Chapter 01-Introduction: Changes and Definitions

Welcome to this Sociology of the Family Free Online textbook. I am the author and have worked for over a year writing this textbook so that students can have a free alternative to the expensive textbooks currently being sold in campus bookstores. I have taught Sociology of The Family for over 20 years and have a Ph.D. in Family Studies from Brigham Young University (Class of 1991). I have taught thousands of students how to understand the family using sociology as a framework for gaining insight and expertise in their study of the family. Most of my students did not continue on in the field of family studies. A few are professors in their own right and others are therapist practicing in their communities.

My bias toward the family is to provide you with information that is scientifically sound and practically useful. It is not enough for me to simply spread facts. I want to tell students what works, what doesn't work, and how to tell the difference in finding real solutions to their own life troubles. Call it bias or just common sense, if you read this book you'll find more answers than questions. My first full-time gig as a professor of sociology was in a community college where administrators demanded that we provide a service to our students that was worth the money they paid us for teaching. I have continued on in this professional commitment since then. Having said that, enjoy the textbook.

In all societies, the family is the premier institution for all of the following: socialization of children, adult intimate relationships, life-long economic support and cooperation, and continuity of relationships along the life-course. Sociologists are leaders among scientists who study the family. They have functioned in a core assessment role for describing, explaining, and predicting family-based social patterns for the United States and other countries of the world. Sociologists have allowed us to understand the larger social and personal level trends in families.

Family Structures

The family structures that were very common a century ago are not nearly as common today. In the US around the year 1900 most families had 3 generations living in one home (e.g., children, parents, and uncle/aunt/grandparent) and most did manual labor. Today, very few families live with multiple generations. Most modern families fall into one of two types: nuclear, or blended. The Nuclear Family is a family group consisting of mother & father and their children. This is the family type that is mostly preferred. One variation of this type is the single-parent family, which can be created by unwed
motherhood, divorce, or death of a spouse. The second most common form is the Blended Family, which is the family created by remarriage including step-siblings and parents. Finally, all of the family relations you have past your nuclear or blended family we call Extended Family, which are one's relatives beyond nuclear and blended family levels (i.e. cousins, aunts & uncles, grand and great grandparents).

The US Census Bureau conducts annual surveys of the US population and publishes them as the Current Population Surveys. Table 1 represents the US family Types as of October 1, 2008. You will notice that marrieds comprise the largest proportion of family types in 2008. Single never marrieds are the second largest type and include another 6.8 million cohabiters of opposite sex and an unknown number of same sex cohabiters. Next is divorced, widowed, then separated (see Table UC1. Opposite Sex Unmarried Couples by Labor Force Status of Both Partners: 2008 retrieved 30 March 2009 from http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2008.html).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>123,671,000</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>14,314,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>23,346,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>5,183,000</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Married-Single</td>
<td>71,479,000</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Families 15 and over</td>
<td>237,993,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look at Figure 1 below to see the US trend of actual numbers in millions of family types. It shows that the single largest type of family in the US has always been marrieds then never marrieds. The divorced overtook widowed category in the 1970s and has been higher ever since. Why are the trends upward? Simply put, these are numbers and not rates nor percentages. The population has grown and therefore the population size has been steadily increasing.
What are the functions of families? In studying the family, Functional Theorists (See Chapter 3) have identified some common and nearly universal family functions. That means almost all families in all countries around the world have at least some of these functions in common. Table 2 shows many of the global functions of the family.

### Economic Support

By far, economic support is the most common function of today's families. When your parents let you raid their pantry, wash clothes in their laundry, or replenish your checking account, that's economic support. For another young adult, say in New Guinea, if she captures a wild animal and cooks it on an open fire, that's also economic support in a different cultural context. I've always been amazed at how far family economic cooperation extends. Some families cooperate in business-like relationships. In Quebec, Montreal there is an established pattern of Italian immigrants who help family and friends emigrate from Italy to Canada. They subsidize each other's travel costs, help each other find employment once in Canada, and even privately fund some mortgages for one another. Each participant is expected to support others in the same manner. To partake in this form of economic cooperation is to assume a very business-like relationship.

### Emotional Support

Emotional relationships are also very common, but you must understand there is a tremendous amount of cultural diversity in how intimacy is experienced in various families around the world. Intimacy is the social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical trust that is mutually shared between family members. Family members share confidences, advice, trust, secrets, and ongoing mutual concern. Many family scientists
believe that intimacy in family relationships functions as a strong buffer to the ongoing stresses experienced by family members outside of the home.

