

EXPLORING

Marriages & Families

Karen Seccombe



 Pearson

Third Edition

Exploring Marriages & Families

Third Edition

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Preface

Marriages and families is my favorite course among the many I have taught over the past 20 years. Students crave information about love, sex, dating, relationships, marriage, and children. However, they tend to see these issues in individualized terms, which makes the course a constant challenge to teach.

My goal, therefore, is to offer students a fresh perspective—one that places individual relationships in their social context so that students can more fully understand why they make the choices they do. Throughout the text, I illustrate the ways in which historical, cultural, social, and political factors influence our personal experiences, beliefs, privileges, constraints, and choices. Our likelihood of marrying, bearing children, or divorcing; our family values, lifestyles, and opportunities; and our health and well-being (and stressors on them) are all influenced by these structural factors. With a strong focus on theory and research, a celebration of diversity, a rich look at how history shapes both our present and future, an emphasis on family resilience and empowerment, and an emphasis on assessment and engaging visual presentation, this introductory text helps students make more informed decisions about their relationships by better understanding the social context in which they live and the relevance of social science to their lives.

I introduce the following key themes in the opening chapter, provide provocative examples of each throughout subsequent chapters, and revisit the themes in the concluding chapter: (1) the best way to truly understand families is to link micro- and macro-level perspectives; (2) families are not monolithic or static, but are ever-changing; and (3) social science theory and research help us understand families and relationships.

The Best Way to Truly Understand Families Is to Link Micro- and Macro-Level Perspectives

Although all of us experience relationships and family life as individuals, we will not understand these experiences without an appreciation of the social environment in which they happen. Our relationships are shaped in large part by our culture and elements of social structure, including our statuses (i.e., race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and sex) and our institutions (i.e., the economy, religion, and the political system). Thus, at every appropriate opportunity in the text, the relationship between macro-level factors and micro-level personal choices, experiences, opportunities, and constraints is highlighted. For example, social structure may influence who is considered an appropriate mate, how we communicate with our partners, our sexual experiences, benefits that accrue from marriage, the division of household labor between husbands and wives, decisions about children and childrearing, and our likelihood of divorcing and repartnering.

Families Are Not Monolithic or Static But Are Ever-Changing

People construct families to meet their needs for warmth, companionship, economic cooperation, and as a way to raise

children. Therefore, families take many different forms that continue to evolve, sharing historical, cultural, and subcultural differences in family life. The text suggests there is not one “right” type of family—one size does not fit all—and each chapter celebrates the diversity of families in the United States and around the world. For example, extensive coverage of topics such as gay and lesbian families, cohabitation, single parents, racial and ethnic differences in family structure and interaction, and social class differences are fully integrated throughout the text. Also included are documented changes in relationships and families advanced by technology, such as cell phones, laptops, and networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. These technologies have changed the way people meet, communicate, and carry on their daily lives.

Social Science Theory and Research Help Us Understand Families and Relationships

Everyone holds “common sense” opinions about families based on personal experience or information filtered through the mass media, peers, or parents. However, a scientific perspective can provide a more objective and factual window on the world and can help us form opinions, develop our values, and make sound personal choices. Theories and methods of social research are introduced in Chapter 1. Each subsequent chapter provides solid theoretical grounding in key issues, demonstrates the value of research, and includes the most recent quantitative and qualitative interdisciplinary scholarship available. Finally, the feature *Why Do Research?* illustrates how family scientists conduct research, the methods they use, the dilemmas they face, and how conclusions of research champion common sense perceptions about families. Students sometimes complain that research is “dry,” but I have done my best to show that it isn’t.

What Is New in This Edition

Overall:

- Includes specific learning objectives in each chapter
- Updates with 2015 and 2016 statistics whenever possible
- Use of sociologically inspired photo journalism to illustrate key concepts
- Incorporates the most recent scholarship in the leading family journals
- More user-friendly writing style
- Greater attention to racial and ethnic minorities and differences across groups
- Increases coverage of same-sex couples, including marriage
- Greater use of theory throughout
- Clearer comparisons of macro- and micro-level factors that influence families
- Additional personal narratives to help students grasp the concepts
- Expands international coverage

Chapter 1

- Updates discussion of China's one-child policy
- Updates information about the movement to increase the minimum wage
- Clearer distinction between qualitative and quantitative research

Chapter 2

- Suggests greater caution about overgeneralizing findings from research
- Expands coverage of the ways in which video games and television shows teach gendered roles
- Provides recent research evidence about the prevalence of prejudice and discrimination.
- Updates information about the racial and ethnic composition of the United States
- Clarifies differences between first and second generation Hispanics
- Elaborates on the intersection of ethnicity, race, class, and gender

Chapter 3

- Expands coverage of singlehood, including how intersections affect the experience of singlehood
- Expands research coverage on cross-sex friendships
- Updates discussion of online dating
- Increases coverage of cohabitation and effects of cohabitation on children
- Highlights new data on same-sex partner households
- Includes coverage of racial and religious homogamy

