



# Marriages and Families

Diversity and Change



Mary Ann Schwartz  
BarBara Marliene Scott  
Eighth Edition

 **Pearson**

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**EIGHTH EDITION**

**Mary Ann Schwartz**

*Northeastern Illinois University*

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New York, NY

**Editor:** Billy J. Grieco  
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and Electronic Page Makeup:** Integra  
**Cover Designer:** JayBird Design  
**Cover Photos:** Belkin & Co/Fotolia; Orange Line Media/Fotolia; Vitalinka/Fotolia;  
Lisa F. Young/Shutterstock; dglimages/Fotolia  
**Manufacturing Buyer:** Mary Ann Gloriande  
**Printer/Binder:** LSC/Menasha  
**Cover Printer:** Phoenix Color/Hagerstown

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication is on file with the Library of Congress.**

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Student Edition ISBN 10: 0-134-62919-1  
Student Edition ISBN 13: 978-0-134-62919-3  
A la Carte ISBN 10: 0-134-63199-4  
A la Carte ISBN 13: 978-0-134-63199-8

*To our husbands,  
who share(d) with us  
the joy and value of family life*

*Richard  
and  
Roger (1936–2012)*

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# Preface

Today, many marriages and families are buffeted by numerous global economic and political forces. Many families are experiencing unemployment, home foreclosures, and personal bankruptcies as well as ongoing violence at home and abroad. These experiences are taking a toll on the health and stability of family life. In this context, a sociological approach to studying marriages and families is especially helpful. Such an approach enables us to understand the constraints and opportunities that affect our lives and those of other people, thereby positioning us to make more discriminating and successful decisions and to exercise greater control over our lives.

In this eighth edition of *Marriages and Families: Diversity and Change*, there is a conscious effort to present a continuity of major issues, concerns, and themes on contemporary marriages, families, and intimate relationships. Our initial resolve when writing the first edition of this textbook has not changed, and it informs this eighth edition as well. The subtitle of this book, *Diversity and Change*, continues to be the major thematic framework that runs through all 15 chapters and is informed by the scholarship of a wide variety of scholars, most notably scholars of color and feminist scholars in sociology and from across a number of other academic disciplines. The emphasis on diversity helps students to understand that many different forms of intimate relationships exist beyond the traditional heterosexual, two-parent, married, White, middle-class family. As we show throughout this textbook, marriages and families more generally include single-parent families, headed by women or men; lesbian or gay families with or without children and with or without a live-in partner; adoptive and foster families; biracial and multiracial families; cohabiting couples involving heterosexual or same-sex partners; and blended families that emerge following divorce, remarriage, or simply when people bring to a new relationship children from a previous intimate relationship. In this context, we treat marriages and families as social constructs whose meanings have changed over time and from place to place.

Consistent with this position, we continue to give high priority to framing our discussions of marriages and families in historical context. Most, if not all, aspects of our lives are shaped by larger historical circumstances. To be born during a particular historical period is to experience intimacy, marriage, family life, childbearing and childrearing, family decision making, household labor, and marital and family satisfaction (to name a few) in particular ways germane to the time, place, and social structure within which we find ourselves. For example, the economic growth and prosperity of the 1950s, a period during which the nuclear family was idealized, encouraged or made possible this particular

family structure. During this period, both women and men married at early ages, had children within a relatively short interval from the wedding, and generally stayed married until the death of one spouse. For many families, a husband's income was sufficient to support the family. Thus, wives and mothers typically remained at home fulfilling domestic and child-care roles. Although economic conditions have changed, now often requiring multiple wage earners, this 1950s "idealized" image continues to influence popular discourse on marriages and families. However, in the 1990s and continuing today, most children grow up in single-parent families, in remarried families, and/or in families where both parents work outside the home. Framing our discussion of marriages and families in historical context not only provides students with knowledge about marriages and families in earlier periods of U.S. history but also enables them to understand and interpret the changes occurring around them in marriages and families today.

Our objectives in this eighth edition are simple yet significant:

- to help students recognize and understand the dynamic nature of marriages, families, and intimate relationships;
- to enable students to recognize, confront, and dispel prominent myths about marriages, families, and intimate relationships;
- to help students see the interactive relationships of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation;
- to encourage an informed openness in student attitudes that will empower them to make informed choices and decisions in their own marriage, family, and intimate relationships;
- to enable students to see how marriages, families, and intimate relationships in the United States and around the world are increasingly affected by global events, particularly economic upheavals, armed conflicts, and acts of terrorism and war; and
- to provide students with a comprehensive introduction to a number of key issues facing marriages and families today.

In this age of rapid communication and technological changes, not only does the evening news bring into our homes stories about marriages and families in distant places, but, more importantly, the news also calls attention to how political and economic decisions, wars and conflicts, and terrorism, national and international, affect families in the United States as well as those in other countries of the world. For example, international trade agreements and decisions



of multinational corporations to relocate from one country to another in pursuit of lower labor costs and less regulation affect families in both countries. On the one hand, family budgets and patterns of living are often seriously disrupted when a family member loses a job because a business moves offshore. On the other hand, family patterns are also affected when members must work for subsistence-level wages, often in an unhealthy environment. In this example, the experiences of these families are globally interdependent.

In addition, issues of violence and the massive abuse of human beings both nationally and internationally crowd our psyches. In the United States, racism, homophobia, hate crimes, gun and community violence, the escalation of violence in schools, and both threats of and actual terrorist attacks are indeed very troubling issues faced by all families. Elsewhere, the violence and atrocities related to political, cultural, religious, and ethnic conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, the Congo, Sudan, and some parts of North Africa have had devastating consequences for millions of families. These global incidents are not unrelated to life in the United States. In turn, both human and financial resources must be reallocated from domestic agendas to help meet humanitarian commitments around the world. By examining the process of globalization and its consequences or, as C. Wright Mills (1959) suggested, by grasping history and biography and the connections between the two, students should be better able to understand their personal life experiences and prepare themselves for meeting the challenges of living in a global world.

Rapid changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population, due to immigration and differential fertility rates, have focused our nation's attention on diversity. Although some dimensions of this issue are new, a historical review quickly shows that throughout U.S. history, marriages and families have taken many diverse forms. A focus on structured relationships such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation allows us to see how marriages and families are experienced differently by different categories of people. In this eighth edition, we continue to make a special effort to treat this diversity in an integrative manner. Thus, we have no separate chapters on class or families of color. Instead, when marriage and family experiences are differentiated by race, class, or gender, these differences are integrated into the discussion of specific experiences. Two examples will illustrate this point. First, although the vast majority of all Americans will eventually marry, the marriage rate is lower for some groups than others. For example, confronted with a continuing shortage of African American males of comparable age and education, college-educated African American women are far less likely than their white counterparts to marry a man who also graduated college. Second, although both women and men suffer from the dissolution of their marriages through divorce or death, gender also differentiates those experiences in important ways. The most striking difference is an economic one: The standard of living declines for women and children, but it is stable or improves for men.

It is not always easy to discuss diversity, partly because our thinking about diversity is itself diverse. One of the first issues we face in discussing diversity is language—what are the appropriate designations to use in reference to different groups at this point in time? Names are often controversial and reflect a power struggle over who has the right or authority to name. Not surprisingly, those in positions of power historically have assumed that right and authority. As the “named” groups themselves become more powerful and vocal, however, they often challenge the naming process and insist on designations they believe more clearly express their sense of their own identity. For example, as a result of pressure from people with mixed ancestry, the U.S. Census Bureau gave official recognition to a biracial or multiracial category on its year 2000 census forms. However, even this is not without problems. The multiracial category has yielded significant changes in the number of reported members in various racial and ethnic groups of color. This fact has political and economic significance in terms of the distribution of governmental resources and services.