Socialization

Socialization of children is covered in more detail in a Chapter Four. For now, keep in mind that children are born with the potential to be raised as humans. They will realize this potential if older family members or friends take the time to protect and nurture them into their cultural and societal roles. Today the family is the core of primary socialization. But many other societal institutions contribute to the process including schools, religion, workplace, and media.

Sexuality and Reproduction Control

The family has traditionally asserted control of sexuality and reproduction. A few centuries ago the father and mother even selected the spouses for many of their children (they still do in many countries). Today, U.S. parents want their adult children to select their own spouses. Older family members tend to encourage pregnancy and childbirth only in marriage or a long-term relationship. Unwed mothers are mothers who are not legally married at the time of the child's birth. Being unwed brings up concerns of economic, emotional, social, and other forms of support for the mother that may or may not be present from the father. Many fathers reject their fatherly obligations in the case of unwed mothers.

When an unwed mother delivers the baby, it is often the older female family members who end up providing the functions of support for that child rather than the birth father. Table 3 shows the unwed mother births for the US in 2000 and 2006. Most of the 4,266,000 live US births in 2006 were to married mothers. But about 1/10 of teen mothers and 38 percent of all mothers were unwed (retrieved 30 March 2009 from http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/09s0077.pdf). This trend of increasing unwed birth rates suggests that more and more families have less control by sanctioning childbirth within marriage. On the other side of the coin, many of these unwed mothers marry the child's fathers and many of those marriages eventually end in divorce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Births to Unwed Teens</th>
<th>Births to All Unwed Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>33.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Percentage of All Births that were to Unwed Teens and Mothers of All Ages Years 2000 and 2006

Taken from Statistical Abstracts of the US on 30 March 2009 from Table 87. Births to Teenage Mothers and Unmarried Women and Births With Low Birth Weight-States and Island Areas: 2000 to 2006 http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/tables/09s0087.pdf

Ascribed Status

Finally, ascribed status is there at birth. With your friends, have you noticed that one or two tend to be informally in charge of the details? You might be the one who calls everyone and makes reservations or buys the tickets for the others. If so, you would have
the informal role of “organizer.” Status is a socially defined position, or what you do in a role. There are three types of status considerations: Ascribed Status is present at birth (race, sex, or class), Achieved Status is attained through one's choices and efforts (college student, movie star, teacher, or athlete), and Master Status is a status which stands out above our other statuses and which distracts others from seeing who we really are.

You were born into your racial, cultural-ethnic, religious and economic statuses. That shaped to some degree the way you grew up and were socialized. By far in our modern societies, achieved status (which comes as a result of your own efforts) is more important than ascribed (which you're born with) for most members of society. Although the degree of achievement you attain often depends heavily on the level of support families give to you.

Another consideration about groups and our roles in them is the fact that one single role can place a rather heavy burden on you (e.g., student). Role strain is the burden one feels within any given role. And when one role comes into direct conflict with another or other roles you might experience role conflict. Role conflict is the conflict and burdens one feels when the expectations of one role compete with the expectations of another role.

Groups

The first and most important unit of measure in sociology is the group, which is a set of two or more people who share common identity, interact regularly, and have shared expectations (roles), and function in their mutually agreed upon roles. Most people use the word “group” differently from the sociological use. They say group even if the cluster of people they are referring to don't even know each other (like 6 people standing at the same bus stop). Sociologists use “aggregate,” which is a number of people in the same place at the same time. So, people in the same movie theater, people at the same bus stop, and even people at a university football game are considered aggregates rather than groups. Sociologists also discuss categories. A category is a number of people who share common characteristics. Brown-eyed people, people who wear hats, and people who vote independent are categories—they don't necessarily share the same space, nor do they have shared expectations. In this text we mostly discuss trends and patterns in family groups and in large categories of family types.