Chapter 4

- Increases coverage of biochemical approaches to love
- Elaborates on the importance of romantic love to most Americans
- Presents the positive aspects of an arranged marriage on relationships
- Expands coverage of controlling behavior, including stalking
- Highlights research on breakups

Chapter 5

- Greater attention to the portrayal of sex in the popular media
- Expands coverage of transgender issues
- Provides an greater understanding of sexual scripts
- Updates discussion of the double standard, including how both males and females view the double standard and its effects on understanding women's sexuality
- Provides the latest data on teen pregnancy and births
- Expands coverage about the hook-up sexual culture among young adults
- Updates research on sex and the elderly
- Broadens discussion of sexually transmitted infections

Chapter 6

- Expands coverage of social media sites
- Greater attention to the importance of nonverbal communication
- Updates research about sex differences in communication
- Further discussion of conflict in relationships

Chapter 7

- Updates marriage trends
- Explains why marriage rates vary across race and ethnicity
- Reviews the research about marriage across social class boundaries
- Updates coverage of same-sex marriage
- Expands coverage of the "marriage premium," and compares it to the benefits that accrue to cohabitators
- Incorporates the most recent data about marital satisfaction
- Includes new statistics and analysis about changing attitudes toward marriage

Chapter 8

- Increases coverage in fertility patterns throughout the world
- Updates fertility patterns in the United States
- Provides expanded information about the costs and benefits of raising children
- Expands coverage of those who are childfree by choice and by infertility
- Provides new information about transracial adoption
- Elaborates on the transition to parenthood

Chapter 9

- Introduces the importance of computers as an agent of socialization
- Updates information about gender socialization
- Expands coverage on fathering
- Updates statistics on teen parenting
- Elaborates on the ways that children's characteristics influence parenting
- Expands discussion of grandparents raising grandchildren

Chapter 10

- Updates trends on women's labor force participation
- Revises discussion on the post-recession period to reflect where we are in 2016 and beyond
- Provides additional information about unstable wages and working conditions
- Expands discussion of health insurance and the Affordable Care Act
- Expands coverage on family chores and the division of household labor
- Updates and increases coverage about childcare

Chapter 11

- Provides greater international coverage
- Updates data using the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey and the National Crime Victimization Survey
- Expands coverage of stalking and cyberstalking
- Includes new information about violence in same-sex relationships
- Elaborates on rape and sexual assault, including on college campuses
- Provides new and expanded information on child and elder abuse

Chapter 12

- Clarifies how divorce data are collected and the ways in which collection has changed
- Elaborates on the micro- and macro-level factors associated with divorce
- Expands coverage of alimony
- Updates discussion on joint physical custody
- More fully reviews the short- and long-term effects of divorce on children
- Analyzes the feasibility of a “good divorce”

Chapter 13

- Introduces the differences in women’s downward mobility after divorce by social class
- Elaborates on the double standard in repartnering and remarriage
- Includes new data about cohabitation after divorce
- Expands coverage of stepfamilies
- Further distinguishes between stepmother and stepfather roles
- Compares the sense of family obligation between biological families and stepfamilies

Chapter 14

- Updates changing demographics
- Elaborates on ageism and the myths surrounding aging
- Includes new information about the increase of young adults living with their parents
- Expands coverage of same-sex elderly couples
- Discusses the micro- and macro-level reasons that the age at retirement is increasing
- Further coverage of health issues such as Alzheimer’s Disease and long-term care

Chapter 15

- Makes more explicit policy comparisons between the United States and other countries
- Greater coverage of telecommuting jobs
- Updates coverage of the minimum wage compared with living wages

- Expands analysis of the Earned Income Tax Credit
- Introduces the Child Tax Credit
- Added coverage of Social Security and Medicare

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Visual Style and Assessment Tools

Many college students today are *visual learners*, reading more Web sites, magazines, graphic novels, e-mails, and text messages than ever before. They learn and absorb information differently, thriving in an environment awash in information technology, where fast delivery and visually rich presentations are expected.

Professors, myself included, have been challenged by students’ seeming disinterest in traditional textbooks. Many perceive textbooks as boring, outdated, and irrelevant. They find the material too intimidating to master. Many would rather consult Google, a study partner, or a classmate rather than struggle with their textbook if they have a question.

This text has been designed with these concerns in mind. Based on a sound scholarship, the text is written in a conversational tone to help grab and hold students’ attention. Each chapter begins with an engaging video and opening vignette about a couple or family whose story illustrates the chapter’s main ideas. The video is then recalled at the end of the chapter as students answer questions applying what they have learned. The last paragraph of each chapter (**Bringing It Full Circle**) asks students to think critically about what they have learned and apply it to the video from the chapter opener.

My overall goal is to present the material in a lively and appealing format, with 15 chapters to grab and retain students’ attention as they work through their Marriages and Families course.

- For professors, this text is grounded in solid theory and research.
- For students, it is accessible, relevant, and engaging.
- For both, the text captures the compelling relationship and family issues of our time.