Although there is no unanimity on these matters even among members of the same group, some terms have emerged as the preferred ones. Thus, for example, *Latina/o* is preferred to *Hispanic*, *Native American* is preferred to *American Indian*, *LGBTQ* (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) is preferred to *homosexual*, and *African American* is preferred to *Black*. Throughout this text, we try to be consistent in using the preferred terms. When we make specific comparisons by race, however, we use the terms *Black* and *White* for ease of presentation. In addition, we have consciously avoided using the term *minority group* to refer to racial and ethnic groups in our society. Instead, we use the term *people of color*. Although this term is not problem-free, it avoids an implicit assumption in the term *minority* that groups so designated are not part of the dominant culture in terms of shared values and aspirations.

## New To This Edition

- New learning objectives open each chapter to help students focus their reading and expand their analytical and critical thinking skills.
- Coverage of contemporary topics—such as changing immigration patterns, same-sex marriage, adoption laws, divorce laws, the growing income gap in the United States and the recent recession, and the xenophobia, isolationist tendencies, and religious intolerance that result from increasing globalization—has been updated and expanded in this edition.
- New photos have been added, and line art, tables, and maps have been updated throughout the book.
- Hundreds of new research studies have been added to this edition.

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## Expanded Features

*Marriages and Families: Diversity and Change* continues to be distinguished from other textbooks in a number of important ways, including the expanded features of the eighth edition.

**IN THE NEWS** The In the News chapter opener has been a popular feature in past editions of this textbook. In this edition, we continue the trend of beginning each chapter with this feature. These chapter openers continue to be contemporary, true stories of people caught up in the web of marriage, family, and other intimate relationships or issues either directly or indirectly related to marriage, family, and intimacy. Following each In the News feature is a series of questions under the heading "What Would You Do?" This feature helps students to see the relevance of many political, economic, and cultural issues of the day to ordinary people's lives and invites them to reflect on the topics covered in that chapter in light of their own value expectations and experiences.

#### **APPLYING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION BOX**

Each box provides questions to help students develop a sociological perspective in analyzing aspects of marriages and families. The questions are designed to help students see the relationship between personal behavior and how society is organized and structured. For example, in Chapter 2, students can learn at a glance from statistics presented about the characteristics of the welfare population. They can also go to a website where actual welfare recipients share their experiences of receiving welfare benefits, helping to dispel many of the myths about this population while at the same time learning about the diversity among American families. In Chapter 9, students are directed to websites that provide historical data about Father's Day as well as factual information about

today's fathers who are often overlooked in discussions of parenting.

**IN OTHER PLACES BOX** Students remain interested in learning about diverse forms of marriages and families. Therefore, this box continues to offer students insights into the diverse structures and functions of marriages and families, both global and local. For example, in Chapter 11, they can learn about global and local responses to violence and sexual assault against women. And in Chapter 12, students can see how different customs, laws, and religious beliefs contribute to different rates of divorce around the world. Each In Other Places box includes a series of questions under the heading "What Do You Think?" These questions require students to reflect on cultural similarities and differences. They also help students understand that culture is relative.

**DEBATING SOCIAL ISSUES BOX** In recent years, considerable controversy has surrounded numerous policy issues regarding marriages, families, and intimate relationships. Students often hear media stories designed to grab headlines rather than inform the public about the different perspectives people have on these difficult and often emotionally laden issues such as abortion (Chapter 9) and immigration (Chapter 1). Thus, we have included a Debating Social Issues box in every chapter to help students understand the pro and con arguments that surround a given policy issue and then use the related questions to help them clarify their own views on the subject.

**WRITING YOUR OWN SCRIPT BOX** These exercises again can be found at the end of each chapter. Students and instructors have told us that this focused approach makes it easy for students to reflect on their own life choices and in writing their own marital or relationship scripts. In this way, students are encouraged to think sociologically about their personal decision making in light of the relevant research presented in that chapter.

**EXPANDED THEMES** One of the criticisms students sometimes make about marriage and family courses and their related textbooks is that they are pessimistic in tone and content. They use as examples the high divorce rate, individual and family violence, poverty, inequality, and sexual problems. Students realize these patterns of behavior are real and must be addressed, but they also want to know more about how to support marriages, families, and intimate relationships. Therefore, we have retained the section at the end of each chapter, "Supporting Marriages and Families," that discusses various initiatives being carried out or proposed to help individuals, couples, and families in their relationships and, where appropriate, suggests areas in which resources and support for families are still needed.

In addition, we have enriched each chapter by incorporating hundreds of new research studies. We have also included new photos, examples, tables, and figures to illustrate contemporary marriage and family concepts, events, trends, and themes.

- Changing immigration patterns have resulted in greater racial, ethnic, and racial diversity among families in the United States and throughout the world (Chapters 1 and 15).
- Just as families are changing, so too is the discipline of sociology. Although in the past women and people of color were involved in research and theorizing about marriages and families, their contributions were largely ignored. But today, women and people of color are gaining much deserved recognition as researchers and theorists (Chapter 2).
- Although gender roles are less limiting than in the past, women (and men, too) continue to confront gender stereotyping at work and in their personal, political, and family lives (Chapter 3).
- Most often when we think about love, we think about people who love each other as being close in age. But an increasing number of people are falling in love and establishing intimate relationships with people much older or younger than themselves, raising questions about whether society should put age constraints on love (Chapter 4).
- Although interracial dating has become more acceptable to Americans in recent years, there is a generation gap in terms of acceptance. For example, the generations born before 1946 are the least accepting, and those born since 1977 are the most accepting (Chapter 5).
- For many Americans teens, oral sex is not “really” sex; real sex, they believe, is vaginal intercourse. This perspective puts young people in jeopardy of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. The incidence of AIDS continues to increase dramatically around the globe (Chapter 6).
- Despite continuing controversy, same-sex marriages are now legal across the United States. However, increasing numbers of young adults are choosing to remain single for longer periods of time or even permanently. The lifestyles of the unmarried population continue to take many diverse forms (Chapter 7).
- Although some people think of premarital agreements as cold, unromantic, and businesslike, an increasing number of couples are making them part of their marriage preparation. Additionally, because conflict is now recognized as a normal part of intimate relationships, many couples are participating in marriage preparation classes that teach conflict resolution skills (Chapter 8).
- Polls show that an increasing number of fathers desire to spend more time and develop a closer relationship with their children. New research documents the importance of fathers in the lives of children, indicating that when fathers provide strong emotional, financial, and other support, their children are likely to be healthier physically and psychologically (Chapter 9).
- In recent years, the income gap between wealthy and other families widened dramatically. Although unemployment rates and home foreclosures have lessened since the recession of 2007–2009, many families still find themselves in precarious financial situations (Chapter 10).
- Power, abuse, and gender-based violence within families and other intimate relationships continue to be a major human rights violation in the United States and around the world. The most vulnerable victims of gender-based violence are women and young girls (Chapter 11).
- Although the overall divorce rate has decreased slightly over the past several years, the rate remains high and varies among different groups and in different geographic regions. Several states are trying to reverse this trend by reforming divorce laws (Chapter 12).
- Greater numbers of children are living in stepfamilies. Although no precise figures exist on the number of children being raised in lesbian and gay stepfamilies, the increasing use of reproductive technology (Chapter 9) and changes in adoption laws (Chapter 15) suggest that more children will live in lesbian and gay stepfamilies in the future (Chapter 13).
- People are living longer. Expectations are that by 2050, one in five Americans will be 65 or older in the United States. Contrary to popular stereotypes, the majority of older people maintain their independence and enjoy an active social life (Chapter 14).
- As globalization expands, so, too, does the inequality that accompanies it, leaving many children and families behind. Rising inequality can result in an increase in racial bias, xenophobia, isolationist tendencies, and religious intolerance. In this process, individuals and societies who are among the most disadvantaged sometimes respond with violence and acts of terrorism (Chapter 15).

