

Portrait of a Family

Telecourse Guide

FIFTH EDITION



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Fifth Edition

Portrait of a Family

Telecourse Guide

By:



Authors:

Vicki L. Spandel
Michael D. Hiscox
Interwest Applied Research

with contributions from:

Lynn Darroch
Jeff Kuechle
David Milholland



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Acknowledgements:

Bulcroft, Kris and O'Conner-Roden, Margaret, "Never Too Late." Copyright © 1986 by *Psychology Today* Magazine. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Cantor, Marjorie H., Ph.D., "Families: A Basic Source of Long-Term Care for the Elderly." Copyright © 1985 by *Aging* Magazine. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

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Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 03 02 01 00 99

ISBN 0-534-52516-4

Preface

About This Telecourse Guide Student Guidelines

A telecourse guide is a special kind of document. As its name implies, it literally guides you through a course, helping you to focus your thinking, identifying key ideas, and monitor progress. A telecourse guide that can accomplish these things increases the value of the course; it is much like having a private tutor, but without the expense and logistical difficulties that would involve.

In addition, a telecourse guide must establish a certain context for learning so that the materials which follow will be more effective. Research on learning indicates that students tend to learn more and feel they get more out of a course when their higher level thinking skills are tapped. Without this element, a course can become a tedious and ineffective memorization of data, which is not conducive to long-term educational benefits, nor to the higher purpose of teaching students to think for themselves.

In establishing this context, several options are available. One is to introduce new material in a way that helps you establish a kind of mental network, to make connections with your own experience and with other previous learning. Without this connection, newly introduced material may seem irrelevant, or even incomprehensible. Research has shown that we all learn by integrating new information with our previous experiences. The overview within each telecourse guide lesson is intended to establish a basis for forming this network. It highlights key elements or themes from the text, but does so in a way that shows how the material introduced has relevance for each individual student's life.

Further, we tend to learn material best when we see a purpose to that learning. Part of the function of the overview is to demonstrate why you should care about pursuing the subject any further. A good overview will provide the message that "This is important material. It has implications for your life, for the way you think, for the decisions that will shape the person you are continually becoming."

The function of the objectives is to identify the purpose of *Portrait of a Family* as a course of instruction. Through the objectives, you will see what you're supposed to learn or focus on. However, the deeper purpose of the course is to encourage the same kind of networking and higher thinking that provides a context for the course in the first place. In other words, what we want you to ask is, "How can I apply this to my life or to new experiences? How can I use this information in making intelligent decisions?"

We believe that the *Portrait of a Family* telecourse guide helps you answer these questions through a series of increasingly demanding activities:

- ☐ The overview sets the stage and heightens interest in the material.
- ☐ The objectives establish a structure for learning, suggesting what elements of the course require particular attention.
- ☐ The key terms alert you to the important concepts covered in the lesson.
- ☐ The assignments section provides reading assignments in the text and shows you how to proceed with learning activities.
- ☐ The video viewing questions lay out some key questions that will be answered during the video program.
- ☐ The self-test shows what progress you have made in assimilating the material and beginning to apply it.
- ☐ The decision questions ask you to apply concepts, integrate ideas, make choices, synthesize, and evaluate.

Once all these activities have been completed, you should be well on your way to integrating the new learning. The test items from the examination bank, while challenging, should also provide some confirmation of learning that has already occurred.

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Lesson 1

Family Portraits

A New Look at a Familiar World

We live in a changing society. That's no surprise. What is surprising, though, is the speed with which changes are occurring. And for many of us, that speed produces a certain amount of tension. We wonder whether we'll change rapidly enough to keep pace with the unfolding world about us; whether, in fact, we ought to be changing at all or clinging to old values and traditions.

With lifestyles, values, and traditions in flux, it is easy to feel out of synch, to question our society and sometimes ourselves. Are we making the right choices—living as we should, according to what society expects or accepts?

Many of us spend a large part of our lives trying to create some balance between what we personally want out of life, and what we believe to be appropriate or acceptable, given the perceived values of our family or society. The questioning of values or traditions that we've been taught are correct or appropriate is difficult at best—sometimes painful.

It might be comforting, therefore, if each of us went through this questioning process just once, and then made the decisions that would govern how the rest of our lives would run. Unfortunately, that is not at all how it works. The questioning of values and goals is a lifelong process.

Even those of us who reach a decision with which we seem momentarily satisfied—the decision to marry, for example—can expect to question that decision, or to ask how things might have been different had we taken another path. Such constant reevaluation is quite natural, even among people who have made careful, well-thought-out choices in their

Overview

What is a Family?

lives. And if the reevaluation seems to point you in another direction, that isn't necessarily because your first decision was a poor one. Quite likely you have changed. Your circumstances and your values have changed. No longer do most of us think that true-for-now means true forever.

