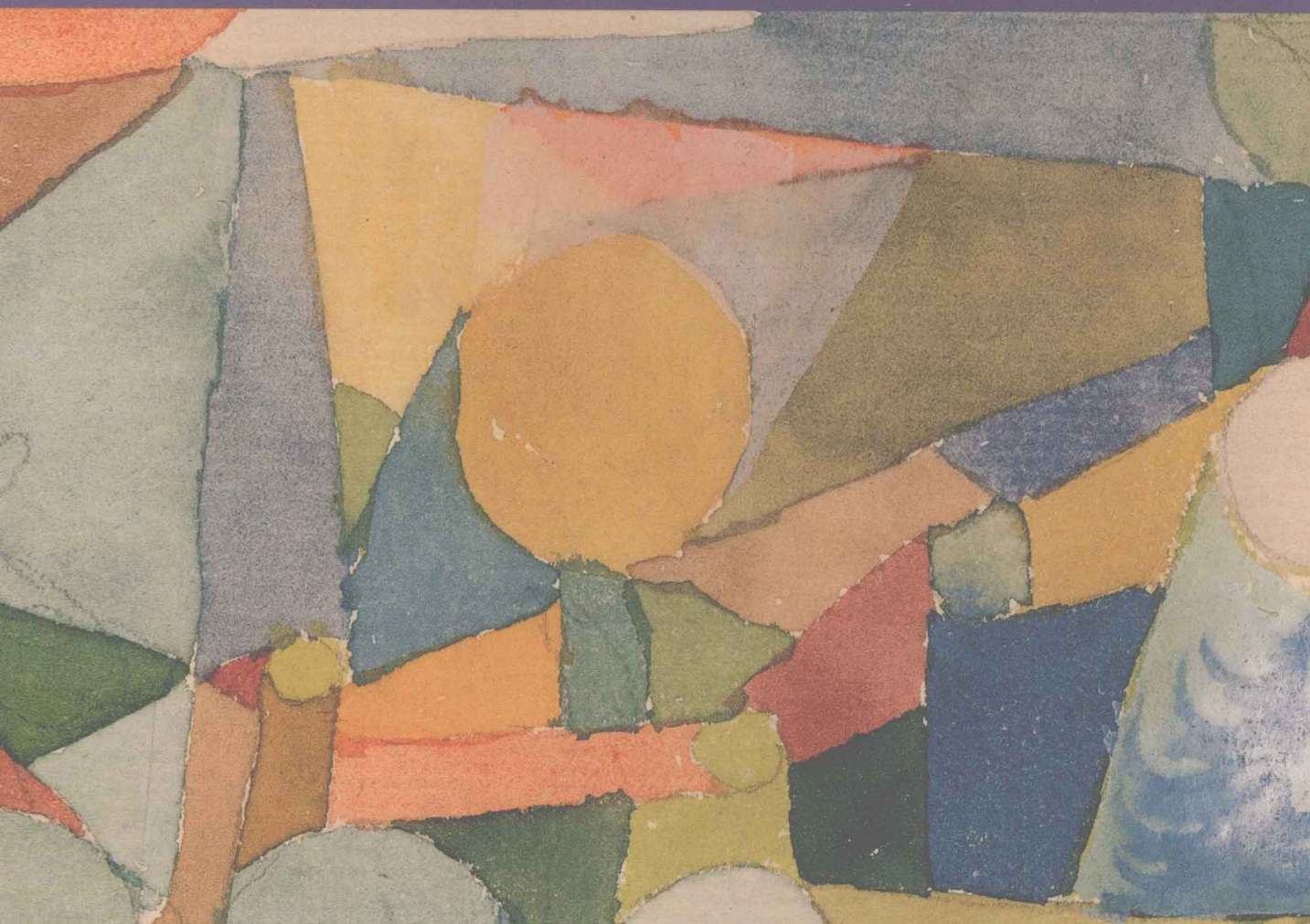
THIRD EDITION

Public & Private Families

AN INTRODUCTION

ANDREW J. CHERLIN



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Johns Hopkins University

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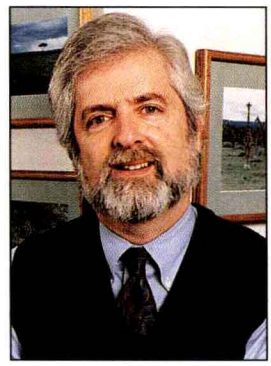

Andrew J. Cherlin is Benjamin H. Griswold III Professor of Public Policy in the Department of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University. He received a B.S. from Yale University in 1970 and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1976. His books include *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage* (revised and enlarged edition, 1992), *Divided Families: What Happens to Children when Parents Part* (with Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., 1991), *The Changing American Family and Public Policy* (1988), and *The New American Grandparent: A Place in the Family, A Life Apart* (with Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., 1986). In 1989–1990 he was chair of the Family Section of the American Sociological Association. In 1999 he was president of the Population Association of America, the scholarly organization for demographic research.

Professor Cherlin is a recipient of a MERIT (Method to Extend Research in Time) Award from the National Institutes of Health for his research on the effects of family structure on children. His recent articles include "Stepfamilies in the United States: A Reconsideration," in the *Annual Review of Sociology;* "Longitudinal Studies of the Effects of Divorce on Children," in *Science;* "Effects of Parental Divorce on Mental Health throughout the Life Course," in the *American Sociological Review;* "Going to Extremes: Family Structure, Children's Well-Being, and Social Science," in *Demography;* and "By the Numbers" and "I'm OK, You're Selfish," both in *The New York Time Magazine.* He also has written many short articles for the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post, Newsweek,* and other periodicals. He has been interviewed on *ABC News Nightline,* the *Today Show,* network evening news programs, National Public Radio's *All Things Considered,* and other news programs and documentaries.

Preface

The sociology of the family is deceptively hard to study. Unlike, say, physics, the topic is familiar (a word whose very root is Latin for "family") because virtually everyone grows up in families. Therefore, it can seem "easy" to study the family because students can bring to bear their personal knowledge of the subject. Some textbooks play to this familiarity by mainly providing students with an opportunity to better understand their private lives. The authors never stray too far from the individual experiences of their readers, focusing on personal choices such as whether to marry and whether to have children. To be sure, giving students insight into the social forces that shape their personal decisions about family life is a worthwhile objective. Nevertheless, the challenge of writing about the sociology of the family is to also help students understand that the significance of families extends beyond personal experience. Today, as in the past, the family is the site of not only private decisions but also activities that matter to our society as a whole.

These activities center on taking care of people who are unable to fully care for themselves, most notably children and the elderly. Anyone who follows social issues knows of the often-expressed concern about whether, given developments such as the increases in divorce and childbearing outside of marriage, we are raising the next generation adequately. Anyone anxious about the well-being of the rapidly growing elderly population (as well as the escalating cost of providing financial and medical assistance to the elderly) knows the concern about whether family members will continue to provide adequate assistance to them. Indeed, rarely does a month pass without these issues appearing on the covers of magazines and the front pages of newspapers.

