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CHAPTER 1

Why Study Families and Other Close Relationships?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Family can have many different definitions. Here it is defined as a relationship by blood, marriage, or affection, in which members may cooperate economically, may care for children, and may consider their identity to be intimately connected to the larger group. Definitions are important because of the consequences with respect to legal rights. While important differences may exist among families, there are some important universal patterns. These include regulating sexual behavior, reproduction and socialization of children, property and inheritance laws, economic cooperation, and social placement of family members. Social structures like the economy, government, religion, and education affect family structures. Important family structures include **statuses** and **roles**; other important patterns that affect family structure and family dynamics include marriage patterns (e.g., **monogamy** versus **polygamy**), patterns of authority (e.g., **patriarchy** versus **egalitarianism**), patterns of descent (**bilateral, patrilineal, and matrilineal**), and residence patterns (**neolocal, patrilocal**, and **matrilocal**). Research demonstrates that families are always in transition; many important changes in the family have been documented in both China and the United States. Many of these changes concern urbanization and industrialization. Social science theory and research play an important role in helping family researchers objectively understand families and family dynamics. The major research methods used by researchers include **surveys, in-depth interviews, experiments, focus groups, observational studies,** and **secondary analysis.** Theories help us frame research questions and analyze data. Some theories focus on macro-level phenomena (**structural functionalism, conflict theory**, and **feminist theory**), while others focus on micro-level phenomena (**social exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, developmental theory**, and **systems theory**).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 1, students should be able to:

1. Identify the different definitions of "family" and their implications.
2. Describe the functions of families.
3. Recognize the link between micro-level and macro-level perspectives on families.
4. Assess the ways that families are always changing.
5. Summarize the importance of social science theory and research.

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. HOW DO WE DEFINE *FAMILY*?

A. The question of how to define the concept of family may seem simple, but it can have a surprisingly complex answer.

B. The number of traditional two-parent heterosexual parent families has declined, while the number of nontraditional families is on the rise.

1. Nontraditional family forms include childfree married couples, multigenerational families, unmarried adults who cohabitate and sometimes have children, stepparents whose stepchildren reside with them only part of the time, and gay and lesbian couples are increasing in number.

2. Diversity in family forms increases the challenge of providing a simple definition.

C. Legal versus Social Science Definitions

1. The U.S. Census Bureau defines family as two or more people living together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

a) This definition excludes heterosexual or homosexual unmarried partners and is used as the basis for many social programs and policies.

b) Many people object to this definition because it excludes groups that consider themselves to be family.

D. This text uses a more inclusive definition, and proposes that a **family** is a relationship by blood, marriage, or affection, in which members may cooperate economically, may care for children, and may consider their identity to be intimately connected to the larger group.

1. It includes the **family of orientation** or the one into which a person is born.

2. It includes the **family of procreation** or the one a person creates by marrying, partnering, or becoming a parent.

E. The text includes **fictive kin** in its definition of family.

1. Fictive kin are nonrelatives whose bonds are strong and intimate.

2. These persons provide important services and care for individuals, yet they are not allowed to claim benefits that traditional family members can expect to receive (tax benefits or health insurance).

F. Why Are Definitions So Important?

1. Societal definitions of concepts like the family have consequences for rights and privileges, including health insurance and Social Security benefits.

a) Unmarried partners cannot file a joint tax return.

b) The offspring of an employed person may receive health insurance benefits, while the unmarried partner may be excluded.

c) Unmarried partners are not eligible for membership discounts.

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II. THE FUNCTIONS OF FAMILIES

A. Despite some differences, family forms are remarkably similar across time and place.

1. All societies have a marriage, a public, institutional arrangement between persons to recognize social and intimate bonds.

2. Norms exist to regulate who can marry whom, how many spouses a person can have, what the ceremony should be like, and how married persons should behave.

B. Anthropologist William Stephens defines marriage as a socially legitimate sexual union that is publicly announced; undertaken with some idea of permanence; and implies a contract that spells out reciprocal obligations between spouses and between spouses and children.

