support for all family members. This father looks to be doing all that. But functional definitions of family aren't enough. We also need to consider the group's structure. This family consists of a heterosexual couple and their child. They may be married or cohabiting.

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at providing for such practical needs as food, clothing, and shelter. Throughout this text, we'll see the varied ways that this function plays out.

Family economic functions now consist of earning a living outside the home, pooling resources, and making consumption decisions together. In assisting one another economically, family members create some sense of material security. For example, family members offer one another a kind of unemployment insurance. If one family member is laid off or can't find work, others may be counted on for help. Family members care for each other in additional practical ways too, such as nursing and transportation during an illness or lending an ear when someone needs to talk.

Family Function 3: Offering Emotional Security Although historically the family was a pragmatic institution involving material maintenance, in today's world the family has grown increasingly important as a source of emotional security. Thinking of families globally, the United Nations has described the family as a place where "one finds warmth, caring, security, togetherness, tolerance and acceptance" ("International Day of the Family," n.d.). Not just partners or parents but also children, siblings, and extended kin can be important sources of emotional support (Henig 2014; Waite et al. 2011).

This is not to say that families can solve all our longings for affection, companionship, and intimacy. Sometimes, in fact, the family situation itself is a source of stress and pain–as in the case of parental conflict, alcoholism, drug abuse, or domestic violence. But families and committed relationships are expected to provide emotional support. Defining a family by its functions is informative and can be insightful: According to a Chicago Chief Executive Officer, for instance, "To me a family is whoever I can depend on for support, to laugh with, to play with, and to share the challenges and rewards of life with" (Wolf 2018, p. 4).

But defining a family only by its functions would be too vague and misleading. Neighbors or roommates might help with childcare, provide for economic and other practical needs, or offer emotional support, but we might not define them as family. An effective definition of family needs to incorporate structural elements as well.

Structural Family Definitions

Traditionally, both legal and social sciences have specified that the family consists of people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. In their classic work *The Family: From Institution to Companionship*, Ernest Burgess and Harvey Locke (1953 [1945]) specified that family members must "constitute a household," or reside together. Some definitions of the family have gone even further to include economic interdependency and sexual–reproductive relations (Murdock 1949).

The extended family—grandparents, aunts, and uncles—can provide occasion for good times as well as an important source of security, its members helping each other, especially during crises.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption and residing together in a household. The Census Bureau defines **household** as any group that resides together. Not all households are families; to be a *family household*, persons sharing a household must also be related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Now that same-sex marriages are legal nationwide, married same-sex couples living together are of course counted as family households. Before the June 26, 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage, lesbian and gay male couples living together were counted as *non*-family households. Cohabiting couples, whether heterosexual or same-sex, continue to be counted as nonfamily households.

Family structure—the form a family takes—varies according to the social environment in which it is embedded. In preindustrial or traditional societies, the family structure involved whole kinship groups. The **extended family** of parents, children, grandparents, and other relatives performed most societal functions, including economic production (e.g., the family farm), protecting family members, providing vocational training, and maintaining social order. In industrial or modern societies, the typical family structure often became the **nuclear family** (husband, wife, children), which was better suited to city life. Until about sixty years ago, social attitudes, religious beliefs, and law converged into a fairly common expectation about what form the American family should take: breadwinner husband, homemaker wife, and children living together in an independent household—the *nuclear-family ideal.*

Nevertheless, the extended family—including adult siblings, a family research topic often neglected—continues to play an important role in many cases, especially among recent immigrants and race and ethnic minorities. To cope with economic hardships more relatives of all races and ethnicities are moving in together to create more multigenerational or otherwise extended-family households. About one-fifth, or 20 percent of Americans live in multigenerational households—about the same percentage as in 1950, but an increase from a low of 12 percent in 1980 (Cohn and Passel 2018). "Accordion" family households that expand or contract with more or fewer family members, depending on family

Ariel Skelley/Getty Images

need, perform important economic and often emotional social functions (Newman 2012).

Meanwhile, today's families are not necessarily bound to one another by legal marriage, blood, or adoption. The term *family* can identify relationships in addition to spouses, parents, children, and extended kin. Individuals fashion and experience intimate relationships and families in many forms. As social scientists take into account this structural variability, it is not uncommon to find them referring to the family as *postmodern*.

Postmodern: There Is No Typical Family

Barely half of U.S. adults are married (U.S. Census Bureau 2019, Table A1). Only about 5 percent of families now resemble the 1950s nuclear family of married couple and children, with a husband-breadwinner and wife-homemaker (Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider 2013, Tables 4, 5). Prompting social scientists to remark on today's "revolution in intimate life relationships," the past several decades have witnessed a proliferation of relationship and family forms: single-parent families, stepfamilies, families with children of more than one father, two-earner couples, stay-at-home fathers, cohabitating heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian marriages and families, three-generation families, and communal households, among others. Individuals construct a myriad of social forms in order to address family functions. Social scientists have typically thought of the nuclear family as the "modern" family form. The more recent term **postmodern family** acknowledges the fact that today's families exhibit multiple of forms as new or altered family forms continue to emerge.

Figure 1.2 displays the types of households in which Americans live today. Only about two-thirds of households contain families. Just 19 percent of households are nuclear families of husband, wife, and children, compared with more than twice that (44 percent) in 1960 (U.S. Census Bureau 2015a, 2018a). The most common household type is married couples without children: Either the children have grown up and left or the couple has not yet had children or doesn't plan to. More households today (28 percent) are maintained by individuals living alone than by married couples with children. "Facts about Families: American Families Today" presents additional information about families. We now see unprecedented diversity in family composition, or form.

Due to this diversity, laws, government agencies, and private corporations such as insurance companies make decisions about what was once taken for granted—that is, what a family is. If rent policies, employee-benefit packages, and insurance policies cover families, decisions need to be made about what relationships or groups of people are to be defined as a family. The

FIGURE 1.2 The many kinds of American households, 2018. A household is one or more persons who occupy a dwelling unit, or domicile. Households can be family or nonfamily. Family households contain persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Along with other household types, the Census Bureau classifies opposite- and same-sex unmarried-couple households as nonfamily households. This figure displays nonfamily households in shades of blue and family households in shades of green.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2018b, Tables FG3, FG5, H.

September 11th Victim Compensation Fund of 2001 struggled with this issue in allocating compensation to victims' survivors. As a result, and New York state law was amended to allow awards to unmarried gay and heterosexual partners (Gross 2002). In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage is a nationwide right to be recognized in all fifty states.

Adapting Family Definitions to the Postmodern Family

As family forms have grown increasingly variable, social scientists have proposed—and often struggled with—new, more flexible definitions for the family. Legal definitions of family have become more flexible as well. The 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalizes same-sex marriage comes to mind. As another example, a few state legislatures have provided that legal status and rights can be enjoyed by more than two—that is, by three or four—parents in one family. What would be an example of a family like this? Here's one: Two children spend three nights a week with their partnered gay fathers. The other nights they stay with their lesbian mothers, who live nearby (Lovett 2012).

Many employers have redefined family with respect to employee-benefit packages. Just more than half of

Facts About Families

American Families Today

What do U.S. families look like today? Statistics can't tell the whole story, but they are an important beginning. As you read these ten facts, remember that the data presented here are generalizations and do not consider differences among various sectors of society. We explore social diversity throughout this textbook, but for now let's look at some overall statistics.

1. *Marriage is important to Americans—but not to the extent that it was sixty years ago during the "Golden Age of Marriage."* Today about 58 percent of never-married adults say they want to marry someday. Twenty-seven percent are not sure. Another 14 percent don't want to get married (Parker and Stepler 2017). Ten years ago,, 44 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds and 32 percent of Americans age 65 and older saw marriage becoming obsolete (Taylor et al. 2011).

2. *About half of Americans are married.* Just about 50 percent of adults age 18 and older were married in 2018, compared to about three-quarters (72 percent) in 1960. About 30 percent of Americans today have never married; 10 percent are divorced, and 6 percent widowed (U.S. Census Bureau 2018a, Table A1).

3. *Young people are postponing marriage.* In 2018, the median age at first marriage was 27.8 for women and 29.8—nearly 30—for men, as compared with about 21 for women and 24 for men in 1970. Today's average age at marriage is the highest recorded since the 1890 census (U.S. Census Bureau 2018b, Table MS-2).

4. *With some usually religion-based exceptions, cohabitation has become an acceptable family form (as well as a transitional lifestyle choice).* The number of opposite-sex cohabitating adults increased more than tenfold since 1970—and by 40 percent since 2000. About 40 percent of cohabiting couples live with children under age 18—either their own or those from a previous relationship or marriage. Unmarried-couple families are only about 7 percent of American adults at any one time, but more than 50 percent of first marriages are preceded by cohabitation. No longer a minority lifestyle choice, cohabitators are older now, as well as more racially and ethnically diverse, more highly educated, and higher earners (Gurrentz 2019). In fact, for adults ages 18 to 24, living with an unmarried partner is more common than living with a spouse (Gurrentz 2018).

5. *Fertility has declined.* Although there's a slight increase in people who say three or more children would be ideal, fertility is down (Bialik 2018). At 1.77 in 2017, the total fertility rate (TFR)—the average number of births that a woman will have during her lifetime—had dropped by 3 percent from 2016 (Martin et al. 2015). After a high of 3.6 in 1957, the TFR has generally been below replacement level over the past thirty years (Martin, Hamilton, Osterman, Driscoll, and Drake 2018; Matthews, Brady, and Hamilton 2019). A society requires a TFR of at least 2.1 in order for the

the Fortune 500 companies, as well as many state and local governments, offer domestic partner benefits to persons in an unmarried couple who have registered their relationship with a civil authority (Appleby 2012). President Barack Obama signed an executive order granting federal employees and their domestic partners some of the rights (but neither health insurance nor retirement benefits) enjoyed by married couples (Miles 2010). If passed in the future, currently proposed federal legislation would extend domestic partner benefits to all federal civilian employees ("Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act" 2015). Meanwhile, federal practices permit low-income unmarried couples to qualify as families and live in public housing.