In this textbook, consequently, I have written about the family in two senses: the *private family,* in which we live most of our personal lives, and the *public family,* in which adults perform tasks that are important to society. My goal is to give students a thorough grounding in both aspects. It is true that the two are related—taking care of children adequately, for instance, requires the love and affection that family members express privately toward each other. But the public side of the family deserves equal time with the private side.

Organization

This book is divided into six parts and 15 chapters. Part One ("Introduction") introduces the concepts of the public and private families and examines how sociologists and other social scientists study them. It provides an overview of the history of the family and then examines the central concept of gender. Part Two ("Race, Ethnicity, Class, and the State") deals with the larger social structures in which family relations are embedded: social class hierarchies, and racial and ethnic divisions. A chapter is then devoted to the influences of the nation-state on family life. In Part Three ("Sexuality, Partnership, and Marriage"), the focus shifts to the private family. The section first examines the emergence of the modern

concept of sexuality and the formation of partnerships through dating, courtship, and cohabitation. It then focuses on persistence and change in the institution of marriage.

Part Four ("Links across the Generations") explores how well the public family is meeting its caretaking responsibilities for children and the elderly. Part Five ("Conflict and Disruption") deals with the consequences of conflict in family life. It first studies violence against wives, partners, and children. Then divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies are discussed. Finally, in Part Six ("Family and Society"), I discuss where the great social changes of the twentieth century have left the institution of the family.

Special Features

This textbook differs from others in several ways, as described below.

It explores the public and the private family. This public/private distinction that underlies the book's structure is intended to provide a more balanced portrait of contemporary life. Furthermore, the focus on the public family leads to a much greater emphasis on government policy toward the family than in most other textbooks. In fact, every chapter except the first includes a short, boxed essay under the general title, "Families and Public Policy." This edition features new essays on parents' rights, work-family legislation since 1945, and fragile familes. Given the attention currently paid to issues such as these, the essays should stimulate student interest and make the book relevant to current political debates.

It highlights family life in other cultures. Although the emphasis in the book is on the contemporary United States and other Western nations, no text should ignore the important historical and cross-cultural diversity of families. Consequently, in addition to relevant material in the body of the text, I have also included in every chapter except the first a boxed essay under the title, "Families in Other Cultures." New to this edition are essays on transnational families and on public opinion toward government assistance for working parents. Adopters of the previous editions of the text have said that their students find these boxes intriguing and that they (and the policy boxes) provide good starting points for class discussions.

It includes distinctive chapters. The attention to the public family led me to write several chapters that are not included in some sociology of the family textbooks. These include Chapter 6, "The Family, the State, and Social Policy", Chapter 10, "Children and Parents"; and Chapter 11, "The Elderly and Their Families." These chapters examine issues of great current interest, such as income assistance to poor families, the effects of out-of-home childcare, and the costs of the Social Security and Medicare programs. Throughout these and other chapters, variations by race, ethnicity, and gender are explored.

It gives special attention to the research methods used by family sociologists. To give students an understanding of how sociologists study the family, I include a section in Chapter 1 titled, "How Do Family Sociologists

Know What They Know?" This material explains the ways that family sociologists go about their research. Then in seven chapters, I include boxed essays under a similar title on subjects ranging from national surveys to feminist research methods to archival research. Instructors who used the previous edition of this text said that this material gives their students a better understanding of how sociological research is carried out and of the strengths and limitations of various methodological approaches.

It features "Families on the Internet" sections. Since I wrote the first edition of this textbook, the World Wide Web has changed from a pleasant diversion to an essential information-gathering tool. Almost every chapter contains information that I gathered from the Web, including the most up-to-date demographic statistics from government statistical sites such as the Bureau of the Census web page. While using the Internet, I realized that it can be not only an indispensable research tool but also a powerful instructional tool. Consequently, at the end of each chapter is a section titled "Families on the Internet," in which I list web sites that students may find useful. In this edition, students are also asked to answer questions when they visit the sites suggested in these sections. Instructors should also find many of these sites to be excellent sources of information for student papers and presentations.

Pedagogy

Each chapter begins in a way that engages the reader: the neither-men-nor-women *berdaches* of many Native American tribes; the nineteenth-century diary in which Maud Rittenhouse described her suitors; the story of American men who fly to Russia in search of brides; the case of Danny Henrikson, taken from a stepfather who raised him and awarded by a judge to a father he did not know; and so forth. And each of the six parts of the book is preceded by a brief introduction that sets the stage.

In addition, several new features make this edition easier to use and should stimulate students' critical thinking.

- Each chapter includes the following types of questions:
  1. Looking Forward—questions that preview the chapter themes and topics.
  2. Ask Yourself—Two questions, which appear at the end of each of the three types of boxes.
  3. Looking Back—Looking Forward questions reiterated at the end of each chapter, around which the chapter summaries are organized.
  4. Thinking About Families—five questions, which appear at the end of each chapter and are designed to encourage critical thinking. Two of the five questions focus on the "public" and the "private" family.
- "Families on the Internet" sections now ask students to answer questions when they visit the sites suggested in these sections.
- Cross-reference icon: These icons, embedded in the text, point readers to the exact page where an important concept was introduced in an earlier chapter.
- More headings and summary tables.

- Boxes and "Families on the Internet" sections include the Online Learning Center web site URL to signal that content updates are available on the web site.
- This edition features a new, full-color design that enabled me to select contemporary photos and to use color effectively in graphs and tables.

What's New in Each Chapter?

First, users of past editions will find a slightly different chapter order. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 in the second edition have been combined into new Chapter 7, "Sexuality" and new Chapter 8, "Cohabitation and Marriage." Moreover, I now present the chapters on children and the elderly (which constitute Part Four) before the chapters on domestic violence, divorce, and remarriage and stepfamilies (which constitute Part Five). Every chapter has new material.

Chapter 1 Public and Private Families

- Update on the opening vignette—Vermont's domestic partner law
- Table 1.1, The Public Family and the Private Family

Chapter 2 The History of the Family

- Expanded coverage of Native American families: discussion of kinship among the Apache of Arizona
- Expanded discussion of affection and individualism in the medieval European family
- Updated statistics on immigration, marriage, and women in the workforce
- Section on the African cultural heritage, including an expanded discussion of marriage as a process
- Section on the Asian cultural heritage
- Section on generational changes in the life course, with graph

Chapter 3 Gender and Families

- Section on the gestational construction of gender, including hormonal, biosocial, and evolutionary influences
- Section on masculinity and the recent men's movement
- Updated statistics on the earnings gap and the sex ratio in China

Chapter 4 Social Class and Families

- Updated and expanded opening vignette
- Updated statistics on social class structure, homelessness, the labor market, poverty trends, and dual-earner couples