Pedagogical Features

The features in each chapter are specifically designed to make learning easier and more rewarding, and to highlight the themes of the text:

Opening Vignette and Video Clip

Grabbing students' attention immediately. Each chapter begins with a compelling personal narrative and accompanying video clip that chronicles an individual's or couple's experience that is relevant to the chapter. Students can identify with these real stories; they bring the material to life, revealing the micro- and macro-level connections in our relationships while stimulating students' critical evaluation of the material. Examples of vignettes and video clips include a couple describing the benefits of their arranged marriage; a young couple discussing their decision to cohabit; insights into the double standard from both a male and a female perspective; a moving account of an international adoption; how one family juggles work and family responsibilities; a heroic confrontation of intimate partner violence; a young woman's painful remembrance of her parents' divorce; and the story of caring for a frail elderly parent while also caring for a young child at home. Vignettes and video clips use humor, emotion, and curiosity to engage students and immediately draw them into the chapter.

Bringing It Full Circle

Revisiting and reinforcing student learning. Each chapter's concluding section revisits the opening narrative and *Exploring Families* video clip and prompts students to think critically about it in the context of what they have learned in the chapter. For example, the opening story in Chapter 12, "The Process of Divorce," presents a child's view of her parents' divorce. In the *Bringing It Full Circle* feature, we return to this case, and pose several questions that draw on the chapter content.

- How would you describe Melanie's experiences with the different stations of her parents' divorce: emotional, legal, economic, co-parental, community, and psychic?
- Because the research shows that children do better if they remain in close contact with their noncustodial parents, should children like Melanie be required to stay with their fathers even if they don't really want to?
- Do you think that Melanie's family had a "good divorce"? Explain your answer.
- If you or someone close to you divorced, how would you explain it to your child? Would you focus only on micro-level issues, or would any macro-level issues be relevant?

Boxed Features

Tying It All Together: Factors that Shape...

Explicitly identifying the micro and macro links. Students often have difficulty identifying the importance of culture and social structure and how these influence personal relationships. This feature highlights the first theme by explicitly identifying micro- and macro-level influences on our marriages, families, and close relationships. Students benefit from the insights of each perspective and their interrelationship. Within each chapter, this feature shows how culture, history, social institutions, and social status shape personal choices and constraints, including sexual scripts; dating and mate-selection practices; the decline in marriage rates; the division of household labor; and the decision to have a child.

Policy and You: From Macro to Micro

Connecting social structure to our personal lives. This feature, supporting the text's first theme, critically examines programs or policies designed to strengthen families and focuses on how social structure creates specific needs within families, and how social policy can address those needs. Chapters include specific examples of "best practices," here in the United States and abroad, to show students what is happening and what is possible. Examples include maternity and family leave policies in the United States compared with other developed nations; the history of domestic partnerships and issues surrounding same-sex marriage; budgeting choices families living in poverty must make; and a look at family allowances available in more than 80 countries to help families with the costs of raising children.

My Family

Relating personal narratives that reveal how macro-level factors shape our micro-level experiences, choices, and constraints. Family narratives bring the material alive for students. These boxes allow students the opportunity to see all three text themes in action: the effect of social structure on families, the diversity of family experience, and the importance of systematic research. Examples of this feature include stories of delaying marriage; living in a stepfamily; dating violence; growing up poor; and the experience of being widowed at a young age.

Diversity in Families

Showing the diversity of experience around the world, and within our own country. This feature illustrates a variety of diverse family experiences and traditions, and emphasizes the text's second theme: families are not monolithic or static but are ever-changing. Examples include stories of social class differences in the way parents socialize their children; teaching children about racism; sex trafficking of children; patriarchy and divorce laws in Egypt; and father-headed single families.

Why Do Research?

Demonstrating the relevance of research. Bolstering the text's third theme, students learn the logic behind quantitative and qualitative research. All chapters are grounded in research and include many articles, books, and reports published in the last few years. This box offers specific theoretical or methodological insights so that students can better evaluate research findings and see the relevance to their lives. For example, students will read about the distinction between correlation and causation by using the example of successful men who were raised by single parents. Specific methodologies are highlighted, such as content analysis to see how adoption is portrayed in college textbooks or how art can be used to understand children's views of divorce. In addition, the feature shows how research findings can challenge our stereotypes, such as whether women are really more talkative than men.

Getting to Know Yourself

Employing self-tests and inventories that allow students to assess their own attitudes and compare their opinions with others. This feature includes fun and engaging self-tests so that stu-

dents can identify their own opinions, and compare themselves to others. Self-tests include both adapted classic scales as well as newly created self-tests, such as ones that assess attitudes toward divorce, sex differences in communication styles, and attitudes toward homosexuality. These self-tests can be taken individually or completed in class to springboard discussion.

Supplements

Instructor's Manual and Test Bank

Each chapter in the Instructor's Manual includes the following resources: Chapter Summary, Chapter Outline, Learning Objectives, Critical Thinking Questions, Activities for Classroom Participation, Key Terms, and a Video User's Guide. A grid opens each chapter that correlates the detailed chapter outline to its corresponding video. Designed to make your lectures more effective and to save preparation time, this extensive resource gathers useful activities and strategies for teaching your course.