We, your authors, began this section with our definition of family. Our definition recognizes the diversity of postmodern families while paying heed to the essential functions that families are expected to fill. Our definition combines some structural criteria with a more social–psychological sense of family identity. We include the commitment to maintaining a relationship or group over time as a component of our definition because we believe that such a commitment is necessary in fulfilling basic family functions. It also helps to differentiate the family from casual relationships, such as roommates, or groups that easily come and go.

We have worked to balance an appreciation for flexibility and diversity in family structure and relations with the concern that many policy makers and social scientists express about how well today's families perform their functional obligations. Ultimately, there is no one correct answer to the question, "What is a family?"

8

population numerically to replace itself, so the current TFR is below replacement level.

6. *Particularly among college-educated women, parenthood is often postponed.* The average age for a woman's first birth increased by about 6 years between 1970 and 2017—from age 21 to 27. But the statistics differ according to education with more highly educated women waiting longer to have children (Martin et al. 2018, p. 5). Married women today wait longer after their wedding to conceive than in the past (Hayford, Guzzo, and Smock 2014).

7. *Compared to 4 percent in 1950, the nonmarital birthrate is high* with 40 percent of all U.S. births today being to unmarried mothers. Unlike 1950, however, between one-quarter and one-half of nonmarital births today occur to cohabiting couples (Carter 2009; Martin et al. 2019, p. 6). Seeing marriage as obsolete (as noted in #1 above) may be an overstatement. However, the fact that today "nearly half of U.S. births happen outside marriage" certainly marks a "cultural shift" (Griffin 2018).

8. *Same-sex-couple households increased* by 80 percent between 2000 and 2010 (Homan and Bass 2012). Partly because an unknown number remain "closeted," it is difficult to know how many same-sex-couple households really exist in the United States (Hoffman 2014). According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, there were approximately 900,000 same-sex households in 2017 (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Of these, about 500,000 were married, although married-couple same-sex couples comprise less than 1 percent of all U.S. married couples (Cohn 2014; Schwarz 2014). About 17 percent of same-sex households include children (U.S. Census Bureau 2014b, Table 1).

9. *The divorce rate is dropping.* After it doubled between 1965 and 1980, the U.S divorce rate began to drop steadily, falling more than 30 percent from 1980 to 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a, Table 78). The divorce rate continued to decline through 2016, the year of our most current data. We used to say that about half of marriages end in divorce, but today that figure is closer

to one-third (National Center for Health Statistics 2017). This is good news. We need to be aware, though, that fewer and fewer Americans are getting married—and those who do tend to be more highly educated and have high incomes, a category that has traditionally evidenced lower divorce rates.

10. *The remarriage rate has declined in recent decades but remains significant.* About 60 percent of recent marriages are first-time marriages for both spouses. About 40 percent of today's marriages involve a remarriage for at least one spouse. Twenty percent of marriages today and remarriages for both partners. About 4 percent of marrieds wed three or more times. This number rises to 7 percent for those over age fifty (Geiger and Livingston 2019; Lewis and Kreider 2015).

Critical Thinking

What do these statistics tell you about the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary American family and about family change?

Relaxed Institutional Control over Relationship Choices: "Family Decline" or "Family Change"?

According to public opinion polls, about 30 percent of Americans reject today's trend toward the postmodern family while about the same proportion accept new family forms. Another 37 percent accept some aspects of family change but are concerned about others (Morin 2011). In 2012, 59 percent of Americans found unmarried heterosexual sex to be morally acceptable, but 38 percent saw it as morally wrong. Those numbers had changed from 53 percent and 42 percent in 2001. Sixty-seven percent of Americans today see divorce as morally acceptable, whereas in 2001 that figure was 59 percent. Fifty-four percent of Americans believe having a baby

outside marriage is morally acceptable today, compared with 45 percent in 2002 ("Marriage" 2012). Americans are fairly evenly split regarding whether they support same-sex marriage as legally valid, although fewer than 40 percent favored legal same-sex marriage in 2001 (Pew Research Center 2015a). Figure 1.3 shows results of a 2015 national Pew Survey asking respondents what they think about some current trends in family life. As shown in Figure 1.3, about two-thirds of Americans believe that single women having children without a partner is bad for society. Meanwhile, just about half of us think that more unmarried couples raising children is bad for society (Pew Research Center 2018). Americans can be strongly opinionated about family change; we can better understand why if we understand that the family has historically been understood as a **social institution**.

Majority viewed more solo moms as bad for society in 2015
% saying each trend is...

	Bad for society	Doesn't make much difference	Good for society
More single women having children without a partner	66	29	4
More unmarried couples raising children	48	45	6
More children who have parents who are gay or lesbian	40	46	12
More couples living together without getting married	39	53	7
More mothers of young children working	36	41	22
More children who have parents of different races	11	65	22
More peoples of different races marrying each other	11	59	29

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

■ Bad for society
■ Doesn't make much difference
■ Good for society

FIGURE 1.3 How Americans view emerging family trends—bad, doesn't matter, or good for society. What do these survey results say about Americans' attitudes about (1) more single women having children without a partner, (2) more people of different races getting married, or (3) more children with gay or lesbian parents—among other indicators of family change?

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted February—April, 2015, Pew Research Center 2018a.

Social institutions are patterned and largely predictable ways of thinking and behaving—beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms that are organized around vital aspects of group life and serve essential social functions. Social institutions are meant to meet people's basic needs and enable the society to survive. Earlier in this chapter, we described three basic family functions. Because social institutions prescribe socially accepted beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors, they exert considerable social control over individuals.

Beginning in the 1960s, however, family formation became less and less predictable. Demographers noted dramatic social transformations: age at first marriage increased, marital childbearing decreased, nonmarital childbearing increased, divorce rates rose, and cohabitation became common among young adults. Although the most dramatic shifts arose in the 1970s and 1980s, trends established then have continued. Combined with increased longevity and lower fertility rates, these changes have meant that a smaller portion of adulthood is spent in traditionally institutionalized marriages and families (Cherlin 2008).

Critics have described relaxed institutional control over families and relationships as "family decline."

Those with a **family-decline perspective** believe that cultural change toward excessive individualism and self-indulgence has hurt relationships, led to high divorce rates, and undermines responsible parenting (Popenoe and Whitehead 2005):

According to a marital decline perspective . . . because people no longer wish to be hampered with obligations to others, commitment to traditional institutions that require these obligations, such as marriage, has eroded. As a result, people no longer are willing to remain married through the difficult times, for better or for worse. Instead, marital [or other relationship] commitment lasts only as long as people are happy and feel that their own needs are being met. (Amato 2004, p. 960)

In addition, fewer family households contain children. According to the family-decline perspective, this situation "has reduced the child centeredness of our nation and contributed to the weakening of the institution of marriage" (Popenoe and Whitehead 2005, p. 23; Wilcox, Marquardt, Popenoe, and Whitehead 2011). "Facts about Families: Focus on Children" provides some statistical indicators about the families of contemporary children.

Facts About Families

Focus on Children

In many places throughout this text, we focus particularly on children. Approximately 74 million children under age 18 live in the United States. However, the proportion of today's population that is under age 18—about 23 percent—represents a substantial drop from the 1960s when more than one-third of Americans were children (U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2015). Here we look at five statistical indicators regarding U.S. children's living arrangements and well-being.

1. In 1960, 88 percent of U.S. children lived with two married parents. Things have changed considerably. Nonetheless a majority of children today live in two-parent households. In 2018, 69 percent of children under 18 lived with two parents, although not necessarily married. More than

The faces of America's children provide evidence of increasing ethnic diversity. The child population of the United States is more racially and ethnically diverse than the adult population. Making up about one-third of the U.S. population today, racial/ethnic minorities are projected to reach 50 percent of the total population by about 2042. Mostly due to rapid growth in Latino families, the population under age 18 is projected to reach this point by 2023 (Mather 2009).

one-quarter (27 percent) of children lived with a single parent, the vast majority with their mother. Another 4 percent did not live with either parent (U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2019, p. vii).

2. Many children experience a variety of living arrangements while they're young. A child may progress through living in an intact two-parent family, a single-parent household, with a cohabiting parent, and finally in a remarried family. About half of all American children are expected to live in a single-parent household at some point in their lives, most likely in a single-mother household (Kreider and Ellis 2011a).

3. Children are more likely to live with a grandparent today than in the past. In 1970, 3 percent of children lived in a household headed by a grandparent. By 2015 that rate had reached about 8 percent (Child Trends Databank 2015; Wu 2018). In about one-quarter of the cases, grandparents had sole responsibility for raising the child, but many households containing grandparents are extended-family households that may include one or both of the children's parents as well as other relatives (Child Trends Databank 2015; Edwards 2009).

Charles Thatcher/Getty Images

4. Although most parents are employed, children are more likely than the general population to be living in poverty. The 2018 poverty rate for U.S. children under age 18 was 16 percent, compared with 10 percent for Americans age 65 and older. Older Americans typically have had lower poverty rates than children since the 1935 onset of the federal Social Security program—and because older Americans are more likely to vote than young children's parents. Poverty rates in 2018 for nonHispanic white children were 9 percent; for Asian children, 11 percent; for Hispanic children, 24 percent; and for black children, 29 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2018c, Table 3; DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015, Table 3).

5. A growing number of U.S. children have a foreign-born parent. The percentage of children under age 18 living with at least one foreign-born parent rose from 14 percent in 1994 to 26 percent in 2018—over one-quarter of all U.S. children. Twenty-three percent of children were native-born children with at least one foreign-born parent, and 3 percent were foreign-born children with at least one foreign-born parent. In 2016, nearly one quarter (23 percent) of children ages 5 to 17 spoke a language other than English at home, (U.S. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2019, p. ix).