## Pedagogy: Reader Involvement

*Marriages and Families: Diversity and Change* is intended as a text that challenges students to become involved in a direct way by examining their personal belief systems as well as societal views of the many forms that marriages and families have taken in the past and are taking in the present. Based on more than 60 years of combined teaching experiences, we have found that a course on the sociology of marriages and families almost always invokes concern and interest among students regarding how the general principles and descriptions of marriages and families in a given textbook apply to and are similar to or different from their own personal experiences. Thus, throughout the process of revising this book, we continued to use an innovative, sensitive, and inclusive approach to writing about marriages and families. We use a sociological and feminist–womanist perspective, encouraging the application of the sociological imagination



to everyday life. In this context, we focus on the link between social structure and our personal experiences of marriages, families, and intimate relationships. That is, we examine how cultural values, historical context, economic and political changes, and structured relationships of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and age interact and affect individuals and groups as they create, sustain, and change their various intimate relationships.

The positive response of students as well as instructors to the pedagogical strategies included in the first seven editions encouraged us to continue them in this edition. It has been gratifying to hear how these strategies have facilitated students' involvement in understanding marriages and families and empowered them to make more informed lifestyle decisions.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES** Each chapter begins with a series of objectives designed to help students focus their reading and expand their analytical and critical thinking skills.

**KEY TERMS** The important terms and concepts that help us to understand and analyze marriages and families are boldfaced and defined in the text. The key terms are also listed at the end of each chapter and defined in the glossary at the end of the book as a way of facilitating the study and review process.

**CHAPTER QUESTIONS** Throughout this edition, students will find sidebar questions that ask them to apply the material in the chapter to their own experiences and to critically evaluate aspects of interpersonal relationships.

## Supplements

This book is accompanied by an extensive learning package to enhance the experience of both instructors and students.

**INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL AND TEST BANK** For each chapter in the text, this valuable resource provides a chapter overview, list of objectives, lecture suggestions, discussion questions, student assignments and projects, and multimedia resources. In addition, test questions in multiple-choice, short answer, and essay formats are available for each chapter; the answers to all questions are page-referenced to the text. For easy access, this manual is available at [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com).

**MYTEST** This computerized software allows instructors to create their own personalized exams, to edit any or all of the existing test questions, and to add new questions. Other special features of this program include random generation of test questions, creation of alternate versions of the same test, scrambling question sequence, and test preview before printing. For easy access, this software is available within the instructor resources section for *Marriages and Families, Eighth Edition*, at [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com).

**POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS** The Lecture PowerPoint slides follow the chapter outline and feature images from

the textbook integrated with the text. The Special Topics PowerPoint slides allow you to integrate rich supplementary material into your course with minimal preparation time. They are available to adopters at [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com).

## Acknowledgments

Although we continue to refer to this book as ours, we recognize that such an endeavor can never singularly be attributed to the authors. As with any such project, its success required the assistance of many people from many different parts of our lives. Our interaction with students, both within and outside the classroom, continues to have a significant impact on our thinking and writing about marriages and families, and that impact is quite visible in this eighth edition. Our decisions to retain and, in some cases, update certain pedagogical aids, such as the boxed features and the examples used in the text, were made in response to student questions, reactions, and discussions. Student feedback was also instrumental in the development of the applied exercises, which we have found to be most effective in teaching about marriage and family issues and concerns.

We wish to acknowledge the skilled professionals at Pearson Education—the editors, artists, designers, and researchers who saw this edition through the process, from its inception through the many stages of development and production. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to Brooke Wilson and Jennifer Auvil whose support, patience, and perseverance were major factors in our completing this project. We are grateful to Allison Campbell, Associate Managing Editor, and the entire team at Integra for their assistance during the production process. Our thanks also go to permission editors and all others whose tasks were so essential to this book.

The timely, thoughtful, and extensive reactions, suggestions, and critical reviews of the previous editions of this textbook were greatly appreciated, and in each case, they have helped us avoid major mistakes and weaknesses while enhancing our ability to draw on the strengths of the book. We are also grateful to the reviewers of the previous edition:

Soheyl Amini, *Salve Regina University*

Meryl Damasiewicz, *University of Maryland Baltimore County*

Kristin Holster, *Dean College*

A. J. Jacobs, *East Carolina University*

Audra Kallimanis, *Wake Technical Community College*

Jessica Leveto, *Kent State University*

Laurence Segall, *Housatonic Community College*

Leslie Stanley-Stevens, *Tarleton State University*

Michael Stewart, *Bainbridge State College*

Jennifer Sumerel, *Itawamba Community College*

We again wish to acknowledge and thank our marriages and families (nuclear, extended, blended, and fictive) for continuing to love, understand, and support us as we undertook, for yet another time, the demands and responsibilities involved in researching, writing, and revising this

eighth edition. As in the past, when our time, attention, and behavior were dedicated to this endeavor, often at the expense of our time, attention, and activities with them, they remained steadfast in their support and encouragement. Now that we have finished this edition, they are as proud as we are and rightfully so, for this book, too, is as much theirs as ours. Its completion is due in large part to their understanding and the sacrifices they made to facilitate our ability to revise this book. We acknowledge our parents, Helen and Charles Schwartz and Lillian Johnson, for their love and support throughout our lives. As always, our partners, Richard and Roger (1936–2012), gave us their unconditional support and contributed to partnerships that were significantly critical to our meeting the various demands and deadlines that revising this book engendered. In addition, we continue to acknowledge our children, Jason, Roger Jr., Dionne, and Angella, granddaughters Courtney Mariah, Shaunte, and grandson Roger III (Trey) for their unwavering love, patience, and understanding when our work forced us to miss family gatherings and events. We thank them all, especially for providing us with continuing opportunities for the exploration and understanding of marriage and family life.

Last, but certainly not least, we wish to acknowledge and thank each other. As with the previous editions, this book has been a joint effort in every sense of the word. Time has not diminished our appreciation of each other's skills, perspective, humor, and experiences, and our collaborative effort continues to deepen our appreciation and respect for one another. We continue to learn from one another about diversity and the differential impact of race on various intimate relationships. In the process, we continue to learn more about a particular type of intimate relationship, one based on love, respect, commitment, understanding, tolerance, and compassion: namely, friendship.

**KEEPING IN TOUCH** Just as we appreciate all of the comments, suggestions, and ideas that we received on the first seven editions of this textbook, we would like to hear your reactions, suggestions, questions, and comments on this new edition. We invite you to share your reactions and constructive advice with us. You can contact us at: [m-schwartz@neiu.edu](mailto:m-schwartz@neiu.edu) or [b-scott1@neiu.edu](mailto:b-scott1@neiu.edu).

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# About the Authors

**Dr. MARY ANN SCHWARTZ** has been married for 39 years. She earned her bachelor of arts degree in sociology and history from Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; her master's degree in sociology from the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago; and her doctorate in sociology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She is Professor Emerita of Sociology and Women's Studies and former chair of the Sociology Department at Northeastern Illinois University, where she cofounded and was actively involved in the Women's Studies Program. She also served as a faculty consultant to the Network for the Dissemination of Curriculum Infusion, an organization that presents workshops nationally on how to integrate substance abuse prevention strategies into the college curriculum.

Throughout her educational experiences, Professor Schwartz has been concerned with improving the academic climate for women, improving student access to higher education, and improving the quality of undergraduate education. As a union activist, Professor Schwartz worked to win collective bargaining for higher education faculty in Illinois. She served as union president at Northeastern and spent more than 8 years as the legislative director for the University Professionals of Illinois, where she lobbied for bills of interest to higher education faculty and students. She edited the union's newsletter, *Universities 21*, which focused on academic issues. She continues to be active in the labor movement and served as an officer in the retirees' chapter. Professor Schwartz is a Vice President of the Board of Directors of Lincoln Park Village, a nonprofit organization, whose mission is to enhance the quality of life and the well-being of individuals as they live longer so that they remain integral, vibrant, and contributing members of their communities.

