TASHA R. HOWE

2 EDITION

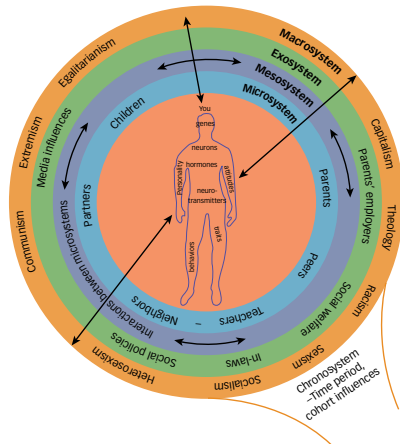# Marriages & Families IN THE 21st CENTURY

A Bioecological Approach

A NEW LENS ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

■ **FIGURE 2.1** The Bioecological Model

BIOECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The bioecological model provides an organizing framework for the text that helps students see how families are shaped by multiple influences, from biological to cultural, that interact with one another

■ **FIGURE 9.1** The Zygote's Journey

SOURCE: Levine and Munsch (2010, p. 102).

MULTIDISCIPLINARY LENS

Discussion of research from fields as diverse as neuroscience, medicine, anthropology, biopsychology, and sociology encourages students to think critically about research

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FOCUS ON MY FAMILY

SUSAN AND KAREN ADOPT INTERNATIONALLY

Susan and Karen with Jesse and Eleanor

When I met Karen, she was in medical school and pregnant, but miscarried. We both unsuccessfully tried to get pregnant. I couldn't see children without pangs of jealousy and yearning. We decided against domestic adoption; I couldn't endure the thought of the birth mother changing her mind. Our adoption agency told us that healthy infants could be adopted in Vietnam. My life as a social justice activist began with Vietnam War protests—and now, a baby from

people didn't believe lesbians should adopt, but that *she* thought "better with you than 'dying in an orphanage in Vietnam.'" (Quite a compliment; I became practiced at keeping my mouth shut.) Finally came a picture of a 2-month-old baby. We got Immigration and Naturalization Services' approval. Then we waited. Endlessly. Painfully. Karen and I had fight after fight. I despaired; I couldn't believe it would ever happen. Imagine giving birth to a baby and then waiting 5 months to see him.

Finally, the call came. Karen was the experienced babysitter and older sister but couldn't leave her medical residency. I had never even diapered a baby. Luckily, three of our dear friends came with me. I'll never forget the day I called Karen to tell her I held our son in my arms. He had adorable feet, the sweetest smile, and his hair stood straight up. I remember walking off the airplane, putting Jesse into Karen's arms, and watching her incandescent smile blossom. Without an outpouring of help from our friends and families, it would never have happened.

Jesse had so much energy that we were run ragged. But soon it was Karen's turn to travel—this time to Cambodia (we didn't want Jesse to be the only non-white person in the family). The only hitch was that we couldn't afford it. But a generous gift from a friend solved that problem! In a week, Karen was back. Eleanor was beautiful, with curly hair and chubby cheeks.


DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

Families Today ▲
Love at First Sight

© SAGE Publications

Focus on My Family presents real families of diverse ethnicity, culture, and sexual orientation who share their experiences through essays and photos

Exclusive *Families Today* video clips available with every chapter provide additional cases and interviews that explore diverse family experiences
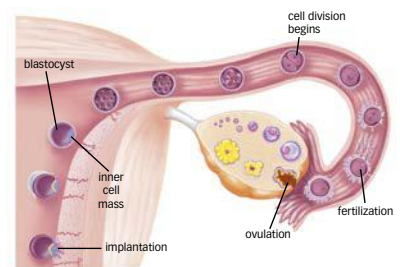
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"Howe does a superb job of keeping students reminded of the multiple influences on family and individual. Many textbooks are missing this organizational element."

—Alicia Drais-Parrillo, Ph.D.
The Pennsylvania State University

AN ACTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

BUILDING YOUR STRENGTHS

- If you have a problem, think about how to present it and then present it with love sooner rather than later.
- State the problem clearly to your partner using "I" statements, without blaming him or her for the problem. For example, "I have been feeling sad lately when I come home and the house is messy because the clutter makes me anxious."
- The receiver of the information should be prepared to restate the problem so that there are no misunderstandings. For example, "I'm hearing some disappointment from you, because I haven't been keeping the house very tidy."
- The first partner should acknowledge whether the problem was heard correctly or make amendments. Then he or she is responsible for suggesting a solid solution, without blaming or shaming the other person. For example, "Yes, I'm so tired after work that I don't have the energy to clean the house. Would it be possible for you to pick up the living room and put the kids' toys away before I get home? That would be a big help."
- The second partner should then either agree to the request or state other options. Each option should be discussed until there is one that is workable (not necessarily perfect, but one that is not characterized by one partner dominating the other's ideas). For example, "Actually, I think the kids will keep making messes until bedtime, so would it be OK with you if I picked up the living room and put the dishes away but then after the kids went to bed, we could both put the toys away?"
- After the couple has reached an agreement, they must make a concrete plan to implement it and prevent it from being sabotaged.
- Once an agreement is reached, the partners should reaffirm their commitment and acknowledge the compromises that were made on each side.
- Agree to revisit the problem after a while (for example, a week later) to see if the plan needs tweaking. If the plan is not implemented properly, it is not acceptable to yell, whine, or complain. Just start over with the first step.

SOURCE: Adapted from Matta, 2006, pp. 70–71: Reproduced with permission of ABC-CLIO, LLC.

NOTE: These tips are not meant to diagnose, treat, or cure any personal or relationship problems. They are meant for informational purposes, and to spur discussion.

STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

Building Your Strengths and ***Self-Assessment*** help students reflect and build on their own families' strengths, recognizing the commonalities that unite healthy families from diverse backgrounds

SELF-ASSESSMENT

You've learned a bit about the different processes families experience both historically and today. You can also assess your own family processes. The table below lists ten healthy family processes. Rate your family, a specific dyad or triad in your family (that is, mom and older brother, or husband, wife, and teenage daughter, and so on), or think about your family as a whole. You can do this regarding your *family of origin* as well as your *family of procreation*.

	Never	Sometimes	Always
1 My family members and I respect each other's individuality.	1	2	3
2 We try to solve problems without blaming each other.	1	2	3
3 We try not to raise our voices or yell.	1	2	3
4 We tell other family members we love them.	1	2	3
5 We express physical affection to each other (e.g., with hugs and kisses).	1	2	3
6 We try to discuss our problems before they fester too long.	1	2	3
7 We don't gang up on specific family members.	1	2	3
8 We don't call each other names during disagreements.	1	2	3
9 We don't get physical (e.g., slapping or pushing) during disagreements.	1	2	3
10 We enjoy just spending time together.	1	2	3
Total score			

"[Howe's] strength is debunking the long-standing myth about what the ideal American family should be for everyone."

—Andrea G. Weyermann, Ph.D.
Georgia State University

A FOCUS ON CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYSIS

HOW WOULD YOU MEASURE THAT?

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST SINGLES

Morris and colleagues wanted to examine whether the general public would discriminate against single people in housing decisions. They sampled a group of college students and a group of adults working in real estate agencies and asked them to imagine themselves as landlords evaluating housing applications of several potential tenants. They gave the participants various tenant profiles where they manipulated whether the tenant was: a single man, a single woman, a married couple married for either 6 months or 6 years, a cohabiting couple together for 6 years, or a pair of opposite sex roommates. They then asked the participants how responsible they thought the tenants might be in terms of damaging the house, keeping it clean, being noisy, and paying their rent in a timely manner. Across all conditions, married couples were judged more positively than all of the types of single people (for example, they were judged more likely to pay their rent on time). Single women were seen as almost as responsible as married couples, as were cohabitors if they had been together longer than the married couple (6 years versus 6 months). These results were consistent regardless of the marital status and gender of the participants or whether they were real estate agents or college students.

When asked why they judged the married couple so positively, most people said "because they are married" without any real explanation, suggesting that they believe everyone thinks married people are more responsible and trustworthy. Some participants said "because they have two incomes," even though both the cohabitors and the roommates also had two incomes.

While participants rated single people as least likely to stay in the house for an extended period of time and least likely to pay the rent on time, they never used fears about personal reliability or timely payments as reasons to explain their judgments against single people. They were comfortable explaining that marital status had been the determining factor in their decisions. In fact, when subjects in another experiment by the same authors read about landlords' discrimination against single people, African Americans, women, and the disabled, they [...] African Americans, women, an [...] but endorsed discrimination ag [...] the landlords were justified in [...] single people, despite judgin [...] other groups as wrong. Perha [...] more harshly because single pe [...] traditional system of couplin [...] marginalized groups cannot ch [...] comment that married couple [...] more reliable and stable than [...] considering that most people [...] marriages end in divorce. The [...] basing decisions solely on [...] nothing about family *processe* [...] dysfunctional, even in married [...] that single people may face d [...] market as well as negative jud [...] of their bioecological systems.

SOURCE: Morris Sinclair, & DePa [...]

How Would You Measure That? presents innovative research studies and encourages students to develop their scientific analysis and critical thinking skills

Brain Food examines new and interesting laws, facts, and policies that shape family life

⚡ BRAIN FOOD

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT HIV AND AIDS

Myth	Fact
You can become infected with HIV by using the bathroom of an infected person, shaking hands or kissing an infected person, if an infected person sneezes on you, and through mosquito bites.	HIV is transmitted through bodily fluids exchanged during vaginal, anal, or oral sex, through sharing needles or syringes with an infected person, and through childbirth and breastfeeding by an infected mother. HIV is not spread through saliva but can be spread by people with open or bleeding mouth sores where blood is exchanged.
You should not give or receive blood at hospitals or blood banks due to the risk of HIV.	While a few early cases of AIDS were related to blood transfusions, there is no risk from giving blood and all blood since 1985 has been thoroughly tested so the blood supply is safe.

CHAPTER 4 STUDY TOOLS

End-of-chapter flow charts with learning objectives, key terms, reflection questions, and highlighted digital resources help students create a mental template of the big picture of each chapter

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"*The author found ways to bring 'the self' into the discussion on relationships. Students really need to relate, and the author finds many ways to open that up for students.*"

—Carol Fealey
Farmingdale State College

2 EDITION

MARRIAGES & FAMILIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

*For Elijah, Kieran, and Aydin, three young
men who taught me everything I know about love.*

2 EDITION

MARRIAGES & FAMILIES
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

A Bioecological Approach

TASHA R. HOWE

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

SAGE

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

17 18 19 20 21 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

BRIEF CONTENTS

DETAILED CONTENTS

PREFACE

Dear Instructors and Students,

I am thrilled to be able to bring a fresh new perspective to a topic near and dear to my heart: family relationships. During the decade that I taught the marriages and families course in my department, I struggled to find an adequate textbook that would truly reflect the diverse and dynamic family lives most of us experience. I found that books either focused a lot on individuals from a psychological perspective, or they emphasized the larger social systems that influence families, but they did not integrate the two perspectives, and they certainly didn't include any information on human biology or neuroscience. I was trained to believe that in order to truly understand humans, we must go "out from neurons and in from culture," a perspective known as "bioecological theory." This theoretical framework allows us to examine families in all their messy complexities, never simplifying something so profoundly personal yet so culturally universal as the connection we share with our family members.

Once my dissertation advisor convinced me to take what I had learned in my training as a developmental psychologist and put it into my own textbook, I knew my main goal would be to create a fun read for students that didn't dumb down the science but also didn't feel like a long slog through too much scientific jargon. I gave the final manuscript a dry run with my own students, who gave it a resounding "thumbs up." Every time I teach the course, students tell me it feels like they're having a conversation with me instead of trudging through dense prose. Professional reviewers have also commended the book for its lively, engaging writing style, multidisciplinary focus, and depth of analysis—all of which encourage students to think critically. I was delighted by the positive evaluations from both students and professors and I feel I was successful in writing a textbook unlike any other on the market. It covers all topics instructors are accustomed to examining in marriage and family courses (e.g., divorce, mate selection) yet it explores them in a way no other book does, from a bioecological and multidisciplinary approach. This makes the book appropriate for classes in many departments, such as family studies, sociology, psychology, social work, and nursing.