Family groups are crucial to society and are what most of you will form in your own adult lives. Groups come in varying sizes: dyads, which are groups of two people and triads, which are groups of three people. The number of people in a group plays an important structural role in the nature of the group's functioning. Dyads are the simplest groups because 2 people have only 1 relationship between them. Triads have three relationships. A group of 4 has 6 relationships, 5 has 10, 6 has 15, 7 has 21, and one of my students from Brazil has 10 brothers and sisters and she counts 91 relationships just in her immediate family (not counting the brothers and sisters in law). When triads form it looks much like a triangle and these typically take much more energy than dyads. A newly married couple experience great freedoms and opportunities to nurture their marital relationship. A triad forms when their first child is born. Then they experience a tremendous incursion upon their marital relationship from the child and the care demanded by the child. As Bill Cosby said in his book Fatherhood, “Children by their very nature are designed to ruin your marriage” (1987, Doubleday Publisher, NY).
As sociologists further study the nature of the group's relationships they realize that there are two broad types of groups: primary groups, which tend to be smaller, less formal, and more intimate (families and friends), and secondary groups, which tend to be larger, more formal, and much less personal (you and your doctor, mechanic, or accountant). Look at the diagram below in Figure 2. Typically with your primary groups, say with your family, you can be much more spontaneous and informal. On Friday night you can hang out wherever you want, change your plans as you want, and experience fun as much as you want. Contrast that to the relationship with your doctor. You have to call to get an appointment, wait if the doctor is behind, address him or her as “Doctor,” then once the diagnoses and co-pay are made you leave and have to make another formal appointment if you need another visit. Your Introduction to Sociology class is most likely large and secondary. Your family and friends tend to be few in numbers and primary in nature.

**Family Systems Theory**

One core definition that will help you in studying the family is that of Family Systems. Family Systems Theory claims that the family is understood best by conceptualizing it as a complex, dynamic, and changing collection of parts, subsystems and family members. Much like a mechanic would interface with the computer system of a broken down car to diagnose which systems are broken (transmission, electric, fuel, etc.) and repair it, a therapist or researcher would interact with family members to diagnose how and where
the systems of the family are in need of repair or intervention. Family Systems Theory comes under the Functional Theory umbrella and shares the functional approach of considering the dysfunctions and functions of complex groups and organizations.

**Sociological Imagination**

The average person lives too narrow a life to get a clear and concise understanding of today's complex social world. Our daily lives are spent among friends and family, at work and at play, and watching TV and surfing the Internet. There is no way one person can grasp the big picture from their relatively isolated lives. There's just not enough time or capacity to be exposed to the complexities of a society of 310 million people. There are thousands of communities, millions of interpersonal interaction, billions of Internet information sources, and countless trends that transpire without many of us even knowing they exist. What can we do to make sense of it all?

Psychology gave us the understanding of self-esteem, economics gave us the understanding of supply and demand, and physics gave us the Einstein theory of E=MC2. When I learned of the sociological imagination by Mills, I realized that it gives us a framework for understanding our social world that far surpasses any common sense notion we might derive from our limited social experiences. C. Wright Mills (1916-1962), a contemporary sociologist, suggested that when we study the family we can gain valuable insight by approaching it at two core societal levels. He stated, “neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” (Mills, C. W. 1959. The Sociological Imagination page ii; Oxford U. Press). Mills identified “Troubles” (challenges on the personal level) and “Issues” (challenges on the larger social level) as key principles for wrapping our minds around many of the hidden social processes that transpire in an almost invisible manner in today's societies. Look at Figure 3 below to see a diagram of the Sociological Imagination and its two levels (personal and larger social).

**Personal Troubles** are private problems experienced within the character of the individual and the range of their immediate relation to others. Mills identified the fact that we function in our personal lives as actors and actresses who make choices about our friends, family, groups, work, school, and other issues within our control. We have a degree of influence in the outcome of matters within the personal level. A college student who parties 4 nights out of 7, who rarely attends class, and who never does his homework has a personal trouble that interferes with his odds of success in college. But, when 50 percent of all college students in the country never graduate we call it a larger social issue.

Larger Social Issues lie beyond one's personal control and the range of one's inner life. These pertain to society's organization and processes. To better understand larger social issues, let us define social facts. Social facts are social processes rooted in society rather than in the individual. Émile Durkheim (1858-1917, France) studied the “science of social facts” in an effort to identify social correlations and ultimately social laws designed to make sense of how modern societies worked given that they became increasingly diverse and complex (see Émile Durkheim, The Rules of the Sociological Method, (Edited by Steven Lukes; translated by W.D. Halls). New York: Free Press, 1982, pp. 50-59).
The national cost of a gallon of gas, the War in the Middle East, the repressed economy, the trend of having too few females in the 18-24 year old singles market, and the ever-increasing demand for plastic surgery are just a few of the social facts at play today. Social facts are typically outside of the control of average people. They occur in the complexities of modern society and impact us, but we rarely find a way to significantly impact them back. This is because, as Mills taught, we live much of our lives on the personal level and much of society happens at the larger social level. Without a knowledge of the larger social and personal levels of social experience, we live in what Mills called a false social conscious, which is an ignorance of social facts and the larger social picture.