Critical Thinking

Perhaps the greatest concern Americans have about family change today is its impact on children. What do these family data tell us about the family lives of children?

11

In a world of demographic, cultural, and political changes, there is no typical family structure. Today's postmodern family includes cohabiting families, single-parent families, lesbian and gay partners and parents, and remarried families. Interracial families are more evident, too, and their increasing social acceptance may result in their experiencing greater community support.

Not everyone concurs that the family is in decline: family change, yes, but not decline (Coontz 2015). Scholars and policy makers with a **family-change perspective** point out that family changes can be for the better. Longer life expectancy can mean more positive years with parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Easier access to divorce than was the case fifty years ago offers alternatives to enduring domestic violence. With more than 80 percent of Americans approving black–white marriages (Jones 2011), increasing tolerance for interracial unions means that mixed-race families are likely to experience less hostile communities than in the past. Family flexibility can be functional in times of economic crisis as extended families expand to take in needy relatives.

Family-change scholars argue that we need to view the family from a historical standpoint (Coontz 2015). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American families were often broken up by illness and death, and children were sent to orphanages, foster homes, or already burdened relatives. Single mothers, as well as wives in lower-class, working-class, and immigrant families, did not stay home with children but went out to labor in factories, workshops, or domestic service. Similar to today's situation, a relatively small proportion of children lived only with their father a century ago (Kreider and Fields 2005).

Family-change scholars posit that today's family forms need to be seen as historically expected adjustments to changing conditions in the wider society, including the

decline in well-paid working-class, middle-class, and even upper-middle-class jobs that used to provide solid economic family support (Coontz 2015). Family-change sociologists do not ignore the difficulties that separation, divorce, and nonmarital parenthood present to families, children, and the broader society. However, these social scientists view the family as "an adaptable institution" (Amato et al. 2003, p. 21) and argue that it makes more sense to provide support to families as they exist today rather than to attempt to turn back the clock to an idealized past (Cherlin 2009a; McHale, Waller, and Pearson 2012; Sawhill 2014).

Then too, today's American families struggle with new economic and time pressures that affect their ability to realize their family values. In sharp contrast to the United States, many European countries have paid family-leave policies that enable parents to take time off from work to be with young children and that provide relatively generous economic support for families in general (Human Rights Watch 2011).

Recently the prominent family sociologist Andrew Cherlin (2015) observed an emergent "truce in the war over family":

[T]he conservative and liberal positions have both shown signs of change. . . . Liberals now seem to acknowledge the downsides of the retreat from marriage. . . . The . . . same-sex marriage [movement] has made it possible for liberals to endorse the importance of marriage without feeling that they have abandoned their commitment to equality. . . . Some conservatives acknowledge that changes in the economy have hurt families, a marked departure from insisting that personal choices are solely to blame. (Cherlin 2015; and see Blankenhorn et al. 2015)

Recognizing that economic and other policy changes have hurt many families involves placing an individual's or family's private troubles within a society-wide context. This way of thinking is the crux of what sociologists call a **sociological imagination**.

A SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: PERSONAL TROUBLES AND SOME SOCIAL CONDITIONS THAT IMPACT FAMILIES

People's private lives are affected by what is happening in the society around them. In his classic book, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), sociologist C. Wright Mills developed the principle that private, or personal, troubles are connected to events and patterns in society. Many times what seem to be personal troubles are shared by others, and these troubles often reflect societal influences. For example, when a family breadwinner is laid

off, the cause does not necessarily lie in their poor work performance but in the economy's inability to provide full employment. As another example, the difficulty of juggling work and family is not usually simply a question of an individual's time-management skills but of society-wide influences—work schedules, commuting, and family care in a society that provides limited support for working families. As a final example, the quality of veterans benefits available to soldiers returning from active duty significantly affects their postwar health and readjustment to civilian family life (Finkel 2013).

In this section we'll look at five social factors that affect families:

1. ever-new biological and communication technologies,
2. economic conditions,
3. historical periods or events,
4. demographic characteristics (statistical facts about the makeup of a population) such as age, religion, and race or ethnicity, and
5. family policy.

Ever-New Biological and Communication Technologies

The pace of technological change has never been faster; new technologies will continue to alter not only family relationships but also how we define families. Here we'll look at two broad types of technological change that impact family life—biological and communication technologies.

Biological Technologies A baby is born in Israel and will be raised by gay male parents there. The sperm to conceive the baby came from one of the Israeli fathers. It was frozen and flown to Thailand, where a South African egg donor awaited. After the egg was fertilized, the new embryo went to Nepal, where it was implanted in a surrogate mother, an Asian Indian woman. Nine months later, the two fathers fly from Tel Aviv to Nepal and, thanks to science, claim their infant (Harris 2015).

Since the 1960s invention of the birth-control pill and the 1978 arrival of the first "test-tube baby," modern science has expanded our options regarding both preventing pregnancy and enhancing fertility. Science continues to develop new techniques that offer new options for individuals and couples to have biological children. The more common infertility interventions involve prescription drugs and microscopic surgical procedures to repair a female's fallopian tubes or a male's sperm ducts (Ehrenfeld 2002).

More recent hormone applications and surgical techniques offer transgender options for family members. These developments are further addressed elsewhere in this text, particularly in Chapters 3, 4, 8, and 9. Here we

point out that ever-new biological technologies dramatically impact family members' options and daily lives (Axad 2018; Farrell, VandeVusse, and Ocobock 2012).

Also, *assisted reproductive technology* (ART) offers increasingly innovative reproductive options (Ravitz 2018). Chapter 8 further explores issues regarding ART procedures.. In general, ART involves the manipulation of sperm or egg or both in the absence of sexual intercourse, often in a laboratory. ART procedures include:

- *artificial insemination* (male sperm introduced to a female egg without sexual intercourse),
- *donor insemination* (artificial insemination with sperm from a donor rather than from the man who will be involved in raising the child),
- *in vitro fertilization* (sperm fertilizes egg in a laboratory rather than in the woman's body),
- *gestational surrogacy,* or *surrogacy* (one woman gestates and delivers a baby for another individual who intends to raise the child),
- *egg sale or donation* (by means of a surgical procedure a woman relinquishes some of her eggs for use by others), and
- *embryo transfers* (a laboratory-fertilized embryo is placed into a woman's womb for gestation and delivery).

ART allows singles, infertile heterosexual couples, and LGBTQ+ couples to have biological children. The ability to freeze eggs, sperm, or fertilized embryos enables persons to become pregnant later in life—after careers are launched, after undergoing medical treatments that will leave them infertile, or even after death (Chiu 2019; Rosenblum 2014). Anticipating contact with hazardous materials, catastrophic injury or death, men deployed overseas have banked sperm before they leave. Potential grandparents have financed egg freezing for their adult children (Gootman 2012).

Moreover, now we can determine the DNA blueprint of a fetus months before the baby is born. As a result, thousands of genetic diseases can be detected prenatally, a situation allowing parents to address these conditions while pregnant—by fixing problems, accepting that the child will have a genetic disease, or aborting the fetus (Pollack 2012b).

On a somewhat different note, we can now confirm the paternity of a biological father in the eighth or ninth week of pregnancy. "Besides relieving anxiety, the test results might allow women to terminate a pregnancy if the preferred man is not the father—or to continue it if he is." Many states require fathers to pay child support when DNA testing establishes biological paternity, a situation that can be fraught with conflict. Then too, "men who clearly know they are the father might be more willing to support the woman financially and emotionally during the pregnancy which some studies suggest might lead to healthier babies" (Pollack 2012a).

Biological technologies expand options but also raise thorny relationship and ethical issues (Lewin 2014a). An example of expanded options involves the ability of a spouse to choose gender-reaffirming (formerly called sex- or gender-reassignment) surgery to change their anatomy to better align with their gender identity—and this situation prompts dramatic family readjustment. As another example, new biological technologies raise difficult family issues as at-home genetics tests such as 23andMe and Ancestry.com reveal previously secreted family members who may have been conceived in hidden affairs. ART procedures can result in complex issues. Sperm donors may be sought out by their adolescent or older offspring, a situation that (facilitated by no social script) may be joyful or traumatizing, "and how does the introduction of this new blood relative affect existing relationships with the parents and siblings that a person grew up with?" (Chuck 2018). As one example among many ethical issues, the Catholic Church condemns any form of conception that doesn't involve traditional intercourse (May 2011).

Moreover, due to misunderstandings and sometimes to fraud, ART agreements—particularly those involving surrogacy—have sometimes "delivered heartache" (Lewin 2014a). Frozen embryos can be ruined if a freezer fails (Ravitz 2018). ART parents may discover that the donor is not who they had agreed on with the agency they used. Or—because sperm donation is not well monitored in the United States as opposed to European countries—a donor may have biologically fathered far more offspring than parents imagined—in one case, up to forty-four or more (Cha 2018a; Chuck 2018; Ravitz 2018). What are the chances that these children, often in the same geographical region, might find themselves unwittingly romantically attracted to their half sister or brother?

As yet another example, for some individuals and couples, fertility-enhancing procedures and extensive DNA fetal mapping raise ethical issues surrounding abortion. And in the case of divorce, which spouse gets to own the couple's previously frozen embryos (Cha 2018b)? Policy and ethical issues associated with biological technologies are more fully addressed in Chapter 8.