Professor Schwartz's research continues to focus on marriages and families, socialization, nonmarital lifestyles, work, aging, and the structured relationships of race, class, and gender. Although she found teaching all courses thought-provoking and enjoyable, her favorites were Marriages and Families; Women, Men, and Social Change; Sociology of Aging; and Introductory Sociology. In her teaching she employed interactive learning strategies and encouraged students to apply sociological insights in their everyday lives. Seeing students make connections between their individual lives and the larger social forces that influence them remains one of the most rewarding and exciting aspects of her teaching career.

**Dr. BARBARA M. SCOTT**, widowed after 47 years of marriage, is the proud mother of two sons and proud grandmother of four grandchildren: three granddaughters and one grandson. As a wife and mother of two small children, she returned to school, earning a bachelor of arts degree in sociology and two different master's degrees: a master of arts degree in sociology and a master of philosophy from Roosevelt University in Chicago and later a doctorate in sociology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Dr. Scott is Professor Emerita of Sociology, African and African American Studies, and Women's Studies at Northeastern Illinois University and was the university's first coordinator of its African American Studies Program. She has served as president of the Association of Black Sociologists, a national organization, and she currently serves as its executive officer. Dr. Scott is also a former chair of the Sociology, Justice Studies, Social Work, and Women's Studies departments at Northeastern Illinois University. She is a strong advocate for curriculum transformation and the integration of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation into the college curriculum as well as a social activist who has been in the forefront of organizing among national and international women of color, both within and outside academia.

Professor Scott has received meritorious recognition for her work and has served for more than 39 years as an educational and human resource consultant. She has coordinated the Women's Studies Program and was a founding member of the university's Black Women's Caucus. Her research and teaching interests include marriages and families, particularly African American families; the structured relationships of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation; institutionalized racism and inequality; cultural images and the social construction of knowledge in the mass media; and Africana (aka Black) women's studies. She finds teaching challenging and invigorating; among her favorite courses are Marriages and Families, Sociology of Black Women, Sociology of Racism, and Introductory Sociology. She is an enthusiastic advocate of applying sociology to the everyday worlds in which we live and routinely engages her students in field research in the communities in which they live and work. After years of teaching, she still gets excited about the varied insights that sociology offers into both the simplest and the most complex questions and issues of human social life.

# Chapter 1

# Marriages and Families over Time



## Learning Objectives

- 1.1 Describe the different types of marriages and families.
- 1.2 Describe the various functions families serve for their members and be able to articulate the basic tenets of contemporary debates over family values.
- 1.3 Understand the differences between nostalgic views of marriages and families or myths and the reality of marriages and families over time.
- 1.4 Describe the structure and function of various families in early America.
- 1.5 Identify some of the aspects of racial mixing in America's history.
- 1.6 Outline some of the ways in which families changed from the colonial period to the nineteenth century.
- 1.7 Identify the major economic, social, and political events of the twentieth century and discuss how they affected family life.
- 1.8 Describe the characteristics or households in the United States today and challenges facing marriages and families in the future.
- 1.9 Explain what is meant by the sociological imagination, including being able to articulate the connection between individuals' lived experiences and society's structural constraints and being able to apply sociological principles to your own and others' lives.

## In the News

### Kabul, Afghanistan

Early in 2015, 21-year-old Faheema found her way to an emergency women's shelter to save herself from the likelihood of an "honor killing" by members of her own family. Her "crime" was to run away with the man she loved, rejecting her father's choice of a husband (Rubin, 2015). Faheema's story is not uncommon but rather a reflection of centuries-old beliefs that if a woman's behavior violates or is even perceived to violate cultural norms that bring shame to the family, it is expected that male family members redeem that honor by killing the offender(s). The United Nations estimates that more than 5,000 women and girls die each year as a result of these "honor killings." However, many experts believe the figure is much higher because such crimes are frequently hidden from the police through a code of silence (Ryan, 2014).

Although "honor killings" occur more frequently in Asian and Middle Eastern countries, such killings are increasing in other parts of the world, particularly in countries where



Faheema survived an attempted "honor killing" by her family.



there are large, close-knit immigrant communities. The London Metropolitan Police recorded 211 such incidents in 2009 (“Honour Killing . . .,” 2010). In the United States there were at least 10 victims of honor-related violence between 2000 and 2008 (Ali, 2015).

The family, and marriage as a process that can generate it, exists in some form in all societies. Families are created by human beings in an attempt to meet certain basic individual and social needs, such as survival and growth. Marriage and family are among the oldest human social institutions. An **institution** consists of patterns of ideas, beliefs, values, and behaviors built around the basic needs of individuals and society and that tend to persist over time. Institutions represent the organized aspects of human social existence that are established and reinforced over time by the various norms and values of a particular group or society. The family as an institution organizes, directs, and executes the essential tasks of living for its members. Although, historically, marriage and family have been considered the most important institutions in human society, humans have created many other important institutions—for example, education, government, the economy, religion, and law. Throughout this textbook, we will examine how these other institutions affect marriages and families.

Families encompass cultural patterns as well as social structure. For example, as the story of Faheema in the opening vignette illustrates, the cultural recognition of mating is intimately bound up with familial and societal norms and customs about appropriate mates. As we discuss in detail in Chapter 5, two of the most common ways in which families regulate with whom their members can mate are through rules of **exogamy**, the requirement that marriage must occur outside a group, and **endogamy**, the requirement that marriage occur within a group. Clearly, Faheema’s romantic choice was deemed unacceptable to her father and, perhaps, other male family members as well. In many societies, marital endogamy is so important that an infraction of the rule is considered not only a violation of group customs but also cause for violent retribution. Although both political and religious leaders have spoken out against this practice, it remains rampant in a number of Middle Eastern communities where the perpetrators, mostly male family members, often go unpunished. Opponents of attempts to outlaw honor killings argue that without such controls on women, families would disintegrate.

Do you think it is necessary for a society to put controls on women to ensure the stability of families? On men? Explain. What controls, if any, do you experience as you think about dating and possibly marriage?

## Contemporary Definitions of Marriages and Families

### LO 1.1 Describe the different types of marriages and families.

Because all of us belong to some sort of family and have observed marriages (including our parents—and perhaps our

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Suppose your family forbids you to marry someone you love. Would you marry anyway, knowing that both of your lives might be in danger? What causes some groups to feel so strongly about whom their children marry?

own), we probably think we know exactly what the terms *marriage* and *family* mean. Although marriage and family go hand in hand, they are not one and the same. You might ask, then, exactly what are they? Take a few minutes to jot down your perceptions, definitions, and ideas about each of these institutions. How did you define them? Not surprisingly, many of your definitions and images of marriages and families are probably tied to ideas about a *traditional* family that consists of a husband, wife, and their children—an image often portrayed in both popular and academic literature and transmitted throughout American popular culture. As this exercise demonstrates, each of us has our own view of what constitutes a family. However, because our views and ideas about families are rooted in our own individual and unique family experiences and communities, our ideas about what constitutes a family are often an inaccurate depiction of the “typical” family. In fact, as we are finding increasingly today, there is no such thing as a typical family. And the traditional family that many people believe is the typical family pattern is an institution of the past, if indeed it ever really existed at all. To be sure, it is far from typical today. Transformative trends over the past 45 years, including changing attitudes and behaviors about what constitutes a family, have transformed the structure and composition of the American family, giving rise to a diversity of family forms today. Many people reading this textbook, for example, come from single-parent families or families that include a stepparent and stepsiblings or half-siblings. Some of you perhaps moved between your parents’ separate households as you were growing up or lived under the guardianship of a grandmother, a great grandmother, or some other relative. And still others grew up in families where their parents were of different races or of the same sex. Clearly then, families are not static but dynamic—they change over time.