The Test Bank, written by Karen Seccombe, contains more than 1400 questions. Each question is organized by its corresponding Learning Objective and classified according to Bloom's Taxonomy. This third edition Test Bank has been developed thoroughly in response to market feedback. It has also been analyzed by a developmental editor and a copy editor to ensure clarity, accuracy, and delivery of the highest-quality assessment tool.

MyTest

This computerized software allows instructors to create their own personalized exams, to edit any or all of the existing test questions, and to add new questions. Other special features of this program include random generation of test questions, creation of alternate versions of the same test, scrambling question sequence, and test preview before printing. For easy access, this software is available at www.pearsonhighered.com.

PowerPoint Presentations

The PowerPoint presentations for *Exploring Marriages and Families* are informed by instructional and design theory. You have the option in every chapter of choosing from any of the following types of slides: Lecture and Line Art, and/or Special Topics PowerPoints. The Lecture PowerPoint slides follow the chapter outline and integrate images from the textbook. All of the PowerPoints are uniquely designed to present concepts in a clear and succinct manner that allows you to customize them with your own clip art or color ideas. They are available to adopters at www.pearsonhighered.com.

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Now, to the readers—faculty and students alike—if you have questions or comments, please send them my way. I want to hear from you: seccombe@pdx.edu.

All my best,

Karen Seccombe

About the Author

Karen Secombe is a proud community college graduate (Go Citrus!) and a first-generation college student. She is now a professor in the School of Public Health at Portland State University, located in Portland, Oregon. She received her B.A. in sociology at California State University, Chico; her M.S.W. in health and social welfare policy from the University of Washington; and her Ph.D. in sociology from Washington State University. Karen is the author of *Social Problems*, with W. Kornblum and J. Julian; *“So You Think I Drive a Cadillac?”: Welfare Recipients’ Perspectives on the System and Its Reform; Families and Their Social Worlds; Just Don’t Get Sick: Access to Healthcare in the Aftermath of Welfare Reform*, with K. A. Hoffman; and *Families in Poverty*. She is a fellow of the National Council on Family Relations, and a member of the American Sociological Association and the Pacific Sociological Association, where she has held elective offices.

Karen lives in the San Juan Islands, located off the northwest coast of Washington with her husband Richard, a health economist, her 16-year-old daughter, Natalie Rose, her 14-year-old daughter, Olivia Lin, and her two Australian Shepherds, Stella and Bart. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, biking, international travel, and hanging out with her pack. In Spring 2017 she taught in the Semester at Sea program, and along with 600 college students, traveled to Japan, China, Vietnam, Myanmar, India, Mauritius, South Africa, Ghana, and Morocco.



Chapter 1

Why Study Families and Other Close Relationships?



Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Identify the different definitions of “family” and their implications.
- 1.2** Describe the functions of families.
- 1.3** Recognize the link between micro-level and macro-level perspectives on families.
- 1.4** Assess the ways that families are always changing.
- 1.5** Summarize the importance of social science theory and research.

What is a family? This seems a fairly simple question, but it can have a surprisingly complex answer.

Throughout this text, you'll meet people in different types of relationships: married couples, cohabiting couples, same-sex couples, and stepfamilies, to name just a few. Let's introduce a few of these families to you now.

Becca is a 31-year-old single mother of 7-year-old Taylor. Raised in poverty, homeless as a young adult, she has struggled successfully to overcome the odds against her. She is no longer homeless, has completed her degree in community college, and is a loving mother to Taylor. Becca has no relationship with her mother and other relatives. Unfortunately, Becca had to give up a son for adoption before she had Taylor. Today, Becca and Taylor have a good relationship with him and his adoptive family. Are Becca and her mother *family*? Are Taylor and her half-brother *family*?

Melanie, a young woman in her 20s, was devastated by her parents' divorce when she was 10 years old. Like other children whose parents divorced, she harbored dreams that they would one day get back together, even though both parents remarried other people. She had little use for her stepparents at the time but finally realized that her parents would never remarry when her father and his wife had a baby together. Are Melanie and her stepparents *family*? Are her half-brother and her mother *family*?

Meghan and Jonathon—"Jono" as he is called—are a young couple happily in love. They have lived together for a couple of years, and both think they will probably get married someday, even though there has been no explicit discussion of marriage. They believe it's important for her to finish her education first and begin her career. Are Meghan and Jono a *family*?

Tracey and Juan, unable to have biological children, adopted two beautiful children from Colombia. Juan was born in Colombia and still has family there, so it seemed a natural place to pursue adoption. Tracey and Juan have some information on the birth mother of their son John, but they know virtually nothing about the birth mother of their daughter Cassandra. The adoptions are closed; there will be no contact with either birth mother. So, are John and Cassandra's birth mothers part of the *family*?

Karen and Betsy have been together for 13 years. They talked early on about wanting to raise children together. Today they have two children: Henry, 8, and Jayla, 3. Karen gave birth to Henry, and although Henry's father doesn't live close by, he still plays a role in Henry's life. Jayla was adopted and came to them just before her first birthday. Are Karen and Betsy a *family*? Are Betsy and Henry a *family*? Are Henry's father and Jayla a *family*?