A larger social issue is illustrated in the fact that nationwide, students come to college as freshmen ill-prepared to understand the rigors of college life. They haven't often been challenged enough in high school to make the necessary adjustments required to succeed as college students. Nationwide, the average teenager text messages, surfs the Net, plays video or online games, hangs out at the mall, watches TV and movies, spends hours each day with friends, and works at least part-time. Where and when would he or she get experience focusing attention on college studies and the rigors of self-discipline required to transition into college credits, a quarter or a semester, study, papers, projects, field trips, group work, or test taking.

In a survey conducted each year by the US Census Bureau, findings suggest that in 2006 the US has about 84 percent who've graduated high school (http://www.factfinder.census.gov; see table R1501 at http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GRTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-_box_head_nbr=R1501&-ds_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00 &-format=US-30). They also found that only 27 percent had a bachelor's degree (http://www.factfinder.census.gov; see table R1502 at http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GRTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-_box_head_nbr=R1502&-ds_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00 &-redoLog=false&-format=US-30&-mt_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_R1501_US30). Given the numbers of freshman students enrolling in college, the percentage with a bachelor's degree should be closer to 50 percent.

The majority of college first year students drop out, because nationwide we have a deficit in the preparation and readiness of Freshmen attending college and a real disconnect in their ability to connect to college in such a way that they feel they belong to it. In fact college dropouts are an example of both a larger social issue and a personal trouble. Thousands of studies and millions of dollars have been spent on how to increase a freshman student's odds of success in college (graduating with a 4-year degree). There are millions and millions of dollars in grant monies awarded each year to help retain college students. Interestingly, almost all of the grants are targeted in such a way that a specific college can create a specific program to help each individual student stay in college and graduate.
The real power of the sociological imagination is found in how you and I learn to distinguish between the personal and social levels in our own lives. Once we do that we can make personal choices that serve us the best, given the larger social forces that we face. In 1991, I graduated with my Ph.D. and found myself in very competitive job market for University professor/researcher positions. With hundreds of my own job applications out there, I kept finishing second or third and was losing out to 10 year veteran professors who applied for entry level jobs. I looked carefully at the job market, my deep interest in teaching, the struggling economy, and my sense of urgency in obtaining a salary and benefits. I came to the decision to switch my job search focus from university research to college teaching positions. Again the competition was intense. On my 301st job application (that's not an exaggeration) I was interviewed and beat out 47 other candidates for my current position. In this case, knowing and seeing the larger social troubles that impacted my success or failure in finding a position was helpful. Because of the Sociological Imagination, I understood the larger social job market and was able to best situate myself within it to solve my personal trouble.

There are larger social trends that will be identified in the 16 chapters that follow this one. Some of them can teach you lessons to use in your own choices. Others simply provide a broad understanding of the context of the family in our complicated society.
This free online textbook comes with 93 self-assessments designed to enlighten YOU about YOUR personal family circumstances. They are not therapy, and they are not diagnostic. They are simply insightful and designed to help you understand better your personal family circumstances.

In this textbook you will find larger social evidences of many current United States family trends. Figure 4 shows these trends and where they will be discussed in this textbook. These changes were initiated in the Industrial Revolution where husbands were called upon to leave the cottage and venture into the factory as breadwinners. Women became homemakers and many eventually ended up in the labor force as well. The trend of having fewer children and having fewer of them die in or immediately after birth is directly related to medical technology and the value of having smaller families in our current service-based economy. The trend of lowering our standards of what exactly a “clean house” means is an adjustment that arguably needed to be made, because the post-World War II marketing campaigns convinced women that a spotless house was a good woman. Today, good women have varying levels of a clean house.
Of concern to many are the continuing high rates of divorce. I fully intend to present you with knowledge about what is happening and what you can do to prevent divorce and enhance the quality and satisfaction of your marriage. These other relatively high, yet declining rates will be discussed in further detail, also providing you with information about what you can do and what works. The higher categories include many trends. Some may comfort you while others may threaten or concern you. I urge you to study them, to listen to your professor, and to ask questions about the things in the study of the family that become important to you.

Simply studying something does not imply that you agree with it or support it for yourself or others any more than studying diseases in your basic health class means you have to go out and get one or support others in getting one. One of the many benefits of being a college student is that it expands and broadens your opinions. I found in my 8 years of college and university that my opinions became more entrenched and I was able to better understand my values and defend my own views. By keeping my mind open and...
my willingness to learn new things, I graduated a better person than when I started. I challenge you to keep your mind open. Trust that learning doesn't mean changing for the worse.