C. Marriages and families in all cultures include a variety of functions such as the following:

1. *Regulation of Sexual Behavior.* All societies stipulate who can have sex with whom and when. The *incest taboo*, which forbids sex between close family members, is a cultural universal.

2. *Reproducing and Socializing Children.* All societies need to produce new members and ensure *socialization.* Socialization means that children are taught the rules, expectations, and culture of the society in which they live. When reproduction is undertaken by the family, rather than by unrelated partners, the birth parents are held responsible for socializing children.

3. *Property and Inheritance.* As societies evolved, they developed surplus food and property, which meant that they needed to be able to identify heirs to wealth. Monogamy meant that men could identify their offspring and their heirs.

4. *Economic Cooperation.* Families cooperate to clothe, feed, shelter, and support children and other members. Gender is often linked to a division of or.

5. *Social Placement, Status, and Roles.* Families provide members with an identity and place in society (statuses and roles). This includes social class, racial and ethnic identities, and religious affiliation.

6. *Care, Warmth, Protection, and Intimacy.* Humans need more than food and shelter to survive. Families are expected to provide the emotional care necessary to survive.

D. Because we have lived in a family, we may think of ourselves as family "experts." However, our personal experiences are part of a larger picture that we may not see; we cannot fully appreciate this without understanding the environment in which family processes take place.

III. THEME 1: LINKING THE MICRO-LEVEL AND MACRO-LEVEL PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILIES

A. Recognize the link between the **micro-level** and the **macro-level** perspectives on families.

1. While we may think of family in terms of our own personal experiences, we must locate family in the context of the **social structure** found in our society.

2. *Social structure* refers to the patterns of social organization that guide our interactions with others.

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a) Most people focus on their **micro-level** experience (e.g., I chose her or him because we decided not to have children because) and concentrate on individual-level interactions in specific settings.

b) People who use this perspective focus on individuality and personal decision making, and the interactions between groups in specific situations.

3. Despite having unique qualities, family relationships also share many important qualities.

4. A theme of this text is that elements of social structures shape our daily experiences, privileges, and constraints.

5. A **macro-level** perspective examines the ways in which marriage, families, and intimate relationships are interconnected with the rest of society and with other social institutions.

a) Families are not isolated entities.

b) Social, cultural, political, and economic forces shape our decisions.

B. COVID-19 as Macro-Micro Example

1. Virtually all people have been personally touched by the virus, including within our families and relationships.

2. Effects occurred on three levels: individual patients, families, and communities.

C. Family as a Social Institution

1. Families are **social institutions** upheld by beliefs and rules organized to meet basic human needs.

2. In early human civilization, families were the center of most activities; they educated the young, cared for the sick, and practiced religion.

3. Despite a high divorce rate, people still want to marry and still agree on some basic behavioral expectations for husbands and wives. Fidelity is one example.

4. Family is linked to other social institutions; religious customs, the type of economy, the structure of education, and political systems all shape family patterns, as do attitudes, behaviors, and opportunities.

D. Social Status and Families

1. **Status** is another element of social structure; this refers to the social position that one occupies.

2. Most people occupy many statuses; son, daughter, friend, and roommate are examples.

3. **Master statuses** dominate others. Sex, race, ethnicity, and social class generally operate as master statuses.

E. An Example of the Interrelationship of Macro-level and Micro-level Perspectives: Unemployment and Marriage Rates

1. Single-parent households are blamed for a variety of social ills and are more likely to be poor. The text raises the question of why poor and low-income women like Terry Lynn have children without marrying their children's father.

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2. Some research shows that poor women value marriage highly, and believe that their own relationships cannot meet their expectations.

3. William Julius Wilson's research indicates that inner-city women view inner-city men as risky because they cannot support families on their low wages.

4. Outsourcing and relocation of jobs to suburbs drive up unemployment and poverty rates, thereby decreasing marriage rates.

5. Substance abuse, homicide, violence, high incarceration rates, immigration policies, technological advances, women's opportunities, and new conceptions of fatherhood also affect marriage rates.