Chapter 5 Race, Ethnicity, and Families

- Opening vignette on the "new second generation" of immigrants
- Updated statistics on racial and ethnic populations in the United States, marriage rates, out-of-wedlock birth rates, income levels, and interracial marriage rates
- Updated Families and Public Policy box on the counting of multiracial families in Census 2000
- Updated table showing the decline of marriage by race
- Updated figure showing married-couple households by race and income group
- Discussion of residential patterns of middle-class African-American families
- Updated figure showing total fertility rates of racial and ethnic groups

- Families in Other Cultures box on transnational families
- Updated figure showing out-of-wedlock births by racial and ethnic groups
- Section on social capital and immigrant families

Chapter 6 The Family, the State, and Social Policy

- Families in Other Cultures box on public opinion toward government assistance for working parents
- Updated statistics on U.S. government assistance to poor and nonpoor families and the proportion of American children born outside marriage by race
- Section on abortion policy moved from previous Chapter 10 and updated
- Updated graph showing race and ethnicity of parents receiving TANF
- Updated coverage of the "marriage penalty," the earned income tax credit, and the number of families receiving TANF

Chapter 7 Sexuality

- Section on adolescent sexuality, pregnancy, and childbearing outside of marriage moved from previous Chapter 8.
- Graph showing percentages of first births in the United States, conceived and born before or after marriage, 1930–1994
- Families and Public Policy box on the U.S. policy response to AIDS formerly in the text
- Expanded discussion of selection effects combined with material from previous Chapter 8
- Updated statistics on sexual attitudes, AIDS, and teenage childbearing
- Updated graph showing AIDS deaths in the United States by race and ethnicity

Chapter 8 Cohabitation and Marriage

- Single new chapter on cohabitation and marriage which replaces previous Chapters 8 and 9
- Opening vignette on a brokered marriage between an American man and a Ukrainian woman
- Updated statistics on age at first marriage, expected marriage rates, cohabitation, and gay and lesbian partnerships
- Discussion of the characteristics of cohabiting couples, including educational level, marital status (divorced or never married), and the presence of children in the household
- Discussion of births to cohabiting couples
- Discussion of the duration and outcome of cohabiting relationships
- Updated Families and Public Policy box on domestic partnerships
- Discussion of domestic partnerships among gay and lesbian couples
- Expanded discussion of the benefits of marriage for women

Chapter 9 Work and Families (previously Chapter 10)

- Updated vignette showing shift in marital power after a wife's earnings increased
- Updated graph showing labor force participation rates of married women with children
- Updated statistics on labor force participation rates of married women by race and children's age; women's earnings relative to men's by race; share of professional degrees earned; family responsibilities of employed workers; percentage of workers with flexible schedules and work-at-home arrangements; and international parental leave policies

- Updated section on division of housework among husbands and wives, including updated graph
- Updated discussion of men's attitudes toward housework
- New section on overwork among salaried professionals and underwork among wage-earning sales and service workers
- New statistics on the effect of work responsibilities on home life; the percentage of parents working night or weekend shifts; divorce among parents working the night shift; and gender of projected new entrants to the labor force
- New Families and Public Policy box on trends in work-family legislation since 1945, with graph

Chapter 10 Children and Parents (previously Chapter 14)

- New Families and Public Policy box on parents' rights (the Elián González case and *Troxel* v. *Granville*)
- New discussion of parenting styles among ethnic and racial minorities
- Updated discussion of the effect of fathers on children's lives, including a new section on the effect of nonresident fathers
- Updated discussions of the effect of poverty and divorce on children
- Updated statistics on childcare, including a new graph showing relative reliance on different types of childcare
- Updated discussion of the effect of childcare on children, including infants
- Updated discussion of gay and lesbian families, including those formed by artificial insemination, and their effect on children
- Updated discussion of historical trends in the well-being of children, including an updated graph showing child poverty rates
- Updated How Do Sociologists Know What They Know? box on measuring the well-being of children
- Updated discussion of historical trends in the well-being of children from different social classes
- Updated Families in Other Cultures box, including an updated graph showing child poverty rates in 25 countries

Chapter 11 The Elderly and Their Families (previously Chapter 15)

- A new section on changing patterns of dying and their effects on the widowed and on children and grandchildren
- Updated statistics on life expectancy, the aged population, poverty among the aged, grandparents as childcare providers, residency in nursing homes, government expenditures for Social Security and Medicare, government and private expenditures for nursing home care, and nursing home costs

Chapter 12 Domestic Violence (previously Chapter 11)

- Expanded definition of domestic violence (includes intimate partners and stalking)
- Two new graphs showing percentage of physical assaults by type of assault and gender of victim
- Updated statistics on domestic violence, partner rape, and child abuse
- New section on marital status of couples reporting domestic violence
- Expanded discussion of the Puritan attitude toward the use of physical force in childrearing
- Updated graph showing percentage of child abuse cases by type of abuse

- Updated Families and Public Policy box on foster care
- Updated Families in Other Cultures box on wife beating in the developing world

Chapter 13 Divorce (previously Chapter 12)

- Updated vignette on covenant marriage
- Updated statistics on divorce rates, child support, and single-parent families headed by fathers
- Updated graph showing the divorce rate over time
- Updated discussion of the effect of personal and family background on the likelihood of divorce
- Updated figure showing the award and receipt of child support
- Updated box on the enforcement of child support obligations
- Updated discussion of the effect of multiple transitions on children
- Updated discussion of children's long-term adjustment to divorce

Chapter 14 Remarriage and Stepfamilies (previously Chapter 13)

- Expanded section on building stepfamilies, including summary table
- Updated discussion of stepchildren's relations with stepparents
- Updated discussion of the effects of remarriage on children

Chapter 15 Social Change and Families (previously Chapter 16)

- New opening vignette on Americans' attitudes toward family life and recent changes in the family
- New Families and Public Policy box on fragile families
- Updated statistics on foreign birth rates and children without health insurance
- Revised sections on encouraging two-parent families and assisting single-parent families

Supplements

This text is accompanied by a variety of instructional resources designed to enhance classroom instruction and to support instructors with long experience as well as those teaching the family course for the first time.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FAMILIES: A READER, 2/E

Edited by the text's author and keyed to text chapters, this reader includes articles and book excerpts by family sociologists and other writers on a variety of issues facing families today. A special discount is available when the text and reader are ordered as a package.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL AND TEST BANK

This manual, prepared by Bahira Sherif of the University of Delaware, and Anne Smith Hastings of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, includes the following elements: detailed chapter outlines; lecture ideas; student projects and review questions; suggested readings and films; and a test bank with multiple choice, matching, true-false, short-answer, and essay questions for

each chapter. In addition to the printed format, the test items are available on CD-ROM for test construction.

ONLINE LEARNING CENTER WEB SITE

Students and instructors are invited to visit the book's Online Learning Center, the text-specific web site, at www.mhhe.com/cherlin. The content for the Online Learning Center was developed by Diane Levy of the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, and Lynn Newhart of Rockford College in Illinois. This web site offers an extensive variety of resources and activities, including chapter quizzes, key terms, learning objectives, author audio clips, Internet exercises, interactive activities, PowerPoint slides, relevant URLs for Census updates, and more. It's also possible to link directly to Internet sites from the Online Learning Center. The URL for the Online Learning Center appears in the boxes and *Families on the Internet* sections throughout the text, reminding readers to visit the Online Learning Center homepage for content updates.