Communication Technologies Communication technologies have dramatically changed the way family members interact. We video family events on our cell phones and send the images to family members around the world. Texting, e-mail, websites, blogs, Facebook, Skype, and Twitter facilitate communication in ways that we would never have dreamed possible not long ago. Relationships can begin in cyberspace, minimizing the need for geographical proximity at first meeting. With texting and apps such as FindMyFriends or Spoten, parents monitor children wherever they are. Parents monitor their children's driving via technologies in the

These grandparents Skype to keep in touch with their family. Communication technologies have altered family interactions in ways we never imagined a decade or so ago. At the same time, we see a digital divide among America's families. Not all of us have ready access to computers or the Internet.

family car. Some young adults away at college or elsewhere text their parents once or more daily.

Social support for virtually every conceivable challenge—from infertility to living in stepfamilies to caring for someone with a chronic illness, to name just three examples—can be found on the Internet. Social media can enhance family connection, (Padilla-Walker, Coyne, and Fraser 2012). At the same time, the Internet can cause frustration and conflict for partners or parents who experience another family member's emotional absence because of social networking or online game playing. Some families have been faced with Internet pornography or cyber-infidelity. Social networking sites such as Facebook have made breaking up and divorce potentially more hurtful as partners publish details on their pages. Even more sadly, cyberbullying can become painful enough to result in a bullying victim's suicide. Moreover, communication technology results in a "digital divide" between those who have access to computers and the 16 percent of American households that don't and hence cannot access the benefits of computer use, such as filling out online job applications (File and Ryan 2014).

Economic Conditions

As you probably already know from experience—the economy has important consequences for family relationships. The average long-term trend in U.S. household income has been upward (see Figure 1.4). However, that overall upward pattern masks a situation of growing inequality (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015, p. 8.)

Income, Wealth, and Inequality During the post–World War II decades of the 1950s and 1960s, incomes
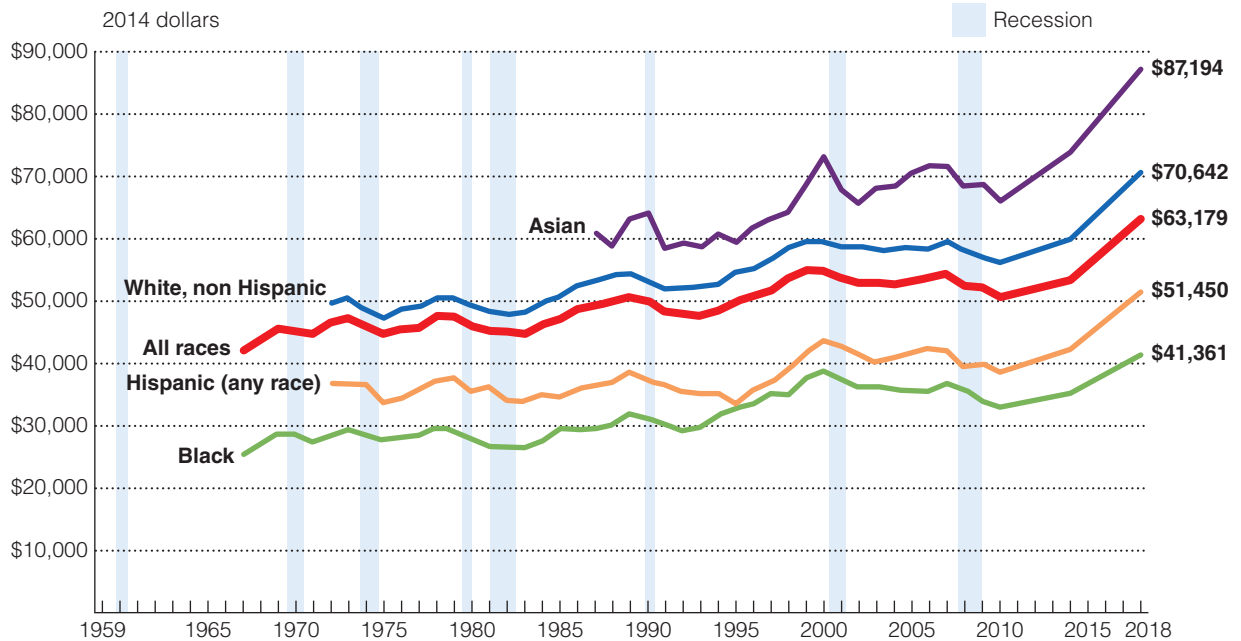
FIGURE 1.4 Real median household income by race and Hispanic origin, 1967 to 2018.

Source: Semega, Kollar, Creamer, and Mohanty 2019, Figure 2.

grew at about the same rate for families at all income levels—almost 3 percent annually. From 1970 to 2000, however, the pattern changed sharply. Incomes of the top 1 percent grew more than threefold (300 percent), while median household income grew less than 15 percent. Today, the poorest 20 percent of the population earn about $25,000 or less annually; the top 20 percent of the population earns $220,000 or more ("Household Income Quintiles" 2019). In 2011, the top one-fifth of U.S. households received more than half (52 percent) of the nation's total income, whereas the poorest one-fifth received just 3.4 percent (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith 2012, pp. 8–10 and Table 2). Inequality has continually increased over the past fifty years (Kochkar and Cilluffo 2018).

Robots and other forms of automation, along with job restructuring to employ fewer workers, and outsourcing, or sending jobs to other countries where labor is cheaper, have caused lower wages and diminished job security for middle- and working-class Americans, many of whom struggle to pay their bills even in today's "strong" economy (Long 2019). Multinational corporations "are the new countries" inasmuch as they exist beyond any one nation's borders and detach themselves from any one country's national interest. As one Apple executive interviewed about outsourcing put it, "We don't have an obligation to solve America's problems" (Foroohar 2012).

Furthermore, in percentage terms, the Great Recession that began in 2007 took a far greater toll on the middle and working classes than on the wealthy. The Great Recession may be declared officially over, but it hasn't ended for a significant number of Americans, still looking for work, sometimes homeless, and vulnerable to unmanageable health care insurance premiums and deductibles (Casselman, Cohen, and Burke 2018; Simmons-Duffin 2019; Yarrow 2018).

Then too, wealth gaps between the richest few and the rest have always been greater than income gaps. Household *wealth* differs from income. Income is the annual inflow of wages, interest, profits, or other sources of earning. Wealth is the accumulated sum of assets (houses, cars, savings and checking accounts, stocks and mutual funds, retirement accounts, etc.) minus the sum of debt (mortgages, auto loans, credit card debt, etc.). Wealth gaps have grown to higher and higher levels, resulting in what many economists describe as the shrinking of the middle class (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015, pp. 8–10).

Income varies by gender. Women have gained more than men since about 1980, while men's wages have been largely stagnant. Still, access to a male wage remains an advantage, a situation explored further in Chapters 3 and 10 (Semega, Kollar, Creamer, and Mohanty 2019, Figure 4). Household income varies by family type. Married-couple households have the highest median annual incomes—$93,654 compared to $61,518 for unmarried male-headed family households and $45,128 for unmarried female-headed family households (Semega, Kollar, Creamer, and Mohanty 2019, p. 4).

Dog housing inequality? Yes, indeed. Whether or not an effective definition of *family* can include pets, the lifestyle of the family pooch pretty much matches that of its owner. Economic inequality is rising in the United States. Both lower-income sectors and the middle class are losing ground.

Moreover, "[i]n no state can an individual working full-time at the minimum wage afford . . . a two-bedroom apartment for his or her family." In fact, in many states it takes more than two full-time jobs at minimum wage to afford that apartment—and in California, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New York, and New Jersey, it would take three jobs (Children's Defense Fund 2012, p. 18, Table 9). It would take almost four and one-half full-time jobs at minimum wage to rent that two-bedroom apartment in Hawaii—probably a good start to explaining why Hawaii has the highest proportion of multifamily households (Chandra and Foster 2018; Lofquist et al. 2012, Table 6).

The Great Recession that began in 2007 made things worse for many families. Many Americans lost their jobs and homes. With fewer tax dollars available, state governments cut services, many of them important to poor, working-class, and middle-class families (Long 2019). Although policy makers declared the recession over in 2009, lost jobs and lowered family income have persisted for many (Yarrow 2018). Many Americans have seen a "low-wage recovery" as relatively high-wage jobs that were lost have been "replaced" with those paying much less (National Employment Law Project 2012).

Because many people put off marriage until they can earn enough to support a family, more marriages were delayed or foregone during the recession of about ten years ago, and the birthrate began to decline as well (Mather 2012; Yarrow 2015). Young adults' difficulties in finding jobs mean that more of them are cohabiting rather than marrying (Kreider 2010) or are living in their parents' homes. Job losses and housing evictions have meant not only more homeless families but also more extended-family and intergenerational households as older parents and their adult children move

in together. Today about 21 percent of men and 13 percent of women between ages 25 and 34 live in a parent's home (U.S. Census Bureau 2018a, Table AD1).

Poverty A new and growing category of Americans has emerged—those who live in their cars (Pollard 2018). A significantly larger proportion of Americans, although not necessarily homeless, live in poverty. As a result of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty measures in the 1960s, poverty rates fell significantly during that decade—from about 22 percent in 1959 to about 12 percent ten years later (Semega, Kollar, Creamer, and Mohanty 2019, Figure 7). However, the vast majority of Johnson's War-on-Poverty measures were dismantled by subsequent federal administrations, and until recently the poverty rate has been rising since about 1974. Today the poverty rate of the general population is again about 12 percent. At 10 percent, the poverty rate of Americans age 65 and older is lower than the population average. The *child* poverty rate—that is, the rate for children under age 18—is 16 percent (Semega, Kollar, Creamer, and Mohanty 2019, p. 12). The U.S. child poverty rate is considerably higher than rates in other industrialized nations. Moreover, approximately one-third of all U.S. families (10.2 million) can be classified as "working poor": at least one wage earner is employed fulltime but the family still lives with very low annual income (Roberts, Povich, and Mather 2011–2012).

