

UNDERSTANDING FAMILIES AND HOW RESOURCES ARE MANAGED

Family resource management assumes that families are actively involved in the management of resources available to them to fulfill needs. It is essential that both the concept of “family” and the process of “management” by families be fully understood before professionals in the field can fully serve clients.

The most basic unit of society is the family. It is hard to imagine someone who has never experienced being part of a family. In fact, almost everyone can tell a story about his or her family. For most, family is where we learn how to face the outside world. Effective management of the family is critical not only to the family but also to the individual members within the family. The family is where we learn to make good decisions and experience the consequences of bad decisions. A study of the family begins with the history of the family.

HISTORY OF THE FAMILY

The origins of the family are unclear. Some have suggested that there is evidence that families have existed for thousands, perhaps millions, of years (Gough, 1971). Anderson (1997) speculates that although prehistoric clans were organized around a patriarch, with the development of agriculture it became necessary to organize around geographic areas ruled by political figures rather than by the head of the family. In medieval Europe, the family was influenced by the church and feudalism, generally extended in form (Seufert-Barr, 1994). Tadmor (1996) studied the definition of a “family” as it appeared in 18th-century English writings. She found that the term included not only immediate blood relatives in the household but also servants and other relatives in residence. The criterion for inclusion as a family unit at that time was an individual’s dependence on the head of household for basic needs.

The institution of marriage within the family is also varied. As early as 1922, Westermarck described the origin of marriage as follows:

It was, I believe, even in primitive times, the habit for a man and a woman to live together, to have sexual relations with one another,

Objectives

- Summarize the history and origins of the family.
- Describe how the family today is in transition.
- Compare various definitions of families.
- Discuss change to family expectations, family structure, and the institution of marriage.
- Explain how families exist in cultural contexts.
- List basic functions of the family.
- Identify resources that are available to families.
- Describe how family resource management and home economics are related.
- Review key family management challenges.

Polygyny:

the practice of a man having more than one wife at the same time

Modern family:

a family that consists of a breadwinning husband, a housewife, and their children

Democratic family:

a family that emerged at the end of the 18th century as a separate and private group in society where mates were selected through preferences and children were nurtured

Companionate family:

a family in which a husband and wife are partners who married because they loved each other, rather than out of a sense of moral duty

Postmodern family:

the contemporary family that is more diverse than in the past in terms of family structure and relationships

Traditional family:

a married couple and their biological child or children in one household

Nuclear family:

the family group consisting of parents (usually a father and mother) and their children in one household

and to rear their offspring in common, the man, being the protector and supporter of his family and the woman being his helpmate and the nurse of his children. This habit was sanctioned by custom, and afterwards by law and was thus transformed into a social institution. (1971, pp. 27–28)

Gibbs and Campbell (1999) reported that religious and social groups experimented with different forms of familial social bonds in the Americas during the 19th century. The practice of **polygyny**, having multiple wives, existed in certain religious factions and in some Native American cultures. Larger households meant an increase in children and wealth. Multiple adult members provided the resources necessary to fulfill the many daily needs of large family units.

In the United States, the preindustrial family was largely an economic unit. Those who lived together were needed to help provide for existence. Families sometimes included nonfamily members whose purpose was to care for the children or carry out household work. Children, once old enough, were often sent to help other families if they were not needed at home.

After the Industrial Revolution, work was no longer centered in the home. Men went away from the home to work, and family roles were more defined. As the middle class emerged, the family became a symbol of stability and the domestic ideal (Skolnick, 1993). The **modern family** consisted of a breadwinning husband, a housewife, and their children. According to Aulette (2002), the modern family included two distinct phases. First, the **democratic family** emerged at the end of the 18th century as a separate and private group in society where mates were selected through preferences and children were nurtured. Creating and maintaining a family was an expected, almost obligatory, role for adults. Husbands went to work outside the home, and wives were expected to stay home. By the 20th century, the second phase, the **companionate family**, had become the most common family form. In the companionate family, husbands and wives were partners who married because they loved each other, rather than out of a sense of moral duty (Mintz & Kellogg, 1988).

The **postmodern family** implies that families at this time in history are so diverse that comparison with those in the past is impossible. Another implied concept within the term “postmodern” is that in trying to rely on past research and theory, one would be unable to study current family structures and relationships.

THE FAMILY TODAY

Throughout history, researchers have been unable to find a picture of family that would represent what it has come to mean today or what it will be in the future. How we define the family today must be broad and flexible. One definition would not be able to accurately characterize every family in the United States.