Throughout history, the definition of what constitutes a family has changed. For example, at one time a family consisted of servants and slaves and all the other people in the household who were under the authority of the head of household. At a later historical time, the term *family* referred only to a man’s offspring. Moreover, ethnically as well as globally, definitions of what constitutes a family vary; for example, in some African and Native American cultures the concept of family includes everyone in the community as family. It was not until the nineteenth century that the idea of the traditional American family—a married couple and their children in which the male is the breadwinner and the female stays at home to care for the home and the children—gained popular usage (Arnold, 2007). Today, however, this traditional family structure is all but disappearing; for example, the traditional American family consisting of

a married couple with children declined from 40 percent of households in 1970 to 20 percent in 2012 (Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider, 2013). Therefore, a broader and evolving definition of what constitutes a family is necessary.

## What Is Marriage?

Historically, marriage has been defined in the United States as a legal contract between a woman and a man who are at or above a specified age and who are not already legally married to someone else. However, this legal definition of marriage has changed dramatically with the historic 2015 Supreme Court decision that guarantees the right of same-sex marriage. The importance of marriage equality in the United States is reflected in the words of Supreme Court Justice Anthony M. Kennedy, who wrote for the majority in the historic decision: Marriage is a “keystone of our social order...it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice and family...no longer may this liberty be denied” (quoted in Liptak, 2015). Like contemporary definitions of the family, definitions of marriage (including the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage) have emerged from fast-moving changes in public opinion about what constitutes marriage, with public opinion polls indicating that the majority of Americans today approved of same-sex marriage even before the historic Supreme Court decision (Pew Research Center, 2015j). Thus, in this book, as with family, we utilize a broad and evolving definition of marriage that encompasses the lived experiences of members of American marriages and families. Broadly defined, **marriage** can be viewed as a union between people (whether widely or legally recognized or not) that unites partners sexually, socially, and economically; that is relatively consistent over time; and that accords each member certain agreed-upon rights.

**TYPES OF MARRIAGES** **Monogamy** involves one person married to another person of the other sex. Although, legally, monogamy has referred to heterosexual relationships, any couple can be monogamous if they are committed exclusively to each other sexually and otherwise during the course of the relationship.

In some societies, polygamy is the accepted marriage structure. **Polygamy** is a broad category that generally refers to heterosexual marriage in which one person of one sex is married to several people of the other sex. It can take one of two forms: **polygyny**, in which one male has two or more wives, and **polyandry**, in which one female has two or more husbands. Even though the practice of polyandry is rare, polygyny is legally practiced or recognized civilly in nearly 50 countries around the world in areas such as the Middle East, South America, Asia, and parts of Africa. Societies that allow polygyny maintain that allowing men to have more than one wife is a more equitable way of organizing relationships. Critics of polygyny, however, disagree. They argue that polygyny is an unequal relationship where men have more rights than women; it is demeaning to women; it places women in a subordinate child-like role; and it can be a source of violence and abuse (Hamilton, 2008).

Although polygamy is illegal in almost all Western countries, small pockets of polygamous groups can be found in Western countries such as the United States, Canada, and Europe. Although both forms of polygamy are illegal in the United States, some religious and parareligious groups here routinely practice polygyny. For example, the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS, a splinter group from the Mormon Church) is one of the largest Mormon fundamentalist denominations and one of the United States’ largest practitioners of polygamy. Nonetheless, many Americans tend to view polygamy as an exotic relationship that occurs in societies far remote from the United States. Although most Americans do not approve of polygamy, support for this marriage form is gaining some momentum, particularly since the 2015 Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage. For example, according to a recent Gallup Poll, the percentage of Americans who view polygamy as morally acceptable has more than doubled since 2001. In 2001, only 7 percent of Americans felt that polygamy was morally acceptable. In 2015, 16 percent said that it is a morally acceptable marriage form (Newport, 2015). Some American proponents of polygamy say they feel encouraged by the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage because, in their view, the same legal argument made in favor of same-sex marriage also applies to polygamy. Polygamy supporters argue that if marriage is no longer defined as between just one man and one woman, it also shouldn’t be limited to just two people (Al Jazeera, 2015). For them, the bottom line is about marriage equality.

Although polyandry is rarer than polygyny, it does exist and can be found in the Himalayan areas of South Asia; in parts of Africa, China, Sri Lanka, northern India, Oceania, and the Suruí of northwestern Brazil; and among some Native Americans. Anthropologists have recorded two forms of polyandry: **fraternal polyandry**, in which a group of brothers share one wife, and **nonfraternal polyandry**, in which a woman’s husbands are not related. Fraternal polyandry is common in the mountainous areas of Nepal and Tibet. For example, among the Tibetan Nyinba, brothers live together throughout their lives in large patrilineal households where they share a common estate, common domestic responsibilities, and a common wife with whom each maintains a sexual relationship. This type of polyandry can be understood, in part, as a response to a shortage of women due to a lower survival rate in comparison to men and/or in response to severe environmental conditions, limited land, and widespread poverty. Today, polyandry is almost exclusively practiced by the Toda of India where the practice is intended to keep land—a precious resource in a populous country like India—from being split up amongst male heirs. It is worth noting that unlike polygyny, polyandry is not sanctioned in the United States by any religious group and, in fact, many U.S. groups that support polygyny denounce the practice of polyandry.

Why do you think polygyny is more acceptable than polyandry to some Americans? As you read further in this chapter, think about what this suggests about the structure of American families and about patriarchy.

A third and even less common form of marriage is **cenogamy, or group marriage**, in which all of the women and men in a group are simultaneously married to one another and may exist in a number of forms such as where more than one man and more than one woman form a single family unit and all members of the marriage share parental responsibility for any children arising from the marriage. Like polygamy, this form of marriage is also illegal in the United States. In the mid-1800s, however, the Oneida Community, a communal group living in New York, practiced cenogamy until they were forced to disband.

What this discussion of various marriage forms found around the world illustrates is that humans are capable of tremendous variability and adaptability in their behaviors. It illustrates that human marriage neither is written in stone nor does one size fit all. Anthropologists have found that throughout history, people have adapted their societal norms to ensure the survival and well-being of their children (see, for example, Starkweather and Hames, 2012).

## What Is a Family?

What is a family? This question is not to be taken lightly. Over the past decade, questions and issues relating to family, marriage, and intimacy have become highly publicized, causing many of us to question what family, family values, marriage, and intimacy mean and how these terms relate to our lives. Social definitions of what constitutes a family have varied historically. It is worth noting, for example, according to family historian Stephanie Coontz (2000), the word *family* originally meant a band of slaves. Even after the word came to apply to people affiliated by blood and marriage, for many centuries the notion of family referred to authority relations rather than love relations. The sentimentalization of family life and female nurturing was historically and functionally linked to the emergence of competitive individualism and formal egalitarianism for men. As the stories of Faheema and other “honor killings” suggest, social definitions of families raise important public policy issues. These issues are related to issues of power and control and the ability of individuals and institutions to exert their will over others. An important question to ask is: Who defines or who has the right to define family? Power gives one the leverage not only to define but also to set public policy based on a particular set of beliefs, in turn affecting the ways in which various individuals are treated. One thing that seems clear from the opening vignette is that static images and definitions of families from the past do not provide us with an accurate picture of families today.