Some people see this kind of flux as signaling the disintegration of social structures. How can we hope to have any values, they protest, if we are constantly digging away at the foundations of what few traditions still remain? For others, the prospect of change in any form is stressful. They cling to what is familiar not so much because they value their current lifestyle but because they fear the unknown. What's familiar feels comfortable. And for most of us, what's familiar is whatever we've grown up with—what we've come to know through our own immediate families.

Think of your own life growing up. Were most of the families around like your own? If you grew up in, say, the 1950s, perhaps you were part of what might have been considered the typical family of that time: mother, father, and three or four children. But what if you weren't? What if you were an only child, or lived only with one parent, or lived with grandparents, or had twelve brothers and sisters? Chances are that if your lifestyle deviated significantly from that of others within your immediate experience, you felt some sense of alienation. How did you handle it? Did you come to value and appreciate your uniqueness? Or did you seek to make the gap between your lifestyle and that of those around you smaller?

More and more, people are coming to see that the richness of multiple lifestyles existing all around us offers a range of choices. No longer must we model what someone else has done in order to achieve acceptance. We can accept—even admire—the lifestyle chosen by our parents. But we do not have to imitate it, even when it comes to forming our own family group.

What is a family in today's culture? It is any intimate, interpersonal relationship in which people live together with a definite commitment, form an economic unit, care for any young, and gain their identity through being attached to the group. It may include children; it may not. The adult members of the family may be biologically related or not, married or not. The breadwinner may be the father, mother, both, or several adults who share that responsibility. Grandparents or other relatives may be part of the household.

Although the definition of family has broadened significantly if one looks at the way in which the relationships are defined, some things remain relatively unchanged. Families are still characterized by strong, loving bonds that give family members a sense of belonging and a feeling of security. Perhaps we are simply learning as we go that there are many ways to provide that kind of stability.

As we've noted already, the kind of family into which you were born very likely had a lot to do with the way you first defined the concept of family. A child who lives with one divorced parent may have a concept of family very different from that of the child who lives with several unmarried adults that share child-rearing responsibilities—and different still from that of the child who has always lived with biological parents and siblings.

Within a given community, most families may share similarities. But as we move beyond those communities, we soon encounter differences. Typical ranch families in Montana may be very different from typical city families in London. Further, the more we expand the geographic boundaries, the more difficult it becomes to define what's typical or normal. Many customs taken for granted within Western societies may be unusual or even unheard of elsewhere. For example, we may find it usual for one man to marry one woman, or for people to marry because they're in love, or for people to wait until after marriage before having children. In other cultures, it may be common for a man to have several wives, or to have children by several women, or to marry because a mate is of the right status or social class. As we begin to view ourselves as part of a larger world community, therefore, we may find the range of lifestyle patterns widening considerably.

If you're like most of us, you've gained some ideas through your own experience, through reading or through the pictures of family life that's depicted in contemporary films or plays. But are these characterizations accurate?

In their search for the "truth," today's social scientists depend on a wide range of sources for information. The visions of playwrights and film makers may tell part of the story. But a thorough researcher must also rely on firsthand information from surveys, interviews, direct observation, clinical experiments, and long-term studies. Because such information is not readily accessible to most of us on an every-

Removing Blinders

day basis, we may find that our own beliefs about what's typical do not always correspond to what is really taking place in our society. Let's look at a few specifics to find out.

- ☐ *Are you married?* If so, you may be interested in knowing that since the 1950s (when teenage marriage was fairly common), people have been marrying at an increasingly later age—and that trend may well continue, particularly as employment opportunities open up for women. Today, few men marry until their mid-twenties or later. For women the median age for a first marriage is about 24.5 years. If you were married younger than this, your situation might be considered somewhat atypical—according to recent statistics defining what's usual.
- ☐ *Have you ever been divorced?* Not so long ago, that would have placed you in a small minority. No more. Current projections estimate that only about half of first marriages will last. The number of second marriages is on the rise, but even fewer of those—about 40 percent—are expected to last long-term.
- ☐ *Do you plan on having a big family?* If so, you'll be in a small group—relatively speaking. The typical American mother today has one or two children. In the 1960s, it was not unusual for a mother in our society to have two or three children; in the 1950s, three to four children was about average. How old are first-time mothers? Increasing numbers are in their thirties.
- ☐ *Have you been part of a one-parent family—as either the child or the parent?* Consider yourself fairly typical. Predictions suggest that the overwhelming majority of today's two-year-olds will have lived in a single-parent household at some point in their lives before reaching age 18.
- ☐ *If you are in your late teens or early twenties and you live at home with your parents, is that an unusual situation?* Not in the least. A majority of young men and nearly half the young women of this age are still living with parents or have returned to living with parents. Why? Extended education, difficulties finding employment after high school or college, advantages in sharing living expenses and expanded ideas about what should or could constitute a family are all likely factors contributing to this situation.