Becca, Melanie, Meghan, Jono, Tracey, Juan, Karen, and Betsy represent some of today's families. The number of "traditional" two-parent heterosexual families has declined, whereas the number of nontraditional families is on the rise. Together we'll examine these trends, look at their causes, and discuss their implications.

What is a *family*? Who would guess that such a commonly used word could generate disagreement? We all probably come from some kind of family. Students of all ages crave information about families, including love, sex, relationships, marriage, and children. Unfortunately, most students have individualized views of these issues. They tend to emphasize personal choices without focusing on the broader social, cultural, and historical conditions that shape these choices. This chapter will show you how our personal experiences are shaped by the social structure in which we live. To do this, we introduce you to the latest in research and theory. Be prepared not only to learn "fun facts" to share with your friends, but also be ready to open yourself up to new ways of thinking about the world and your place in it.

How Do We Define Family?

1.1 Identify the different definitions of "family" and their implications.

Welcome to the study of families! This text takes you on a journey of personal self-discovery and greater social awareness. We'll learn about love and dating, cohabitation and marriage, parenting, aging families, divorce and remarriage, families and work, and family crises. Like all journeys, we'll encounter bumps along the road—issues like miscommunication, jealousy, economic problems, discrimination, violence, and other stressors. However, we'll also encounter sources of strength that help families cope

with these stressors—education, legislation to help families, and cultural change that has led to greater acceptance of diversity in family life.

Today, we're surrounded by child-free married couples, multigenerational families, unmarried adults who cohabit and who sometimes have children, stepparents whose stepchildren live with them only part-time, and gay and lesbian partnerships. These types of living arrangements are increasing, whereas the more traditional type of family—husband, wife, and children all living together—is declining in numbers (Desilver, 2016; Lewis & Kreider, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015b).

With such a variety of relationships, how can we define *family*? Some people believe that a couple must be married legally to be considered a family. Others think that children must be present—certainly, you've heard people ask, "So, when are you going to start a family?" They mean, of course, "So, when are you going to have children?" And still others believe that same-sex partners don't really qualify as a family regardless of their level of commitment to one another or whether they are married.

Legal versus Social Science Definitions

How would you define *family*? With all these different possibilities, it's important to stop and reflect on your own views for a moment. The feature, *Getting to Know Yourself: How Do You Define Family?* gives you a chance to think about your definition, and then perhaps, compare it to the way other people think.

Getting To Know Yourself

How Do You Define *Family*?

What is a family? Opinions differ. Let's see what you think. Please answer how you think regarding each statement. There are no right or wrong answers here, just your opinions. Your answers can include:

1 = Yes; 2 = Unsure; 3 = No

- ___ 1. Elian and Rosa have been living together for 2 years but are not married, nor have they seriously discussed marriage. Are they a family?
- ___ 2. Jake and Tina have a child together, but they live in separate cities and see each other about once every month or two. Are they a family?
- ___ 3. Soolyn and Tran are married and have two young daughters. Are they a family?
- ___ 4. Jonathan and Patrick have been together for almost a year and spend all their time together. They each have their own place to live, but Patrick has his house up for sale, and as soon as it sells, he'll move in with Jonathan. Are they a family?
- ___ 5. William and Jenica have cohabited for 7 years and have no children. Are they a family?
- ___ 6. Janie, Helen, and Rachel live with a man who is legally married to only one of them, yet all three women consider themselves married to him, a practice known as *polygamy*. Are they a family?
- ___ 7. Hannah, 16, ran away from her parents' home last summer and has been living on the streets. She has since met up with a group of runaway and homeless youth. Together they beg or steal food, and some of the young

people prostitute themselves to earn money for the group. They take care of one another. Are they a family?

- ___ 8. Corey, 8, has lived in four different foster homes since he was taken away from his drug-addicted and violent parents when he was 3. He has lived in his current foster home for 2 years and has a good relationship with the family in which he lives. His foster parents treat him just like they treat their other children. He does not know how much longer he will stay there but hopes it is for a long time. Are they a family?
- ___ 9. Dee has five children fathered by five different men. She has never been married. The fathers rarely if ever pay child support and only a few come around sporadically to see her or their child. Are Dee and her children's fathers a family?
- ___ 10. Lucas and Emma are a married couple who are firmly committed to not having children. Are they a family?

Tally your answers. The lower the score, the broader your definition of family. The higher your score, the narrower your definition of family. Compare your answers with others. How do you compare?

What Do You Think?

- 1. What is your score? Do you have a broad or narrow definition of family, or are you somewhere in between?
- 2. Where do you think your views have come from? Do they reflect the values of your parents, your culture, or your peers? Which of these influences is the strongest, and why?

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a *family* as two or more people living together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. Heterosexual or homosexual unmarried partners are excluded from this definition. The U.S. government continues to use this traditional definition as the basis for many social programs and policies. However, many people object to the Census Bureau's definition because it excludes groups who consider themselves to be families. They argue that government should expand its definition of *family* because it doesn't adequately reflect the reality of the rich diversity of family life in our society today (Amato, 2014; Lloyd, Few, & Allen, 2009). If people believe they are a family, these feelings shouldn't be ignored because of rigid definitions.