Like marriage, family has been defined historically in rigid and restrictive language. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as two or more persons (one of whom is the householder) living together and related by blood, marriage, or adoption. As with the popular definition of marriage, this definition of family is limiting in that it does not take into account the considerable diversity found in families. Thus, we define **family** as any

relatively stable group of people bound by ties of blood, marriage, adoption; or by any sexually expressive relationship; or who may or may not live together and who are committed to and provide each other with economic and emotional support. According to this more inclusive definition, a family can be any group of people who simply define themselves as family based on feelings of love, respect, commitment, and responsibility to and identification with one another. This concept of family has a subjective element in that it takes into account people’s feelings of belonging to a particular group. Thus, children living in foster care and cohabiting individuals, either of the same or other sex, who identify themselves as a family meet these criteria and are indeed families.

Most Americans, it seems, agree with this broader definition. Recent research, government reports, and public opinion polls find that while Americans continue to place a high value on family life, they do so today with a vastly expanded concept of family to include much more than the stereotypical traditional family of married Mom, Dad, and children. For example, one of the most comprehensive surveys to date on Americans’ attitudes toward family conducted by the Pew Research Center in Washington, DC, suggests that Americans no longer believe that marriage and/or children constitute the only paths to family formation, although both play a role in how Americans define family. According to the Pew Survey, for example, 86 percent of Americans say a single parent and child constitute a family; nearly as many (80 percent) say an unmarried couple living together with a child is a family; and 63 percent say a gay or lesbian couple raising a child is a family. On the other hand, if a cohabiting couple has no children, a majority of the public says they are not a family. The presence of children clearly matters in these definitions. Likewise, as with children, marriage plays an important role in how the American public defines a family. For example, if a childless couple is married, 88 percent of Americans consider them to be a family (Pew Research Center, 2010b). So, while both marriage and children figure prominently in today’s definitions of family, they do not go hand in hand.

Stephanie Coontz, professor of history and family studies and a member of the Pew Research team for this survey, says that today people think of “family as a relationship rather than an institution. If you are in a close relationship and are committed, they count you as family. If you’re making obligations to partners and kids, you get counted as a family as opposed to older ways of thinking when it was purely the legal definition” (quoted in Jayson, 2010).

**TYPES OF FAMILIES** As with marriages, American families are diverse; thus, several types are worth noting. The **family of orientation** is the family into which a person is born and raised. This includes, for example, you, your parents, and any siblings. In contrast, when we marry or have an intimate relationship with someone or have children, we create what sociologists call the **family of procreation**. Some of us were born into a **nuclear family**,



consisting of a mother, father, and siblings. Others were born into an **extended, or multigenerational family**, consisting of one or both parents, siblings, if any, and other relatives, including grandparents. In both urban and rural areas of the United States, a form of the traditional extended family is often evident. That is, in many neighborhoods, especially those with ethnic or poor and working-class groups, a variety of relatives live, not necessarily in the same household but in very close proximity to one another (upstairs, next door, down the block, around the corner); interact on a frequent basis; and provide emotional and economic support for one another. Some sociologists have labeled this family form the **modified extended family**.

Can your family be described as a modified extended family? Elaborate. If you live in a dorm, could the relationships formed on your floor and/or in the building generally be considered a family? As a modified extended family? Elaborate.

As you read this book, you will discover repeatedly that the family mosaic in the United States is not limited to nuclear and extended families. As our definition and discussion earlier imply, there is a wide variety of families and thus a wide variety of terms to identify them. For example, voluntarily child-free families consist of couples who make a conscious decision not to have children. Single-parent families (resulting either from divorce, unmarried parenthood, or death of a parent) consist of one parent and her or his children. Sometimes these families are specifically described as female- or male-headed families. In either case, legal marriage is not a criterion for family status, as the parent may or may not have been legally married. Reconstituted, blended, or stepfamilies are formed when a widowed or divorced person remarries, creating a new family that includes the children of one or both spouses.

Over the past several decades, racially and ethnically mixed families have become an ever-growing part of the American national landscape. America's mixed-race population is up 25 percent since it was first calculated in the 2000 census, while the nation's overall population has grown only 7 percent in that same time.

*Multiracial, mixed race, and biracial* are the major terms used to describe the population of people who identify in terms of more than one racial category in the U.S. Census. The number of these individuals in the overall population varies depending on who is defining them. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau counts multiracial individuals based on if they selected two or more races on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. However, using a different method than the U.S. Census Bureau, taking into account the races reported by adults, along with the races they report for their parents and grandparents, a Pew Research Center survey finds that 6.9 percent of Americans 18 or older have a multiracial background compared with the 2.1 percent of adult Americans who said they were two or more races in the Census Bureau's 2013 American Community Survey (Pew Research Center, 2015g).

According to Pew researchers, the rise in both interracial dating and marriage over the past several decades has given rise to a surge in the birth of biracial and multiracial babies, creating a dramatic rise in biracial and multiracial families. For example, in 2013, 1 in 10 babies living with two parents were interracial, up from only 1 percent in 1970. At the same time, 4 in 10 of those children were living in families that did not include a married couple. This increase in biracial and multiracial coupling and child bearing has added to the contemporary transformation of American families (Pew Research Center, 2015g).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning<sup>1</sup> (LGBTQ) families include communities of people whose sexual or gender identities can create shared political, social, and/or other concerns. Throughout this book when we speak of LGBTQ individuals and their experiences, we are mindful of the importance of self-definition in who is counted as LGBTQ. That is, we recognize and are mindful of an individual's right to self-define into any or none of these categories. We concur with those who feel that it is not for any of us to dictate how LGBTQ people define themselves or which box society can most comfortably place them into (see, for example, *Liberate Yourself*, n.d.).

Keeping this in mind, it is interesting to note that the 2010 census was the first U.S. census to provide same-sex couples who live together the option to report themselves as married partners. Importantly, this census only counted same-sex couples who were living together at the time of the census. LGBTQ singles, same-sex couples who do not live together, and relationships including members of the bisexual and transgender communities are not counted in the census. Thus, an accurate or complete picture of LGBTQ families is difficult to present. Gary J. Gates (2013), a Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law Distinguished Scholar and a national expert in the demographic, geographic, and economic characteristics of the LGBTQ population, analyzed multiple recent data sources to determine the following:

- An estimated 37 percent of LGBTQ-identified adults have had a child at some time in their lives.
- An estimated 6 million American children and adults have an LGBTQ parent.
- Among those under age 50 who are living alone or with a spouse or partner, nearly half of LGBTQ women (48 percent) are raising a child under age 18 along with a fifth of LGBTQ men (20 percent).
- More than 125,000 same-sex households (19 percent) are raising 220,000 children under age 18.

<sup>1</sup>According to Fred Sainz, a spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign, an organization that lobbies for LGBTQ rights, Q can mean either "questioning" or "queer." Either interpretation is accepted. Those who use the Q to mean "questioning" refer to people who are in the process of exploring their identity; those who are figuring out their gender identity and figuring out how they want to identify their sexual orientation (quoted in Grisham, 2015).



- More than 111,000 same-sex couples are raising an estimated 170,000 biological, step-, adopted, or foster children.
- More than a quarter of same-sex couples raising children (25.6 percent) include children identified as grandchildren, siblings, or other children who are related or unrelated to one of the spouses or partners. Approximately 32,000 same-sex couple households include more than 48,000 such children (Gates, 2013:1).

An increasing number of people living in the United States, especially children, live in foster families. A foster family consists of one or two parents and one or more children who have been taken away from their biological families (parents) and become wards of the state. In 2013, 402,378 children were living in foster families. More than one-fourth (28 percent) were in relative homes, and almost one-half (47 percent) were in nonrelative foster family homes (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013). If nothing changes, it is estimated that by the year 2020 more than 10.5 million children will live at some time in a foster care family (Foster Club, 2015). Foster parents typically raise these children as their own. Other contemporary forms of the family include two families living in the same household and what some social scientists call the “surrogate, or chosen, family”—set of “roommates” or group of people either of different or the same sex who choose to share the same household and who define themselves as a family.