As mentioned above, the Industrial revolution changed societies and their families in an unprecedented way, such that Sociology as a discipline emerged as an answer to many of the new-found societal challenges. Societies had change in unprecedented ways and had formed a new collective of social complexities that the world had never witnessed before. Western Europe was transformed by the industrial revolution. The Industrial Revolution transformed society at every level. Look at Table 4 below to see pre and post-Industrial Revolution social patterns and how different they were.

### Table 4. Pre-Industrial and Post-Industrial Revolution Social Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Industrial Revolution</th>
<th>Post-Industrial Revolution</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm/ Cottage</td>
<td>Factories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Work</td>
<td>Breadwinners/Homemakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Towns</td>
<td>Large Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Families</td>
<td>Small Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogamous Towns</td>
<td>Heterogamous Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Standards of Living</td>
<td>Higher Standards of Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Died Younger</td>
<td>People Die Older</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, families lived on smaller farms and every able member of the family did work to support and sustain the family economy. Towns were small and very similar (homogamy) and families were large (more children=more workers). There was a lower standard of living and because of poor sanitation people died earlier. After the Industrial Revolution, farm work was replaced by factory work. Men left their homes and became breadwinners earning money to buy many of the goods that used to be made by hand at home (or bartered for by trading one's own homemade goods with another's). Women became the supervisors of home work. Much was still done by families to develop their own home goods while many women and children also went to the factories to work. Cities became larger and more diverse (heterogamy). Families became smaller (less farm work required fewer children). Eventually, standards of living increased and death rates declined.

It is important to note the value of women's work before and after the Industrial Revolution. Hard work was the norm and still is today for most women. Homemaking included much unpaid work. For example, my 93 year old Granny is an example of this. She worked hard her entire life both in a cotton factory and at home raising her children, grand-children, and at times great grand-children. When I was a boy, she taught me how to make lye soap by saving the fat from animals they ate. She'd take a metal bucket and poked holes in the bottom of it. Then she burned twigs and small branches until a pile of ashes built up in the bottom of the bucket. After that she filtered water from the well through the ashes and collected the lye water runoff in a can. She heated the animal fat and mixed it in the lye water from the can. When it cooled, it was cut up and used as lye soap. They'd also take that lye water runoff and soak dried white corn in it. The corn kernel shells would become loose and slip off after being soaked. They'd rinse this and
use it for hominy. Or grind it up and make grits from it. We'll talk more about women and work in Chapter 4.

These pre and post-industrial changes impacted all of Western civilization because the Industrial Revolution hit all of these countries about the same way, Western Europe, United States, Canada, and later Japan and Australia. The Industrial Revolution brought some rather severe social conditions which included deplorable city living conditions, crowding, crime, extensive poverty, inadequate water and sewage, early death, frequent accidents, extreme pressures on families, and high illness rates. Today, sociology continues to rise to the call of finding solutions and answers to complex social problems, especially in the family.

**Family Research**

The American Sociological Association is the largest professional sociology organization in the world. There is a section of ASA members that focuses its studies specifically on the family. Here is an expert of their mission statement:

> “Many of society's most pressing problems -- teenage childbearing, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, domestic violence, child and elder abuse, divorce -- are related to or rooted in the family. The Section on Family was founded to provide a home for sociologists who are interested in exploring these issues in greater depth (retrieved 18 May, 2010 from http://www.asanet.org/sections/family.cfm).”

Many family sociologists also belong to the National Council on Family Relations (www.ncfr.org). Their mission statement reads as follows:

> “The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) provides an educational forum for family researchers, educators, and practitioners to share in the development and dissemination of knowledge about families and family relationships, establishes professional standards, and works to promote family well-being (retrieved 18 May, 2010 from http://ncfr.org/about/mission.asp).”

There are other family-related research organizations in the world, but these two rank among the largest and most prestigious organizations in the field of family studies. As with all of sociology and other social sciences, science and scientific rigor is paramount. It is not enough to simply study the family from our narrow personal points of view. We have to reach into the larger social picture and see the hidden social processes that teach us how to inform marriage and family therapy, provide useful and accurate data to governmental and policy-making figures, and provide reliable advice that will help the most people in the most efficient way.