PAGEOUT

All online content for *Public and Private Families, 3/e* is supported by WebCT, eCollege.com, and Blackboard. Additionally, McGraw-Hill's PageOut service is available to get you and your course up and running online in a matter of hours—at no cost! PageOut was designed for instructors just beginning to explore web options. Even the novice computer user can create a course web site with a template provided by McGraw-Hill (no programming knowledge required). PageOut lets you offer your students instant access to your syllabus, lecture notes, and original material. And, using PageOut, you can pull any of the McGraw-Hill content from the Cherlin Online Learning Center web site into your web site. To find out more about PageOut, ask your McGraw-Hill representative for details, or fill out the form at www.mhhe.com/pageout.

POWERWEB

Offered free with the text, and accessible from a link on the Cherlin Online Learning Center, PowerWeb is a turnkey solution for adding the Internet to a course. PowerWeb is a password-protected web site developed by McGraw-Hill/Dushkin that offers instructors and students the following materials: refereed, course-specific web links and articles, student study tools, interactive exercises, weekly updates with assessment, material on how to conduct research on the Internet, daily news feed of topic-specific news, message board for instructors, and access to Northern Light Research Engine.

POWERPOINT SLIDES

PowerPoint slides, prepared by Catherine Robertson of Grossmont College in California, feature the 480 charts, graphs and detailed chapter outlines.

VIDEOS

McGraw-Hill offers adopters a variety of videotapes that are suitable for classroom use in conjunction with the textbook.

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Visual Preview

Viewing the Family Through Two Lenses

Chapter 1 Public and Private Families 17

The private family: **Americans seek intimacy and emotional support from their spouses and partners.**

have when they are in one. Let me offer, then, a definition of the **private family** not as an authoritative statement but rather as a starting point for analyzing this uncertainty: *two or more individuals who maintain an intimate relationship that they expect will last indefinitely—or, in the case of a parent and child, until the child reaches adulthood—and who live in the same household and pool their income and household labor.* This definition allows for children to be part of the private family, although the character of the intimacy between parents and children is clearly different from that between adult partners. It does not require that the individuals be of opposite sexes. The relationship must be one in which the commitment is long-term, in which the expectation is that the adult partners will stay together indefinitely. I do not require that they expect to stay together for life because it's not clear how many married couples even expect as much, given that about half of all marriages now end in divorce. The definition also includes the notion that the partnership usually is household-based and economic as well as intimate—shared residence, common budgets. This reflects my sense that intimate relationships in families are not merely erotic and emotionally supportive but also involve sharing the day-to-day details of managing one's life.

private family two or more individuals who maintain an intimate relationship that they expect will last indefinitely—or in the case of a parent and child, until the child reaches adulthood—and who live in the same household and pool their income and household labor

To be sure, individuals also receive emotional support and material assistance from kin with whom they are not in an intimate relationship. The word "family" is sometimes used in the larger sense of relationships with sisters, uncles, grandmothers, and so forth. These broader kinship ties are still an important part of the setting in which people embed their intimate relations to spouses, partners, and children. The usual definition of "kin" is the people who are related to you by descent (through your mother's or father's line) or marriage. Yet the concept of kinship is also becoming broader and harder to define, as this book will show. In settings as varied as sharing networks among low-income African Americans, friend-based support networks among lesbians and gay men, and middle-class networks of adults who are related only through the ties of broken marriages and remarriages, people are expanding the definition of kinship, creating kin, as it

The Private Family

This text considers aspects of intimate relationships in its examination of the private family in which people live most of their personal lives.

14 Part I Introduction

The public family: **In another 10 years, will there be enough young workers paying taxes to support programs for the elderly such as Social Security and Medicare?**

producing them—metaphorically, the temptation to ride free on the backs of others. Luckily, people have children for reasons other than economic self-interest. At the moment, however, they are barely having enough to replace the current generation of parents. Everyone benefits from the child rearing that parents do.* A National Academy of Sciences panel estimated that if the government had to purchase all the childcare services parents and relatives now provide for free, the cost would be $126 billion per year (Hayes, Palmer, & Zaslow, 1990).

In addition, families provide other services that have the character of public goods. As will be noted in Chapter 11, adult children still provide the bulk of the care for the frail elderly. If I am old and ill, I will benefit if I have adult children who will care for me. But others will also benefit from the care that my family provides. Without them, I would need more assistance from the government-funded medical insurance programs for the elderly (Medicare) and for the poor (Medicaid). Consequently, the care my family provides will keep government spending, and hence taxes, lower for everyone. The same logic applies to care that family members provide for the chronically ill.

The first definition, then, concerns the view of the family you take when you are concerned about the family's contribution to the public welfare—the useful services family members provide by taking care of one another. It is a definition of what I will call the **public family:** *One adult, or two adults who are related by marriage, partnership, or shared parenthood, who is/are taking care of dependents, and the dependents themselves.* Dependents are defined as children, the frail elderly, and the chronically ill. The family members usually reside in the same household, but that is not essential. For example, an elderly person may live in her own apartment but still receive daily assistance from her daughter or son. Nor is it essential that the family members be married or of the opposite sex. The important fact is that they are taking care of dependents and, in doing so,

public family one adult, or two adults who are related by marriage, partnership, or shared parenthood, who is/are taking care of dependents, and the dependents themselves

*This example holds only, however, for developed countries such as the United States, where the birthrate is at or below the level needed to replace the population. In developing countries with very high birthrates, children can impose negative externalities. Given the high death rates in the poorest developing countries, it is in the interest of a peasant farmer to have many children to ensure that at least one or two will still be alive when the farmer is too old to work. But if every family follows that logic, the land may become overpopulated and the country's development may slow. See Cain (1983).

The Public Family

This text also describes how families do socially important work such as raising children and caring for the elderly.

Chapter 10 Children and Parents 319

Families and Public Policy

Elián, the Troxels, and Parents' Rights

In November 1999, the U.S. Coast Guard rescued a six-year-old boy floating on an inner tube off the coast of Florida. Like many Cubans before them, Elián González and his mother had attempted to reach the United States by crossing the sea in a small boat. When the boat capsized, Elián's mother drowned.

After his rescue, Elián's relatives in Florida attempted to take custody of him, arguing that he should be granted political asylum in the United States rather than be sent back to communist Cuba. But Elián's father, still in Cuba, asked that the boy be returned; he had not given permission for Elián to leave the country. The United States Department of Justice agreed, ruling that parents have a fundamental right to custody of their children that supersedes the claims of other relatives, even when political considerations might dictate otherwise. The decision infuriated anti-Communist Cuban immigrants, who mounted a fierce campaign to prevent the boy's return. When Elián's Florida relatives refused to relinquish the boy, Federal agents raided the house where he was staying and returned him to his father.