I have scoured the research from fields as diverse as medicine, economics, psychiatry, nursing, anthropology, psychology, sociology, social work, and neuroscience, in order to approach each topic in a comprehensive yet clear and concise manner. We are all biological beings, with brains that have been organized to reflect our social and cultural milieu. The inner workings of our nervous systems, hormones, and neurotransmitters are not laid down solely through some genetic blueprint but are intimately linked to the environments that shape us. Biology and context work bidirectionally to impact family functioning, whether it be to create healthy, safe, stable relationships, or those that are less than optimal. By the end of each chapter, students will have a clear idea of how each topic is affected by biology, personality, childhood experiences, interpersonal interactions, social norms, and cultural and historical forces.

Several pedagogical features are included in each chapter to help students develop their critical thinking regarding family relationships. Each chapter includes a How Would You Measure That? box, which presents an innovative research study and encourages students to build their scientific analysis skills. Each chapter also has a Brain Food box, which examines new or interesting laws, facts, and policies that shape family life. Because the book sets up a complex theoretical and analytical research lens at the outset, students immediately begin to assimilate skills for analyzing research in each subsequent chapter. I have used this framework for years in my classes and I find that within the first month of class, students become so well-versed in the bioecological approach that they can use it to understand their own and other people's families with ease. They know, for example, that something like "love" is not simply a feeling but is a concept affected by everything from neurotransmitters to religion to culture. Indeed, the bioecological approach makes intuitive sense right away and students easily apply it to new topics. My intent in writing this book is to engage students in critical analysis so they are no longer swayed by arguments such as "it's in the genes!" or "his mother made him that way!" The bioecological model makes it clear that all aspects of family life are multiply determined.

In addition to this organizing theoretical framework, other aspects of the text also make it unique and effective at eliciting deep learning, analysis, and personal insight. For example, diversity has always been the norm in regard to families and a key focus of the book is the historical context and evolution of current family forms. Many of us grow up with biases and stereotypes regarding some family forms being better for individuals' adjustment (e.g., having heterosexual married parents). I emphasize that we cannot understand the health and well-being of a family based solely on its structure. The only way to assess family strengths is to look inside, to examine the processes, the dynamics, and the attachment patterns within the home. Only with a process-based analysis can one determine if a family is dysfunctional or has an abundance of strengths. All family structures can have many strengths and ultimately, this textbook helps students develop a strengths-based lens through which to view diverse family forms.

I have included a plethora of Self-Assessment and Building Your Strengths exercises so that students can reflect on their own families' strengths and attempt to build on them. When we focus on the positive attributes of families, we see that most of us have a lot in common. These commonalities tie the human family together and unite people from extremely diverse backgrounds. Each of us lives an intersectional life, carrying with us our age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, history, "race," social class, religion, language, (dis)ability status, and biochemical makeup. These intersectional sources of our identity constitute the unique strands of who we are, yet all of us are members of the same global village. It is no longer an option to be isolationist, insular, or ethnocentric. What happens in every tiny corner of the globe happens to us all. The 21st-century family is a diverse and globalized one. Each chapter in the text illuminates trends from across the world; diversity is the driving force in the text's analysis of families, not something that is featured in a sidebar or in discrete boxes in a few chapters.

A multicultural lens leads to cognitive, social, and even spiritual advancement. Those who learn how to integrate multiple perspectives into their own worldviews can become cognitively flexible, solve problems, and act in more creative, critical, and innovative ways. To enhance this perspective, each chapter features a "Focus on My Family" box, wherein families wrote essays about their lives and submitted family photos to provide students a tiny glimpse at the diverse experiences parents, partners, children, and extended kin use to build their strengths. Pedagogical tools and digital materials will also help instructors and students explore these concepts in more depth. Each chapter begins with several learning objectives, which are revisited at the end of the chapter, with summary material organized around the objectives. Each chapter also includes self-quizzes and web resources. Instructors will benefit from PowerPoint slides and an instructor's manual with discussion topics, class activity ideas, and exam questions.

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- Editable, chapter-specific **PowerPoint® slides** offer you flexibility in creating multimedia presentations
- EXCLUSIVE ACCESS! Carefully selected **SAGE journal articles** support and expand concepts presented in each chapter
- **Video and multimedia links** appeal to students with different learning styles
- **Lecture notes** summarize key concepts by chapter to aid in preparing lectures

NEW TO THIS EDITION

A lot has happened since I was writing the first edition of this text in 2008 and Barack Obama had just been elected president of the United States. The United States survived an economic meltdown, same-sex marriage was legalized, and the Syrian refugee crisis affected the entire world. The United Nations accomplished many of their Millennium Development Goals and is now implementing the Sustainable Development Goals to enhance families' quality of life across the globe. The second edition of this text integrates all of these changes and more into its examination of topics such as violence against women in developing countries, the impact of migration trauma on children, and shifting attitudes about same-sex relationships.

My research assistants and I devoured hundreds of new studies published in myriad disciplines between the years 2010–2016 in order to update every section of every chapter. Chapters have been reorganized, streamlined, and shortened where appropriate. The entire narrative has been edited and freshened up. New photos and cartoons have been added to break up text passages and allow students more time to reflect. A new organizing schematic flowchart has been included to help students create a mental template of the big picture of each chapter in the context of learning objectives, key terms and concepts, critical-thinking questions, and related multimedia resources. Students can use these study tools, along with chapter summaries organized by learning objective, to be sure they have understood the take-home messages of each section of text.

We have worked hard to bring you a lively, colorful, visually appealing, interesting, and in-depth examination of family relationships. Please let us know how we did! I love to hear from readers. Just shoot me, Tasha R. Howe, an e-mail any time, at th28@humboldt.edu.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a textbook is such a huge endeavor; it seems unfair that only my name is on the cover. So many people have helped bring this book to fruition. My original acquisitions editor, Christine Cardone, not only helped me negotiate my original contract, but helped me find a home for this new edition. Thanks Chris! To the amazing staff at SAGE, you have been a sheer joy to work with. Lara Parra, your enthusiasm for this project from the minute we met has been contagious. You are always full of good ideas, keen vision, and the energy to make things happen. Your guidance, organization, and support have been invaluable. Lucy Berbeo was instrumental in getting the final photos, pedagogical tools, and every other loose end tied up. Katherine Hepburn, Zachary Valladon, Morgan Shannon, Gretchen Treadwell, Veronica Stapleton-Hooper, and Shari Countryman were also of great help in guiding the project to completion. To everyone in the art and marketing departments, thank you so much! And to the reviewers: your enthusiasm for my project was palpable on the review page and you provided great suggestions for improving the manuscript.

At Humboldt State University, my phenomenal students collected research, typed references, ran to the library, made spreadsheets, and generally allowed me the luxury of writing full-time. Most especially, I'd like to thank Zahra Shine and Casey Mintz for being the pioneers muddling through the first few chapters with me. Zahra stuck with me until the end and along the way we picked up Tish Jett-Dias and the fabulous Hannah Goldan, who came along like an angel in the nick of time to finish the project by the deadline.

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I want to thank my father Dr. James Hein, my sister Lanee Buchholz, my stepmother Lyn Ackley, my uncle Laurence Clarke, my grandparents Charles and Louise Kent, my sons Elijah Howe and Kieran Howe, my stepparents Richard and Cathy Mance, and posthumously, my mother Susan Clarke, and my brother Kisasi Mance. Each of you successfully navigated the most difficult family circumstances with me and we all came out stronger and closer! Thank you for the love. For those friends and family members I cannot thank individually, you know who you are and how much you mean to me. Thank you, especially, to the brave families who shared their personal stories so intimately within the pages of this book.

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SAGE also wishes to thank Mo Therese Hannah, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Siena College, for developing the Reflection Questions for each chapter in this text.

1

THE CHANGING AMERICAN FAMILY

> *We are one big family of people,*
> *trying to make our way through*
> *the unfolding puzzle of life.*
>
> —Sara Childre, President,
> Heartmath Research Institute

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

1.1 Identify different ways to define family.

1.2 Describe the impact of Standard North American Family ideologies on our perceptions of ourselves and others.

THE STANDARD NORTH AMERICAN FAMILY

What is a family? You might think that a formal definition is unnecessary for such a familiar concept. But you will see throughout this book that the way we define a concept is not just a matter of semantics but can have real consequences for the people involved. How we define what a family is or is not can influence what research questions scientists choose to investigate. Our definitions can also affect social policies enacted by governments and can even shape the moral values of a given population. By reading this book you will come to realize that there are many, quite diverse ways to envision family, and that the entity we call family is by nature a cultural and historical construction. In fact, it may be impossible to come up with one agreed-upon definition of what a family is, which makes studying families both difficult and endlessly fascinating.

Take a moment to think about your own definition of family. List your family members and reflect on whom you include on the list and whom you decide to leave out. Who makes up your family? I often have my students do this exercise on the first day of class and I'm always impressed by the great variety of definitions of family they offer, as well as the diverse family structures they describe. For example, last semester Miguel shared his list with our class. It included his mother, father, four siblings, seven aunties, four uncles, 32 cousins, and his grandparents on both sides.

"It seems like Miguel's definition includes only blood relatives," Jasmine, another student, commented. She continued, "My list

includes my play cousins, my dad's girlfriend, my best friend who lived with us while we were growing up, and my stepbrother on my mom's side." Several members of the class nodded and then Tiffany spoke up, saying, "I agree with Jasmine. Your family can include people who aren't blood relations. Like my uncle and his long-term partner, Joshua. They aren't married and don't have any biological kids but Joshua is a big part of our family. Not to mention that, without my dog, I wouldn't have made it through college this far. He's my baby!"

After a few giggles, the class discussed whether those we consider family must be related by blood, involved in heterosexual unions, live in the same household as us, or even be human. Several students felt their college roommates were their primary family members since they were far away from home and they had built a little family at college.

Like my students, even governments and countries define the term *family* in a variety of ways. Why does it matter that we have such different ideas about the definition of family? If you think about the laws of the United States or your home country, you might see some that apply only to people who are blood relations, legally married, or live together. For example, in some states and many countries around the world, same-sex couples are not allowed to marry, adopt children, or visit their partners in intensive care units of hospitals because they are technically not "spouses" (visiting hours are reserved for "immediate family" only).

The definition of family doesn't stop with a country's laws, however. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau (2012) defines family as two or more people living together where the members are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. The lead householder (the person whose name is on the mortgage or rental agreement) and all people in the household who are related to him or her are considered to be the family members. If we take the census definition seriously, Jasmine, Tiffany, and Miguel would not technically be "family" with anyone on their lists as they each live with college roommates, away from most of those they consider to be family members.

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Compare the Census Bureau's definition with *Webster's Dictionary* (Family 2015) definitions, which include "a group of persons of common ancestry," or "a people or group of peoples regarded as deriving from common stock," or "a group of people united by certain convictions or a common affiliation." Would any of these definitions include Jasmine's play cousins or stepbrother? Many people consider a "family" to be characterized solely by a husband, a wife, and a couple of kids. In fact, one of *Webster's* other definitions of family states that family is "the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children." To confuse you even further, a group of family researchers defines family thus: "two or more people who are in a relationship created by birth, marriage, or choice. Some families have legal protection and privileges, while

others do not" (Silverstein & Auerbach, 2005, p. 33). As you can see, understanding a "simple" concept like family may not be simple after all.

In agreement with Silverstein and Auerbach's definition, some of my students report that they have distanced themselves from their biological families because of abuse, neglect, alcoholism, or being "disowned" due to their lifestyles or belief systems. They went on to create families of their own choosing, consisting of members such as romantic partners and their children, close friends with whom they spend the holidays, and people with whom they work or for whom they are caretakers. These students consider their "family" members to be just as important and as emotionally rewarding for them as Miguel does his biological aunties and grandparents.