This becomes a scientific endeavor then to study and examine the family with rules of scientific engagement and analysis. For those earning a Ph.D. in a family-related field, science is learned and executed with rigor. If the results of a study are made public and presented for critical review by other family scientists then scientific rigor is even stronger and more credibility can be afforded to those findings. For example, studies have shown that the leading factor of divorce is not any of the following: sex problems, failures to communicate, money mismanagement, nor even in-law troubles. What is the leading cause of divorce? Would you believe it is marrying too young? Specifically, if you marry at 17, 18, or 19 you are far more likely to divorce than if you wait to marry in
your 20s. This was discovered and confirmed over decades of studying who divorced and which factors contributed more to divorce than others (See Chapter 12). The cool thing about knowing the risks of marrying as a teen is that you can choose to wait until you are older, more established in your sense of self, and more experienced in knowing your own likes and dislikes.

**Family Culture**

Another key point in studying the family is to understand that all families share some cultural traits in common, but all also have their own family culture uniqueness. Culture is the shared values, norms, symbols, language, objects, and way of life that is passed on from one generation to the next. Culture is what we learn from our parents, family, friends, peers, and schools. It is shared, not biologically determined. In other words, you are only born with drives, not culture. Most families in a society have similar family cultural traits. But, when you do marry you will learn that the success of your marriage is often based on how well you and your spouse merge your unique family cultures into a new version of a culture that is your own.

Yet, even though family cultures tend to be universal and desirable, we often judge other cultures as being “good, bad, or evil,” with our own culture typically being judged good. We have to consider our perspective when studying families from different cultures. Are we ethnocentric or cultural relativist?

**Ethnocentrism** is the tendency to judge others based on our own experiences. In this perspective, our culture is right, while cultures which differ from our own are wrong. I once visited a beautiful Catholic cathedral, Cathédrale St. Jean in Lyon, France. I fell in love with this beautiful and historic monument to the religious devotion of generations of builders. I learned that it took about 300 years to build, that England's King Henry the VIII married his Italian bride there, and that the a few families had 9 generations of builders working on it. I left with a deep sense of appreciation it all. On the bus back to our hotel, we met some American tourists who were angry about their vacation in France. The gentleman said, “these people will eat anything that crawls under the front porch, they never bathe, they dress funny, and they can't speak one *#&@ word of English!”

Another more valuable and helpful perspective about differing cultures is the perspective called **Cultural Relativism**, the tendency to look for the cultural context in which differences in cultures occur. If you've eaten a meal with your friend's family you have probably noticed a difference in subtle things like the food that is served and how it is prepared. You may have noticed that that family communicates in different ways from your own. You might also notice that their values of fun and relaxation also vary from your own. To dismiss your friend's family as being wrong because they aren't exactly like yours is being closed-minded. Cultural relativists like all the ice-cream flavors, if you will. They respect and appreciate cultural differences even if only from the spectators' point of view. They tend to be teachable, child-like, and open-minded. They tend to enjoy or learn to enjoy the many varieties of the human experience.

An ethnocentric thinks on the level of carrot soup, peel carrots, add water, and boil. The cultural relativist tends to think on the level of a complex stew, peel and prepare carrots, potatoes, onions, mushrooms, broth, tofu, and 10 secret herbs and spices and simmer for 2 hours. The diversity of the human experience is what makes it rich and flavorful.
Socialization

From the first moments of life, children begin a process of socialization wherein parents, family, and friends transmit the culture of the mainstream society and the family to the newborn. They assist in the child's development of his or her own social construction of reality, which is what people define as real because of their background assumptions and life experiences with others. An average US child's social construction of reality includes knowledge that he or she belongs, can depend on others to meet their needs, and has privileges and obligations that accompany membership in their family and community. In a typical set of social circumstances, children grow up through predictable life stages: infancy, preschool, K-12 school years, young adulthood, adulthood, middle adulthood, and finally later-life adulthood. Most will leave home as young adults, find a spouse or life partner in their mid-to late 20s and work in a job for pay. To expect that of the average US Child is normal.

Also when discussing the average US child, it's safe to say that the most important socialization takes place early in life and in identifiable levels. Primary socialization typically begins at birth and moves forward until the beginning of the school years. Primary socialization includes all the ways the newborn is molded into a social being capable of interacting in and meeting the expectations of society. Most primary socialization is facilitated by the family, friends, day care, and to a certain degree various forms of media. Children watch about 3 hours per day of TV (by the time the average child attends kindergarten he has watched about 5,000 hours of TV). They also play video games, surf the Internet, play with friends, and read.