The U.S. Department of Justice ruled that Elián González's father had the right to take custody of him even though relatives objected.

At about the same time, another struggle over parents' rights, this one in the state of Washington, made the headlines. The state legislature had recently passed a law allowing anyone to petition the court for visiting rights on the grounds that they would be in a child's best interest. Grandparents Jennifer and Gary Troxel had asked the court for overnight visiting rights to the children of their late son and Tommie Granville Wynne. The children's mother, whose fitness as a parent was not in question, had offered more limited visits. When the family court ruled in favor of the Troxels, Wynne appealed.

On appeal, the Washington State Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional, ruling in favor of Wynne. The Troxels appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, but in June 2000 the Court sided with the Washington State Supreme Court by a six to three margin, agreeing that the law was unconstitutional.† Those justices in the majority reasoned that Wynne was, by all accounts, a fit parent, and that fit parents are presumed to act in their children's best interest. The state, they reasoned, should not interfere with parents' ability to make decisions for their children.

In both the González case and the Troxel case, the winning argument was that parents have close to a fundamental right to direct their children's upbringing—at least as long as their decisions do not greatly harm the children. In cultures that place a greater value on extended family ties, grandparents and other kin might be granted more extensive custody and visitation rights. But in the American legal system—and probably in American public opinion as well—parents' rights prevail.

Ask Yourself

1. Has anyone in your family been involved in a child custody dispute? If so, were parents' rights, as opposed to other relatives' rights, an issue?
2. Besides the issues of custody and visitation, what other ways can you think of that the government limits parents' rights in order to ensure the well-being of their children?

†*Troxel v. Granville*, No. 99-138, 2000

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"Families and Public Policy" Boxes

In its focus on the public family, this text explores the impact of government policies on families.

Reflecting the Rich Diversity of Today's Families

Families in Other Cultures

Love and Marriage in Japan

Is love necessary for a lasting marriage? Most Americans would say yes, of course. But marriage in other cultures suggests a different answer. Consider Japan: Marriages among the older generation, especially in rural areas, were stable but often loveless. In 1996, Yuri Uemura, an elderly woman in the town of Omiya told a *New York Times* reporter, "There was never any love between me and my husband. But, well, we survived" (Kristof, 1996). In 40 years, she said, her husband had never told her he liked her, never held her hand, never given her a present, never said "thank you," and never shown affection in any way.

Yet their marriage endured, as did most others. Until the 1980s, Japan had one of the lowest rates of divorce in the developed world. Love, however, was not the main ingredient keeping couples together. In part, strong social pressure kept couples together. Becoming divorced was shameful, a sign of individual weakness or moral failing. Marriages were also held together by a strict division of labor. Women were responsible for nearly all of the housework and childrearing. Japanese men did, and still do, much less housework and childcare than men in Western countries such as the United States. National studies of time use in Japan from 1965 to 1990 show that husbands do only 10 percent of the housework and childcare (Tsuye, 1992; see Chapter 9 for figures for U.S. husbands).

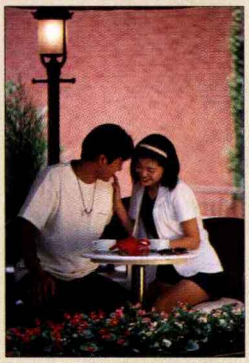
Marriages in Japan were also held together by low expectations for love and companionship. Japanese adults viewed marriage more in terms of social roles, such as mother or wage earner, than in terms of pleasurable relationships between the wife and husband. A woman's primary family role was as mother to her children rather than as companion to her husband (Iglisia & Scanzoni, 1996). With expectations low, married couples did not experience the kinds of crises Americans do if one spouse's affection for the other falters.

But marriage in Japan is changing. Women's roles are becoming more varied. Between 1965 and 1990, the proportion of married women aged 20 to 54 who were paid employees in nonagricultural industries rose from 15 to 41 percent (Tsuye, 1992). Attitudes about women's roles are also changing. A series of national opinion surveys in Japan from 1972 to 1990 have asked women and men whether they agree with the statement that "the external world is for men and the domestic world is for women." In 1972, 83 percent of women and 84 percent of men agreed; but by 1990 just 25 percent of women and 35 percent of men agreed (Tsuye, 1992). Moreover, young adults, particularly in cities, expect more companionship from their spouses.

In these ways, Japanese marriages have become more like Western marriages, which are based on a less-strict division of labor, a larger role for married women outside the household, and more love and companionship. But these changes have also helped to produce a sharp increase in divorce. Between 1980 and 1994, the percentage of Japanese marriages that were projected to end in divorce increased from 20 percent to 29 percent (Yamamoto & Kojima, 1996). While still lower than the projection of about 50 percent in the United States, the rising divorce rate has prompted concern in Japan.

Attitudes have changed among the older generation as well. "The other day, he tried to pour me a cup of tea," Mrs. Uemura said of her husband (Kristof, 1996, p. 12). "It was a big change. I told all my friends." Yet as divorce has become more acceptable, there has also been a surge of divorces among older, traditional married couples, according to reports from demographers (Tsuye, personal communication). In support of this observation, national data show that the average age of people at the time of divorce has been increasing (Yamamoto & Kojima, 1996). Apparently, the reduced stigma of divorce has led some couples in long-term, relatively loveless marriages to break up.

The changes in Japanese marriage over the last few decades suggest that love and companionship do not keep couples together. In fact, the divorce rates in societies in which marriage is primarily a working partnership are generally lower than in societies in which marriage is defined in terms of love and companionship. Once marriage becomes a companionship rather than a working partnership, people who are dissatisfied with the level of love and closeness in their marriages feel justified in obtaining a divorce. As a result, Western-style marriages, while emotionally satisfying to each spouse, also lead to a higher rate of divorce.



Japanese marriages, long rooted in a strict division of labor, are increasingly based on love and companionship.

Ask Yourself

1. Have there been any divorces in your family? If so, in which generation did they occur? Was the lack of love and companionship a major complaint?
2. Besides the increase in the number of married women in the Japanese workforce, what other factors might account for the change in Japanese attitudes toward love and marriage?

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In general, parents take control of the matchmaking process when the choice of whom to marry is too important to them to be left to their children alone. In the past, a good marriage and many children were crucial to the survival of the household. A son who would inherit the farm needed a wife to help him and to have children who would provide more help. A woman needed to marry a man whose parents owned land, or whose relatives owned cattle, or who would inherit a trade. It is probable that throughout human history practical considerations have dominated the search for a spouse. I think it likely that only within the past 100 years in the Western nations—and within the past few decades in newly developed nations—has the standard of living improved so much that young adults have had the luxury of paying more attention to a partner's personality than to his or her industriousness or family worth.