Income, wealth, and poverty rates diverge by race and ethnicity, along with parents' education. NonHispanic whites had the lowest poverty rate in 2018 (8 percent), followed by Asian Americans (10 percent). Hispanics (18 percent) and African Americans (20.8 percent) have higher rates of poverty. Although the poverty rate of nonHispanic whites is low, they comprise about

40 percent of the total number of persons in poverty because they are a relatively large part of the population (Semega, Kollar, Creamer, and Mohanty 2019, p. 12). **Life chances**—the opportunities one has for education and work, whether one can afford to marry, the schools that children attend, and a family's health care—all depend on family economic resources. Money may not buy happiness, but it expands anyone's options for nutritious food, comfortable residences, better health care, education at quality universities, vacations, household help, and family counseling, among others.

We can think a minute here about student loan debt. Compared to the overall costs of consumer goods, college tuition has risen sharply, outpacing inflation. No wonder more and more Americans see college affordability as a serious national problem. For young-adult-headed households, student loan debt ranks second only to mortgage debt. Thanks to student loan debt, coupled with credit card and car payments, many young adults are financially "maxed out" (Federal Reserve Bank of New York 2013; "Shocking Student Debt Statistics" 2013). Indeed, families are impacted by historical events (dramatically rising college tuition costs, periods of recession, situations of growing inequality, for instance).

Historical Periods and Events

In the early twentieth-century United States, the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy brought people from farms to cities and thereby helped to change family household composition as well as attitudes and behaviors. Later, family life was experienced differently by people living through the Great Depression of the 1930s, World War II in the 1940s, the optimistic 1950s, the tumultuous 1960s, the economically constricted 1970s and 1980s, the time-crunched 1990s, or war and the threat of terrorism throughout the 2000s (Carlson 2009). For example, during World War II, married women were encouraged to get defense jobs and place their children in day care, and although most were U.S. citizens or long-term residents, Japanese family members, along with some Italians, were sent to internment camps and had their property seized (Taylor 2002b; Tonelli 2004).

After World War II, the 1950s saw an expanding economy and postwar prosperity based on the production of consumer goods. The GI bill enabled returning soldiers to get a college education, and the less educated could get good jobs in automobile and other factories. Most white men earned a "family wage" (enough to support a family), and most white children were cared for by stay-at-home mothers. In those prosperous times, people could afford to get married young and have larger families (Kirmeyer and Hamilton 2011). The expanding economy and government subsidies for housing and education provided a strong foundation for (white, middle-class, heterosexual) married family life. Apparently forgetting minority categories who didn't benefit this way, social scientists dubbed this period—the 1950s that followed World War II—the "golden age" of marriage and the family. Some may have expected this "golden age" to continue, but in hindsight, this era proved to be an historical exception: Such high societal interest in and commitment to living in married and family life has not been replicated either before or since that so-called golden age (Coontz 2000).

In the late 1960s and through the 1970s, marriage rates declined and divorce rates increased dramatically—perhaps in response to a declining job market for working-class men, the increased economic independence of women, and the cultural revolution of the 1960s, which encouraged more individualistic perspectives. The increase in divorce rates slowed the long-term increase of larger families that were more prominent in the 1950s. Additionally, these historical trends, as well as the sexual revolution, also contributed to a dramatic rise in nonmarital births.

Today many soldiers and their families cope with the effects of historic events surrounding the U.S. war against terrorism and deployment in militarized zones abroad. Many returning soldiers, some burdened with unprecedented injuries or posttraumatic stress disorder, struggle to reintegrate into their families (Finkel 2013). Another example of how history impacts individuals involves President Trump's restrictive (some argue inhumane) policies regarding immigrants legally seeking refugee status at our southern border (Cummings 2019; Koerner 2019; Shanker and Mosendz 2019). The 2019 mass shooting that targeted Hispanic El Paso residents was an historical event creating long-lasting fear in many Latino-American families (Nanez, Dianna 2019). Climate change is an historical event affecting us all either directly or indirectly.

Historical periods interact with economics to impact life chances. For instance, most Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) "came of age and entered the work force facing the height of an economic recession" (Dimock 2019). Career-entry jobs were hard to get, and wages were down.

> As is well documented, many of Millennials life choices, future earnings, and entrance to adulthood have been shaped by this recession in a way that may not be the case for their younger counterparts. The long-term effects of this "slow start" for Millennials will be a factor in American society for decades. (Dimock 2019)

Demographic Characteristics: Age Structure

Increased longevity is a dramatic demographic development. Life expectancy in 1900 was 47 years, but an

American child born in 2017 is expected to live to nearly 79 years—longer than at any time in history (Arias and Xu 2019).

Increased longevity means longer marriages for those who do not divorce, a longer period during which parents and children interact as adults, and a long retirement during which family activities and other interests may be pursued or second careers launched. More of us will have longer relationships with grandparents or grandchildren; some of us will know our great-grandparents or great-grandchildren.

At the same time, the increasing numbers of elderly must be cared for by a smaller group of middle-aged and older adults (Colby and Ortman 2015, p. 7). As the ratio of retired elderly to working-age people grows, so will the problem of funding Social Security and Medicare. At the other end of the age structure, a declining proportion of children is likely to affect social policy support for those families who are raising children. Fewer children may mean less attention and fewer resources devoted to their needs.

Demographic Characteristics: Religion

The historically dominant religion in the United States has been Protestantism, especially "mainstream" denominations such as Presbyterianism and Methodism. Catholics, Latter-day Saints, and Jews have been traditionally present and visible as well. The proportion of religiously unaffiliated Americans has increased over past decades to about 26 percent today. Due to some movement from those identifying as "Christian" to those identifying as "none" regarding religious affiliation, the proportion of Americans who identify as Christian has fallen from nearly 80 percent about fifteen years ago to 65 percent today (Pew Research Center 2019). Immigration from the Middle East and Asia has increased the proportions of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists and furthered religious diversity in the United States.

Religious affiliation and practice is a significant influence on family life, ranging from what holidays families celebrate to whether family relations are understood within a moral framework. Religion offers rituals to mark important family milestones such as birth, coming of age, marriage, and death. Religious affiliation provides families with a sense of community, support in times of crisis, and a set of values that give meaning to life. Membership in religious congregations is associated with age and life cycle; young people who have not been actively religious tend to become so as they marry and have children.

Research suggests that "religious couples are less prone to divorce because, on average, they enjoy higher marital satisfaction, face a lower likelihood of domestic violence, and perceive fewer attractive options outside the marriage than their less religious counterparts" (Vaaler, Ellison, and Powers 2009, p. 930). Some studies show that prayer in relationships, especially praying together or for the partner's well-being, is related to greater couple happiness and commitment (Fincham and Beach 2010). Some research suggests that it is not necessarily what religion family members belong to, but the fact that they hold religious beliefs and attend services together (Vaaler, Ellison, and Powers 2009).

Meanwhile, religious beliefs vary and can affect family decisions differently. For instance, Latter-day Saints, evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Muslims reject homosexuality more strongly than some

AP Images/Susan Walsh

At Arlington National Cemetery, Buddhist monks—their lives dramatically impacted by the historical period in which they live—escort the coffin of an American soldier killed in the Middle East. There has been a Buddhist presence in the United States since at least the nineteenth century, and Buddhist practices have been followed by many Americans of non-Asian backgrounds. But the number of Buddhists more than doubled from 1990 to 2001 as the Asian American population increased through immigration.

other religions. Conservative Protestant Christians, Latter-day Saints, and many Catholics and Muslims are strongly opposed to abortion (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2008, p. 135).

U.S. families of religions out of the mainstream face the challenge of maintaining a religiously proper family life in the context of a culture that does not share their beliefs and may stereotype them (Hirji 2012). Dating, marital choice, child raising, dress, and marital decision making can be religious issues, according to which the morally correct way diverges from mainstream American culture. Muslim (and occasionally other immigrant) families have the added burden of facing suspicion and hostility in the wake of 9/11. For many Americans, finding a balance between participating in the larger society and preserving religious values is challenging.

Demographic Characteristics: Race and Ethnicity

Who could have missed the protest marches and the slogan "Black Lives Matter" in response to the deaths of black men shot by police officers or who died in police custody?

Race is a social construction that reflects how people view varied social groups. "Race is a real cultural, political, and economic concept, but it's not biological," says biology professor Alan Templeton ("Genetically, Race Doesn't Exist" 2003, p. 4). The term *race* implies a biologically distinct group, but scientific thinking rejects the idea that there are separate races clearly distinguished by biological markers. Features such as skin color that Americans used to place someone in a racial group are genetically superficial.

In this text, we use the race and ethnic categories formally adopted by the U.S. government because we draw on statistics collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and other agencies. In the census, racial identity is based on self-reporting, and individuals can indicate belonging to more than one race. The Census Bureau defines *Hispanic* and *Latino* as ethnic, not race, identities. Hispanics may be of any race.

Ethnicity has no biological connotations; instead, it refers to cultural distinctions often based in language, religion, foodways, and history. For census purposes, there are two major categories of ethnicity: Hispanic and nonHispanic. This situation means that data on ethnicities other than Hispanic—Arabs or Portuguese, for example—come from surveys other than those done by the Census Bureau.

Social scientists and policy makers sometimes group African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Asians, and other non-whites into a category termed **minority group** or **minority**. This term conveys the idea that persons in non-white race and ethnic categories experience some disadvantage, exclusion, or discrimination in American society when compared to the politically and culturally dominant nonHispanic white group. *Minority* in a sociological context does not have its everyday meaning of less than 50 percent. Regardless of size, if a group is distinguishable and in some way disadvantaged within a society, sociologists consider it a minority group. The term can be controversial, viewed by some as demeaning or ignoring differences among groups and variation in the self-identities of individuals (Gonzalez 2006a). As much as possible, we avoid using it other than when speaking of numerical differences or in reporting Census Bureau data that is so labeled.