The leading scholarly journal about families, published by the National Council on Family Relations, changed its name from *The Journal of Marriage and the Family* to *The Journal of Marriage and Family* (deleting the second *the*), reflecting the growing recognition that families come in many forms. This text also opts for a broader, more inclusive definition, proposing that a **family** is a relationship by blood, marriage, or affection, in which members may cooperate economically, may care for children, and may consider their identity to be intimately connected to the larger group. It can include a **family of orientation**, which is the family that you are born into, and a **family of procreation**, which is the family you make through marriage, partnering, or parenthood.

This text includes **fictive kin** in its definition of family. *Fictive kin* are non-relatives whose bonds are strong and intimate, such as the relationships shared among unmarried homosexual or heterosexual partners, or close friends. Fictive kin can provide important services and support for individuals, including financial assistance or help through life transitions (Heslin, Hamilton, Singzon, Smith, & Anderson, 2011). Nonetheless, fictive kin are routinely passed over for critical benefits that more traditional family members have come to expect, such as health insurance or tax advantages.

family

A relationship by blood, marriage, or affection, in which members may cooperate economically, may care for children, and may consider their identity to be intimately connected to the larger group.

family of orientation

The family that you are born into.

family of procreation

The family you make through marriage, partnering, or parenthood.

fictive kin

Nonrelatives whose bonds are strong and intimate.

There are many different kinds of families, including traditional married couples, same-sex couples, and even fictive kin.

Why are Definitions So Important?

Why should we care about the definition of a *family*? How society defines a family has important consequences with respect to rights, including access to a spouse's or partner's Social Security benefits, pensions, and health insurance (Rights Campaign, 2016). For example, unmarried partners can't file jointly on federal taxes. Many employer health insurance plans cover only a worker's spouse and dependent children. Unmarried partners may be excluded completely from coverage. Therefore, if an unmarried couple with one employed partner has children, the children may be covered under the employed parent's health insurance plan, but the partner may be excluded. These decisions involve billions of dollars in employer and government benefits and affect millions of adults and children each year, as shown in the feature "Policy and



Policy and You: From Macro to Micro

Domestic Partner Benefits



One clear way in which societal definitions of *family* affect our individual relationships can be seen in our marriage laws. Unmarried adults in long-term, committed relationships—both heterosexual and same-sex couples—are routinely denied important benefits, such as spousal health insurance or dental care, bereavement leave, relocation benefits, or the benefit of filing joint tax returns or receiving Social Security. They face numerous obstacles simply because they lack the legal status of marriage. These obstacles affect the security and well-being of millions of families. The Supreme Court’s landmark decision in 2015 allowing same-sex couples to wed did little to guarantee the rights of those in committed relationships outside of marriage.

However, employers are recognizing that denying benefits to partners in committed relationships may be not only unjust, but also bad for business. In 1982, the New York City weekly *The Village Voice* became the first employer to offer “domestic partner benefits.” Since that time, more than half of employers have chosen to offer domestic partner benefits to an employee’s unmarried partner, whether of the same or opposite sex. These employers include more than 300 *Fortune 500* companies, along with other businesses, and city, county, and state agencies.

Why do a growing number of employers offer benefits to domestic partners? One reason is simple fairness. Before same-sex partners could legally marry, many employers believed that offering benefits to their employees’ legally married partners, but not to nonlegal married partners, discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation or marital status. In June 2015, the Supreme Court made same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states.

A second reason is competition in today’s labor market. To attract and retain a high-quality, diverse workforce, employers must offer a comprehensive benefit package. Offering domestic partner benefits is simply a sound business practice.

What Do You Think?

1. Should an employer’s domestic partner benefits cover both homosexual and heterosexual relationships? Why or why not?
2. Should we leave it to employers or to the state or federal government to decide whether to offer domestic partner benefits?

Sources: Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2009; Human Rights Campaign, 2012; Miller, 2015.

You: From Macro to Micro.” In addition, special membership discounts to a wide variety of organizations are available to families, but not to people who are roommates or friends.

The Functions of Families

1.2 Describe the functions of families.

Why do people marry? Why do we live in families? Whereas some functions of marriage and families might differ from one society to another, what is more remarkable is how *similar* these are across time and place. All societies have **marriage**, an institutional arrangement between persons to publicly recognize social and intimate bonds. There are clear norms that specify who is eligible to be married, to whom and how

marriage

An institutional arrangement between persons to publicly recognize social and intimate bonds.

many people an individual can marry, what the marriage ceremony should be like, and how married persons should behave. Anthropologist William Stephens (1963) provided a broad definition of *marriage*: (1) it is a socially legitimate sexual union; (2) begun with a public announcement; (3) undertaken with some idea of permanence; and (4) assumed with a more or less explicit marriage contract that spells out reciprocal obligations between spouses, and between spouses and their children. Marriages and families in all cultures include such functions as