6. **Human agency** refers to the ability of humans to create viable lives even when they are constrained or limited by social forces. Regardless of social class, age, or gender, we are actively directing our lives, even though powerful social forces shape our opportunities.

IV THEME 2: FAMILIES ARE ALWAYS CHANGING

A. The second theme of this book is change; families are constantly undergoing change as they adapt to meet their needs.

B. **Marriage patterns** include **monogamy, polygamy**, **polygyny,** and **polyandry**.

1. *Monogamy* refers to marriage between one man and one woman. This pattern is found widely, though not exclusively throughout the world.

2. *Polygamy* refers to a system that allows for more than one spouse at a time (gender unspecified).

3. *Polygyny* is a form of polygamy that allows men to have more than one wife.

a) Although illegal in the United States, there are estimated to be about 50,000–100,000 families that practice polygyny, primarily in the western states.

b) This pattern is also legal in some areas of Africa, the Middle East, and South America. Having numerous wives is a status indicator for wealth and education. It is also a way to increase fertility within a family.

4. *Polyandry* is a form of polygamy that allows women to have more than one husband.

a) This rare pattern is most often found in areas where harsh environmental conditions increase the likelihood that men will need to share the burden of supporting a wife and children.

b) Infant girls are more likely to be seen as burdensome, increasing the likelihood of female infanticide. In turn, this increases the shortage of women.

C. Patterns of Authority: Patriarchy, Matriarchy, and Egalitarianism.

1. *Patriarchy* means the rule of the father; this system grants men authority over women. This right is reflected in the rest of the major social institutions, including religion, government, and the economy. This pattern is widespread throughout the world.

2. *Matriarchy* is a pattern that grants women the right to have power over men; however, no true cases of matriarchy have ever been documented.

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3. *Egalitarianism* is a pattern that vests power in men and women equally. The United States and other developed countries are moving in this direction.

D. **Patterns of Descent: Bilateral, Patrilineal, and Matrilineal.**

1. Developed nations typically trace lineage and property rights through both the mother and the father. This gives a person two sets of grandparents.

2. *Patrilineal* systems trace lineage and inheritance exclusively or primarily through the father's family line. Minimal connections exist between offspring and the mother's side of the family.

   a) Some vestiges of this are still evident in the United States. For example, offspring are more likely to bear the father's last name, and sons are often given their father's first name in subsequent generations. There is no equivalent pattern for girls.

E. **Residence Patterns: Neolocal, Patrilocal, and Matrilocal.**

1. *Neolocal* residence patterns assume that couples will establish their own residence after marriage.

2. *Patrilocal* residence patterns assume that couples will live with the husband's family.

3. *Matrilocal* residence patterns assume that couples will live with the wife's family.

F. Families in Transition: China

1. Many changes have taken place over the past few decades. These include an emerging market-based economy, a more highly educated workforce, and a large number of cars and the infrastructure necessary for cars.

2. Many traditional beliefs have changed, including those relating to women's roles, marriage, and children.

3. For several decades couples in China were allowed to only have one child. They are required to apply for permission to marry. The government decides when a couple can marry in order to regulate births.

   a) This pattern was part of the one-child policy. Most couples are allowed to have only one child and face heavy fines or pressure to have an abortion if they get pregnant without government permission.

   b) Until the policy was liberalized in late 2013, the one-child policy worked to improve the standard of living for many Chinese people.

   c) There is now a shortage of girls of marriageable age because many female fetuses were aborted or the girls were adopted by families in other countries.

G. History of Family Life in the United States

1. The U.S. history provides evidence of ongoing changes in families.

2. Family Life in Colonial America: European Colonists. Family historians have shown that families were the cornerstone of colonial society and acted as:

   a) *Businesses.* Families were the center of economic production; households were nearly self-sufficient in producing food, clothing, furniture, and household goods.

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b) *Schools.* Formal schooling was rare; parents educated their children in vocational and technical skills.

c) *Churches.* Churches tended to be far away; families worshipped and prayed together.

d) *Correctional institutions.* Jails were rare; courts sentenced criminals to work for and with respected families.

e) *Health and social welfare institutions.* There were no hospitals and few doctors, so families and women in particular took care of the sick, the aged, the homeless, and the orphaned.