Race and Ethnic Diversity Of particular interest is the increasing race and ethnic diversity of U.S. families. About one-fifth of U.S. families (22 percent) speak a language other than or in addition to English at home. Approximately 62 percent of them speak Spanish, with the remaining 48 percent speaking any of forty or more other languages (Duffin 2019; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2019).

National population statistics show that in 2018 the nation was 61 percent nonHispanic white, 13 percent black, and 6 percent Asian (U.S. Census Bureau 2018d). In 2012, for the first time, nonHispanic white births accounted for 49.6 percent of all births and hence were no longer the majority (Tavernise 2012). Over the past fifty years, immigration combined with relatively low fertility rates among Asians and nonHispanic whites (compared to higher rates among blacks and Hispanics) have "put the United States on a new demographic path" (Martin et al. 2015; Mather 2009). "A Closer Look at Diversity: Immigration, Public Policy, and Family Ties" discusses immigration further. Hispanics are now 17 percent of the population, surpassing blacks as the largest race and ethnic group after nonHispanic whites. Hispanics and Asians are the fastest-growing segments of the population; the Asian population has grown more because of immigration than high fertility (Colby and Ortman 2015, Table 2).

The 2019 estimate of the child population shows more diversity than our adult population: 51 percent are nonHispanic white, 25 percent Hispanic, 14 percent black, and 5 percent Asian. Five percent of children are American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or of more than one race (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2019, p. ix). Race and ethnic minorities comprise more than one-third of the U.S. population and 48 percent of the child population. By 2060 they are expected to make up 56 percent of the population (Colby and Ortman 2015, Table 2).

No category system can truly capture cultural identity. As race and ethnic categories become more fluid and as the identity choices of individuals with a mixed heritage vary, race and ethnic identities may be understood as

A Closer Look at Diversity

Immigration, Public Policy, and Family Ties

Thanks to immigration, there is now more racial and ethnic diversity among American families than ever before. The U.S. foreign-born population numbered 45 million in 2017 and is expected to reach 65 million by 2040. Expressed in percentages, the foreign-born population was 14 percent in 2017 and is projected to grow to 17 percent by 2040 (Colby and Ortman 2015; U.S. Census Bureau 2017).

Many Americans maintain **transnational families** whose members bridge national borders (Trask 2013). Also, many immigrant families are **binational**, with members having different legal statuses. One partner or spouse may be a legal resident, the other not. Children born in the United States are automatically citizens, even though one or both parents may be undocumented. About 5 million U.S. children come from binational families (Warren 2015). Transnational and binational families are explored in several places throughout this text.

The United States admits approximately 1 million legal immigrants each year. Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean are the major sending regions, with the highest percentage arriving from Asia (Pew Research Center 2012c). In addition to legal immigrants, approximately 11 million undocumented (not legal) immigrants live in the United States, the majority from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (Krogstad and Passel 2015). Recent Asian immigrants tend to be highly educated professionals (Pew Research Center 2012c). However, many immigrants leave a poorer country for a richer one in hopes of bettering their family's situation (Kapur and McHale 2009).

The earliest voluntary immigrants (African slaves were obviously *not* voluntary immigrants) to the United States were primarily British, German, and Dutch—whites—from northern Europe. In 1875,, the U.S. federal government passed the Page Act, the nation's first immigration law and thereby initiated immigration policy.

What precipitated this first legislation? In about 1850 some native-born, white Protestant Americans argued that the country was being overrun by Catholics, mostly from Ireland—later, from Italy and Poland—who didn't share American values and lacked occupational and language skills. Ironically, the Page Act, followed by the Chinese Exclusion Act, did not exclude Catholics, but it excluded Asians.

Should United States continue as a "melting pot," or should public policy protect it from becoming a "dumping ground"? Such was the nineteenth-century political debate. By 1924, Congress had established a National Origins Formula whereby the number of immigrants from other than non-Northwest European countries was limited "to preserve the ideal" of White "homogeneity" (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian n.d.). However, during the civil rights era, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the racially discriminatory National Origins Formula and gave preference to relatives of U.S. citizens, to professionals, and to refuges (Keely 1979).

Since World War II when many displaced persons sought refugee status, the United States (along with other nations) has granted asylum to an annual quota of refugee seekers. Asylum seekers must establish that they fear serious persecution in their home country (Weissbrodt and Danielson 2005). In 2017, the United States granted asylum to 110,000 individuals; in 2019, that number declined to 30,000 (Admissions Reports 2019).

Traditionally after immigrants establish themselves, they send for relatives—in fact, since the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the majority of legal immigrants enter via family sponsorship. Immigrant families pay payroll, Social Security, property, and sales taxes even though some receive limited government benefits (Martin and Midgley 2006). A 2015 poll found 51 percent of Americans agreeing that immigrants "make our country stronger due to their work and talents." Another 41 percent said immigrants "are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing, and health care" (Pew Research Center 2015b).

During the Trump administration, policy toward immigrants—legal, undocumented, and refugee or asylum seekers—grew increasingly restrictive. The government made various proposals limiting benefits. Of serious concern are the more than 3 million children who, legal citizens themselves, have seen their undocumented parents deported (American Immigration Council 2018; Golash-Boza 2012; Preston 2007). Due to federal policy, families seeking asylum have faced appalling conditions at our southern border (Associated Press 2019; Cummings 2019; Koerner 2019; Shanker and Mosendz 2019).

Critical Thinking

What are some strengths exhibited by immigrant families? What are some challenges they face? At the society-wide level, how do immigrants benefit the United States? What challenges do immigrants bring?

voluntary—"optional" rather than automatic, especially for young adults (Saulny 2011a). Moreover, considerable diversity exists within major race and ethnic groupings. There are Caribbean and African blacks, for example, as well as those descended from U.S. slave populations. There are Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, and other Asians. There are Salvadoran, Nicaraguan, Costa Rican, Chilean, and other Hispanics. Within-group diversity makes generalizations about race and ethnic groups somewhat questionable. For instance, "Hispanic," "Latina (feminine)," "Latino," (masculine) and "Latinx" (pronounced la-tee-neks and indicating either gender) categories are "useful for charting broad demographic changes in the United States . . . [but they] conceal variation in the family characteristics of Latino groups [Cubans and Mexicans, for example] whose differences are often greater than the overall differences between Latinos and non-Latinos" (Baca Zinn and Wells 2007, pp. 422, 424). Then too, there are areas of social life in which race and ethnic differences seem minor—if they exist at all. Little difference in family patterns is apparent between blacks and whites serving in the military, for example (Finkel 2013). Children born to interracial and inter-ethnic unions further add to America's diversity, and the proportion of interracial children is significant (Livingston 2017).

Race and Ethnic Stratification Race and ethnic stratification persists (Pew Research Center 2011a). A history of racial discrimination affects wealth stratification today. As one example, the GI bill mentioned earlier was available to returning black soldiers as well as to whites, but many colleges did not accept African Americans, and one had to be accepted into a college program to qualify for the GI bill's college assistance. Likewise, the GI bill did not officially discriminate against African Americans' desire for home ownership, but the bill was of little use to them because of the many restrictive covenants against black residents and because real estate agents often did not show listed properties to black customers (Reed and Strum 2008). On average, the income and wealth of Asian and of nonHispanic white households are much higher and poverty rates significantly lower than those of African American, Hispanic, and Native American households (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2015).

Our experiences are shaped by our **social class** as well as gender, our race and ethnicity. The class position, race and ethnic characteristics of our parents impact our childhood experiences, which will inform the decisions we make and how we experience the world as we mature into adulthood, as well as the advantages or disadvantages that we encounter. Social class can be more important than race or ethnicity in shaping people's families. Yet, race and ethnic heritage—the family's place within our culturally diverse society—affects

attitudes, preferences, options, and decisions, not to mention opportunities. Because they can go about their days without thinking about their race, it may not be surprising that whites are considerably less likely than minority groups such as blacks, Hispanics, and Asians to see their race or ethnicity as central to their identity (Horowitz 2018).

For instance, ethnicity can influence options and decisions about whether or when to marry, where the family will live, employment, wives' work preferences, preferred parenting practices, caring for aging parents, and so on. As the U.S. population changes, policy makers need to recognize the complexity and diversity of the growing minority population. We return to issues of racial and ethnic diversity throughout this textbook.

Individuals' choices depend largely on the alternatives that exist in their social environment and on cultural values and attitudes toward those alternatives. If people are to shape the kinds of families they want, they must not limit their attention just to their own relationships and families. This text assumes that people need to understand themselves and their problems in the context of the larger society. This is a principal reason why we explore social policy issues throughout this course.

Family Policy: A Family Impact Lens

Family policy involves all the procedures, regulations, attitudes, and goals of programs and agencies, workplace, educational institutions, and government that affect families. *Family policy* encompasses policies that directly address the main functions of families— family formation, partner relationships, economic support, childrearing, adoption, childcare, family violence, juvenile crime, and long-term care. Issues regarding same-sex couples' separation, divorce, and child custody, as well as determining the legal status for lesbian parents who used ART, are all social policy matters. Whether the federal government should prohibit farm children under age 16 from driving tractors or working other dangerous agricultural equipment is a matter of family policy—and hotly debated in some states ("Parents Defend. . . ." 2012). Family policy expert Karen Bogenschneider urges that political decisions regarding families be scrutinized through a **family impact lens** (Bogenschneider et al. 2012) by which we ask how the policy in question impacts families— for instance, in what ways might asking whether a Census respondent is a U.S. citizen affect family members (Bierman and Savage 2019; Thomsen 2019)?

Another example: Of concern have been the many young adults whose undocumented parents brought them to the United States when they were children and who are therefore not legal residents but have no connections to their country of origin (Gonzalez 2006b).