We can also belong to different types of families, sometimes at the same time. There's our **family of origin**, the family in which we grew up, and our **family of procreation**, which includes our mate and children. These two families we belong to may have similar structures or we may form a family structure completely different from the one in which we grew up. In fact, with today's varied reproductive technologies, divorce rates, and open adoptions, a single child could have a biological mother who contributed an egg for conception, a surrogate mother who carried the child for nine months, an "other mother" who raises the child along with the biological mother, and future stepmothers who enter the picture when a parent divorces and remarries. The same variations in biological and environmental relatedness can occur with fathers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents as well. Today it is not unheard of for a child whose parents divorced and remarried to have up to 16 different grandparents and great-grandparents!

In an attempt to be inclusive of all family forms, **family** will be considered in broad terms in this textbook, and defined as a group of two or more people connected by blood, adoption, marriage, or choice, who may rely on each other for social, emotional, and financial support. Tiffany might not like this definition since it requires all family members to be "people" and excludes her prized pooch. Consider whether you like this definition or not and think about which parts of it ring true or don't feel right from your perspective.

Sociologist Dorothy Smith (1993) coined the term **Standard North American Family (SNAF)**, which refers to the image of a homemaker wife, a husband who works outside the home, and their two biological children. This is not just a way to describe the family. Smith argues that the image of SNAF carries with it an ideological code by which we judge all families who don't fit into this structure. We may be unconscious of how these ideologies affect our judgments of and interactions with other people. Imagine you meet people with the following family structures:

- a single mother with her three children
- a single father with his three children
- a gay or lesbian couple who have adopted children from another country
- a blended family of six children, three from the husband's previous marriage, and three from the wife's

What thoughts go through your mind as you imagine each type of family? Do you feel sorry for any of them or think they may not be able to provide a stable or safe environment for their children? If you've ever thought that children would be better off in a

Family of origin: The family in which one grew up.

Family of procreation: The family one forms as an adult and in which one may have children.

Family: A group of two or more people connected by blood, adoption, marriage, or choice, who may rely on each other for social, emotional, and/or financial support.

Standard North American Family (SNAF): The concept articulated by sociologist Dorothy Smith, which consists of a homemaker mother, a breadwinning father, and their children; usually envisioned as white and middle class.

married heterosexual household with a mother who stayed home, or if you've ever been surprised when someone who was not raised with a SNAF grew up to be successful and happy, you may be walking around with SNAF ideologies influencing the way you think about your own family and the families of people you meet.

Beyond our ideas about what family structure is best for people, implicit in the SNAF image is that a "family" is both white and middle class. Smith (1993) discusses how school personnel may often view non-SNAFs (e.g., families of color, immigrant families, or same-sex families) as deficient. If a child gets into trouble at school, the first conclusion might be that the problem stems from growing up with a "dysfunctional" family form. Some consider families especially deviant if they are not headed by a married adult male. Interestingly, it was not until the 1920s that even a slight majority of children in the United States lived within a male breadwinner SNAF structure (Coontz, 1997). I urge you to continuously assess the messages about families you were taught as you grew up, and try to understand how those ideas impact your perceptions of people and your interactions with them today. To start this process, check out my family in the Focus on My Family box.

Because today most families are not SNAFs, contemporary Americans often feel that the traditional institution of family is "disintegrating" or falling apart. They point to trends like the increase in cross-ethnic and cross-religious marriages, more people choosing not to marry at all, women working outside the home, science-fiction-like reproductive technologies, and the increase in openly gay and lesbian households as destructive to the traditional family. People tend to think that "in the old days" families were happier, more moral, and more stable, and experienced fewer problems like divorce, premarital sex, and abuse. The truth is that violent crime, teen births, and divorce rates all decreased significantly between 1995 and 2012, and are now stabilizing (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015). Outcomes for children have also improved. More kids of all ethnic groups go to high school and college today than ever before, and they are also less likely to smoke than they were in the 1950s. In fact, in 2012 in the United States, 93% of Asian/Pacific Islander students, 85% of whites, 68% of both Native Americans and blacks, and 76% of Hispanic kids graduated from high school. This is a radical improvement over previous decades. Kids today are also less likely to be involved in alcohol-related accidents and to die from drugs than they were in the 1970s (Coles, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Older generations often think back to TV shows from the 1950s, like *Father Knows Best* or *Leave It to Beaver,* which depicted white American middle-class families who fit the SNAF ideal perfectly. In *Leave It to Beaver,* for example, the mother, June Cleaver, was always dressed immaculately with hair done and makeup on. She cooked and cleaned

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The Traditional Family

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■ **PHOTO 1.2**

Leave It to Beaver.
Do the Cleavers seem like an ideal family? Still from *Leave It to Beaver*, c. 1957; actors Tony Dow, Barbara Billingsley, Hugh Beaumont, and Jerry Mather

FOCUS ON MY FAMILY

Photo reprinted with permission.

This picture shows me with my *family of procreation.* I had the privilege of being able to legally marry Mike. Our marriage is recognized by our home state, California. However, I was not allowed to marry Mike in his church, the Catholic Church. Because of the church's rules on *exogamy,* prohibitions about marrying someone outside of your group, we had to marry elsewhere. After five years of marriage we had a son and then another son five years after that. What ideas pop into your mind as you look at this picture? Do you think we look happy? Like good parents?

You may already know that I'm a college professor with a PhD. Would your perception change if you knew I was raised by divorced parents? That my mother married an African American man and I had a mixed half-brother? What about the fact that my biological father had a child as a teenager, giving me an older half-sister? Does it change your opinion to learn that I lived in poverty and went to ten different schools? What if I told you my mother and brother both died of drug overdoses? Do these facts change your perceptions as you gaze at the four smiling faces looking back at you?

In contrast to my background, Mike grew up in what appeared to be a SNAF. His father worked for Ford in Detroit and his mother stayed home with four children. They went to mass every Sunday and Mike played baseball and football. He lived in the same house his entire life. Sounds idyllic, doesn't it? Does anything change if you know that his father served on the front lines in the Korean War? That he came back with posttraumatic stress symptoms that led him to drink heavily? That he has trouble connecting with people and traveling without feeling anxiety? How might these processes have affected his parenting?

The *structure,* or observable composition, of my family of procreation consists of two legally married European American heterosexual middle-class people with two children. Our family *processes,* or interactional qualities, include us not fighting in front of our children, eating dinner together every night, and using consistent and predictable disciplinary methods. Does it matter that our kids have a male and female parent, or is it more important to know that Mike is naturally laid-back and I am more emotional and expressive? Think about the structures and processes in your own family and analyze which held more importance for the way you turned out. The difference between these two concepts will be explored in depth in this chapter.

with a smile on her face. Her husband, Ward, would come home from work, kiss her, and sit down with the newspaper while she waited on him, bringing him a drink or his slippers. She would then call their two sons, Wally and Beaver, down to enjoy a dinner of meat and potatoes, as they jovially discussed their day. The children in this show were mischievous but never got into any real trouble, and the family solved any problems that arose in about 20 minutes. Media images like these often lead people to wonder whether their own families are as good or as healthy as the Cleavers. We may wonder whether our families are even "normal."

While it's true that the ethnic composition of the United States is becoming more diverse and wider varieties of family structures are being recognized, the reality is that the United States has always been diverse and family forms have changed and shifted continuously since the first colonies began to coalesce into a nation. Today over 60 million people in the United States speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). If the traditional 1950s family ever existed widely at all, it seems to have been a brief blip on the radar because that decade is certainly not representative of most Americans' experiences, either in the past or today. For example, although more people today are delaying marriage to focus on their education and career, the younger marriage ages for men and women in the 1950s were just a historical anomaly. You can see these trends in Figure 1.1.

From 16th-century British records (Wrigley & Schofield, 1989), we see that the average age of marriage then was 29.3 years for men and 26.4 years for women. In the United States, similar marriage ages occurred across all decades for the past 100 years, except for a big dip during and directly following World War II (the 1940s and 1950s). Marriage ages were older in earlier generations because men often had to wait until they had learned a trade or had secured land for a home before they married. But after World War II the economy was booming, suburban neighborhoods and affordable uniform tract housing sprang up all over the country, and the GI Bill combined with government subsidies made education and home buying more widely available. Therefore, people had fewer incentives to delay marriage. Another reason that marriage rates increased during the 1940s is that many young couples wanted to be married quickly before the male partners were shipped off to a very uncertain fate overseas.

It is important to recognize that any historical comparisons we make are relatively arbitrary. Depending on the historical periods we choose and the variables or statistics

■ **FIGURE 1.1** Median Age of First Marriage in the United States
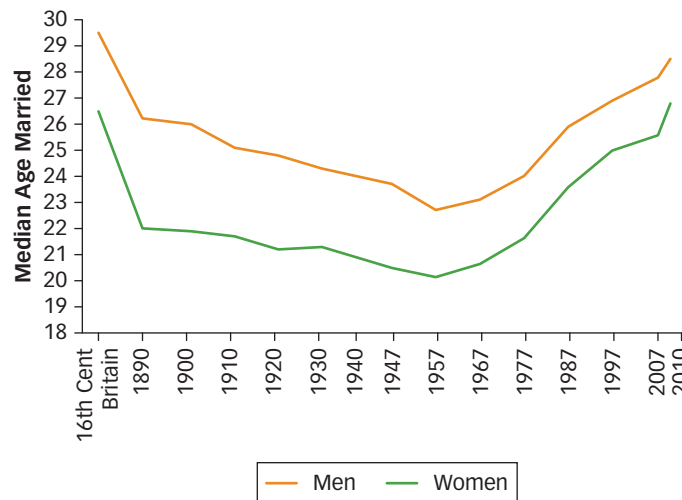
SOURCES: Wrigley & Schofield (1989); U.S. Census Bureau (2007); U.S. Census Bureau (2010); U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *American Community Survey.* Retrieved January 31, 2016, from http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/marriage/data/acs/ElliottetalPAA2012figs.pdf

we use, we can conclude that modern trends in marriage and family life are either worse than, better than, or pretty much the same as previous decades or centuries. Throughout this book, I hope that you will think about what effect SNAF ideologies might have on your thinking. This section has shown that there probably were no "good old days" in the 1950s; instead, that brief period evidenced trends in family life that were historically quite anomalous. Moreover, it coincided with a wider reach for media like television, which impacted people's thinking about what families should be like, cementing the viewpoint that SNAF is preferable over other family types.

FAMILY STRUCTURES VERSUS FAMILY PROCESSES

1.3　Differentiate between family structures and family processes.

As the historical research we just explored indicates, it is not apparent that the SNAF was ever the norm in the United States, nor is there any evidence that SNAF is the best family structure. Throughout this text, I will argue that the processes families experienced are what matter most in terms of health, success, and happiness. **Processes** are interactional variables like caring, sharing, and communicating, which are not always easily visible. We cannot determine how well a child will turn out, or how successful or content a family will be, based solely on the family's external structure. A family's **structure** is its composition, how many members it has, whether people are married, their ages, and other demographic variables. Take a look at Figure 1.2 to see the changes in family structure over time. Can we conclude anything about the processes these family members experienced, by looking at their structures?