Parental influence also erodes when children can find ways of making a living that don't depend on their parents' resources. In eighteenth-century Austria, the heir to the farm had no other good sources of income and couldn't marry without his father's permission. Often permission wasn't granted until the father retired. A folk song of the time expressed the frustration of the unmarried son:

Father when ya gonna gimme the farm,
Father when ya gonna sign it away?
My girl's been growin' every day,
And single no longer wants to stay (Berkner, 1972).

Grandmothers typically play a larger role in childrearing in African-American families than they do in other families.

mothers are divorced. The divorced mothers are more likely to have avoided economic problems prior to the breakup of their marriages; the never-married mothers are more likely to have lived persistently in poverty.

In addition, it is more common among poor black children than among poor white children to be raised by a grandmother—particularly among children whose mothers (and often grandmothers) were teenagers when they gave birth. In these families, teenage childbearing compresses the generations, producing grandmothers who are in their thirties and forties rather than their fifties and sixties (Burton, 1990). To be sure, many young grandmothers provide crucial support and excellent childcare. Moreover, the role of the grandmother in African-American families is stronger, in general, than in European-American families. [➡ p. 152] Nevertheless, some grandmothers may not be at a life stage at which they expect to be caring for grandchildren, and they may be holding jobs themselves. Psychologist P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and her colleagues videotaped interactions between young African-American mothers and their children, and between grandmothers and the same children, in two kinds of families: those in which the three generations lived in the same household and those in which the grandmother lived in a separate household (Chase-Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn, & Zamsky, 1994). To the research group's surprise, the quality of parenting—by both the mother and the grandmother—was *lower* when the three generations lived in the same household. The only exception occurred when the mother had given birth in her early teens. It seems likely that a selection effect [➡ p. 223] is at work: Young mothers who have the financial and psychological resources to live on their own probably are more competent, on average, at raising a child. Mothers who have fewer resources are more likely to live with grandmothers. Joint residence is an arrangement often born of necessity. It has mixed effects on children in poor families (McLoyd et al. 2000).

Thought-Provoking "Families in Other Cultures" Boxes

These essays broaden students' understanding of family life in other cultures. Topics include missing girls in China, transnational families, and public opinion toward government assistance for working families.

Strong Coverage of Family Diversity in the United States

This edition provides expanded coverage of the impact of race, ethnicity, class, and gender on families in the United States.

Explaining How Sociologists Study Families

How Do Sociologists Know What They Know?

Feminist Research Methods

Sociologist Barrie Thorne (1993) begins her book about children's play groups, *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School*, by writing not about her subject but about herself. She recalls that the segregation of girls and boys on the playgrounds of the elementary school she attended was considered "natural." She tells the reader that her views on gender were transformed by the women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s, which argued that the differences between the genders is not natural but rather a social construction. She describes her commitment to raise her own children in a nonsexist way.

Thorne then discusses how, in her own research, she took pains to learn the terminology that the subjects themselves used: "kids" rather than "children." She explained, "I found that when I shifted to 'kids' in my writing, my stance toward the people in question felt more side-by-side than top-down" (p. 9). Using "kids" helped her to adopt the viewpoint of her subjects, as opposed to the viewpoint of an adult feminist scholar.

In fact, Thorne's entire first chapter consists of preliminary material about herself and her relationship with her subjects. The chapter illustrates a practice known as **reflexivity:** a researcher's examination of the nature of the research process that she or he is undertaking (Fonow & Cook, 1991). The researcher reflects upon the beliefs (e.g., feminism) and statuses (e.g., college professor, woman) she brings to the project—and in particular, how those beliefs and statuses might affect the research project.

Reflexivity is part of a larger orientation that is called *feminist research methods*.[1] It emerged from the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s, and is linked to feminist theory. (➥ p. 31) A central tenet of feminist research methods is that scholars should conduct action-oriented research, meaning research that has the objective of advancing the liberation of women from oppression by men—and also ending the gender constraints placed on men (Fonow & Cook, 1991). Feminist researchers explicitly acknowledge this political agenda. More important, they argue that *all* social scientific research reflects the social and political beliefs of the researchers but that most social scientists hide their beliefs—sometimes even from themselves.

In contrast, most sociologists try to follow the *scientific method* (➥ p. 24) A key assumption of the scientific method as it is often practiced is that researchers are neutral figures who stand outside the phenomena they study. The researcher's point of view, it is said, should not influence the methods she or he uses or the conclusions she or he makes. In this way, the social scientist strives for objectivity—a way of viewing the social world that is independent of personal beliefs. (➥ p. 23)

But feminist researchers argue that objectivity is nearly impossible to achieve (Neilson, 1990). They argue that much supposedly "objective" social scientific research actually reflects male bias. They often criticize large-scale surveys and other forms of statistical research. For example, they note that not long ago, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in its surveys, defined the husband as the "head of household" in a married-couple family, no matter what the family's situation was. Similarly, violence against women by husbands and partners was greatly underreported in crime statistics until feminists focused attention on the problem (Reinharz, 1992).

Scholars who use feminist research methods try to make connections to their subjects and to understand and take their subjects' points of view. That is why Thorne sought to use language and methods that made her more of a "side-by-side" observer than a "top-down" (i.e., detached and objective) observer. Only by understanding the meanings that research subjects give their actions can the researcher provide a full account of an issue according to feminist research methods.

Proponents of feminist research methods frequently try to show that there is substantial variation from person to person in the ways in which women and men act. They do so because they oppose generalizations about women that might be used to restrict their independence and equality (for example, the belief, prevalent at midcentury, that the husband should earn the money and the wife should stay home and care for the children). They sometimes carry out research with the intent of demonstrating that generalizations about women are wrong. Thorne warns, for instance: "One should be wary of what has been called 'the tyranny of averages,' a misleading practice of referring to average differences as if they are absolute" (pp. 57–58).

So Thorne ventured out to the elementary school playground to disprove the idea that boys and girls are inherently different in their play styles—boys more aggressive, more concerned with dominance in groups; girls more concerned with relationships with a small number of friends. On the playground, girls and boys did separate, for the most part, in the ways the generalizations about them predict. They were not, however, completely separate. Thorne provided an insightful analysis of contact between girls and boys during the "border work" that maintained their separation, such as invading the other gender's spaces and chasing one another. She also found that a few children defied the stereotype, such as a boy who played jump rope and an athletic girl who played sports with the boys. And she documented occasional mixed games of dodgeball and the like.

From evidence such as this, Thorne concluded that gender "has a fluid quality" (p. 159) and that the claim that boys and girls have separate cultures "has outlived its usefulness" (p. 108). However, as one reviewer noted, the number of times that boys and girls cross the gender boundaries "are a tiny minority of her observations" (England, 1994, p. 263). Consequently, claiming that the average differences between boys and girls aren't important because some individuals cross the boundaries may be an overstatement.

Even if one is not always convinced by the conclusions of researchers like Thorne, one can find useful lessons in feminist research methods. Perhaps the main lesson is that researchers should pay more attention to where they are coming from: the reasons they choose to study a particular topic, the assumptions they have going into a research project, and the beliefs they hold that might influence their conclusions. Feminist researchers have made a convincing case that in the study of family and gender, objectivity has its limits.