In June 2012, President Obama issued an executive order, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, affecting some 800,000 youth by allowing them to stay in the United States without fear of deportation (but also without legal citizenship status) and to be able to work (Preston and Cushman Jr. 2012). The subsequent Trump administration worked to revoke the Obama policy (Dwyer 2019).

Looking through the family impact lens reveals that "laws place some families in the margins of society while privileging others" (Henderson 2008, p. 983). Until 2015, federal family policy privileged heterosexual marriages by defining same-sex unions as "not-marriage," a situation that negatively affected many children in LGBTQ+ families who did not have access to a non–adoptive parent's employer-provided health care benefits (Movement Advancement Project 2011). As another example, "racial profiling, mandatory minimum sentences, and especially the disparities in drug laws [which more heavily penalize crimes involving drugs typically used by blacks] have had a dramatic effect on the incarceration rates of young male [family members], especially in urban inner-city neighborhoods" (Clayton and Moore 2003, p. 86; (Wolfers, Leonhardt, and Quealy 2015).

Other examples of federal, state, city, or corporate policies that impact families involve:

- gun and ammunition sales (Ducharme 2018),
- Amazon's sale of or refusal to sell books promoting lesbian/gay conversion therapy (Ennis 2019),
- a city's issuing or denying Gay Pride Parade permits (LaBorde 2019),
- the U.S. Department of Justice's position on whether transgender employees should be protected from workplace discrimination (Sopelsa and Moreau 2019), and
- the Trump administration's efforts to limit food assistance (SNAP) and other anti-poverty assistance programs (PBS NewsHour 2019).

Americans disagree on the role government should play vis-à-vis families. Indeed, the diversity of family lifestyles in the United States makes it difficult to develop family policies that would satisfy even most of us. Making well-informed family decisions can mean getting involved in national and local political debates and campaigns. One's role as family member, as much as one's role as citizen, has come to require participation in society-wide decisions to create a desirable context for family life and family choices.

WILLARD CULVER/National Geographic Image Collection

Many social factors condition people's options and choices. One such factor is an individual's place within our culturally diverse society. Here a Seminole elder on a Florida reservation shows children how to see one's destiny on a painted wheel of life. Even within a race and ethnic group, families and individuals may differ in the degree to which they retain their original culture. Some Native Americans live almost solely on a reservation, but many reside in urban settings or go back and forth between a reservation and towns or cities. Less than 1 percent of the population is American Indian or Alaska Native.

THE FREEDOM AND PRESSURES OF CHOOSING

Social factors influence people's personal choices in three ways. First, it is usually easier to make the common choice. In the 1950s and early 1960s, when people tended to marry earlier than they do now, it felt awkward to remain unmarried past one's mid-twenties. Now parents may pressure their young-adult children *not* to marry until they have finished college, and staying single longer is a more comfortable choice. Similarly, when divorce and nonmarital parenthood were highly stigmatized, it was less common to make these decisions than it is today.

A second way social factors can influence personal choices is by expanding people's options. For example, the availability of effective contraceptives makes limiting family size easier than in the past and enables deferring marriage with less risk of unwanted pregnancy. Meanwhile, social factors can limit people's options. For example, American society has never allowed polygamy (more than one spouse) as a legal option. Those who would like to form plural marriages risk prosecution. As another example, until the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* U.S. Supreme Court decision, a number of states prohibited racial intermarriage.

The best decisions are informed ones. It helps to know something about all the alternatives; it also helps to know what kinds of social pressures affect our decisions. As we'll see, people are influenced by the beliefs and values of their society. There are **structural constraints**, economic and social forces that limit personal choices. In a very real way, we and our personal decisions and attitudes are products of our environment.

But in just as real a way, people can influence society. Individuals create social change by continually offering new insights to their groups. Sometimes social change occurs because of conversation with others. Sometimes it requires becoming active in organizations that address issues such as abortion, racial equality, immigrant rights, gay rights, or stepfamily supports, for example. Sometimes influencing society involves many people's living their lives according to their values, even when these differ from more generally accepted group or cultural norms.

We can apply this view to the phenomenon of "living together." Fifty years ago, it was widely believed that cohabiting couples were immoral. But in the 1970s, some college students openly challenged university restrictions on cohabitation, and subsequently many more people than before—students and nonstudents, young and old—chose to live together. As cohabitation rates increased, societal attitudes became more favorable. Over time, cohabitation became "mainstream" (Smock and Gupta 2002). Although some religions and individuals continue to object to living together outside

marriage, a majority of Americans today feel that a cohabiting couple who have lived together for five years or more is just as committed as a married couple (Gallup Poll 2012). It is now significantly easier for people to choose this option. We are influenced by the society around us, but we are also free to influence it, which we do every time we make a choice.

Making Informed Decisions

This course about relationships and families can increase your awareness of your alternatives and how a decision you make now may be related to subsequent options and choices. People make choices even when they are not conscious of it. Sometimes we "slide" into a situation rather than make a conscious decision. We can think of these two ways of dealing with choices as **deciding versus sliding** (Stanley 2009) (see Figure 1.5). A good way to make choices is to be well informed—that is, to do so knowledgeably.

An important component of informed decision making involves recognizing as many options as possible. A second component involves recognizing the social pressures that can influence our choices. Some of these pressures are economic; others relate to cultural norms. Sometimes people decide that they agree with socially accepted or prescribed behavior. They concur in the teachings of their religion, for example. Other times, people decide that they strongly disagree with socially prescribed beliefs, values, and standards. Once people

FIGURE 1.5 The process of informed decision making: deciding versus sliding.
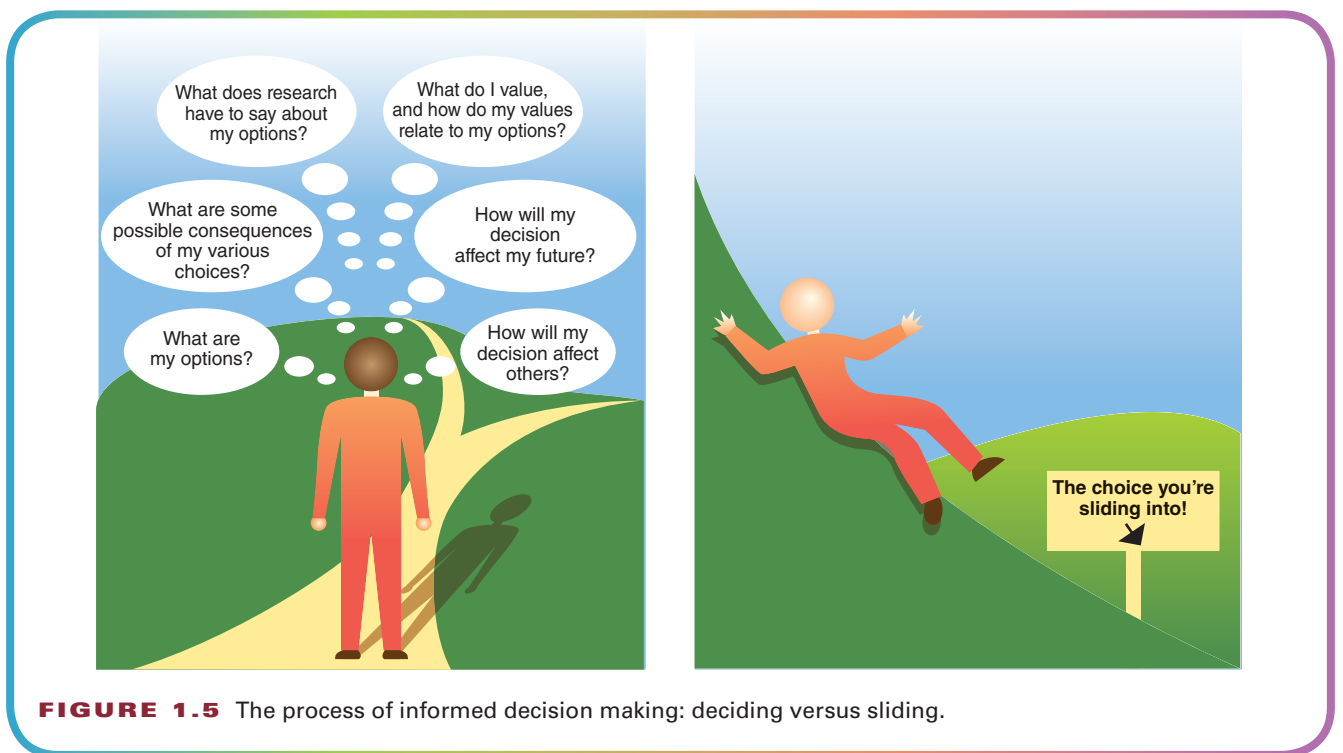
recognize the force of social pressures, they can choose whether to act in accordance with them or not.

A third aspect of deciding about, rather than sliding into, a situation involves considering the consequences of each alternative rather than just gravitating toward the one that initially seems easier or most attractive. For example, someone deciding whether to move back into their parents' home may want to list the consequences. In the positive column, moving home might mean being able to help with family finances as well as save money that would have otherwise gone toward separate rent. In the negative column, returning to one's parental home could result in more cramped family space and increased family conflict. Listing positive and negative consequences of alternatives helps one see the larger picture and thus make a more informed decision.

Part of this process might involve finding research studies on your options. It might help to know, for instance, that the well-respected Pew Research Center surveyed young adults who'd moved back home and found that one-quarter said the situation was bad for their relationship with their parents. Another quarter said moving home was good for their relationship, and about half said moving home made no difference (Parker 2012).

If we're going to decide, not slide, we also need to be aware of our values and understand how they relate to each of our options (Meyer 2007). It's important to respect the so-called gut factor—the emotional dimension of decision making. Besides rationally considering alternatives, people have subjective (often almost visceral) feelings about what for them is right or wrong, good or bad. Respecting one's feelings is an important part of making the right decision. Following one's feelings can mean grounding decisions in a religious or spiritual tradition or in one's cultural heritage, for these have a great deal of emotional power and often represent deep commitments. Other considerations are how the decision will affect your future and other people.

