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THE FAMILY

An introduction

SEVENTH EDITION

J. Ross Eshleman
Wayne State University





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THE FAMILY

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Free Copy In memory of three close friends:

Dr. Milton R. Cudney Dr. A. Ray Mangus Dr. E. Eugene Weaver

Although their lives ended in 1992, their contributions to understanding families and meaningful relationships live on.

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What should an introductory family textbook try to do? First, I believe it should provide a thorough and objective coverage of the basic concepts and ideas in the area of marriages, families, and primary intimate relationships. The ideas should be presented clearly and intelligibly. The coverage should include specific factual data as well as abstract principles and empirically supported findings as well as hypotheses for testing. Since this introduction to the family will be the only course on the family that many students take, the text should arouse a curiosity toward and provide tools for an ongoing process of observation, understanding, and analysis of marital and family relationships and organizations.

Second and equally important, I believe an introductory family textbook should capture students' interest. The processes and organization of marital and family behavior should be conveyed to students in a manner that is understanding, readable, and interesting yet also realistic, without sacrificing accuracy. Given this foundation, students should be able to relate personal and familial values and behaviors to differing life-styles and patterns, both within their own society and in relationship to others. That is, students should be guided to see more clearly their places in the United States and even the world pictures.

I have tried to write a text that is both interesting and highly readable, that is relatively comprehensive in its coverage of topics, and that emphasizes the family in the United States and supplements this discussion heavily with historical and cross-cultural referents. I have also strived to make the text accurate yet contemporary, including nontraditional marital and family life-styles but keeping them in a realistic perspective relative to the more common, traditional family forms. I have also tried to document extensively in presenting the study of the family as a scholarly discipline and to encourage further thought and reading. Each chapter is documented throughout with footnote citations of sources, and each chapter ends with questions for discussion and an annotated bibliography of further reading materials. The latest research and census materials have been presented, and boxed panels have been inserted to illustrate points throughout the text.

In writing this book, I have attempted to fulfill a number of objectives:

- To present an objective description and analysis of contemporary U.S. families within a world perspective
- To examine without condemnation or praise nontraditional family and marital life-styles
- To apply general theoretical schemes and frames of reference to family issues
- To present basic concepts and descriptive materials clearly and intelligibly
- To suggest questions and supplemental sources to stimulate discussion and reading beyond the text
- To cultivate in students an increased awareness of their particular niches in the family and general social orders

PLAN FOR THE TEXT

This seventh edition of *The Family* basically follows a sociological and social/psychological approach. Part I deals with understanding the family irrespective of time and place. Chapter 1 summarizes basic issues in families in the United States. Chapter 2 examines approaches to the study of families and establishes five basic frames of reference, or theories, central to understanding family groups and systems, expanding coverage of contemporary family theories to include sociobiological, humanist, and feminist approaches. Chapter 3 illustrates the boundaries of marital, family, and kinship organization, and Chapter 4 identifies the linkages between the family and other institutions, with a major focus on the institution of work.

Part II looks at cultural and subcultural variations in family life-styles. Chapter 5 considers traditional and contemporary mainland Chinese families as well as Swedish families, and Chapter 6 considers African-American and Hispanic-American families in the United States. Chapter 7 examines social-class variations in the United States, including an extensive look at single parents and the feminization of poverty.

Part III, Chapters 8 and 9, brings structure and process to the creation of a marital and family status by examining mate selection in contemporary U.S. society. Part IV, Chapters 10 and 11, addresses a range of sexual norms and relationships as major and significant social aspects of nonmarital, marital, and family systems.

Part V considers patterns of interaction throughout the family life course: marriage (Chapter 12), parenthood (Chapter 13), childrearing and socialization (Chapter 14), and the middle and later years, including dying, death, and the postmarital family (Chapter 16).

Part VI addresses contemporary issues in the study of marriage and the family. Chapter 16 examines the nature of family crisis and domestic violence, and Chapter 17 examines divorce and remarriage. The book concludes with a discussion of the family and social policy in Chapter 18.

As a result of conducting an extensive review of the literature as well as having received selected feedback from faculty and students who used previous

editions of *The Family*, various changes and additions appear in this seventh edition. Many chapters have been considerably reorganized. Extensive use of new and updated research material will be evident throughout the text, including significant research findings on topics ranging from AIDS and homelessness to intimate relationships beyond traditional marriage/family boundaries. Completely new sections have been added on contemporary theories, families in Sweden, and Hispanic-American families in the United States.

As does the previous edition, this new edition describes five basic frames of reference (structural-functional, social conflict, symbolic interaction, social exchange, and developmental) and applies them to various topics throughout the text. Extensive use is made of recent census data and research findings, and selected inserts (boxed panels) are provided to supplement the basic textual material. Each chapter ends with several useful study aids: Summary, Key Terms and Topics, Discussion Questions, and Further Readings. A glossary and name and subject indexes are provided at the end of the book.

It is my hope that students and teachers alike will find the ideas presented in *The Family* stimulating and clearly explained. I hope the book is readable and interesting, that it presents an accurate portrayal of family systems, that it allows flexible use, that it will stimulate thought and discussion, and perhaps most important, that it will change behavior by expanding readers' awareness of and sensitivity to self and others.

So that I may continue to update and fine-tune the content and presentation of material in this book, I ask that readers report to me any errors they may find as well as any specific points with which they disagree. Likewise, please forward any supplemental materials or observations about the range of topics presented.

A final word about the language used in *The Family*: Efforts have been made in writing and editing this book to follow contemporary style guidelines for language describing people of cultural minority groups. For example, the terms *African American* and *black* are used as synonyms in most cases. The term *white* is used to designate people of Anglo heritage. The general term *Hispanic American* is used to identify members of a number of cultural subgroups of Spanish heritage; more specific terms, such as *Mexican American*, are used in discussions of individual subgroups. The terms *American Indian* and *Native American* are used interchangeably to describe people native to the North American continent. Generally, when reporting results from a given source, a specific term has been used, following the style used in the source. For example, in presenting data from U.S. census reports, the terms *black*, *white*, and *Hispanic origin* are most often used, as those terms are used in the actual reports.

Similarly, care has been taken to describe with sensitivity people with exceptionalities and people who have have victimized. The general idea is to acknowledge, first, that these individuals are people; what characteristics or experiences make them exceptional are secondary. For example, the phrase people with AIDS has been used instead of AIDS victims and disabled people are described as people with disabilities. While labels are needed to identify special

groups within the general population, these terms need not stigmatize the people to whom they apply.

Guidelines such as these for language use describing specific groups of people have changed dramatically over recent years and will continue to do so. I encourage readers to review how language is used in this book and to adopt these practices in their own communications. Consider that the very words one uses to describe a subject convey his or her attitudes toward it, as well.

${\color{red}A}{\color{blue}CKNOWLEDGMENTS}$

It is difficult to know where to begin or end in expressing a deeply felt sense of gratitude and appreciation to many people. First, I want to convey my affection for and recognize the support received from my own primary intimates, including my wife, Janet; my daughter, Jill; my son, Sid; and his wife, Kristie. Other primary relatives—including Claudett, Robert and Floy, Orpha and Ed, Effie and Jim, and Joyce and Jim—have been particularly influential in my life and in creating a personal awareness of the significance and importance of family. Close friends—such as John and Ginger Campbell, Millie and the late Milton Cudney, A. M. and Bebe Denton, Ralph and Zeddy Jordan, Joyce and Stewart Rhymer, John and Chris Turner, and Adele and the late Gene Weaver—are and were constant sources of encouragement, feedback, and meaningful relationships.

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