- *Regulation of Sexual Behavior*: Every culture, including your own, regulates sexual behavior, including who can have sex with whom and under what circumstances they can do so. One virtually universal regulation is the *incest taboo* that forbids sexual activity (and marriage) among close family members. The definition of a *close family member* differs, but includes at least parents and their children, and siblings. The incest taboo reduces the chance of inherited genetic abnormalities, and it also forges broader alliances by requiring marriage outside of the inner family circle.
- *Reproducing and Socializing Children*: Each society must produce new members and ensure **socialization**, teaching children the rules, expectations, and culture of that society. Societies generally prefer that reproduction occur within an established family, rather than randomly among unrelated partners so that birth parents will be responsible for socializing children.
- *Property and Inheritance*: For much of human history, when people were nomadic hunters and gatherers, families owned little or nothing of their own, and so had nothing to pass down or to inherit. However, the invention of agriculture made it possible for people to own property, or to obtain a surplus beyond what they needed for survival. Thus, it became important to identify heirs. Monogamy ensured that men would know who their heirs were; without monogamy, paternity was uncertain (Engels, 1902/1884).
- *Economic Cooperation*: A family is the group responsible for providing its members with food, shelter, clothing, and other basic necessities. Family members work with each other to provide these necessities. Often there is a gendered division of labor, although what constitutes *male tasks* and *female tasks* varies from one society to the next.
- *Social Placement, Status, and Roles*: Families give their members a social identity and position. Members find their place in the complex web of *statuses* (the positions that people occupy in a group or in a society) and *roles* (the behaviors associated with those positions). For example, families give us our initial social class position, provide us with a religious affiliation, and give us a racial and an ethnic identity.

- *Care, Warmth, Protection, and Intimacy*: Humans need far more than food, shelter, and clothing to survive. Families are intended to provide the emotional care needed to survive and thrive. Although romantic love might not be a basis for marriage in many societies, spouses are expected to care for and protect each other, and to love and nurture their children.

Most of us have lived in some sort of family, so we naturally think of ourselves as “experts” on the topic; yet our personal experiences are part of a larger picture. Although all of us experience family life as individuals, we can’t fully understand this experience without appreciating the environment in which it takes place. The remainder of this chapter introduces the three key themes that are the focus of this text.

socialization

The process by which people learn the rules, expectations, and culture of society.

In thinking about your family of orientation, how did your own family fulfill these functions? For example, how did your family socialize you and teach you about the culture you live in? How did your family care for, love, and nurture you? What type of identity and social position did your family give you?

Families have many functions in society. One of the universal functions of families is to care for and nurture the children.



Theme 1: Linking the Micro-Level and Macro-Level Perspectives on Families

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

First, the best way to truly understand families is to link two perspectives: the “micro-level” and the “macro-level.” Although it’s easy to think of our relationships solely in personal terms, they’re actually shaped in large part by **social structure**, which are the patterns of social organization that guide our interactions with others. Let’s discuss this topic further.

We live in a society with hundreds of millions of other people, most of whom also have families. Most of the time, we focus on the uniqueness of our own relationships: “I love him because ...,” “We get along so well because ...,” “I chose to marry her because ...,” “We decided not to have children because... .” Many people focus primarily on this **micro-level** perspective, concentrating exclusively on their individual interactions in specific settings. They focus on individual uniqueness, personal decision making, and the interactions between small groups of people in specific situations. For example, if you were taking a micro-level perspective on family problems, you might conclude that divorce could be reduced by teaching couples better communication skills, that violence can be controlled by learning to manage anger more effectively, or that families stressed with balancing the demands of work and family just need to learn to manage their time better. In other words, a micro-level perspective emphasizes the importance of relationship dynamics, including personal choices or constraints, but doesn’t place those family dynamics into their social context.

Although each relationship is certainly unique, families also behave in remarkably predictable ways. For example, if your female cousin told you that she is getting married next year, could you guess the color of her wedding dress? Of course, her dress could be any color of the rainbow, or even black with pink stripes! However, you would probably guess that her dress will be white.

Our relationships are fairly predictable because they operate within the larger social structure of society. One important theme you will find throughout this text is that *elements of social structure shape our daily experiences, privileges, and constraints*. The personal choices that we make—such as whom we marry; what age we marry; whether we have children and, if so, how many; how we divide the household labor; what type of job we get; or the childcare we arrange—are all affected by social structure.

A **macro-level** perspective examines how marriage, families, and intimate relationships are interconnected with the rest of society, its culture, and its institutions. Families are not isolated entities. Realizing how social, cultural, economic, and political forces influence families helps us understand our supposedly “personal” choices. Dating, marriage, raising children, divorce, domestic violence, work–family stress, teen pregnancy, and most other features of families and intimate relationships are social processes rooted in social structure. To understand these processes, we must examine the organization of that social structure.

Family as a Social Institution

Because families and close relationships fulfill many of our personal needs, it’s easy to forget that families are also a **social institution**: a major sphere of social life, with a set of beliefs and rules organized to meet basic human needs. Therefore, in addition to discussing *your* specific family, throughout this text we’ll discuss the social context of families. Families are a social institution in much the same way that political, economic, religious, healthcare, and educational systems are social institutions. In early human civilizations, the family was the center of most activities. Within families, people learned and practiced religion, educated their young, and took care of the sick. Over time, other institutions took on many of these functions. Today, people worship in churches, educate children in schools, and go to hospitals when they are sick.

social structure

A stable framework of social relationships that guides our interactions with others.

micro-level

Focus on the individual and his or her interactions in specific settings.

macro-level

Focus on the interconnectedness of marriage, families, and intimate relationships with the rest of society.

social institution

A major sphere of social life, with a set of beliefs and rules that is organized to meet basic human needs.