People cannot have everything. They can't simultaneously have the relative freedom of a childfree union and the gratification that often accompanies parenthood, for instance. Every time people make an important decision or commitment, they rule out alternatives—for the time being and perhaps permanently.

However, people can focus on some goals and values during one part of their lives, then turn their attention to different ones at other times. Adulthood is a time with potential for continued personal development, growth, and change. In a family setting, development and change involve more than one individual. Multiple life courses must be coordinated, and the values and choices of other members of the family will be affected if one member changes. Moreover, life in American families reflects a cultural tension between family solidarity and individual freedom (Cherlin 2009a).

FAMILIES OF INDIVIDUALS

Americans place a high value on family. It is hardly surprising that a vast majority of Americans report family is extremely important to them (Carroll 2007; "Marriage" 2008). Why?

Families as a Place to Belong

Families create a place to belong, serving as a repository or archive of family memories and traditions (Cieraad 2006). **Family identity**—ideas and feelings about the uniqueness and value of one's family unit—emerge via traditions and rituals: family dinnertime, birthday and holiday celebrations, vacation trips, and perhaps family hobbies such as working together in the garden. Family identities typically include members' cultural heritage. For example, all the children in one family may be given Irish, Hispanic, Asian Indian, or Russian names.

Families provide a setting for the development of an individual's **self-concept**—basic feelings people have about themselves, their abilities, characteristics, and worth. Arising initially in a family setting, self-concept and identity are influenced by significant figures in a young child's life, particularly those in the parent role, together with siblings and other relatives (Wehmeyer 2014).

How family members and others interact with and respond to us continues to impact self-concept, identity, and even our health options throughout life (Cooley 1902, 1909; Mead 1934; Steiner 2019). A child who is loved comes to think he or she is a valuable and loving person. A child who is given some tasks and encouraged to do things comes to think of him- or herself as competent.

Familistic (Communal) Values and Individualistic (Self-Fulfilment) Values

Familistic values such as family togetherness, stability, and loyalty focus on the family as a whole. They are *communal* or *collective* values; that is, they emphasize the needs, goals, and identity of the group. Many of us have an image of the ideal family in which members spend considerable time together enjoying one another's company. Furthermore, the family can be a major source of stability (Connor 2007). Those of us who marry vow publicly to stay with our partners for life. We expect our partners, parents, children, and even our more distant relatives to remain loyal to the family unit.

But just as family values permeate American society, so do **individualistic (self-fulfillment) values**. These values encourage people to think in terms of personal happiness and goals and the development of a distinct individual identity. An individualistic orientation gives

AP Images/East Valley Tribune, Heidi Huber

Volunteers at the American Muslim Women's Association work on a craft project to benefit poorer immigrants and refugees. The Arab American population is slightly more than 1.5 million. Contrary to what many think, 65 percent of Arab Americans are Christian, and most are second- or third–generation American citizens. Arabs who have immigrated since the 1950s are likely to be Muslim. Employing a *family-impact policy lens*, media scholar Jack Shaheen examined American movies depicting Arabs or Arab Americans and found that generally they presented negative stereotypes of "barbarism" and "buffoonery" (Beitin, Allen, and Bekheet 2010). Some modern young Muslim women have recently adopted the head scarf to express an intensified identification with Islam in the context of experiences of discrimination or challenges to their religious community.

People as Individuals and Family Members

The changing shape of the family has meant that family lives have become less predictable than they were in the mid-twentieth century. The course of family living results in large part from the decisions two adults make, moving in their own ways and at their own paces through their lives. A consequence of ongoing developmental change in individuals is that the union or family may be put at risk. If one or more individuals change considerably over time, they may grow apart instead of together. A challenge for contemporary relationships is to integrate divergent personal change into the relationship while nurturing any children involved.

How can people make it through their own and each other's changes and stay connected as a family? Two guidelines may be helpful. The first is for family members to take responsibility for their own past choices and decisions rather than blaming previous "mistakes" on others in the family. In addition, it helps to recognize that a changing family situation—for example, a college graduate's returning home to live with parents, a partner's deciding to quit his or her job and attend graduate school, a preteen's getting used to a new stepparent—may mean that family living will be difficult for a while. Family relationships need to be flexible enough to allow for each person's individual changes—to allow family members some degree of freedom. At the same time, it's good to remember the benefits of family living and the commitment necessary to sustain it. Individual happiness and family commitment are not inevitably in conflict; research shows that committed family bonds have significant positive impacts on individual well-being (Waite and Gallagher 2000; Wilcox et al. 2011b).

On the one hand, people value the freedom to leave unhappy unions, correct earlier mistakes, and find greater happiness with new partners. On the other hand, people are concerned about social stability, tradition, and the overall impact of high levels of marital instability on the wellbeing of children. The clash between these two concerns reflects a fundamental contradiction within marriage itself; that is, marriage is designed to promote both institutional and personal

more weight to the expression of individual preferences and the maximization of individual talents and options.

The contradictory pull of both familistic and individualistic values creates tension in society (Amato 2004, Cherlin 2009a)—and tension within ourselves that we must resolve. "It is within the family . . . that the paradox of continuity and change, the problem of balancing individuality and allegiance, is most immediate" (Bengston, Biblarz, and Roberts 2007, p. 323).

American society has never had a remarkably strong tradition of familism, the virtual sacrifice of individual family members' needs and goals for the sake of the larger kin group (Sirjamaki 1948; Lugo Steidel and Contreras 2003). Our national cultural heritage prizes individuality, individual rights, and personal freedom. On the other hand, an overly individualistic orientation puts stress on relationships when there is little emphasis on contributing to other family members' happiness or postponing personal satisfactions in order to attain family goals.

MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES: FOUR THEMES

We have defined the term *family* and discussed diversity and decision making in the context of family living. We can now state explicitly the four themes of this text.

1. Personal decisions must be made throughout the life course. Decision making is a trade-off; once we choose an option, we discard alternatives. No one can have everything. Thus, the best way to make choices is knowledgeably.

2. People are influenced by the society around them. Cultural beliefs and values influence our attitudes and decisions. Societal or structural conditions can limit or expand our options.

3. We live in a society characterized by considerable change, including increased ethnic, economic, and family diversity; by tension between familistic and individualistic values; by decreased marital and family permanence; and by increased political and policy concern about the needs of children and families. This dynamic situation can make personal decision making more challenging than in the past—and more important.

4. Personal decision making feeds into society and changes it. We affect our social environment every time we make a choice. Making family decisions can also mean choosing to become politically involved in order to effect family-related social change. Making family choices consciously, according to our values, gives our family lives greater integrity.

We will revisit these topics throughout this text, and we, your authors, believe that they provide a strong foundation for the subject of marriages and families.

Families are made of individuals, each seeking self-fulfillment and a unique identity, but individuals can find a place to learn and express togetherness, stability, and loyalty within the family. Families also perform the important function associated with providing emotional support—they give us a place to belong. Events, rituals, and histories become intrinsic parts of each individual.

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goals. . . . To make marriages with children work effectively, it is necessary for spouses to find the right balance between institutional and individual elements, between obligations to others and obligations to the self. (Amato 2004, p. 962)

Throughout this text we will continue to explore the tension between individualistic and familistic values and discuss creative ways that partners and families can alter committed, ongoing relationships in order to meet their changing needs.

Summary

- Families exist worldwide (of course). Situations and events across the globe increasingly affect family life in the United States—sometimes in our very neighborhoods.

- We, your authors, define family as any sexually expressive, parent-child, or other kin relationship in which people—usually related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption—(1) form an economic or otherwise practical unit and care for any children or other dependents, (2) consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group, and (3) commit to maintaining that group over time.

- Social scientists usually list three major functions served by today's families: raising children responsibly, providing members with economic and other practical support, and offering emotional security.

- With relaxed institutional control, family diversity has progressed to the point that there is no typical family form today.

- Whether we are in an era of "family decline" or "family change" is a matter of debate.

- Families exist in a social context that affects many aspects of family life. Families are affected by ever-new

biological and communication technologies, economic conditions, historical periods, and demographic characteristics such as age, religion, race, and ethnicity.

- Marriages and families are comprised of individuals. Our culture values both families and individuals. Families provide members a place to belong and help ground identity development. Meanwhile, finding personal freedom within families is an ongoing, negotiated process.

- People make choices, either by consciously deciding or by sliding into situations; the best decisions are informed ones consciously made. Our decisions are limited by social structure, and at the same time they are causes for change in that structure.

- Change and development continue throughout adult life. Because adults change, relationships, marriages, and families are far from static.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. Without looking at ours, write your definition of family and then compare it to ours. How are the two similar? How are they different? Does your definition have some advantages over ours?

2. Why is the family a major social institution? Does your family fulfill each of the family functions identified in the text? If yes, how? If no, why not?

3. What important changes in family patterns do you see today? Do you see positive changes, negative changes, or both? What do they mean for families, in your opinion?

4. What are some examples of a personal or family problem that is at least partly a result of problems in the society? Describe one specific social context of family life as presented in the text. Does what you read match what you see in everyday life?

5. **Policy Question.** What, if any, are some changes in law and social policy that you would like to see put in place to enhance family life?

Key Terms

binational   20
deciding versus sliding   23
ethnicity   19
extended family   6
familistic (communal) values   24
family   4
family-change perspective   12
family-decline perspective   10
family identity   24

family impact lens   21
family policy   21
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individualistic (self-fulfillment)
    values   24
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nuclear family   6
postmodern family   7
race   19
self-concept   24
social class   21
social institution   9
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structural constraints   23
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