Ask Yourself

1. Does your gender affect the way you react to Barrie Thorne's research? Explain.
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of feminist research methods and of the scientific method? Why?

[1]The use of reflexivity pre-dates feminist research methods in sociology. Researchers working in the tradition of symbolic interactionism (➥ p. 30) incorporated it into their methods.

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reflexivity a researcher's examination of the nature of the research process that she or he is undertaking

sex-gender system the transformation of the biological differences between women and men into a social order that supports male domination

the basis for pervasive gender differences. Gender theorists refer to this transformation of biological differences into a social order that supports male domination as a **sex-gender system** (Rubin, 1975).

Consider the economy, for example. In Western nations, people must purchase the goods they need with money (as opposed to making their own clothes and building their own houses). Western societies are organized so that men have access to more money than women: Men are more likely to work for pay, and when they do, most earn considerably higher wages and salaries than women (see Chapter 9). To be sure, men tend to have more education and work experience than women, in part because many women withdraw from the paid workforce to bear and rear children. Gender theorists argue, however, that the wage gap is far wider than differences in education and work experience would predict—and recent economic studies suggest that their argument is correct. (See *Families and Public Policy:* The Earnings Gap.) In a number of ways—such as when parents encourage sons more than daughters to have careers, when employers discriminate against women in hiring or pay, and when long-established rules provide men with higher pay than women for comparable work—society creates and reinforces men's economic domination. Therefore, most women must depend on men if they wish to live in a household with a substantial income.

Just how men have achieved their dominant position in society is a subject of some debate. Many writers of this genre link male domination to capitalism—the economic system of the United States and most other nations (Shelton & Agger, 1993). **Capitalism,** which will be discussed (along with socialism) in detail in

capitalism an economic system in which goods and services are privately produced and sold on a market for profit

Studying Families

"How Do Sociologists Know What They Know?" boxes show students how sociologists study families, exploring approaches such as national surveys, archival research, and feminist research methods.

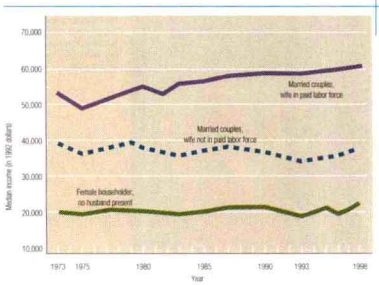

FIGURE 4.3
Median income of three types of families, 1973–1996. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999e.)

midpoint in the distribution, the point at which as many families have higher incomes as have lower incomes. All dollar figures are expressed in 1992 dollars, adjusted for increases over time in the cost of living.) The bottom line shows that there was little change in the median incomes of families that were headed by women without husbands present. The middle line shows how married-couple families without wives in the paid labor force fared. The median income for this group also showed little change—a sharp break from the increases of the 1950s and 1960s. The only increase in income came for married-couple families in which the wife worked for pay, as shown by the top line. The gap between the median incomes of single-earner married couples and dual-earner married couples rose from about $11,000 in 1975 to about $26,590 in 1998 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999i). With housing prices rising and young men's wages declining, families needed a second income to live the kind of lives they aspired to. An increasing number of them chose to have wives enter the paid labor force.

These income trends led economist Frank Levy, in his study of U.S. income distribution since the 1940s, to write, "The most striking development is in families' connection to the economy" (Levy, 1987). In the 1940s, Levy notes, most families had two parents and one earner, whether they were rich or poor. There wasn't much variation in family structure. Yet by the end of the century, more than half of the wealthier families had two earners, while most poor families had no earners or only one earner. In the 1940s, the key economic difference between families was how much the husband earned. Today, the key difference increasingly is whether or not there is a husband in the household at all. As the link between family structure and poverty grows stronger, persistent poverty is becoming the property of single mothers and their children and prosperity is becoming the property of dual-earner, two-parent families.

Presenting Current Findings

This text highlights important research findings in graphs and tables and explains the significance of these findings in the text narrative.

Exploring Public Policy Issues Affecting Families

438 Part V Conflict, Disruption, and Reconstitution

Families and Public Policy

Enforcing Child Support Obligations

Children in single-parent families would benefit if every absent parent knew he or she would have to pay child support. This has been the goal of several new laws that were enacted in the 1980s and 1990s. Since 1994, for example, all parents who have been ordered by the courts to pay child support have had their payments deducted automatically from their paychecks. Moreover, states are now required to adopt guidelines for the amount of child support a parent should pay, according to income and number of children; judges must follow these guidelines or state in writing why they didn't (Charlin, 1993).

The 1996 welfare reform act [➡ p. 191] contained a number of additional measures to strengthen the system. For instance, it provided more support for programs to establish paternity in hospitals at the birth of the children, and it penalized welfare recipients who failed to cooperate. It required employers to send the names of newly hired employees to state and federal agencies that will match the names against lists of parents who have not paid child support obligations. It allowed states to deny occupational and driver's license renewals to parents who fail to pay (U.S. Administration for Children and Families, 1996). In fact, toughening child support enforcement has been one of the most popular family policies among both conservatives and liberals. Conservatives favor tougher enforcement because making fathers pay is consistent with their belief that parents should take responsibility for the well-being of their children. (Although the law applies equally to absent mothers who owe child support payments, in practice the vast majority of payments are collected from fathers and distributed to mothers.) The new measures send a message to fathers that they can leave their marriages, but they can't leave their children. Conservatives hope that the measures will deter men from fathering children they can't, or don't intend to, support. Liberals favor tougher measures because increased collection of child support payments will provide more economic support to children in low-income single-parent families.

There is evidence that these measures are producing results. Between 1993 and 1997, the proportion of custodial mothers who reported receiving the full amount of child support they had been awarded increased by 30 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000a). However, most of the measures help middle-class single parents more than poor single parents and their children. Most middle-class single mothers are divorced, and can obviously identify the fathers of their children. Moreover, most middle-class fathers are employed and can make some child support payments. Many poor single mothers, in contrast, were never married to the fathers of their children. Even when the fathers can be identified and located, they may not be employed, and thus may not be able to pay much in child support. Consequently, some experts warn that child support programs that stress enforcement of divorce decrees will not work for poor families. Rather, these experts advocate programs to increase the earnings capacity of single fathers, so that they can afford to pay child support (Meyer, 1999).

Ask Yourself

1. Do you know anyone who has had difficulty collecting court-ordered child support payments? If so, was the problem caused by the absent parent's inability to pay or simply an unwillingness to pay?
2. Besides the measures described here, what other steps could government take to improve the economic well-being of children in single-parent families?

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another 21 percent had incomes less than twice the poverty line. Yet few single fathers are granted child support awards, since most have higher incomes than their ex-wives. Nevertheless, some single fathers with low incomes may need assistance from their former wives.