Family structure itself does not reveal very much about a person's experiences. Family health, success, and happiness don't depend exclusively on family structure, such as whether a child has two moms, a large family of 11 siblings, a divorced father who is remarried to a woman with her own three children, or a single mom who struggles financially. Family structure can impact the way we grow up, the opportunities we have, the ideas we form, and the goals we set for ourselves; thus, structure is important to an individual's developmental outcomes. However, we must look deeper into a family's processes of interaction to be able to understand a person's long-term adjustment. Processes include interactional variables like problem solving, quality of emotional support, and discipline provided for children. Many families appear to fit the SNAF ideal on the outside if we look at the structure of the family. But this is a superficial examination because within any structure there can be successful or problematic processes. You may know a SNAF where the father has affairs or the mother is mentally ill. Likewise, you may know single parents, gay and lesbian parents, or families formed by choice or adoption who are loving, supportive, kind, and caring, who provide stimulation, discipline, and opportunities for their children, and who value their children for who they are. In sum, while the organizational structure may be an important first place to look when sizing up families, a true understanding of family health, success, and happiness can only come from

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Caring for a Sick Mother
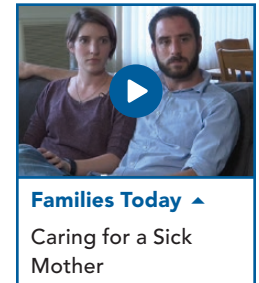
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Processes: Interactional variables like caring, sharing, and communicating, which are not always easily visible; we cannot determine how well a child will turn out, or how successful or content a family will be based solely on its external structure.

Structure: A family's composition, how many members it has, whether people are married, their ages, and other demographic variables.

■ **FIGURE 1.2** Living Arrangements for U.S. Children, 1880–2016
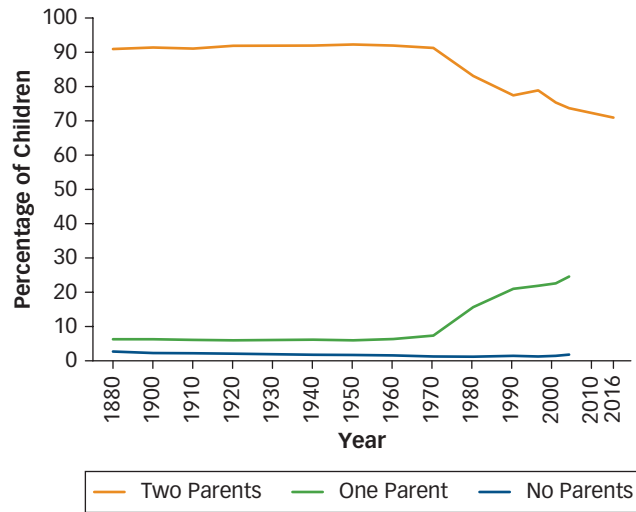
SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau (2004); U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1968 to 2015*. Retrieved January 31, 2016, from https://www.census.gov/hhes/families/files/graphics/CH-1.pdf

examining the underlying interactional processes those family members experience. To check out your own family processes (strengths and weaknesses), read the Self-Assessment box "Rating My Family's Strengths."

Let's think about a concrete example to be sure you understand the differences between family structures and processes. You may have heard people say that being raised in a single-parent family is not as good as being raised with two parents. It is hard to argue against this idea because the more supports and role models a child has, the better. Do these supportive family members have to be a biological mother and a biological father, though? Can the second parent be a close friend? Or what about a live-in grandmother or an uncle who lives nearby? Researchers have struggled to find ways to examine whether it's true that a single mother is insufficient for raising a child, or whether it's just that one person alone will have a more difficult time, regardless of whether that person is a biological mother. Early research compared family structures and found that children from single-mother family structures were at risk for poor outcomes such as lower education and more problems with the law (Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsburg, 1986). But later research that examined family processes showed that it's not living with a single mother, per se, that is detrimental to a child (looking only at the structure of the family) but that part of the explanation for these children's struggles could be due to the fact that single mothers are more likely to live in poverty than mothers living with partners (Brown & Moran, 1997). Moreover, children who live in poverty are more likely to struggle in school and have problems with antisocial behavior, regardless of the family structure they come from (Farrington, 1995). Why is this?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

RATING MY FAMILY'S STRENGTHS

You've learned a bit about the different processes families experience both historically and today. You can also assess your own family processes. The table below lists ten healthy family processes. Rate your family, a specific dyad or triad in your family (that is, mom and older brother, or husband, wife, and teenage daughter, and so on), or think about your family as a whole. You can do this regarding your *family of origin* as well as your *family of procreation.*

		Never	Sometimes	Always
1	My family members and I respect each other's individuality.	1	2	3
2	We try to solve problems without blaming each other.	1	2	3
3	We try not to raise our voices or yell.	1	2	3
4	We tell other family members we love them.	1	2	3
5	We express physical affection to each other (e.g., with hugs and kisses).	1	2	3
6	We try to discuss our problems before they fester too long.	1	2	3
7	We don't gang up on specific family members.	1	2	3
8	We don't call each other names during disagreements.	1	2	3
9	We don't get physical (e.g., slapping or pushing) during disagreements.	1	2	3
10	We enjoy just spending time together.	1	2	3
	Total score			

Scores can range from 10 to 30, with higher scores being best. If you get a 25 or higher, your family has established some pretty healthy processes of interaction. Good for you!

For scores between 16 and 24, you have some key strengths but can definitely do some work to try to improve processes that are lacking.

If your score is 15 or less, you might think seriously about finding some outside help to improve your communication or problem-solving methods. You can usually find free or low-cost counseling services at your university or county mental health office; or search the Internet to find other ideas, such as faith-based pastoral counseling at a nearby house of worship. You can also consult the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists or the American Psychological Association to find a therapist in the United States or abroad (www.aamft.org; www.apa.org).

It can be useful to use this assessment as a conversation starter: Rate your family yourself first and then have another family member rate the same part of the family without knowing your assessment. Then compare the scores and have a targeted conversation about the strengths and weaknesses you think your family has. Are there weaknesses you think would be easy to improve with a heart-to-heart discussion?

*Please note that all Self-Assessments in this text are for informational purposes only. They are not meant to diagnose, cure, or treat any family problems. They are only meant to give you food for thought.

Let's think about some of the processes that may be at work in this example. First, poor people may have to work so many hours at low-paying jobs that they can't be home when their kids get home from school and can't attend school events or meet with teachers. They may live in more dangerous neighborhoods where, if children can't be supervised while the parents are at work, violent or antisocial role models in the neighborhood may play an important role in socializing the children. So does this mean that if you grew up poor, you're doomed? No. In fact, most children who grow up poor turn out just fine. They are happy, healthy, productive members of society. These good outcomes can probably be attributed to the *processes* each individual experienced, such as a loving family, hard-working parents, caring teachers, and people who believed in them. In fact, most people who overcome adverse childhood experiences cite those very processes as explanations for how they overcame stressful circumstances (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

We will return to the ideas of SNAF and "structure versus process" throughout this book. Each chapter includes a Focus on My Family box in which real families tell their stories in their own words, and describe both the structures and the processes that affect their lives. You will see that while both family structures and processes are important for people's outcomes, families are embedded in larger contextual and cultural systems that also greatly impact them. To give you a feel for how a person's culture and context can affect life within the family, let's examine some of the ways people around the world experience diverse structures and processes.

DIVERSE FAMILY STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

Before we delve into a deeper examination of the different types of "American" families, let's first look at a few other structures and processes that exist besides the basic SNAF. The **modern family** is a dual earner household where roles and responsibilities in the home are unequal (Silverstein & Auerbach, 2005). Like SNAF, this family structure is composed of a heterosexual married couple and their children. Women in these families still bear the brunt of the childcare and housekeeping responsibilities; however, unlike SNAF wives, women in modern families often work full-time and earn as much or more than their male partners. You are probably familiar with these families. Most of us know women who work full-time but still come home and cook dinner, bathe the kids, and organize birthday parties. Even though men today do not share equally in childcare, men have tripled the amount of time they spend in childcare compared to 40 years ago (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Knop & Brewster, 2015). And men's housework participation has doubled over the past 40 years; however, they still only do 30% of that work (Brines, 2011; Fisher, Egerton, Gershuny, & Robinson, 2006). Interestingly, women have also increased the amount of time they spend with their children as compared to 40 years ago, as society now has high expectations for both men and women to participate in parenting, instead of just caretaking. In the 1950s it would be unusual to see a mother sitting down on the floor to play board games or baby dolls with her children, a common sight today (Coltrane & Adams, 2008).

In comparison with the modern family, a **postmodern family** involves a deconstruction or transformation of at least one aspect of traditional SNAF ideas about what

Modern family: A family where both adult partners work outside the home but the female partner still completes the majority of the housework and childcare.

Postmodern family: A family where at least one element of the SNAF is deconstructed or transformed.

a family is (Silverstein & Auerbach, 2005). Postmodern families may have egalitarian gender roles, or consist of a same sex couple or a father who remains single by choice. These families have abandoned the idea that a healthy family must include a European American married heterosexual pairing or traditional gender roles. The percentage of households composed of married husband-wife couples living with their own children has decreased from 23.5% in 2000 to 20.2% in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). You can further see the deconstruction of SNAF ideas in Figure 1.3, which shows the rising number of single-father households, by decade.

The Emmy winning television show *Modern Family* depicts many diverse family structures. Look at Photo 1.3 and see if you can figure out whether they are really a modern family or a postmodern family. Do you think this type of show could have succeeded in the 1950s? Why or why not?

REGULATING FAMILY STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES AROUND THE WORLD

In every culture around the world, family structures are regulated—either disallowed or endorsed by cultural, religious, or governmental leaders. Most countries, cultures, and religious groups also have rules, customs, and policies about the people whom its citizens should definitely *not* marry. This is called **exogamy**, meaning marrying *outside* (*exo*genous to) their own group. For example, many religious groups do not allow their practitioners to marry outside of their religion. Likewise, there are certain people whom groups in power

■ **FIGURE 1.3** Rising Number of Single-Father U.S. Households, 1960–2011

SOURCE: Livingston, G. (2013, July). *The Rise of Single Fathers: A Ninefold Increase Since 1960.* Retrieved January 31, 2016, from http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/07/02/the-rise-of-single-fathers/.
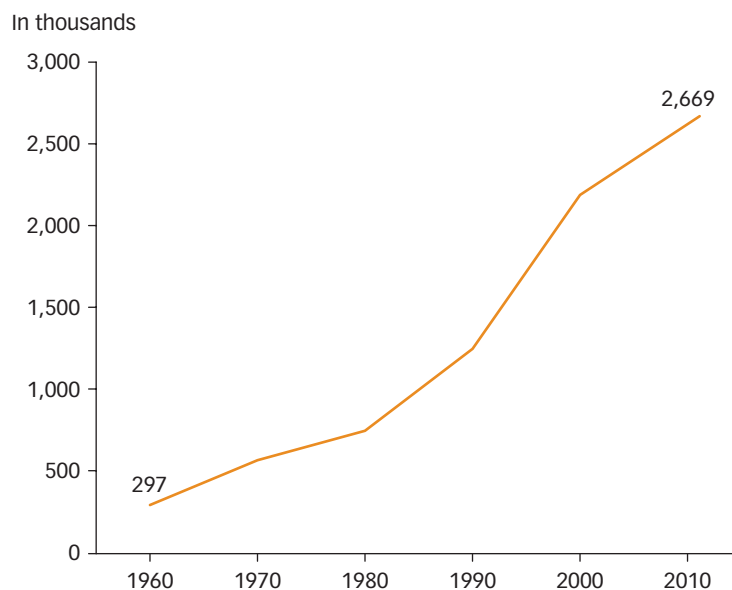
Exogamy: A set of beliefs, practices, or mandates regarding people who should be excluded as possible marriage partners. People outside of one's own group are often excluded as marriage partners.

■ **PHOTO I.3**

Modern Family.
Which types of families are depicted in the TV show *Modern Family?*

Endogamy: A set of beliefs, practices, or mandates regarding people within one's own group who are considered to be one's only viable marriage partners.

Polygamy: The practice of one man taking more than one wife; also known as polygyny.

Polyandry: The practice of one woman taking more than one husband.

Matriarchal: A social system where women hold power and influence in the clan or family.