White et al. (2014) question the focus on family structure as a defining concept. They believe that structure is ambiguous and, ultimately, confusing. Yet family structures are central to many definitions. The **traditional family** or **nuclear family** implies a husband, wife, and children in one household. Although this idea has come to symbolize the American family, it is far from actually representing the vast majority of families today.

The functions of the family will lead us into our discussion throughout the text. Before we look at these functions, it is helpful to look at the diverse ways in which family units are defined.

DEFINING THE FAMILY

The word “family” still brings to mind the image of an intact, two-parent home with two children, a dog, and gray-haired grandparents. In reality, we have just learned that in the United States we can no longer define the family in this way. In the past, the definition of family has been selective and often rigid in description, leaving many to wonder about the validity of their own family. Given the various configurations of families today, creating a contemporary definition of family can be a difficult task. The definition of family takes on diverse meanings, depending on the context from which it comes.



► Photo 2.1

The family today is diverse and flexible.

Theoretical Definitions

Within the study of family resource management, the interdependence of members and the continual need for decision-making to meet the needs of members are key concepts. Although no single definition meets all situational needs, those within the field of family sciences incorporate core concepts founded not only as a result of research and the development of family theory but also in response to the changes that have taken place within society.

Existing definitions that address the study of families include the following:

A group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles; and creating and maintaining a common culture. (Burgess & Locke, 1945)

A range of household structures that meet people’s needs at various points in their lives or that are forced on them by circumstances. (Hess, 1995)

A consuming unit that is highly dependent on the economic system beyond the home, over which the family members have little control. (Hess, 1995)

Two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have a commitment to one another over time. (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, 2001)

As families search for public and private resources, they must navigate the multitude of definitions held by different institutions. It is hard to put the family

Family: the basic unit in society, traditionally consisting of a group made up of parents and children living together in a household

into one philosophical box. Throughout history, the family has changed to meet the needs of its members. **Family** will be defined in this text based on three core concepts drawn from Lamanna and colleagues (2018):

1. A group of any sexually expressive or parent–child or other kin relationship in which people, usually related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption, form an economic unit or otherwise practical unit and care for any young.
2. The group considers their identity to be significantly attached to the group.
3. The group commits to maintaining that group over time.

All three criteria have major implications for resource identification, access, and management.

Variations on a Definition of Family— When Numbers Are Necessary

While Lamanna et al. (2018) provide a grounded definition of family for application throughout this book, professionals working with individuals and families must learn to navigate through the many qualifying definitions necessary for connecting families with appropriate resources.

U.S. Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau says that “a family consists of a householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

2020 Subject Definitions:

Family households: A family consists of a householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. All people in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family. A family household may contain people not related to the householder, but those people are not included as part of the householder’s family in tabulations. Thus, the number of family households is equal to the number of families, but family households may include more members than do families. A household can contain only one family for purposes of tabulations.

Spouse: Includes a person married to and living with the householder. The categories “same-sex husband/wife/spouse” and “opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse” include people in formal marriages, as well as people in common-law marriages. In tabulations, beginning in 2013, unless otherwise specified, “spouse” and “married couple” includes same-sex married couples.

Child: Includes a son or daughter by birth, a stepchild, or adopted child of the householder, regardless of the child’s age or marital status. The category excludes sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, and foster children.

- **Biological son or daughter:** The son or daughter of the householder by birth.
- **Adopted son or daughter:** The son or daughter of the householder by legal adoption. If a stepson or stepdaughter has been legally adopted by the householder, the child is then classified as an adopted child.
- **Stepson or stepdaughter:** The son or daughter of the householder through marriage but not by birth, excluding sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. If a stepson or stepdaughter of the householder has been legally adopted by the householder, the child is then classified as an adopted child.

Grandchild: The grandson or granddaughter of the householder.

Brother/Sister: The brother or sister of the householder, including stepbrothers, stepsisters, and brothers and sisters by adoption. Brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law are included in the “Other relative” category on the questionnaire.

Parent: The father or mother of the householder, including a stepparent or adoptive parent. Fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law are included in the “Parent-in-law” category on the questionnaire.

Parent-in-law: The mother-in-law or father-in-law of the householder.

Son-in-law or daughter-in-law: The spouse of the child of the householder.

Other relatives: Related by birth, marriage, or adoption, but *not* one of the categories already mentioned—for example, niece or nephew. If a foster child is related to the householder, respondents are advised to select the appropriate relative category, such as grandchild, or include in the “Other relative” category.