3. Most colonial families lived in **nuclear families** rather than **extended families**.

   a) *Nuclear families* consist of adults and their children.

   b) *Extended families* comprise parents, children, and other relatives, such as grandparents.

   c) Families were large (e.g., six or more children) and siblings could be as much as 25 years apart in age.

   d) High mortality rates meant that husbands or wives might have married two or three times.

   e) Marriage and family were central events in people's lives; couples were seen as a team. However, women were not seen as equals, but as helpmates and were expected to obey their husbands.

   f) Parents believed that children were born with "original sin" and therefore, were very strict. No concept of adolescence existed; as soon as children were old enough, they were expected to labor on the farm or in the household.

4. **Colonial America: African Americans and Slavery.** The first Africans forcefully brought to the colonies were indentured servants and were freed and able to buy land once they served a specified amount of time.

   a) By the 1800s, the United States prohibited importing new slaves. This resulted in some owners encouraging family relationships and childbearing among the slaves they owned.

   b) Slave marriages were fragile; more than one-third were terminated due to the husband or wife being sold to another household.

   c) Prior to the Civil War, there were over a million slaves in the United States with 150,000 free African Americans living in the South, and another 100,000 living in the northern part of the United States.

   d) Being "free" did not necessarily mean that African Americans were allowed to vote, attend White schools, or be hired for jobs. This led to high poverty rates and many female-headed households.

5. **Industrialization, Urbanization, and Immigration.** These three factors brought many changes to families during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

   a) *Industrialization* meant that the economy shifted from small farms to large, urban industries. Work became something people did away from home.

   b) In search of jobs, many people moved from rural areas to the city; this is known as *urbanization*.

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c) Immigrants from Europe and Asia moved to the United States in search of a better life and provided cheap labor that fueled further industrialization.

6. **The Poor and Working Classes.** Most immigrants were poor and lived in substandard housing without adequate sanitation.
   a) Working conditions were extremely dangerous; many people worked 60–80 hour workweeks.
   b) Stressors like these were associated with alcoholism, violence, crime, and other social problems.
7. **Middle and Upper Classes.** The ideal for these families was a breadwinner father and a stay-at-home mother. Children were seen as "innocents," who could be shaped by proper parenting (the mother's role).
8. **The Rise of the "Modern" Family—the 20th Century.** The early- to mid-1900s saw two World Wars, a depression, and the relative affluence of the 1950s and 1960s.
   a) Increasing numbers of cars meant that more families lived in suburbs and that fathers commuted to work.
   b) **Companionate** families, based on mutual affection, sexual attraction, compatibility, and happiness emerged.
   c) The average age at first marriage dropped, 19 for women and 20 for men.
   d) Federal programs played a role in these trends by underwriting projects for highway construction, more homes in the suburbs, and low-interest loans.

H. **Families Today.** Over the past few decades, our economy has outsourced many manufacturing jobs and replaced these with lower-paying service sector positions.
   a) This trend has made it hard for families to survive on one paycheck, and so, many women have entered the workforce.
   b) There is evidence of increasing social inequality; middle-class and working-class wages have stagnated.
   c) Increasing numbers of workers have evening or weekend shifts; this increases the risk of divorce in families with children.
   d) Purchasing power has declined because wages are not keeping up with inflation; this especially hurts low-income workers.
   e) Housing costs remain unaffordable for many people. Many Americans are forced to rent because they cannot afford the required down payment or monthly mortgage payments.

V. THEME 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE THEORY AND RESEARCH

A. The third theme in this book is an appreciation for the role that social science theory and research play in helping people understand families and close relationships.
   1. Everyone has opinions based on information filtered through the lens of the mass media, friends, parents, religious teachings, and laws.
   2. Because we have been raised in a family ourselves, we may assume that our personal experiences or our "common sense" gives us expertise.

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3. This text assumes that the scientific method can provide information that is more objective; commonsense notions of how women should be treated have changed substantially in our country. Other countries still allow husbands to beat wives.