- ❑ *Is premarital sex the exception or the norm?* Statistics indicate that a majority of young men and women have sexual intercourse before marriage.
- ❑ *Are you finding it difficult to “make ends meet”?* You’re not alone. The proportion of the population below the poverty line has risen steadily since the 1970s. Moreover, poverty is unevenly distributed across ethnic groups.

If you’re like most of us, you have a built-in curiosity about how your lifestyle compares to that of others. To some extent, knowing who we are means finding out how we fit in. Remember, though, statistics can be misleading. They’re often averages, a sort of middle-of-the-road profile that winds up looking like no one in particular. Perhaps our real interest should lie in exploring some of the reasons behind those shifting patterns. And as we look at those reasons, you might be thinking about the choices you have made in your life and those that remain before you. What kinds of information do you need to make a good decision?

In a very important way, you help shape the norms of modern life. Maybe you think it doesn’t make any real difference how you feel about marriage, children, and family relationships. But it does. As you make decisions, you weave the pattern of your own life into the fabric of our culture. That is one of the four themes of this course. The very act of making choices carries a weight of its own. It feeds back into society and somehow changes the social environment.

- ❑ Personal decisions must be made throughout the life course. Decision-making is a trade-off; once you choose an option, you discard alternatives. Thus, the best way to make choices is knowledgeably.
- ❑ Cultural beliefs and values influence our attitudes and decisions. And societal or structural conditions can limit or expand our options.
- ❑ We live in a changing society, characterized by increased economic, ethnic, and family diversity. There is increased emphasis on individualistic values and decreased emphasis on marital and family permanence. This tends to make personal decision-making not only more difficult than in the past, but also more important.

Changing Roles and Relationships

Learning Objectives

Just as society's definitions of roles and relationships are changing, so will your own. In many ways, the way you view friendship, family, or society is an extension of the way you view yourself.

On completing your study of this lesson, you should be able to

- ☐ Identify the four major themes of the *Portrait of a Family* text, *Marriages and Families*, by Lamanna and Riedmann.
- ☐ Explain, in general terms, where and how social scientists derive the information upon which they base their theories and concepts.
- ☐ Comment on the ways in which freedom of choice offers new opportunities, yet creates stress.
- ☐ Discuss the ways in which attitudes and practices relating to marriage and family life have changed over the past several decades.
- ☐ Define, in general terms, the conflict between family values and individualism.

Key Terms

Case study	Longitudinal study
Family	Naturalistic observation
Family values (familism)	Survey
Historical data	Togetherness
Individualistic (self-fulfillment) values	Values

Assignments

- ☐ Before viewing the program, be sure you've read through the preceding overview and familiarized yourself with the learning objectives and key terms for this lesson. Then read Chapters 1 and 2, with particular emphasis on pages 4–12 and 20–25 in Chapter 1, "Family Commitments: Making Choices in a Changing Society;" and pages 43–49 in Chapter 2, "Exploring the Family," of *Marriages and Families*, Seventh Edition, by Lamanna and Riedmann.

- ❑ After completing these tasks, read the video viewing questions and watch the video program for Lesson 1, “Family Portraits.”
 - ❑ After viewing the program, take time to answer the video viewing questions and evaluate your learning with the self-test. You’ll find the correct answers, along with text page references, at the back of this telecourse guide.
-
1. Carlfred Broderick and Paul Bohannon discuss how the definition of a “family” has changed in recent years. Based on their statements, what is a family today? How does it differ from the television families of the 1950s? Describe a modern American “typical family.”
 2. While the physical structure of families vary, families are still expected to fulfill certain functions in society and within the home. What do Dick and Barbara consider these functions to be? Can these expectations transcend complicated family structures? According to Ira Reiss, Carlfred Broderick, and Paul Bohannon, what is a “healthy” family?
 3. Historians frequently refer to the United States as a “melting pot” of different cultures and ethnicities. Based on the testimony of Dr. Wade Nobles and Kirby Alvy, what effect does a family’s cultural heritage have on the function of the family? How do Jess, Peter, and Andrea explain the importance of their individual cultures in their relationships? What would they say about the blending of all cultures the “melting pot” implies?
 4. In the past, a traditional lifestyle of marriage with children and mom at home was highly encouraged. Those who did not conform to this model often found negative stigmas attached to their chosen lifestyles. Compare the traditional family model to the highly contrasting views of the Fairfax high school students. How have priorities shifted? What do the shifts suggest about the importance and perception of marriage?
 5. What was once “shacking up” or “living in sin” is now a quite common phenomenon. What do Joe and Julie say about the positive and negative connotations associated with an unmarried couple living together? What do they

Video Viewing Questions

consider to be beneficial about the arrangement? How does it compare to marriage?