Traditionally, families in the United States have had a patriarchal structure. A **patriarchal family** is a family in which the norm is the male (husband or father) is the head of the family and exercises authority and decision-making power over his wife and children. This family structure is much more than simply a man controlling women and children in the household. More importantly, the ideological foundation of this family structure is manifested and upheld in most American institutions, including educational, religious, economic, and legal institutions.

## Race, Class, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are four of the most important social categories of experience for individuals and families in the United States, primarily because these categories also represent significant, comprehensive, and structured systems of oppression for some individuals and groups and privilege for others. Historically, some families in the United States have experienced social, political, and economic inequalities vis-à-vis other families, principally as a consequence of their race, ethnicity, ancestry, social class, sex or gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics defined as inferior.

At a very elementary level, we can say that family experiences are shaped by the choices that individual members make. However, the options that families have available to them and thus the choices they make are either limited or expanded by the ways in which race, class, gender, and



The growing visibility of multiracial families calls attention to the diversity of American families. It also makes it even more critical that policies relating to marriages and families address the impact of intersections of race, class, and gender on family functioning.

sexuality are organized. To fully understand families and how they function, then, we must examine the influence of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation on family resources and processes and explore how these factors have shaped and continue to shape the experiences of families throughout the world.

Race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are interrelated or interactive categories of social experience that affect all aspects of human life—shaping all social institutions and systems of meaning—including the institutions of marriage and family as well as family values. By “interrelated,” we mean that complex interconnections exist among race, class, gender, and sexual orientation such that families are not separately affected because of the racial composition of their members, to which is added the influence of their economic situation, then the gender of their members, after which comes the impact of the sexual orientation of its members. In other words, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are not independent variables that can be tacked onto each other or separated at will. They are concrete social relations interconnected with one another, and their various intersections produce specific effects. Although these categories are different aspects of social structure, individual families experience them simultaneously. Thus, any concrete analysis of marriages and families must take these intersections into account.

Understanding race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in this way also allows us to see the interrelationship of other important categories of social experiences such as ethnicity, age, religion, geographic location, historical context, and physical and mental abilities. Later in this chapter, we will see that many of these categories of experience have been interwoven in family form and functioning throughout U.S. history. Throughout this book we will integrate these intersections in our discussions, descriptions, and debates relative to marriages and families as much as possible rather than treat them as separate categories of experiences in separate chapters.

# Family Functions and the Debate over Family Values

**LO 1.2** Describe the various functions families serve for their members and be able to articulate the basic tenets of contemporary debates over family values.

Historians and the lay public alike have often discussed families in terms of the vital social functions they serve for individuals and the society at large. These functions have included regulation of sexual behavior, reproduction, social placement, socialization, economic cooperation, and the provision of care, protection, and intimacy for family members.

## Social Functions of Families

When sociologists study the functions of families, the focus is very often on the social aspects and societal forces that affect how families are expected to function for survival. Various social, cultural, and group norms, as well as the power structure of a society, have important consequences for the specific ways in which families are structured and function. Recognizing this helps us better understand the sometimes-invisible rules that govern our sexual and reproductive behavior, how we acquire various statuses and designations within the family, why it is important to learn group and societal norms, and the importance of having a refuge where family members cooperate economically and provide care, protection, and intimacy for their members.

**REGULATION OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR** Every society is concerned about the sexual behavior of its members. In most societies, sexual behavior is regulated and enforced within the context of families. Although the **norms**—cultural guidelines or rules of conduct that direct people to behave in particular ways—governing sexual behavior vary among societies, no known society allows its members to have sexual relations with whomever they please. For example, all societies prohibit sexual relations between blood or close relatives; this is known as the incest taboo. Forcing people to have sexual relations outside the family unit promotes alliances between families, reinforces their social independence, and prevents or minimizes sexual jealousies and conflicts within families. The set of relatives subject to the taboo varies across societies, however. Whereas in most societies parents and siblings are subject to the incest taboo, in ancient Egyptian and Hawaiian societies, siblings in the royal families were permitted to mate with and marry each other; in some cases, father–daughter marriages were also permitted. This system preserved the purity of royalty, enabled the royal family to maintain its power and property, and prevented the splintering of its estate through inheritance. Moreover, in most contemporary societies, sexual relations are linked with marriage even if they occur outside of legal marriage. Even in those societies where it is not, their members’ sexual behavior is nonetheless regulated so that it reinforces the social order.

**REPRODUCTION** To perpetuate itself, a society must produce new members to replace those who die or move away.

The reproductive function of families is considered so important that many societies employ a variety of practices to motivate married couples to have children. For example, in the United States, couples typically receive tax exemptions and other tax breaks for each child they produce. Couples who cannot or consciously choose not to have children are penalized by tax laws and are sometimes stigmatized by society’s members. In contrast, other societies, like India and China, concerned with overpopulation, develop policies to limit population growth. India’s central government establishes population targets but allows its state governments to develop their own policies for controlling the birthrate. Some state policies are coercive, denying certain benefits to workers with large families; other states use a softer approach by leading campaigns to curb teenage weddings, promoting the use of contraceptives, and providing a “honeymoon package of cash bonuses to couples willing to wait to begin a family” (Yardley, 2010). China, on the other hand, established a restrictive one-child policy almost 40 years ago to slow its population growth. However, in response to an increasing aging population, in 2015, China announced an end to its controversial one-child policy and, effective in 2016 all couples were allowed and encouraged to have another child (two children) (Clarke, 2015) (see the In Other Places box).

**SOCIAL PLACEMENT** When new members are born into society, they must be placed within the social structure with a minimum of confusion and in a way that preserves order and stability. The **social structure** of society refers to the recurrent, patterned ways people relate to one another. It consists of an intricate web of social **statuses**—a position in a group or society—and **roles**—a set of behaviors associated with a particular status. Members of society must be placed within these statuses and motivated to play the appropriate roles. One of the ways in which families function is to assign social status to individuals on the basis of their membership within that particular family. The status placement function of families occurs at a number of levels. On one level, families confer statuses that orient members to a variety of interpersonal relationships involving parents, siblings, and a variety of relatives. In addition, simply by being born into or raised in a particular family we automatically inherit membership in—and the status of—certain basic groups, including racial, ethnic, religious, class, and nationality. Social status influences almost every aspect of our lives. It influences the way we see the world as well as how the world sees us. Much of what we consider as our unique values and preferences are really the results of our assignment to certain statuses through our families. As you will learn in later chapters, statuses such as race and class affect families differentially, depending on where families fall within these status hierarchies. Lower- and working-class families as well as certain racial and ethnic families, for example, face greater risks of experiencing poverty, welfare dependency, low academic achievement, being the victims of crime, being victimized by unscrupulous business people, violence, and higher infant and adult mortality rates.

## In Other Places

### CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY: CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

Imagine that your family and most other families in your neighborhood consisted of four grandparents, two parents, and one child where, as an adult, the employed grandchild is responsible for the care of both parents and the four grandparents. In China, only children from single-child parents face this situation, known as the 4-2-1 phenomenon: when the child reaches working age, she or he could have to care for two parents and four grandparents in retirement. This 4-2-1 phenomenon is the lingering reality in much of China today as a result of the government's fertility policy adopted in 1979—popularly known as the one-child policy—in an effort to slow its population growth and to encourage economic development.

China has a long history of children supporting their aging parents. This practice is rooted in the social ideals of Confucius that emphasizes respect between children, their parents, and the elderly. It is also steeped in the cultural idea that equates being old with being unable to work anymore and the belief that every child will have a younger generation to support them. The result of these beliefs is an obligation on the child to take care of the elderly (Main, 2007).