4. If common sense varies so much over time and from place to place, we need to use an **empirical approach**, which answers questions through a systematic collection and analysis of data.

5. The empirical approach can help us to understand patterns of family dynamics, and ultimately, to build stronger families. The goals of family research can

   a) *Describe some phenomenon* (patterns of domestic violence).

   b) *Examine factors that predict or are associated with a phenomenon* (who reports violence and who does not).

   c) *Explain cause-and-effect relationships* (how alcohol and violence are linked).

   d) *Examine the meanings and interpretations of some phenomenon* (how men and women interpret the meaning of the label "victim").

B. How Do We Know What We Know? Methods of Social Research

1. There are many ways to gather information about families; the text discusses six research methods.

2. **Surveys** gather information via questions; if done correctly, a survey produces generalizable results.

   a) Random samples are the key to generalizable results.

   b) Every member of the population has the same chance of being selected for the study.

   c) If it is impossible to find a complete list of every one of interest, we may use a snowball sample.

   d) There are several types of surveys, including phone, mail, and in-person surveys.

3. **In-depth interviews** allow an interviewer to obtain detailed responses to questions. The question formats can be highly structured or emergent.

4. **Experiments** are used to test cause-and-effect relationships under highly controlled conditions.

5. **Focus groups** obtain information from small groups of people who are brought together to discuss a topic. Such group interviews may work well when the researcher is in an exploratory stage of research.

6. **Observational studies** go to the natural setting to observe people in action. Some observational studies use direct observation, while others require the researcher to go undercover and become a participant observer.

7. **Secondary analysis** research makes use of previously gathered information. The U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Justice often provide such sources of information. While not as expensive as other methods, compromise is often involved for the researcher, because the data may not have been collected in the way that the researcher would have collected it.

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8. Some research is **quantitative**, and makes use of information that can be measured numerically; other research is **qualitative** and uses narrative description with words rather than numbers to analyze patterns.
    a) No one method is superior to the others—it depends on the question being posed.

C. Theories: Helping Us Make Sense of the World

1. Research is guided by **theory**, a general framework, explanation, or tool used to understand and describe the real world.
    a) Theory is important before and after the data has been collected.
    b) Prior to research, theories help to frame questions; after the data has been collected, they help us to interpret findings.
2. Some theories are more macro. These include structural functionalism, conflict theory, and feminist theory. These theories attempt to understand large-scale features of society.
3. Other theories are micro. These include social exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, developmental theory, and systems theory. These theories help us to understand dynamic interaction.
4. **Structural functionalism theory** attempts to determine the structure, systems, functions, and equilibrium of social institutions.
    a) This theory focuses on how the family is organized, and how it interacts with other social institutions, the functions that the family performs, and how it works to stabilize our society.
    b) Parsons and Bales studied the division of labor in the family and noted the ways that this contributed to the stability and functioning of the family.
5. **Conflict theory** emphasizes social inequality, power, conflict, and change.
    a) Marxist theorists focus on the ways that capitalism affects family life.
    b) Other conflict theorists examine power and inequality; for example, why the elderly receive universal health care while children do not.
6. **Feminist theory** is related to conflict theory but makes gender the central focus of their research. They are interested in the power imbalance between men and women; such imbalance is reflected in the gendered division of household labor.
7. **Biosocial theory** explores genetic and biological influences on family functioning and how these might interact with (or further influence) important social factors.
8. **Social exchange theory** draws upon an economic model of human behavior; humans are seen as rational decision makers who assess costs and rewards. Family structures and dynamics are seen as the result of a rational decision-making process that evaluates social, economic, and emotional costs and benefits relative to known alternatives.
9. **Symbolic interaction theory** emphasizes the symbols we use in everyday interaction—words, gestures, appearances, and how these are interpreted. Our interactions with others are based on the way we interpret symbols such as a ring, a kiss, or a smile.