Matrifocal: A social system where men marry into their wives' families or clans and often live with them.

wholeheartedly endorse for their citizens' marriages. This is called **endogamy**, meaning marrying *within* a specific circle of people. For example, many immigrants prefer their children to marry within their own group, and do not approve of their children marrying a person from the new country.

Another practice that is regulated—either disallowed or encouraged—by cultural groups is **polygamy**, the practice of one man marrying many women. For example, some Bedouin Arab families practice polygamy. The holy book Muslims follow, the Qu'ran, allows men to have multiple wives. For Bedouins, the first marriage is often arranged by family members and then the man himself may choose his subsequent wives. These subsequent wives, chosen due to attraction, liking or loving, sometimes receive more affection, resources, or support from the husband than the first wife (Al-Krenawi, Lev-Wiesel, & Sehwail Mahmud, 2007).

Cultural groups also regulate **polyandry**, the practice of one woman marrying more than one man. The Nyinba people from Nepal allow all brothers to marry the wife of the oldest brother, resulting in polyandry. However, this structural arrangement doesn't mean the woman is guaranteed much power in these marriages. The younger brothers can choose whether to engage in sexual relations with the wife and may also choose to leave her for another wife as they become older (Haddix, 2001).

As the above example shows, even when family structures appear to reverse traditional gender role processes, men around the world typically retain more power in family dynamics than women do. In fact, there is no evidence that any human group has ever been **matriarchal**, with women maintaining power and control over men. Some societies have been **matrifocal**, however, meaning that a newly married couple moves in with the

wife's family. And some groups have been **matrilineal**, where property, privileges, and goods are passed down through the mother's family. In general, however, most societies around the world have been and continue to be **patriarchal** in nature. Men rule and enjoy power, privilege, and control over women and children.

Men are not the only family members to wield power in family dynamics, however. Sometimes elders (including women) and esteemed community members hold even more sway than, say, a person's father. For example, in order to ensure that cultural beliefs and traditions are adhered to, some cultures practice **arranged marriage**, where the wife and husband are chosen by family members, religious leaders, or cultural elders. While many people in Western societies find it very unappealing to think about marrying someone not of their own choosing, research shows the people in arranged marriages often feel happy, learn to love their partner, have lower rates of divorce, and report feeling less pressure to look sexy, attract someone based on superficial characteristics, or date many "frogs" before finding their "prince/princess" (Regan, Lakhanpal, & Anguiano, 2012; Span, 2003).

In addition to people's marriage patterns being regulated or controlled, the ability to divorce, the right to adopt, and even sexual practices, can be determined by cultural traditions, religion, or governmental policy. For example, in the United States, most states legislate the age at which a person can "consent" to having sexual relations. In Arkansas, Indiana, and Iowa, the age of consent is 16 but if a partner is no more than 5 years her senior, in Iowa a girl can consent at 14. Other states, such as California, Virginia, and Wisconsin, require a person to be 18 (Age of Consent, 2017). Why do you think these states chose different ages? And why different ages for boys and girls? It may have something to do with traditional beliefs about personal power or intellectual abilities in older versus younger teens, or boys versus girls.

Some other exogamy rules that regulate American experiences include laws against marrying within one's own family of origin (e.g., it's illegal to marry one's father, sibling, or child). Americans are also not allowed to have sexual relationships with children. In contrast, the Etoro tribe of Papua New Guinea starts initiating boys (around the age of 12) to enter adulthood by having the boys perform fellatio rites on adult men. The thought is that by inseminating the boys with adult semen, they are helping them become men (Knauft, 2003). This example illustrates that while one culture excludes certain groups for marriage and sex, other cultures encourage relationships with those groups.

Another example of exogamy includes the fact that in most areas, you must marry someone outside of your own gender. However, by 2015, 20 countries had legalized same-sex marriage, including South Africa, Brazil, Uruguay, Spain, Argentina, Norway, and the United States (Freedom to Marry, 2016). In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional for individual states to ban same-sex marriage (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015).

Ironically, in the same countries where gay marriage is allowed or civil unions are given the same rights as marriages, heterosexual couples are choosing *not* to marry in larger and larger numbers. More than half of couples in Sweden, for example, prefer not to get married but to raise children in cohabiting homes (Population Europe Resource Finder and Archive, 2014). There are few incentives to get married as these cultures tend to be secular instead of religious, there are few tax incentives for being married,

Matrilineal: A social system where goods and property are inherited or passed down through the maternal line.

Patriarchal: A social system where men hold power and influence in the clan or family.

Arranged marriage: A marriage wherein partners are chosen by family members, religious leaders, or cultural elders, and not by the bride and groom.

■ PHOTO 1.4

Same-Sex Marriage. In what ways does society regulate family structure?

and cohabiting couples receive the same health and insurance benefits as married couples. Is this trend away from heterosexual marriage a good thing? Many people might think trends like these endanger the very fiber of what it means to be a "family." While this is a complex question to answer, you may be interested to know that Western European and Scandinavian countries with low rates of marriage also have some of the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy, violent crime, and child abuse (Darroch, Singh, & Frost, 2002; Office for National Statistics, 2014).

In contrast to many Western industrialized nations moving away from traditional marriage and the SNAF, other cultures around the world continue to embrace traditional ideas about marriages and families, including separate spheres of existence for males and females. For example, in some Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, women are expected to lead the family in morality and connection to God. Yet women are also expected to serve male family members. They sometimes must marry their husband's family members if their husband dies (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2003; Cherif, 2010). Before the oppressive Taliban regime took over in 1994, however, many women in Afghanistan obtained college educations and performed professional public roles such as being attorneys and physicians. Today, Afghan women are fighting for recognition of their right to participate fully in society, including serving in the government.

The Masai tribe in Africa also practices traditional gender roles where women must take care of the home and husbands have every right to discipline (even physically) their wives (Magoke-Mhoja, 2008). In many countries, women are encouraged, or even required, to be escorted by male relatives in public, and to cover their heads while outside of the home. Do you think these cultures are remiss in endorsing traditional family structures and processes? Or do you believe every society should have the right to regulate relationships and roles as they see fit?

CULTURAL RELATIVISM VERSUS HUMAN RIGHTS

With all of these different cultural and legal regulations about who can or should marry whom, it is easy to wonder whether one practice is right and another wrong. Some would argue that we must consider every culture individually and accept their practices as just as valid as ours. **Cultural relativism** refers to the idea that values, practices, and beliefs differ by cultural group and that no system is better or worse than any other. From this perspective, we should judge family practices as normal relative to the family's or culture's belief system, even if such practices seem abnormal to us. Do you believe in cultural relativism? Live and let live? The United Nations (UN) has decided that we should allow cultural and religious freedom to prosper as long as cultural or religious practices do not violate a family member's *human rights,* an individual's freedom to make choices that make him or her happy without the threat of violence, ostracism, or psychological harm. For example, the UN has specific written documents condemning violence against women and children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child argues that all children in every culture have the rights to be loved and valued, to receive education, and to live a life free of violence or abuse of any kind. This means that the international community has decided that individual human rights are more important in some cases than cultural traditions.

Let's look at one example of a cultural practice that may be judged as wrong by people in the West. The Meru people of Theraka in Kenya, Africa, are one of many groups around the world to practice what Westerners call "female genital mutilation." However, they call it "circumcision." They "circumcise" young women by removing their clitoris and sometimes sewing their vaginal opening closed. This is meant to ensure a woman is a virgin at marriage, and that she not engage in sexual relations for "pleasure." Her clitoris is thought to cause her to be unfaithful and want sex with men other than her husband. The Meru believe that if a child is born to an uncircumcised mother, that child will be unclean so will not be allowed to participate in cultural rituals. They also believe that if a man marries an uncircumcised woman, he may have a curse put on him by their ancestors. The circumcision ritual is a rite of passage for the women of these communities and marks their development into adulthood (Chege, Askew, & Liku, 2001; Population Council, 2011). So do we have the right to tell these women or their families that what they are doing is wrong? Does female genital mutilation violate UN mandates prohibiting "violence" against women? There has been quite an international social movement against female circumcision around the world, and due, in part, to this pressure, many groups are beginning to do "ritual" circumcision where they don't actually cut women's genitals but still perform the other parts of the ceremonies to ensure their cultural rites of passage. I'll leave it up to you to decide for yourself what you think of Westerners or the UN intervening in long-held practice and beliefs surrounding family life around the world.

Let's now turn the international lens onto the Western family. What do you think about the American practice of leaving infants in cribs in their own rooms to sleep? Many cultures around the world would argue that this is child abuse or, at minimum, neglect. Parents around the world feel that infants should be with their parents all the time, especially at night. It is felt that a mother is neglecting her child if she is not there throughout

Cultural relativism: The idea that each culture's beliefs and practices hold equal value and that one culture should not judge another culture as inferior, wrong, or unhealthy for its members.

HOW WOULD YOU MEASURE THAT?

INFANT CO-SLEEPING (TAYLOR, DONOVAN, & LEAVITT, 2008)

Is it better for infants to sleep with their parents, as they do in most non-Western nations? Does sending infants to sleep in their own beds in their own rooms harm them? To answer a question like this requires careful research. Many people around the world think independent sleeping amounts to child neglect, yet most Americans engage in this practice. So what's the truth?

In 2008, Taylor and colleagues attempted to answer this question. Previous research had shown that when mothers co-sleep with their infants, they breastfeed more. Some studies suggested that cases of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) could be prevented by co-sleeping because hormones are produced in the infants to help regulate sleep physiology, more antibodies are produced to fight disease, and parents become more in-tune with their infants' sleeping and breathing patterns. However, other research suggested that more educated and wealthier parents choose both to breastfeed longer *and* co-sleep, so it's not the co-sleeping that matters, but the conscientious parenting the children received. And still other research showed that parents who are forced to co-sleep due to space limitations or child illness do not breastfeed more, so co-sleeping would not necessarily increase breastfeeding. This latter finding may explain why some studies show co-sleeping to be related to sleep disturbances in both adults and children, because they are forced to co-sleep due to other problems.

In research, when one variable is related to another (like co-sleeping and breastfeeding), we say the variables are *correlated.* But we can *never* conclude anything about causality from a simple correlation. Co-sleeping could cause more breastfeeding, or people who choose to breastfeed may then find cause to co-sleep, or it could be that a third variable like higher levels of education cause

both breastfeeding and co-sleeping. So keep this in mind when you read that two variables are correlated with each other: we don't know what causes that relationship.

Taylor and fellow researchers (2008) examined 70 mothers between the ages of 21 and 41 and their 6-month-old infants. They measured the frequency and duration of breastfeeding and looked at outcomes like sensitive responsiveness in mothers and positive affect and play when the infants were 9 months old. They broke the families into three structural groups: nightly co-sleepers, non-co-sleepers, and intermittent co-sleepers (who sometimes co-slept and sometimes didn't). They wanted to see how sleeping *structure* was related to positive family *processes* later on.

What they found was quite interesting. Nightly co-sleepers breastfed their infants more and for a longer duration. The "intermittent" and "non" co-sleeping groups didn't differ on breastfeeding. However, those with consistent sleeping patterns exhibited more positive behavior with their babies, regardless of whether they co-slept; when mothers were consistent in their sleeping patterns, they were also more sensitive to their babies' cues, and they responded more warmly to the infants' behaviors. Thus, the sleep process of consistency had a great impact. It mattered only whether moms did *the same thing* every night. In other words, it was the *consistency* in sleeping patterns that made for the best relationships, regardless of whether they co-slept or the infant slept in his or her own bed. The *structure* of the family didn't have much impact. What mattered most was a *process* of well-regulated, consistent, and predictable sleep every night. It's always best to breastfeed if possible, to give children the richest nutrients, but as far as sleep goes, co-sleep or not, the message from this study is: be consistent!

the night to breastfeed on demand and soothe the infant in its sleep (Goldberg & Keller, 2007). Western research has found that when infants sleep alone, they form strong emotional attachments to transitional objects, such as blankets, stuffed animals, or dolls (Hobara, 2003). Do other cultures have a right to tell us what to do with our babies? Is constant contact in the early years better for children, or is encouraging independence

through solitary sleeping more helpful for child development? For important questions such as these, researchers have to be creative in designing studies to figure out how to answer the public's demand for knowledge about the best ways to raise children. To get an idea about how we might find answers about co-sleeping versus infants sleeping alone, see the How Would You Measure That? box on infant co-sleeping. Each chapter will have such a box, which will help you practice your critical thinking skills by asking you to analyze a research study's methods and conclusions.