The 4-2-1 phenomenon portends to pose some significant challenges in the future for Chinese families as well as the government itself. For example, China's population is rapidly growing older. In fact, according to some records, older Chinese are among the fastest-growing population segments in the world. At the end of 2011, there were 185 million Chinese age 60 or older. Just 3 years later, by the end of 2014, that number had grown to 212 million, or nearly 16 percent of the population (Tatlow, 2015). It is estimated that by 2030, this population will grow to more than 300 million, and by 2050, as many as one-third of China's projected population of 1.5 billion will be 60 or older (Tatlow, 2015; Wang, 2013).

In addition, China's low fertility rate as a result of the country's nearly 40-year-old one-child policy means that there are fewer people being born, thus significantly affecting the proportion of young people in the population. Having a smaller generation follow a boom generation and longer life expectancies mean that by 2050, it is expected that for every 100 people ages 20 to 64, there will be 45 people over 65 years of age, compared with about 15 today (Bailey, Ruddy, and Shchukina, 2012). Thus,

the rapid aging of the Chinese population coupled with the diminished growth in the population resulting from the one-child policy means that working-age citizens make up a decreasing portion of the population. The one-child policy has created a situation in China in which there are too few young people to support a growing, aging population. According to various writers on the subject, the augmentation in the number of elderly people will lead to an increasing demand for services and expenditures related to health care, the costs of which will fall upon China's only children (see, for example, Wang, 2010). With one child providing for six other people in addition to her or himself and her or his family, the financial burden will be demanding. The situation has become so pressing that the Chinese government is examining alternatives, including more elder care centers (Lawrence, 2010), even though there is considerable social shame attached in China to sending parents to old-age homes, an act considered by many as a lack of respect for ones parents and the elderly.

In the face of the impending challenges to the country's traditional familial relationships, and perhaps motivated by the challenges of a future shortage of young workers, the dramatic decrease in population growth, and the strain on the country's social programs by way of an aging population that cannot be supported by its offspring, Chinese President Xi Jinping

announced a package of reforms of the country's one-child policy in 2013. In 2015, the controversial one-child policy was ended, and in 2016, all Chinese couples were allowed to have two children for the first time since the one-child policy was enacted in hopes of diversifying its aging, increasingly male population. The 2013 reforms already included allowing couples to have a second child if either parent is an only child and they were willing. In addition, couples no longer needed to obtain permission to have a first child. This change put an end to the system of local birth quotas, which forced some couples to delay pregnancy if the local quota was exceeded (Kaiman, 2013). However, neither the 2013 reforms nor the new 2016 two-child policy is celebrated by everyone. Critics, for example, cited the fact that under the original one-child policy, exemptions already allowed couples under various circumstances to have a second child—for example, couples in rural areas where more hands were needed or if their first child is a girl, couples who themselves were only children, urban residents whose first



In 2015, China's one-child policy was ended, and in 2016, all Chinese couples were allowed to have two children for the first time since the one-child policy was enacted. However, some exemptions to the one-child policy already allowed some couples under certain circumstances to have a second child.



child was physically handicapped, remarried couples without children from previous marriages—and among ethnic minorities, all were already allowed to have a second child. Moreover, due to the high costs of housing and education, not all couples have taken advantage of this exception; many of the young couples who were eligible to have two children were still choosing to have just one child (Denyer and Wan, 2013; Feng, 2016).

From its very beginning, controversy surrounded China's one-child policy. Proponents argued that such a policy was necessary to prevent uncontrolled population growth that threatened to deplete natural resources, harm the environment, and impoverish an ever-increasing percentage of Chinese society. Opponents feared that enforcement of such an unprecedented policy would lead to human rights violations, especially for women who could be coerced into having abortions and/or face sterilization. They also worried that limiting a couple's reproduction to only one child would change China's traditional family structure, create gender imbalances due to the ongoing preferences for sons, and, as a consequence, increase the number of elderly citizens who would lack traditional family support. Their fears, it seems, have become a reality.

At the time of the 2013 loosening of the one-child policy, experts estimated that it could result in as many as 2 million additional Chinese births per year, depending upon how eligible parents reacted to the loosening of the policy. Other observers suggested that the change probably would not have much of an impact on reproduction behavior and birthrates because Chinese parents have become quite accustomed to smaller families and, additionally, they may not be able to afford another child (Denyer and Wan, 2013). While some saw the relaxation of the one-child policy in 2013 as a step toward improved human rights, allowing parents more discretion in family planning and rearing, others said that the reforms were minor or limited adjustments to a policy that many have long argued has led to selective-sex abortions, child abandonment, and infanticide. The country's hugely disproportionate birth gender ratio, with boys vastly outnumbering girls, is said to be the product of the Chinese traditional preference for males that has led many couples to make sure that their sole child is a son (Denyer and Wan, 2013; Hesketh, 2010).

Amid the government's ongoing concerns about the aging population and the country's declining economy and in an effort to balance population development and perhaps in response to

the loudly voiced ongoing critiques of the government's reproduction policies, the country's one-child policy was replaced in 2016 with a new two-child policy (Phillips, 2015; Ren, 2016).

While some have celebrated the change in the country's reproduction policy as a positive step toward greater personal freedom in China, critics and activists say that the ending of the one-child policy does not go far enough; under the new policy the Communist party continues to control the size of Chinese families. Moreover, critics said important questions remain, particularly about how Beijing will enforce its new two-child policy. For example, now that people are allowed to have two children, what if they want to have three children or more? What if unmarried women want to have their own children? Others expressed concern that the announcement of the new two-child policy, which referred to Chinese couples, suggested children born outside of marriage would continue to be penalized by the government. Thus, with the two-child policy, women generally aren't granted any more freedoms, rather married couples are. The new law hasn't changed regarding what women, independent of men, can do legally. At the end of the day, it's about women's reproductive rights and freedoms. They say the government should completely abolish the family planning system (Feng, 2016; Phillips, 2015; Ren, 2016).

Experts say the change in the Chinese family planning rules is unlikely to have a lasting demographic impact, particularly in urban areas where couples seem reluctant to have two children because of the high cost. However, although no one can guarantee the outcome of the one-child policy reform, it does seem logical that there will be at least some increase in births—that some portion of the eligible parents will presumably take advantage of being able to have a second child (Castillo, 2013; Feng, 2016; Jiang and Cullinane, 2015).

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should governments develop policies regarding reproduction? If so, what techniques should governments use to enforce their policies? If not, what other mechanisms could societies use to control their population size? Should there be a relatively equal number of females and males in any given society? Is it desirable to have a relatively equal number of females and males in any given society? Explain. How would you react if the U.S. government established a one- or two-child policy?

**SOCIALIZATION** Human babies are born with no knowledge of the norms, values, and role expectations of their society; however, they soon learn what their society considers appropriate ways of acting, thinking, and feeling. Children's social development, as well as the continuation of society, depends on the **socialization** process—a lifetime of social interaction through which people learn those elements of culture essential for effective participation in social life. Today, as in the past, families are the primary transmitters of culture to each new generation of the young. Through the socialization process, children learn the language of their culture and the accumulated knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and values not only of the larger culture but also of their family group and the social and interpersonal skills necessary to function effectively in both the family and society.

Many people in our society believe that because parents are more likely than others to be deeply committed to their own offspring, they are thus the best or most appropriate socializing agents. Compulsory education, however, has placed a significant amount of the socialization function in the hands of the state and schools. In addition, the increasing need for mothers to work outside the home has placed part of this function in the hands of child-care workers, and the mass media, video games, and television have become important agents of socialization.

**ECONOMIC COOPERATION** Children have physical and economic needs as well as social needs. They must be fed, clothed, and sheltered. Providing for these needs is the basic economic function of families. Families are