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10. **Developmental theory** suggests that families and individual family members go through distinct stages over time. Each stage has its own set of tasks, roles, and responsibilities. The stages include getting married, having children, preschool years, school-age years, teen years, launching children into adulthood, being a middle-aged parent, and aging.
    a) Now theorists recognize that not all families experience these events (e.g., some couples do not have children, or do not marry).
    b) Developmental theorists use both micro and macro approaches to describe and explain family relationships.
11. **Systems theory** proposes that a family system—the family members and the roles they play—is larger than the sum of its individual members.
    a) The family contains subsystems, such as the married couple subsystem, the sibling subsystem, or the parent–child subsystem.
    b) Communication patterns are important to role maintenance and stability.

D. Family Decline or Not? What Does the Research Reveal?

1. Some people are concerned that the family is in trouble. There are three major concerns: Americans are rejecting traditional marriage and family life; family members are not adhering to roles within families; and social and moral problems result from these changes.
2. Others suggest that families have always faced challenges. Efforts to bolster the family have often met with resistance. For example, childcare, jobs, health care, and housing programs are at odds with the rugged individualism of the United States.
3. To determine which view is correct, we must rely on research to answer the question of family decline.

E. Changing Attitudes toward Marriage and Family Relationships

1. Research shows that there is a continued emphasis on and commitment to marriage, children, and family life.
2. University of Michigan research has shown that high school seniors have not changed their attitudes much toward marriage and family life since 1976.
3. High school seniors are becoming more tolerant of lifestyles other than traditional marriage.

F. Changing Behaviors in Marriage and Family Relationships

1. U.S. Census data show that the percentage of people who are currently married has declined.
2. It is likely that the rising age at first marriage may explain why fewer people are currently married.
3. Divorce is declining, not increasing.
4. While data show that an increasing number of people do not have children, many of these (about half of childfree women ages 40–44) are involuntarily childless.

G. Is the Single-Parent Household a Cause for Concern?

1. Single-parent households comprise about a quarter of all families.

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2. Single-parent families are often blamed for a variety of family problems.
3. They are increasingly made up of older women and their children, not teen mothers.
4. International comparisons show that poor child outcomes are the result of weak social policies that do not provide the support that our family structures require.

VI. BRINGING IT FULL CIRCLE

A. Our views about family relationships reflect both micro-level and macro-level factors.
   1. Micro-level factors include personal choice and interpersonal dynamics.
   2. Macro-level factors include broader social structures, such as social institutions, and the statuses of race, sex, and ethnic identity.

B. Rather than relying on common sense or personal opinion, family researchers are interested in systematically uncovering patterns and answering questions using social science research methods.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVE LEARNING

1. The opening vignette raises the question of how students see their families. Use a thinking map to allow students to draw their family tree (a tree map works best for this). Thinking maps are especially helpful to students who are visual learners. Alternatively, students can locate genogram software online. Have students bring their completed family trees (or, allow them to do this in class), and then tally the number of times specific family statuses are mentioned. Have students write a reflection or summary of the patterns they see**.**
2. To assess student perceptions of different family forms, ask them to complete a bubble map in which they provide as many adjectives for the "single-parent" family as they can in five minutes. Tell students not to write their names on the bubble map. After the students have completed their adjective list, tally the list of adjectives, deleting duplicates. Have students write a reflection or summary of the patterns they see. Are there any patterns of prejudice?
3. Have students explore the issue of pets as family members. Ask them to describe how pets are integrated into families. For example, locate empirical data on the amount of money that people spend on pets per year. This can include overall expenditures, insurance for pets, as well as legacies for pets. Or have students consider what factors might contribute to the change in the status of pets as family members? (Students might think in terms of delayed marriage, longer life spans, more mobility, etc.) Or how did pet ownership change during Covid-19? A useful journal source to begin the discussion is Albert, A., & Bulcroft, K. (1988). Pets, family, and the life course. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 50, 543–552.
4. To encourage students to think about cause and effect, have them brainstorm on two issues that might correlate ("go together") but it is obvious that one does not cause the other. Then consider what actually might be the link. For example, rape and ice cream together: The higher the rate of rape, the higher the consumption of ice cream. But what actually might be the link? Warm weather!
5. Have students work in small teams to write 10 True-False questions based on stereotypes about families and close relationships. The goal is to be tricky—to think of True-False questions that people are likely to get wrong. Then switch papers with

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another group, and try to answer their questions. See how many your team gets right or wrong. Which team has the most correct answers?