I hope that the research evidence reviewed so far has helped you understand that what a "good" family is becomes a complex issue when you consider cultural, religious, legal, and historical factors that impact family relations across many generations. While the picture of the European American postwar middle-class SNAF has been ingrained in many of our minds as the way American families always were and perhaps how they should still be, it's important that students of family relationships understand that diversity has always been the norm. Each ethnic group to live in the United States has had unique experiences regarding how they immigrated, what rules and restrictions were placed on their group, what kinds of oppression and violence were perpetrated against them, and how successful they were in maintaining their traditional family forms while trying to adapt to life in this new land. Stephanie Coontz (2000), a leading expert on the history of the family, writes:

> The "modernization" of the family was the result not of some general evolution of "the" family, as early family sociologists originally posited, but of *diverging* and *contradictory* responses that occurred in different areas and classes at various times, eventually interacting to produce the trends we now associate with industrialization. (p. 25)

THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

1.4 Summarize the major historical and contemporary trends affecting families of the major ethnic groups in the United States.

As you look around your classroom, you will probably notice that the students may look different from each other. As you get to know other students, you may find that they have distinct cultural or religious backgrounds, speak other languages, or identify with different aspects of the larger culture than you do. One thing most of us have in common, though, is a history of migration or immigration in our families of origin. This section will review some of the key historical and contemporary trends affecting many of our families who originated from the major ethnic groups in the United States. It's important that we don't just look at people's group or family structures, but that we attempt to understand the processes individuals experience and how those processes affect family health and well-being. We must look beyond static categories like race, gender, or socioeconomic status, and delve deeper into the complex influences on modern family life. This section is not meant to provide a comprehensive history of each group. It is meant to give broad overviews of the diverse experiences of many groups in the United States, as well as to

illustrate that even within one ethnic group, there is a great diversity of experiences. Thus, we must not generalize or stereotype people in each group because there is usually just as much diversity within each group as there is between two given ethnic groups.

A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF NATIVE AMERICANS

Centuries ago, people from Asia crossed over the land bridge that once connected what is now Russia to the current U.S. state of Alaska. They migrated all over North, Central, and South America, creating some of the great civilizations of the world, such as the Mayan Empire, which existed from 2000 BCE to 900 CE, and the Aztecs, who reigned in modern-day Mexico from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries CE. It wasn't until the 16th century that Europeans came to these lands and encountered Native Americans. Spanish conquistadores and explorers enslaved many of the native peoples they encountered. However, the Catholic Church, which funded many of these expeditions, admonished the Europeans for any treatment that was too severe, such as the violence that African slaves routinely experienced at the hands of European settlers in the "New World." The Catholic Church also allowed Spaniards to marry indigenous women, which led to openly "mixed-race" families. Contrast this practice of open intermarriage with the segregation that occurred decades later in the United States when white slave owners had children with black slave women but did not marry them (Coles, 2006).

Native American Indians are a diverse group and comprise over 300 tribes speaking over 150 languages. It is very difficult to make generalizations about their family structures or processes. To paint a clear picture of the history and current status of Native American families, we will focus only on those tribes found in what is now the United States and who have had some level of reliable data published about them.

■ **PHOTO 1.5**

Native American Family. If these Native Americans kept a journal about their family lives, how do you think it might differ from journals of white settlers in the same area at that time? Hunting Horse and daughters, 1908.

J.V. Dedrick/Buyenlarge/Getty Images

The first U.S. Census in 1790 showed that 13% of the population was Native American Indian (Schaefer, 2004). Due to contact with Europeans, and through disease, starvation, and genocide, by 1890, there were only 250,000 indigenous people left in the United States (Stuart, 1987). The white settlers and the American Indians often engaged in armed conflict with one another, yet many families and small groups got along well, traded, and even intermarried.

Originally, the British colonial regime considered American Indian nations in the colonies to be sovereign; relations with them required public negotiations with written treaties. However, these treaties were difficult to enforce and were often broken. With U.S. independence from Britain came greed for more land. Unlike the British, the U.S. government did not respect American Indian nations as sovereign powers. While some indigenous people stayed on ancestral lands and were not traumatized by their contact with whites, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced many Native Americans east of the Mississippi River to move west. Hundreds of thousands died on this journey, now known as the Trail of Tears. The survivors were often put on inferior reservation lands with new climates, strange soil, new plants and animals, and previously unknown diseases. All that these families had ever known was gone.

Imagine being a Native American child who grew up in a forest community, with river fishing as the primary source of sustenance. Your entire family is then relocated to a dry, desert-like climate. The only means you've ever known to survive are gone. Parents no longer know what to do to protect and feed their children. The life skills they once taught their children are irrelevant in this new setting. Government care packages of food and medicine which were promised arrive only sporadically. Your elders' wisdom can no longer be counted on to get you through tough times. Your warriors have new foes to face, whom they don't understand, as you have been resettled on an existing clan's hunting territory. The U.S. government promised to protect these refugees but rarely followed through (McLemore, Romo, & Baker, 2001).

It is difficult to make generalizations about the original practices of Native American families, but we do know that they tended to be fairly permissive parents who didn't use physical punishment. Children were often raised by everyone in the clan and had much freedom to explore the natural consequences of their actions. All care-giving members of a clan could be called "mother" or "father" and people lived in extended family groups with permeable boundaries (Stanton, 1995). Some tribes were *matrilineal* or *matrifocal,* where the mother's side of the family held prominence, men would marry into their wives' clans, and female elders held much power; however, most groups were *patrilineal* and *patri-archal,* with the father's bloodline holding more sway and men keeping the power and decision-making responsibilities. In general, American Indian tribes were collectivist in nature, not having concepts for private property or individual desires.

NATIVE AMERICANS IN MODERN TIMES

In 1887, another blow came to American Indian peoples when the Dawes Act ensured them large parcels of land for agriculture and animal husbandry. Because many tribes had no experience with an agricultural way of life and could not afford farm implements, whites often took over these lands, too. Moreover, in order to "assimilate" American

Indian children into American life, they were often removed from their families and sent to boarding schools where they were forbidden to use their own languages, practice any of their cultures' customs, or participate in traditional religious ceremonies. The schools were usually built far away from reservations and native clothing was forbidden, so the children were prevented from feeling connected to their families and old ways of life. Students were often abused and exploited, and made to work long hours under harsh conditions (Lomawaima, 1994). These boarding schools existed well into the 1970s.

With the general social movements of the 1960s and 1970s involving marginalized groups like African Americans and women fighting for greater rights and freedoms, Native Americans also actively sought more power and control over their lives. This was especially true in regard to administering tribal lands on the reservations. They were eventually granted more freedom to control their own school curricula, religious and cultural events, and even child welfare issues like adoption and fostering. Today American Indians are considered dual citizens of their tribal nation and of the United States (John, 1998), yet only 22% still live on reservation land (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a). While many tribes have managed to bring in lucrative industries such as greeting cards, auto parts, and gaming casinos, American Indians living on reservations in general suffer from extreme poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, family violence, and high fertility rates.

Today American Indians make up 1.7% of the American population, with the largest tribe being the Navajo, with 308,013 members (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a). Many community leaders today are trying to maintain their clans' ties to the past, teaching collectivist ideals such as viewing personal achievements as a family effort. With a history of trauma, disease, war, and resettlement, it is encouraging that the Native American population has increased to about 5.2 million people today and that families are attempting to rekindle some of their traditional ways of life, while also struggling to help the 29% of their population who live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013a).

A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

When most of us learned about American history in school, we were taught the history of *European* Americans. Other groups' experiences were either briefly described or not described at all. And most of us didn't learn many details about family life back then. In the early colonies of the New World, there was a shortage of women. For example, in the 18th century more men than women made the journey from Europe, and later, in 1830, men crossed the country alone when offered cheap or free land out west. If they did look for a wife, they looked for a hardy, strong woman who could handle the journey as well as the intense work of setting up a homestead. They were not looking for a woman to support financially while she sat at home looking beautiful and cooking gourmet food. These men needed to form a **coprovider family**, what we call today a dual-earner structure, where both partners contribute to the family income. These coprovider families were necessary because everyone had to work equally hard to make an agriculture-based farm life successful. They had to build their own homes, grow their own food, make their own clothes, and often fight off Indians who were struggling to protect their homelands.

Coprovider family:
A family where both partners must work to sustain family livelihood.

Pioneer women had to be skilled in many different crafts, from preserving fruit for the winter, to hoeing a field for crops.

Because families were often mobile and their health was marginal, people died early, by about the age of 40 on average. Despite our popular mythology, there were actually very few multigenerational households with warm and loving grandparents welcoming each grandchild's birth. The elderly rarely came west, either across the sea to the colonies or, later, across the western frontier. People typically took in strangers to make extra money. It wasn't unusual to see "families" composed of eight or nine children, paying boarders, down-and-out community members such as the mentally ill or alcoholic, orphans, and apprentices all living under one roof (Coles, 2006). The term *family* didn't refer to a married couple with their biological children until well into the 19th century (Coontz, 1997).

In early colonial and pioneer families, childhood was short to nonexistent. As soon as a child could work, he or she was put to the task. All family members worked from sunrise to sunset, and there wasn't much time for socializing, nor was there a verb called "parenting" as we refer to it today. Parenting back then meant keeping as many children as possible alive to help with the family's work. Fathers were the heads of the households and were responsible for their children's behavior if they got into trouble. Fathers were also in charge of any education the children might receive, religious or otherwise (Coontz, 1997). To get a feel for the life of some colonial children, see the Brain Food box, which describes some real children's lives soon after they arrived on the *Mayflower*.

Families Today ▲
Families During Colonial Times
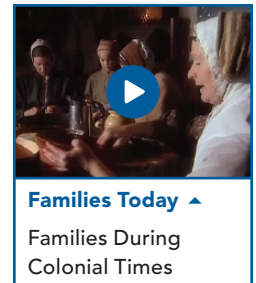
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⚡ BRAIN FOOD

CHILDHOOD IN THE COLONIES

Although many families entered the colony in servitude, another important source of servants was the practice of "putting out" one or more children. Samuel Eddy, for example, although the son of an English minister and a university graduate, did not seem to prosper in Plymouth, and he and his wife, "by reason of many wants lying on them," were forced to put out several children as servants.

So, too, Samuel Eaton and Benjamin Eaton, after the death of their father, *Mayflower* passenger Francis Eaton, were put out by their stepmother and were apprenticed respectively to Widow Bridget Fuller and John Cooke Jr.

On 13 August 1636 Mary Moorecock, by her own voluntary will, and with the consent of her stepfather, was apprenticed to Richard Sparrow for nine years.

Six-year-old Elizabeth Billington, with consent of parents, on 18 April 1642 was apprenticed for 14 years to John and Mary Barnes.

Sarah Hoskins was apprenticed on 18 January 1643/44 with the consent of her father, to Thomas and Winifred Whitney until she became twenty years old.

Thomas and Anne Savory put their 5-year-old son Thomas Jr. out on 2 August 1653 as an apprentice with Thomas Lettice, carpenter, until he reached 21. Young Thomas was to receive meat, drink, apparel, washing, lodging, and all other necessities, and was to be taught the trade of a house carpenter, and be taught to read the English language. In turn he was to give his master faithful and respectful service, not absent himself by day or night without license, not marry or contract marriage during his term, not embezzle, purloin, or steal any of his master's goods, nor give away any of his secrets, and to be obedient. On completing his term, he would be given two suits of clothes and various specified carpenter's tools.