Around age 4-5 pre-school and kindergarten are presented as expectations for the children. Once they begin their schooling, they begin a different level of socialization. Secondary Socialization occurs in later childhood and adolescence when children go to school and come under the influence of non-family members. This level runs concurrently with primary socialization. Children realize at school that they are judged for their performance now and are no longer accepted unconditionally. In fact, to obtain approval from teachers and school employees, a tremendous amount of conformity is required-this is in contrast to having been accepted at home for being “mommy's little man or woman.”

As students children have to learn to belong and cooperate in large groups. They learn a new culture that extends beyond their narrow family culture and that has complexities and challenges that require effort on their part. This creates stressors for the children. By the time of graduation from high school the average US child has attended 15,000 hours of school away from home. They've also probably watched 15,000 hours of TV, and spent 5-10,000 playing (video games, friends, Internet, text messaging, etc.).

Friends, classmates, and peers become increasingly important in the lives of children in their secondary educational stage of socialization. Most 0-5 year-olds yearn for affection and approval from their parents and family members. By the time of pre-teen years, the desire for family diminishes and the yearning now becomes for friends and peers. Parents often lament the loss of influence over their children once the teen years arrive. Studies show that parents preserve at least some of their influence over their children by influencing their children's peers. Parents who host parties, excursions, and get-togethers
find that their relationship with their children's friends keeps them better connected to their children. They learn that they can persuade their children at times through the peers.

The K-12 schooling years are brutal in terms of peer pressures. Often, people live much of their adult lives under the labels they were given in high school. Then it happens. You've probably already done this—graduation! Many new high school graduates face the strikingly harsh realities of adulthood shortly after graduation. Anomie often follows and it takes months and years at times for young adults to discover new regulating norms which ground them back into expectable routines of life.

The third level of socialization includes college, work, marriage/significant relationships, and a variety of adult roles and adventures. Adult socialization occurs as we assume adult roles such as wife/husband/employee/etc. We adapt to new roles which meet our needs and wants throughout the adult life course. Freshmen in college, new recruits in the military, volunteers for Peace Corps and Vista, employees, missionaries, travelers, and others find themselves following the same game plan that lead to their success during their primary and secondary socialization years—find out what's expected and strive to reach those expectations.

**Opportunity**

In the US and throughout the world there are rich and poor families. Where you belong has a great deal to do with who you were born to or adopted by. Where you end up in your economic standing has a great deal to do with how you act, given your own set of life chances. As identified by Max Weber, life chances are access to basic opportunities and resources in the marketplace. There are differences among family systems in which people live and have opportunities. This brings up a very important concept from Max Weber. Not all of us have the same life chances as others. For example, one of my best friends in high school came from a wealthy family. Her father was a neurosurgeon and they had many resources that myself and others like me didn't have (she and I were friends because we dated for a short while). When I went to college, I was the first ever on either my mother or father's side to go to college. I had no financial aid, no family support, and such bad high school grades that I had no scholarship funding. My friend on the other hand had a new car, new Apple computer, all expenses paid apartment and living costs. She and I had very different life chances from one another. Nevertheless I was able to earn my PhD. I worked numerous part-time jobs and eventually got my GPA high enough to earn a scholarship, and later graduate assistantship. I also had to take out thousands in student loans. But, even I had far greater life chances than most people in the world today. So did you. We have K-12 education, access to college, and the possibility of a career of our choosing. In many less developed countries low to no formal education is common fare.

Life chances can also be applied to the quality of your own marriage and family. If you came from a highly shaming family culture, then you are more likely to develop an addiction. If you came from a family where the parents divorced, then you are more likely to divorce. If you were born to a single mother you are more likely to become a single mother or father. These are known correlates but not causes. In other words you may be slightly disadvantaged because of the difficult family circumstances you were born in, but you are by no means doomed.
Understanding life chances simply raises your awareness by demonstrating trends from the larger social picture that might well apply to you in your personal level. For example, I have about 21 known correlates to divorce (see Workbook assignment to discover your own). My wife and I have been married now for 25 years. We knew we would have an uphill battle in some regards. But we faced our life chance issues together (still do) and try specifically to avoid some of the same mistakes our parents made.