6. To encourage students to apply family theories to analyze family behaviors, have them apply one or more of the theories discussed in Chapter 1. For example, students could use Merton's concepts of manifest and latent functions to analyze how a legal change in the definition of the family might impact society. Be sure to have them make a list of manifest dysfunctions so that they can think about the role that political pressures might play in resisting changes to the official definition.

7. Have the class conduct a short survey outside of class and present the findings to the rest of the class. It may be helpful to break the class into groups of three or four students and give them one or two questions to research. Each student should interview between five and ten respondents. For example, students could ask respondents how they feel about men who choose to take their wives' names, or if they favor changing the legal rights of unmarried partners. They should be sure to get the gender and marital status of the respondents. Have them present their findings in either bar charts or pie charts (to keep it simple) to the rest of the class. Make sure they understand that gender and marital status are independent variables, and the respondent's attitude would be the dependent variable. Students should also discuss the limitations of their "study," as they will most likely have to use snowball or convenience sampling.

VIDEO SUGGESTIONS

Our Family: A Film about Family Diversity. In Our Family, children share stories about all kinds of families. Today's children come from families living in one home or two, some are being raised by one mom or one dad, or they might have two parents/caregivers or live with grandparents or other family members. Others have parents/caregivers of different ethnic backgrounds, or who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. And some children are adopted or live in blended families. This short film is a collaboration between our family coalition and not in our town to encourage conversation about the many diverse family constellations, to give children the opportunity to see and appreciate their own families and to be open and respectful to those who are different from them.
Not in Our Town. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTqC4U_98Xo

Theories About Marriage and Family. Explores how sociology defines family and the different terms used to describe specific types of families. A general overview of families. Looks at marriage in different societies, as well as marital residential patterns and patterns of descent. Reviews several theoretical approaches.
Sociology Crash Course. No. 37. Available online: https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/theories-about-family-marriage-crash-course-sociology-37/

Sociology Research Methods. How do social scientists actually conduct research about families and other topics? This video explains research methods, including how to form a question or hypothesis, collect data, and analyze that data to contribute to theories about families in society.
Sociology Crash Course. No. 4. Available online: https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/sociology-research-methods-crash-course-sociology-4/

Stages of Family Life. One way of thinking about family life says that there are stages that families move through: courtship, marriage, child-rearing, and family life in your later years. We'll also discuss changing patterns of marriage and childbearing in the US, highlighting some of the varied family types that exist.
Sociology Crash Course. No. 38. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWTz3KBCxfg

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Small, M.L and J.M. Calarco, 2022. *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research.* University of California Press.

Smith. S.R. and R.R. Hamon. 2021. *Exploring Family Theories. Fifth Edition.* Oxford University Press.

White, J.M., T.F. Martin, and K. Adamsons. 2020. *Family Theories: An Introduction 5th Edition.* Sage Publications.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As noted in Chapter 1, the one-child policy in China reduced the population, but came with serious costs. Were the costs worth it? What other strategies can populous countries like China employ to reduce the population to prevent starvation? How would conflict theorists and structural functionalists view this policy?
2. According to Chapter 1, divorce seems to be declining. What are some macro-level reasons for this decline?
3. How would you conduct research to answer the question: Are younger husbands and wives more likely than older husbands and wives to share housework? What research methods would you use? How type of theories would be useful?
4. How do recessions (macro-level) affect one's personal decision to marry or divorce (micro-level)?
5. Suppose that you were in charge of family policies in the United States. What policies would you implement to increase the marriage rate among the poor? What possible unintended consequences might emerge from your policies?
6. Which of the family functions listed in Chapter 1 do you think is the most important in contemporary society and why? As the text notes, in colonial times, the family functioned as a commonwealth. However, today, many of those functions have disappeared as society industrialized, and labor markets became more specialized. What social forces will change family functions in the future?

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