About 4 percent of all children in 1998 lived in single-father families (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998b). Our mental image of the single-father family is the divorced dad living alone with his children. However, only one-fourth of single-father families consist of divorced men living alone with their children. Of the rest, most are sharing their households with mothers, sisters, or new girlfriends, who may be doing much of the childcare (Eggebeen, Snyder, & Manning, 1996). Yet the census counts them as "single-father families" as long as the mother of the child is not in the household.

146 Part II Race, Ethnicity, Class, and the State

Families and Public Policy

How Should Multiracial Families Be Counted?

How can a child whose parents have different races have only one? Logically impossible, you might think; but until 1997, federal government statistical policy required that individuals check just one race for themselves or their children on official forms such as the Census of Population. And before 1997, the government recognized four races: (1) white, (2) black, (3) Asian and Pacific Islander, and (4) American Indian and Alaska Native. It also required its agencies, in a separate question, to ask about membership in one ethnic group: Spanish or Hispanic origin.

Interracial couples represent a small but growing share of all families. About 2.5 percent of married couples were interracial in 1998 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999g). Their numbers are large enough, however, that they have become a visible presence and a reminder that the old categories may not fit much longer. In 1993, Representative Thomas Sawyer of Ohio, chair of the subcommittee of the House of Representatives that oversees the census and statistical policy, listened to the testimony of Susan Graham, an advocate for multiracial children and a mother of two of them. She told Representative Sawyer:

When I received my 1990 census form, I realized there was no race category for my children. I called the Census Bureau. After checking with supervisors, the Bureau finally gave me their answer, the children should take the race of the mother. When I objected and asked why my children should be classified as their mother's race only, the Census Bureau representative said to me, in a very hushed voice, "Because in cases like these, we always know who the mother is and not the father" (U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Hearings, 1994).

Ms. Graham said her son had been classified as white by the census but black by the school he attended. Her solution: Add a new category, "Multiracial," to the official government list and to the 2000 Census. Yet this seemingly logical step was opposed by many of the political leaders of the minority groups that would be most affected. They opposed a multiracial category because the statistics that agencies collect are used not just to describe the population but also to determine whether federal laws have been carried out. Congress and the courts use the information on race and ethnicity from the census to determine whether congressional districts are providing fair representation to blacks and Hispanics. Agencies that oversee banks use the information to determine whether banks are willing to loan money to members of racial-ethnic groups. Other agencies use the information from employers to determine whether employers are discriminating on the basis of race or ethnicity. Consequently, the political leaders opposed a multiracial category because they feared it would lower the number of blacks, Hispanics, or Asians counted in the census and would therefore dilute the political power that comes with greater numbers (Wright, 1994).

Faced with this dilemma, the government considered what, if anything, to do about Susan Graham's children and the many others like them when it fielded the 2000 Census of Population. In 1997, a government statistical committee decided that the 2000 Census (and all other government surveys) would allow individuals to choose more than one race; but it rejected a separate "multiracial" category. It also decided to place the question about Hispanic ethnicity before the question on race (rather than after it, which was the old policy), a change that probably increased the number of people who said they were "Hispanic." So when Americans filled out the 2000 Census, they saw the ethnic and racial questions shown in the figure. First they were asked whether they were "Spanish/Hispanic/Latino," and

the blue columns show, more than 80 percent of Asian-American family households were headed by a married couple, the highest percentage of any of the five groups. In contrast, just 44 percent of African-American family households were headed by married couples—the lowest percentage of any of the groups. Non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics, and Native Americans were in between. Correspondingly, African Americans had the highest percentage of family households headed by an unmarried woman and Asian Americans had the lowest. Few households in any group were headed by an unmarried male, as the middle columns show.[2]

[2](O'Hare, 1992). The data were taken from 1990 Census Summary Tape File 1C. By "unmarried," I mean never married, divorced, separated, or widowed.

496 Part VI Family and Society

Families and Public Policy

Fragile Families

Once nearly all two-parent families were started by married couples. Today, about 1.5 million unmarried cohabiting couples have children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998b). Yet cohabiting parents often are ignored in official statistics. For example, the increasing trend toward childbearing outside of marriage is common knowledge, but most people are unaware that these births occur mainly to women who are cohabiting—usually with the child's father. In fact, the percentage of the supposedly "single" mothers who are cohabiting is growing (Bumpass & Lu, 2000).

In a recent study, researchers interviewed random samples of unmarried mothers in hospitals in Austin, Texas, and Oakland, California, just after they had given birth. They also interviewed the fathers when possible. They were surprised to find that over half the mothers were living with the fathers when the children were born. Moreover, at the time of the births, 80 percent of the mothers said that their chances of marrying the father were 50-50 or better (Garfinkel & McLanahan, 2000). Clearly, cohabitation is common among unmarried mothers in these two cities, and most are cohabiting with the father of their children.

Yet many of these relationships end quickly. The 1995 national survey found that among unmarried mothers, only about half of whites and one-fifth of African Americans married within five years of giving birth (Bumpass & Lu, 2000). Among those who married, not all of them married the father of their child. Little is known about why some woman marry, some continue to cohabit, and others break up with the father. The leaders of the Austin and Oakland research project, Irwin Garfinkel and Sara McLanahan, call the couples they studied "fragile families." They plan to reinterview the parents periodically, to learn more about their relationships.

Meanwhile, policymakers who wish to encourage the surprisingly large number of fragile families to stay together, whether through marriage or continued cohabitation, are considering whether to increase public support. While many of the mothers have access to job training and employment counseling through the welfare system, the fathers typically do not. Furthermore, some of the fathers owe child support payments to the mothers of other children. Providing fathers with job training, counseling, and assistance with child support obligations may well increase their chances of remaining with the mothers of their children.

Ask Yourself

1. Do you know a cohabiting couple that has children? If so, do you think these parents see themselves as a fragile family? Do you expect them to be together five years from now?
2. If you were a sociologist, what questions would you ask about the trend toward childbearing among cohabiting couples? How would you go about answering them?

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coverage they are very expensive. Programs targeted on the poor are cheaper but command less political support.

One universal program that was nearly established in 1994 was a national health insurance system. The failure of Congress to enact it was particularly unfortunate from the standpoint of family policy because universal health insurance would be a major antipoverty measure for children. The most obvious reason is that so many children, an estimated 11 million in 1997, are not covered (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999d). In addition, the lack of health insurance benefits in many part-time and low-wage jobs creates a perverse incentive for parents to apply for, or remain on, the public assistance rolls. This is because parents and children receiving public assistance also receive health insurance through the Medicaid program for the poor. When a parent gives up public assistance to take a job, she may find that she loses all her medical coverage, and she may decide that having protection from large medical bills dictates that she quit her job. The problem has been eased by recent expansions of Medicaid to some children in nonwelfare, low-income families, but the parents of these children are still at high risk of not having health insurance.

Focus on Public Policy Issues

Boxed essays in all but the first chapter examine the impact of government policies on families. New to this edition are essays on trends in work-family legislation, parents' rights, and strategies to assist fragile families.