> The same Thomas and Anne Savory in November 1653 put out their 9-year-old son Benjamin to John and Alice Shaw until he reached 21, and the father was to receive thirty shillings. Benjamin was to be taught to read and write, and at the end of his term he would get £5 or a cow.
>
> SOURCE: From: Eugene Aubrey Stratton, FASG (1986). *Plymouth colony: Its history and people 1620–1691.* Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry Publishing. Available online at: www.mayflowerfamilies.com.

Because life was so difficult for most European Americans, deaths of children and parents were common. Death and desertion in hard times led to the formation of many single parent, stepparent, and remarried families. It was also common for children to grow up with several half- and stepsiblings. Children often lost one or both parents so there were many orphans. These children might be lucky enough to be apprenticed in the trades or perhaps became boarders in a family's home, but many of them roamed the streets and became petty criminals.

To address another stereotype of early American family life, the one that says contemporary generations are declining in morality, you may be surprised to learn that at least one third of marriages in the 19th century were *preceded* by a pregnancy (Demos, 1970). Because "courtship" and dating were rare, and traveling long distances was difficult, people who were interested in perhaps marrying each other would often stay for extended periods with their partner's family, which often resulted in a pregnancy and a "shotgun wedding." The joke goes that a man who got a woman pregnant would be forced by her father (at gunpoint) to marry her. This lifestyle sounds like a far cry from *Leave It to Beaver!*

AMERICAN FAMILY LIFE AFTER THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Families Today ▲

Delayed Childbirth, Breastfeeding, and Infant Mortality

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Between 1800 and 1850, huge waves of European immigrants came to the United States to find work and build a better life for their families. They settled in ethnic enclaves, and most major cities had Italian, Irish, Jewish, and Russian sections. Most of the European immigrants were poor and had difficulties learning English and finding work. Large factories started springing up, marking the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

By 1850 more and more farm families had moved to larger cities for a guaranteed wage and shorter work hours than farm life allowed. Women and children also worked in factories, but for lower wages than men received. Children were particularly badly treated, often given the dirtiest or most dangerous jobs, like greasing moving parts in dangerous factory machines or shimmying through small airless caverns in coal mines. Children were often beaten when things went wrong.

After the United States annexed half of the country of Mexico in 1848, Latinos made up 38 million new "immigrants" who came to U.S. cities for work. This new American territory covered modern day New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California. At that time, the United States also claimed to own most of Texas, but residents and leaders in that region felt that area belonged to the independent "Republic of Texas."

This was a period of great social reorganization as western expansion allowed for innumerable new opportunities. For example, in the 1850s to 1920s, many Asian immigrants

Photograph by Lewis W. Hine, January 19, 1909, from the records of the National Child Labor Committee (U.S.)

also sought work in the United States, particularly in mining and construction. However, those workers, along with newly freed blacks, were felt to pose a threat to European Americans' livelihood. Whites were not only fearful of people they didn't understand, but were also afraid of losing their jobs to groups who would accept lower wages (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

As immigrants poured into the country to find work, the emerging European American business owners began to mentally separate themselves from less-educated workers from other ethnic groups. A new concept emerged as "whiteness" became a form of identity for those with European backgrounds. "White" people psychologically and physically separated themselves from non-European immigrants and people of color who experienced the lowest socioeconomic status (Coontz, 1997; Roediger, 1988). People of European backgrounds who looked "white" could change their last names to sound anglicized and could work on losing their accents, strategies that people of color could not use to blend in as "American." Strong anti-immigrant sentiments abounded and whites could now afford to leave city centers and move to suburbs.

Though there was still a large underpaid working class, jobs with guaranteed hours and wages did allow poor people to earn a little bit more money during the Industrial Revolution (circa 1830–1910) compared to earlier periods, so they had more leisure time than their ancestors did. With the better sanitation and medical practices that began to emerge during this period, people began to live longer, and the need for large families decreased. With more leisure time and smaller families, the role of children in the family began to change. By 1880 childhood came to be seen as a special time when skills and character should be molded. Education for white children became mandatory in 1890, and families sought to invest time and energy in their children so that they could become successful and benefit their families substantially over the long term.

When employee unions emerged in the second half of the 19th century, wages got even better for European American men, and their wives began to stay home, caring for the home, rearing children, and becoming responsible for the moral and religious education of children (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988). The middle class began to emerge, with children living easier lives than their parents and grandparents had. Families became increasingly private as the home and workplace became separated. Leisure activities for European American homemakers were often depicted in magazines and fashion catalogs. The early automobiles produced by Ford allowed the rising middle class of the 1920s new freedoms to travel, enjoy vacations, and meet new people outside their own towns. Other groups wanted this lifestyle, too. Unfortunately for most Americans, even most European Americans, the reality was still one of toil, financial struggles, and subsistence living.

By the 1950s, America had recovered from the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s, and the economy was booming. Single wage-earner SNAFs made up 60% of white American households. Men lived public lives, socializing and holding business meetings. Women occupied the private sphere, rearing children, cooking, and cleaning. With material wealth came appliances to help with housework, but also larger houses and more sets of clothes to clean (Coles, 2006). Women were able to drive their own cars, but this meant they spent the majority of their time doing errands and toting children around town. Longer lives meant grandparents were more likely to be involved in family life. Single-parent families decreased in number as better health brought fewer widows (Coontz, 1992). Families became consumers in a growing economy. Subdivisions of tract homes were being built on a massive scale.

Unfortunately, during these "good old" times, women's use of tranquilizers increased. They often felt dissatisfied with their isolated existences as well as the realization that their marriages would be longer lasting than those of any other previous generations. They had become financially dependent on men and often felt hopeless (Coltrane & Adams, 2008). An upward trend in divorce rates began in 1960 and persisted for the next 30 years, until they leveled off in the past two decades (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2015a; National Bureau of Economic Research, 2009). Recent declines in divorce rates may be accounted for by fewer marriages occurring in the first place.

White children of the baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1965) often grew up to feel isolated as well. They felt their parents were too materialistic and they wanted to choose a different, more meaningful lifestyle for themselves. They realized their mothers had few rights and that discrimination and racism were still blights other groups faced on a daily basis. Many ethnic and cultural groups recognized that segregation, poverty, and racial hatred were ubiquitous in the United States. The widespread psychological unrest of this period gave birth to the successful fight for civil rights for African Americans, women, lesbians and gays, and other groups who were no longer willing to be marginalized and denied "The American Dream" (Coles, 2006). While there is not yet equality in terms of income or access to education and health care, most groups today have earned unprecedented human rights guarantees.

The Immigration Law of 1965 lifted quotas and prohibited legal discrimination, so that multicultural issues could rise to the forefront in education and politics. Prohibitions against sexism, racism, gender discrimination, and heterosexism have allowed people to

create family forms of their own choosing, such as those many of my students described at the beginning of this chapter, including pets, friends, and domestic partners. Marriage rates have declined in most Western nations. For example, as mentioned earlier, in Sweden over half of couples cohabit but don't marry, and 54% of births are nonmarital; the rate is about 40% in the United States (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2015b; Eurostat, 2013b).

Today, European Americans, or "non-Hispanic whites," make up 62 percent of the American population. European Americans still enjoy longer lives, better wages, and better health care than most people of color. Yet 39% of public assistance (welfare) recipients are white, and white middle-aged males have the highest rates of suicide of any other demographic group (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2014; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2015). In 2014 rates of children living with two married parents varied by state from 55% to 81%. See Figure 1.4 for a state-by-state comparison of the percentage of children living with two parents. Keep in mind that data on two-parent families include parents who have been divorced and remarried. Again, the ways we define and measure families have important implications for the kinds of conclusions we might be able draw from statistics.

So what do you think of the "good old days"? What might your response be to people who talk about the disintegration of *the* American family? Such a conversation might start with the fact that current families in America closely resemble early American

■ **FIGURE 1.4** Percentage of Households where Children Live with Two Parents, 2014
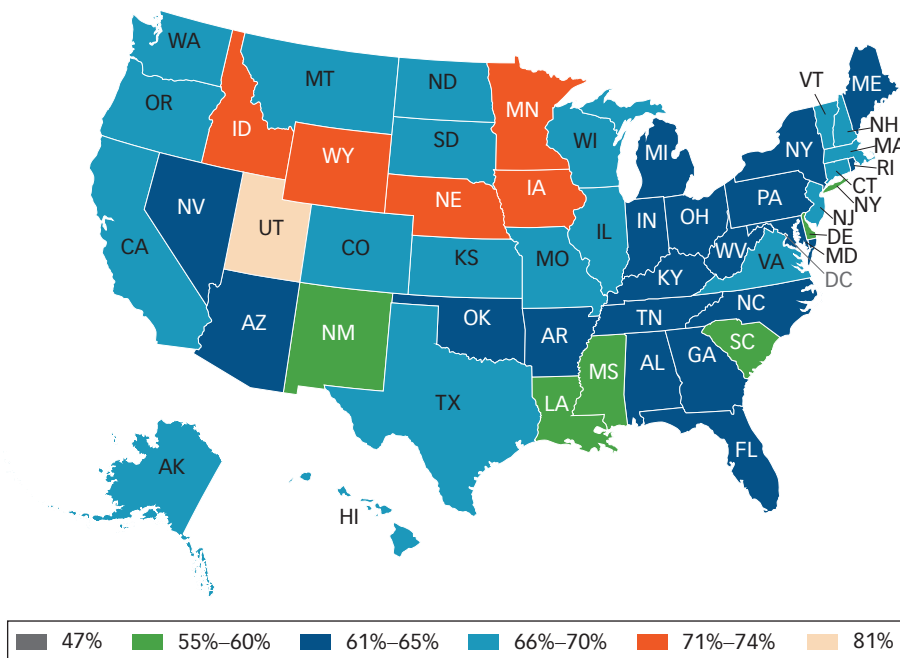
SOURCE: Based on data from Kids Count Data Center, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014.

families where both mothers and fathers worked to provide for the household. Also, while divorce rates increased between the 1960s and 1990s, they have since stabilized. Although nonmarital births have increased over the past few decades, teen births have actually declined, especially for African American girls (Martin, Hamilton, and Osterman, 2013). Finally, diversity has always been the norm for the U.S. population. Immigration and migration are parts of *everyone's* family history. Let's take a closer look at African-American families.

A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

People from the tribes of Africa first arrived in the New World in the 16th century, to provide indentured servitude for the colonists in Jamestown, Virginia. Slavery had not yet been established so many poor blacks and poor whites could eventually buy their freedom (Coles, 2006). However, by 1700, slavery became entrenched in the British colonies.

The practices of slavery had a widespread and deep impact on how African American families developed. Slave owners feared slave revolts and so did all they could to keep slaves from communicating and from forming families of their own. They tried to mix slaves from different tribes and countries, who spoke different languages, so as to prevent slave communion and possible revolt. Plantation owners in the South often used African males as "studs" and African women as "breeders," forcing them to reproduce to increase the available work force (Hamer, 2001). Slave women were forced to give birth frequently and then to quickly return to work, often without their babies (Burgess, 1995). White slave owners raped slave women, often fathering mixed-race children, whom they called mulattos, who could be sold at higher prices than purely black children. "Mulatto" children were also treated better than those with darker skin. But mixed children could be a source of scandal for slave owners within their own families and communities, so fathers often tried to get rid of them, sometimes sending them to boarding schools but, more often than not, selling them into slavery on other plantations (Gonzales, 1998; McAdoo, 1998).

While some slave owners, especially on larger plantations that had separate slave cabins, allowed slaves to marry and keep their children, it was common practice for whites to prohibit marriage or to sell a slave's spouse or children to another owner. Stevenson (1995), in an exploration of the lives of former slaves, found that out of the survivors of slavery interviewed, only 43% recalled contact with their fathers while 82% recalled being with their mothers. On the larger plantations that allowed for more freedom and the development of slave communities and churches, the families that did form tended to be **nuclear families**, meaning that a married couple lived with their biological children (Kulikoff, 1986).