Data sets gathered by the U.S. Census are used in a multitude of ways. Business institutions focus on these households as consuming units, further categorizing them into socioeconomic, cultural, age-specific, and other target market groups. Financial analysts use these data to forecast the economic health of the country. Social scientists apply these data to the analysis of behavioral shifts and actual or possible impacts of such changes.

Lupita is part of a team creating a local housing study for city officials to use as support for a grant to provide money for subsidized apartment construction. Using official U.S. census data provides an accurate and trusted basis for such purposes.

Public Opinion

Surveys administered to the general public collect information about behaviors and configurations of family units that are then presented as being acceptable or deemed to be normal in that particular society. Depending on the scientific rigor

of the instruments used in these polls, results may be generalized to the larger population or may be biased and unreliable.

In Lupita's work with the housing study, to illuminate local uniqueness in a city specific surveys can focus on certain family circumstances. For instance, a quick local survey could help her team understand the way citizens define "affordable housing." Analyzing responses can help the team understand how citizens define families. Is it by income averages, neighborhood allegiance, age of household members, or something different?

The Legal System

The legal definition of "family" has become much more flexible and nonspecific and not limited to people linked by legal marriage, blood, or adoption. Judges use these criteria: common residence, economic interdependency, stability, and commitment (Scanzoni & Marsiglio, 1993).

Based on the functional and psychological qualities of the relationship: The "exclusivity and longevity" of relationship; the "level of emotional and financial commitment"; the "reliance placed upon one another for daily family services"; and how the members "conducted their everyday lives and held themselves out to society." (New York Supreme Court; see Gutis, 1989)

Celeste is just 6 years old, but a dispute between her grandparents and her divorced parents has resulted in a court hearing to determine her guardianship. Bloodline is not enough to ensure safe placement of children in many situations.

Life Insurance

Employers offering life insurance in their benefits package will usually limit coverage of an employee's family members by defining such terms as "spouse," "child," and "plus-one." For example, the University of Nebraska (2021) gives the following definitions:

Spouse—To be eligible for coverage, a "spouse" must meet these criteria:

Husband or wife, as recognized under the laws of the state of Nebraska

Common-law spouse if the common-law marriage was contracted in a jurisdiction recognizing a common-law marriage

Child—The following dependent children may be eligible for coverage:

Natural-born or legally adopted child who has not reached the limiting age of 26

Stepchild who has not reached the limiting age of 26

Child for whom the employee has legal guardianship and who has not reached the limiting age of 26

Child with a mental or physical disability who has attained the limiting age of 26 may continue coverage beyond age 26 if proof of disability is provided within 31 days of attaining age 26

Employee Plus One—University benefits eligibility is extended to an adult designee of the same or opposite gender who meets all the following criteria:

Has resided in the same residence as the employee for at least the past consecutive 12 months and intends to remain so indefinitely

Is at least 19 years old

Is directly dependent upon, or interdependent with, the employee, sharing a common financial obligation that can be documented in a manner prescribed by the university; and

Is not currently married to or legally separated from another individual under either statutory or common law.

William, an assistant professor, is divorced with two children and has been living with Sadie for the past 5 years. They have no plans to marry but do intend to continue cohabiting. William can include Sadie in his employer's benefit package as a "plus one." This designation is available to same-sex couples as well.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Under the FMLA, employees working for qualifying employers have the legal right to take unpaid leave to care for infants, ill children, spouses, or parents or to take new parental bonding time with adopted or foster children. The following definitions illuminate qualifying situations:

Birth and care of a newborn child

Placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child

Care for an immediate family member (spouse, child, or parent—but not a parent-in-law) with a serious health condition

Any “qualifying exigency” arising out of the fact that the employee’s spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on or called to active duty (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, 2017)

Jorge's elderly mother broke her hip and requires constant supervision. She doesn't have the resources to be admitted to a care facility for rehabilitation, so Jorge takes an unpaid leave of absence from work for 2 months to take care of her. The FMLA ensures that, after that leave, he will be able to return to his position or a comparable position with his employer.

U.S. Income Tax/Internal Revenue Service

To determine tax liability, U.S. citizens file annual tax returns. The terms used in this process are defined by accompanying literature. A **head of household** is an unmarried or “considered unmarried” person who pays more than one-half the

Head of household: the person whose name appears first in the census enumeration of a family or group of people living together

Dependent:
a person who relies
on another for
support

cost of keeping up a home for a qualifying person, such as a child who lived with that person or a parent whom the person can claim as a dependent. There are five tests that must be met for a person to qualify as another's **dependent**:

1. *Relationship test.* The person must either be a relative or have lived in the home as a family member all year.
2. *Age test.* The person must be under age 19 or a student under age 24 at the end of the year and younger than the head of household or permanently and totally disabled at any time during the year, regardless of age.
3. *Residency test.* To meet this test, the person must have lived with you for more than half the year. There are exceptions for temporary absences, children who were born or died during the year, kidnapped children, and children of divorced or separated parents.
4. *Support test.* To meet this test, the person cannot have provided more than half of his or her own support for the year, and the head of household generally must provide more than half of a person's total support during the calendar year.
5. *Joint-return test.* To meet this test, the person cannot file a joint return for the year. An exception to the joint-return test applies if the person and his or her spouse file a joint return only to claim a refund of income tax withheld or estimated tax paid. (Internal Revenue Service, n.d.)