**Demography**

Finally, the US family in our day has an important underpinning that influences the family in the larger social and personal levels. Demography is the scientific study of population growth and change. Everything in society influences demography and demography conversely influences everything in society. After World War II, the United States began to recover from the long-term negative effects of the war. Families had been separated, relatives had died or were injured, and women who had gone to the factories then returned home at war's end. The year 1946 reflected the impact of that upheaval in its very atypical demographic statistics. Starting in 1946 people married younger, had more children per woman, divorced then remarried again, and kept having one child after another. From 1946 to 1956 the birth rate rose and peaked, then began to decline again. By 1964 the national high birth rate was finally back to the level it was at before 1946. All those millions of children born from 1946-1964 were called the Baby Boom Generation (there are about 78 million of them alive today). Why was there such a change in family-related rates? The millions of deaths caused by the war, the long-term separation of family members from one another, and the deep shifts toward conservative values all contributed. The Baby Boom had landed. And after the Baby Boom Generation was in place, it conversely affected personal and larger social levels of society in every conceivable way.

The Baby Boomers are most likely your parents (Born 1946-1964). For a few of you they may be your grandparents. Their societal influence on the family changed the US forever. The earliest cohort of Baby Boomers (1946-51) has the world record for highest divorce rates. Collectively baby Boomers are still divorcing more than their parents ever divorced. They had their own children and many of you belong to Generations X or Y (X born 1965-1984 and Y born 1985-present). There are many of you because there were many Baby Boomers. The demographic processes of this country include these baby Boomers, their legacy, and their offspring. To understand the US family, you must understand the Baby Boomers and the underlying demographic forces in our day.

The core of demographic studies has three component concerns: births, deaths, and migration. All of demography can be reduced to this very simple formula:

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(Births - Deaths) +/-(\text{In-Migration} - \text{Out Migration}) = \text{Population Change.}
\]

This part of the formula, \((Births - Deaths)\) is called Natural increase, which is all births minus all the deaths in a given population over a given time period. The other part of the formula, \((\text{In-Migration} - \text{Out Migration})\) is called Net Migration, which is all the in-migration minus all the out-migration in a given population over a given time period. In all the chapters that follow this one, the issues pertaining to the family are heavily influenced by demography's social force in the United States. This formula is not just a measure of larger social trends, it is also an indirect factor that impacts those social
trends.
The Industrial revolution set into motion a surge of births and a lowering of deaths. After a century of this type of growth, billions of people lived on the earth. Eventually as the Industrial Revolution became the era of the computer chip, birth rates declined and death rates continued to increase. In Western civilizations this explains why migration is so important. Because fewer births mean less workers for the economy and more need for immigrants.

Chapter 02 - Studying Marriage and Families

Scientific Sociology

One of the most remarkable traits that August Comte mandated for Sociology was a core of scientific rigor. He proposed the concept of Positivism, the scientific-based sociological research that uses scientific tools such as survey, sampling, objective measurement, and cultural and historical analysis to study and understand society. Although the current definition of positivism expands far beyond Comte's original vision, Sociological scientific methodology is used through government and industry researchers and across higher education and the private sector. Comte was originally interested in why societies remain the same (social Statics) and why societies change (social dynamics). Most sociological research today falls within these broad categories. Sociologists strive for Objectivity, which is the ability to study and observe without distortion or bias, especially personal bias. Bias-free research is an ideal that, if not present will open the door to extreme misinterpretation of research findings.

Sociological science is both different and similar to other scientific principles. It differs from Chemistry, Biology, and Physics in that sociology does not manipulate the physical environment using established natural science theories and principles. It's similar to Chemistry, Biology, and Physics in that statistical principles guide the discovery and confirmation of data findings. Yet, Sociology has no universally social laws that resemble gravity, E=MC2, or the speed of light. This is because Chemistry, Biology, and Physics have the luxury of studying phenomenon which are acted upon by laws of nature. Sociologist study people, groups, communities, and societies which are comprised of agents, people who use their agency to make choices based on their varied motivations (Google Anthony Giddens-human agency, January 18, 1938 British Sociologist).

Sociologist Perform Survey Research

Sociologists study people, who chose, decide, succeed, fail, harm others, harm themselves, and behave in rational and irrational ways. I've often explained to my students that if I took an ounce of gasoline and placed a burning match upon it, the gas would have to burn. The gas has no choice just as the flame has no choice. But, if someone placed a burning match on your arm, or the arm of your classmate, you or they might respond in any number of ways. Most would find the experience to be painful. Some might enjoy it, others might retaliate with violence, and yet others might feel an emotional bond to the one who burned them. Sociologist must focus on the subjective definitions and perceptions that people place in their choices and motivations. In fact, sociologists account for human subjectivity very well in their research studies. The most common form of Sociological research of the family is survey research.