6. What do the statements of Michelle, Glenn, and Donna reveal about the differences between the ideal vision of marriage and the reality of marriage? What expectations were unrealistic?
7. Consider the comments of Chris and Robin, Jennifer, and Mr. and Mrs. Estelle with regard to parent/child relationships. How do these examples demonstrate the stress children may bring to a relationship?

Self-Test

1. Which of the following probably *best* characterizes how Americans today feel about marriage?
 - a. Embittered and ready to abandon marriage as an institution.
 - b. Hopeful—yet apprehensive at the same time.
 - c. More optimistic than ever before.
 - d. Fairly negative, though still willing to maintain the tradition.
2. As in other areas of life, our decisions and attitudes about marriage and family are influenced by our culture and society, but
 - a. culture is more influential than is society.
 - b. society is more influential than is culture.
 - c. individuals can influence culture and society.
 - d. we should keep in mind that institutions are a better guide to truth than are individual preferences.
3. Projections indicate that in the future, _____ of all marriages will last a lifetime.
 - a. a quarter
 - b. a third
 - c. half
 - d. two-thirds
4. Values that focus on the family as a whole—such as togetherness, stability, and loyalty—are associated with
 - a. societal influences.
 - b. familism.
 - c. individualism.
 - d. families in the middle years of the family life cycle.

5. The idea that young persons should select their own marriage partners is
 - a. pretty universal.
 - b. particular to the United States.
 - c. common in many societies, though not universal.
 - d. common to only a few societies historically, and diminishing today.
6. To a social scientist, "scientific investigation" generally implies
 - a. work done within the confines of a laboratory.
 - b. systematic analysis of information gained through surveys.
 - c. analysis of data gathered systematically through a variety of sources.
 - d. firsthand observation.
7. Paul, a social scientist, has conducted a survey on attitudes toward marriage by the readership of a magazine on American family life. Paul got very good return on his survey (over 80 percent), and the answers are clear-cut and easy to interpret. Would it be all right for Paul to generalize, based on this data, about how Americans as a group feel toward marriage?
 - a. Yes, but only because of the high return on the survey forms.
 - b. Yes, because clearly Paul has structured his questions in a way that makes results simple to interpret.
 - c. Only if he conducts a second survey using the same sample of subscribers and the results turn out about the same.
 - d. No, because the readers of this magazine may or may not be representative of Americans as a whole.
8. The *main* reason that social scientists often gather information through a range of sources or methods is that
 - a. every method has certain advantages and disadvantages that may influence the accuracy of the data.
 - b. it is usually impossible to get more than minimal information from any one source.
 - c. tradition encourages use of multiple sources—even though it's often unnecessary.
 - d. some methods—like naturalistic observation—are very unreliable, and must be countered by more proven methods, such as laboratory experiments.

9. Probably the *best* definition of family as we know it in America today is
 - a. any household in which all members share equally in social and economic responsibilities.
 - b. any group in which the members are bound by ties of blood relationship or marriage.
 - c. any group in which members, married or not, share child-care responsibilities.
 - d. any intimate, interpersonal relationship in which persons form an economic unit and care for young, consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group, and share a strong commitment to maintain the group over time.
10. The *Marriages and Families* text is based on the assumption that people make better decisions if
 - a. they have parents who provide good role models to follow.
 - b. they place more emphasis on familial values—somewhat less on individual values.
 - c. such decisions are based on their own thought-through principles.
 - d. other members of the family group share in the decision making process.

Lesson 2

The Seasons of Life

Making Choices and Facing Change

If you've spent much time around children, and especially if you have children of your own, you know how rapidly they change. Almost every day, if you're observant, you can witness changes in appearance, demeanor, attitudes, abilities, and temperament. Many books on child rearing stress the idea that never again after infancy will changes occur so rapidly or appear so dramatic. But while that point may be well taken, we're increasingly recognizing the fact that people change not only during infancy and childhood, but all through their lives—even into old age. And those changes may be more extensive and far reaching than we had once imagined. So, whether you're now 18 or 25 or 35 or 60, you are still in the process of "becoming." The changes you go through from this time forward in your life may be vast or almost unnoticeable, but change you will.

The nature of change that occurs throughout an adult's life affects not only that individual, but also his or her family and marital relationships. Understanding the factors that precipitate change can help an individual cope better with an evolving identity. The fundamental question "Who am I?" may have many answers.

There are many variables that influence change. The time in which we're born is one of them. If you have parents or grandparents who lived through the Great Depression, for example, you likely know from their recounted tales and adventures how much that experience helped shape their own

Overview

Factors that Influence Change