People still want to marry, despite a high divorce rate in the United States. Most individuals agree on some fundamental expectations between a husband and a wife, such as marital fidelity. For example, a 2015 Gallup Poll, based on a large representative sample of adults, found that more than 90 percent of Americans believe it is morally wrong for married men or women to have an affair (Dugan, 2015b).

Like other social institutions, families can't be understood without examining how they influence and are influenced by social institutions. Religious customs, the type of economy, the structure of education, and the political system all shape family patterns, as do our attitudes, behaviors, and opportunities. For example, until recently in Afghanistan, the Taliban did not allow girls to go to school or women to work outside the home. Women had virtually no power inside or outside the family; today, although there have been improvements, women and girls continue to face major constraints on their lives (Oxfam International, 2014; Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, 2016; Trust in Education, 2016).

Social Status and Families

status

The social position that a person occupies.

master status

The major defining status or statuses that a person occupies.

In addition to social institutions, another aspect of social structure is **status**, or the social position(s) we occupy. You hold many statuses; you may be a daughter or son, a student, an employee, a friend, a roommate, or a parent, to name just a few. A **master status** is a status that tends to dominate the others. Most of us hold several master statuses, each with a set of privileges or constraints. Sex, race, ethnicity, and social class represent some of the major organizing constructs in our society, as we shall see in Chapter 2. For example, when the Pew Research Center interviewed second-generation Hispanics and Asians about their views of success, nearly three-quarters of both groups believed that “most people can get ahead if they work hard.” In contrast, only 58 percent of the full adult population felt that way (Pew Research Center, 2013b). Why do you think there is such a large racial and ethnic difference in something as fundamental as what it takes to succeed? Are Asians and Hispanics just more positive by nature, or could there be some structural reasons for their views, such as witnessing their parents' assimilation?

How do micro-level and macro-level perspectives together shed light on families? The feature “Tying It All Together” shows the interrelationship between these perspectives. Next, you'll read about one detailed example of how macro-level issues can influence our personal choices—unemployment and marriage rates—and throughout this text you'll see many more ways that micro-level and macro-level issues are linked.

An Example of the Interrelationship of Macro-Level and Micro-Level Perspectives: Unemployment and Marriage Rates

Many people are concerned about the number of single-parent households headed by women. People often wonder why these women keep having children outside of the institution of marriage. Terry Lynn is one of these women, and if you look closer, you can see that her life choices are grounded in a social context.

Terry Lynn is a single mother who has never married and is raising a 6-year-old daughter alone, with the temporary help of cash welfare assistance (Seccombe, 2014). She is a shy young woman, yet at the same time, she's eager to tell her story. Terry Lynn works part-time at a bowling alley, a good job considering her weak reading and writing skills. She takes the bus to work, and various shifts sometimes keep her at work well into the night. She is savvy about the additional help she needs to support her child, and therefore deliberately keeps her employment hours below a certain threshold so that she and her daughter will continue to qualify for Medicaid, the government-sponsored health insurance program. Her employer doesn't offer health insurance, and even at the age of 24, Terry Lynn knows that

Typing It All Together

The Interrelationship of Micro-Level and Macro-Level Factors

What do we mean by *micro-level* and *macro-level factors or perspectives*? Both are important for understanding marriage, families, and intimate relationships. At a micro-level, the focus is on the individual and his or her social interactions. Opportunities, choices, and constraints are made or experienced by the individual, without much thought given to the social and cultural context in which that person lives. In contrast, a macro-level understanding shows us that our personal relationships are interconnected with the rest of society. Social structure influences the opportunities, choices, and constraints that we experience everywhere in life, including in intimate relationships.

Micro-Level Factors

The focus is on the individual and his or her social interactions:

- Personal choices
- Behaviors
- Feelings
- Communication
- Decisions
- Constraints
- Values

Macro-Level Factors

The focus is on the way our personal relationships interconnect with the rest of society, the recognition that our social structure influences our marriages and families:

- Culture
- History
- Power and inequality
- Social institutions, including the economy, political system, or dominant religion
- Social status, including sex, race, ethnicity, and social class
- Social movements and social change

What Do You Think?

1. Can you think of three ways in which our culture has shaped your personal attitudes or values about specific family or intimate relationships?
2. How would a social institution such as the dominant religion affect you personally if you do not practice that religion? For example, how would Christianity affect you if you are Jewish?

providing coverage for her daughter is vital. She and her daughter live with a sister in a cramped, rundown, two-bedroom apartment in an unfashionable part of town. The furniture is second hand, and the couch is threadbare. Nonetheless, Terry Lynn is proud of herself and her daughter for “making it” on their own. You may wonder where the child’s father is. He comes around now and then, she says, usually when he wants money or sex from her. Does Terry Lynn ever plan to marry him? Her answer is a definite “No.”