As early as the Revolutionary War in the latter part of the 18th century, many slaves in the North were freed; an estimated 8% to 12% of blacks there were free. Once the slaves in the South were freed after the Civil War (around 1865), they tried to locate lost family members through the newly developed Freedman's Bureau, which was funded through the 1867 Reconstruction Act (Gutman, 1976). Many children were found living with only one parent or with no parents at all, as they had been orphaned or sold too far away to find their parents. After Reconstruction and until the 1940s, 70% of black children lived in two-parent homes (Ruggles, 1994).

Nuclear family: A small family consisting of parents and children, without extended kin present.

Even though the slaves were legally freed, de facto slavery continued through segregation, racism, discrimination, and violent crimes against blacks, such as lynching, in which African Americans would be hanged from a tree, and often dismembered and set on fire. Black families continued to live in poverty and were often forced to work the land of their previous owners or other whites, under a system of sharecropping, where they would work the land and share in the profits of the crops.

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES IN MODERN TIMES

As former slaves heard of job opportunities in big northern cities during the Industrial Revolution, they migrated north into cities like Chicago and Detroit. However, upon arrival, the former slaves found it was much easier for women to find jobs as domestic servants and nannies. Men had a more difficult time finding work and thousands of men were left unemployed or underemployed. Divorce and desertion among black families increased, as did family violence and conflict (Franklin, 1997). With women often bringing home the higher wages, they gained power in the family. However, once the Great Depression of the 1930s hit, African Americans of both sexes became unemployed along with millions of other Americans. Without an extended kin network to rely on, a sense of hopelessness increased in black communities. When the government implemented monetary aid for poor households, African American families received far less than their poor white counterparts. Black families were often forced to move into large, overcrowded housing projects and take on boarders to make ends meet.

During World War II, thousands of black men fought for a country that denied them basic civil rights such as voting and being able to sleep in hotels on public highways. However, black women benefited from new industrial jobs as droves of American women of all ethnic backgrounds entered the workforce to be employed in factories to support the war effort. These new jobs enabled black women to leave domestic work behind. One African American woman said, "Hitler . . . got us out of white folks' kitchens" (as cited in Franklin, 1997, pp. 104–105). Unfortunately, African American women earned far less for factory work than European American women did.

After finally being guaranteed civil rights in 1964 and 1968 through their organized efforts, African Americans have slowly gained access to opportunities like higher education and living wages. Along with the right to vote, laws against discrimination have helped them to move ahead in careers, government, and business. In 2008, Americans elected their first president with an African background.

However, even today, African Americans have very high rates of infant mortality compared to whites and high rates of poverty (38% of black children are poor compared
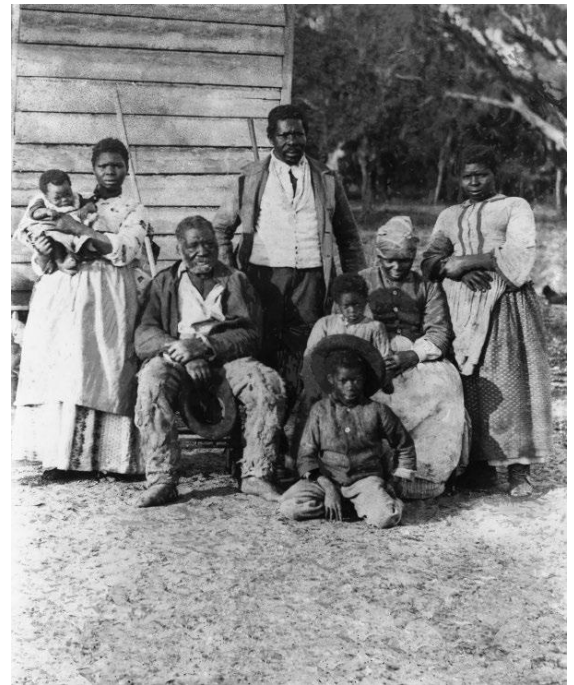
■ **PHOTO 1.7**
African American Family.
In what ways was African American family life both similar to and different from European American family life after slavery ended? Four generations of an African American family, born on a plantation in South Carolina.

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to 13% of white children). In fact, 14% of African American babies are born with dangerously low birth weight, in comparison to about 6% to 7% of infants in all other ethnic groups (Reichman, 2005). African Americans also have higher divorce rates, more nonmarital births, and a large gender gap in education, with more college-educated black women and fewer college-educated black men in their communities (Coles, 2006; Kids Count Data Center, 2014).

Today African Americans make up 15.2% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014c). Despite the continuing challenges of institutionalized racism, lower wages, and poorer health, African American family resilience is truly remarkable. Through centuries of trauma and turmoil, black people have been able to maintain very strong family ties, valuing family and spending a great deal of time with family members. African Americans often live in intergenerational households where three or four generations help care for children and support the household. The church plays a key role in African American mental and spiritual resilience and there is often a large community support system available for black families (Haight, 2002).

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Modern African American Families

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A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF LATINO AND HISPANIC AMERICAN FAMILIES' EXPERIENCES

Like Native Americans, Latinos are an extremely diverse group. They stem from many countries and have a variety of cultural backgrounds. Latino skin color ranges from the black of many Caribbean groups to white, including the blond hair and blue eyes of some Mexicans. With such a diverse group, it is difficult to make many generalizations about Latino families beyond the fact that they mostly speak Spanish or Portuguese (in Brazil) due to their colonial experiences with Spaniards and the Portuguese. Most, but not all, tend to practice Catholicism and to exhibit a sense of communal devotion called **familism**, where respect and reverence for one's family, especially one's elders, are paramount. Similarly, Latinos often live in multigenerational and extended family households where many "god parents" share responsibility for raising children. This spiritual parenting is often called **compadrazgo**, something similar to the idea of coparenting. Because of their conservative family values and desire to connect with others in their tight knit communities, Hispanic/Latino peoples tend to prefer to talk about issues face to face and to solve problems from within their close social networks. This preference for **personalismo** allows community and family members to provide favors, help, and assistance for anything from birthing a baby to filling out insurance papers or finding a good deal on a vacation package. As you will see, these values of familism, compadrazgo, and *personalismo* have served Latinos well throughout their varied histories within the United States. They work together to create family values and communal support networks that are similar to those in the African American community.

Keep in mind that Hispanic and Latino groups vary a lot in their historical, cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Venezuelans are different from Chileans, who are quite different from Dominicans, who don't resemble Peruvians. To give you a little flavor for this diversity, we will briefly explore the histories of some of the most populous groups in the United States: Mexican Americans or Chicanos, Puerto-Rican Americans,

Familism: A belief common in Hispanic/Latino families (as well as others) wherein the needs and goals of the family, especially elders, take precedence over the needs and goals of any given individual.

Compadrazgo: A belief common in Hispanic/Latino families where many men and women are thought of as coparents for children (in other words, all "aunties" care for all children in the family).

Personalismo: A practice common in Hispanic/Latino families, where goods and services are exchanged in a face-to-face, or personal, manner; people prefer to deal with those in their own community on a personal level.

and Cuban Americans. These three groups came to the United States in quite different ways and their histories and current states of existence vary quite a bit. These are simply brief examples given to illustrate the vast diversity experienced in families often lumped together into single ethnic categorizations.

MEXICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES

As discussed earlier, indigenous Mexican Indians were colonized by the Spanish starting in the 16th century. The Catholic Church allowed the groups to intermarry and Mexican Indians could sometimes buy their freedom (Gonzales, 1998). The indigenous people and the Spaniards were both used to living in patriarchal families but because most of the families were poor and lived in rural areas, they mainly practiced **common law marriage**, a union that is recognized as legitimate even though no formal ceremony or legal documentation has taken place.

After winning the Mexican American War, the United States annexed what are now California, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and Nevada from the country of Mexico. The U.S. government affirmed that the Mexicans already living in those territories could keep their own land and maintain cultural and familial practices. However, this 19th-century land grab usurped the rights of Mexican people, and the land was eventually taken by whites (Gonzales, 1998). No longer able to survive in a traditional agrarian manner, Mexican families moved to work in gold mines, in factories, and on the railroads.

During the Great Depression, when white workers lost jobs and faced poverty, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans were deported so they could not compete for "American" jobs. As the economy recovered by 1940 and more workers were needed, Mexicans were then invited back under a *bracero* agreement, to work seasonally or for certain periods of time to help with infrastructure or war efforts during World War II (Becerra, 1998). After decades of being pushed out of and pulled back into the American workforce, the Chicano rights movement began to take shape during the 1960s when Chicano/Latino groups fought for farm workers' rights, better wages and working conditions, and a voice in government.

Today Mexican Americans make up the largest percentage of Hispanic families in the U.S. (about 64%). Their families tend to live in larger households than non-Hispanic whites (3.87 members on average; Population Research Institute, 2015). Mexican American families have higher rates of marriage than non-Hispanic whites, as well as lower rates of divorce. A common thread among many Hispanic/Latino families is that they value family connections above other priorities and when faced with difficulties such as migration stress or economic problems, they draw on family values to buffer their health and their children's academic success (Halgunseth, Ipsa, & Rudy, 2006).

PUERTO-RICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES

While Mexican Americans have lived on the land that is now the United States since its beginning, Puerto Ricans began arriving for war-related jobs in the 1940s. The United States won the rights to the island of Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American War in 1898.

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Mexican Immigrants

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Common law marriage: A marriage recognized in some states and countries where a couple is given all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of marriage because they've been together a long time, not because they have gone through a formal marriage ritual.

Puerto Ricans were then allowed to become U.S. citizens. Today the island is considered a *commonwealth,* neither a state nor an independent nation. Citizens of Puerto Rico don't pay U.S. taxes and cannot vote but are allowed to travel freely to the mainland at will. Puerto Ricans settled mainly on the East Coast and often worked in factories.

Today Puerto-Rican Americans are one of the poorest Hispanic groups and have high fertility and low marriage rates. In fact, 60% of Puerto Rican babies are nonmarital births. Moreover, 26.5% of Puerto Rican households are headed by women, in comparison to 15.2% and 13.0% for Mexican American and Cuban Americans, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b). However, they have higher rates of high school completion (67%) than Mexican Americans (51%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008b).

CUBAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES

If Puerto Ricans have not been able to reap the rewards of a close connection to the American mainland, Cuban Americans have had quite a

■ **PHOTO I.8**
Mexican American Family.
How did the historical experiences of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American families in the United States differ? Mexican American women and children, Omaha, Nebraska, 1922.

different experience. When the United States obtained Puerto Rico, it also gained control over Cuba (as well as the Philippines and other island nations). The U.S. government allowed self-rule for Cuba in 1902, but American capitalism and influence were entrenched there for the next 57 years (Suarez, 1998). When Fidel Castro overthrew the American-backed Cuban government in 1959, many wealthy and successful Cuban families fled to America. Because the wealthy had the most to lose in a newly communist country, and because they spoke English and had close ties to the United States, elite Cubans became political refugees and were welcomed. The U.S. government helped them bring their entire families over, provided scholarships for their children, and helped them to become established, mainly in Florida. In a second wave of immigration during the 1960s and 1970s, Cuba's middle class of skilled laborers and small business owners came on flights chartered by the U.S. government (Bean & Tienda, 1987).

With this favored status and much material wealth to begin with, Cuban Americans today are the wealthiest and best educated of the Latino groups in the United States. Cuban American women have low fertility rates and marry later than women in other Hispanic groups. Only 25% of Cuban American births are nonmarital, compared to 40% for Mexican Americans, and 60% for Puerto Ricans (Coles, 2006). In 2015, the United States began to normalize its relationships with the Castro government; thus, travel bans and economic embargoes began to ease and families could more easily be reunited with long lost family members.