Pam and Randy have three children (dependents) under the age of 16. While filing their tax return, they can receive a deduction of income earned for each "dependent allowance" they can enter on their tax form. As a family, they have five potential allowances. If they choose to file jointly, all five can be used to determine that deduction and lower tax liability. Should they choose to each file a separate return, they would need to divide those five allowances between the two returns.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The SNAP federal governmental program provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move toward self-sufficiency. Some people who live together, such as spouses and most children under age 22, are included in the same SNAP household, even if they purchase and prepare meals separately. If a person is 60 years of age or older and unable to purchase and prepare meals separately because of a permanent disability, the person and the person's spouse may be a separate SNAP household if the others they live with do not have very much income (no more than 165% of the poverty level; USDA, n.d.).

Meila is a single mother with three small children. Her income falls below the current qualifying income level for the SNAP program. Each month her SNAP card (a plastic credit card) is loaded with funding to use on approved food items in most grocery stores. This money helps Meila stretch her food budget to adequately address the needs of her and her children.

IN THE NEWS

Unsettled Inheritance

When someone dies, decisions must be made about who will receive his or her assets, which include money and property. If you do not have a legal document, a will, on file explaining your wishes, the legal system has a method of determining who will get what you leave behind. Family becomes a deciding factor. Your closest living relative(s) will be considered your heirs.

When pop star Prince died in 2016, he did not have a will in place. His multimillion-dollar estate had to be divided among his six blood relatives. Before everything could be settled,

one of his half-brothers, Alfred Jackson, died, but not before he had completed and filed a will leaving most of his claim to Prince's estate to a New York entertainment company. That company, Primary Wave, filed a legal case requesting to be considered one of Prince's legal heirs. The other five remaining relatives did not view the company as "family."

Dozens of lawyers have been working to settle Prince's estate for several years, accumulating millions of dollars in legal and consultant fees that will be settled out of Prince's remaining assets. The estate, and money, could be tied up in the court system for a very long time.

Source: Puente, M. (2019). Prince died three years ago, his estate is still unsettled: Here's why. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/2019/04/18/prince-died-3-years-ago-his-estate-still-unsettled-heres-why/3344038002/>

Gray Areas

Other definitions of *family* tend to be influenced by social factors. Family definitions include arrangements that may be seen as gray areas by some but are becoming more socially accepted, and these families are often granted "family" legal rights. Such was the case in the example of employee "plus one" benefits earlier in this chapter.

Cohabitation, or an *unmarried couple*, is defined as "two unrelated adults of the opposite sex (one of whom is the householder) who share a housing unit with or without the presence of children under 15 years old. Unmarried couple households contain only two adults" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Despite some concerns, this form of the family has gained widespread social acceptance over the past 30 years. Current legal debate has centered on **domestic partners** being entitled to legal rights and/or employee benefits. Loosely, two people who have chosen to share one another's lives in an intimate and committed relationship, live together, and are jointly responsible for basic living expenses qualify for such programs in states that recognize this designation. As of 2009, federal employees in domestic partnerships gained some benefits following a new policy enacted by the Obama administration (Phillips, 2009). In addition, since July 9, 2015, married same-sex couples throughout the United States have had equal access to all the federal benefits given to married opposite-sex couples (Lynch, 2015).



► **Photo 2.2**

Same-sex parenting challenges some definitions of family.

Cohabitation: to live together as or as if a married couple

Domestic partners: the personal relationship between individuals who are living together and sharing a common domestic life together but are not joined in any type of legal partnership, marriage, or civil union

Mutual definition: a definition shared by or common to two or more people or groups

Yorburg (2002) defines “families” as groups related by marriage, birth, adoption, or **mutual definition**. According to this definition, when people define themselves as a family, they essentially are a family. Within that mutual definition are elements of emotional involvement and identity attachment that connect individuals at the present time and create a need for continuation or maintenance of that family unit over time. This maintenance function requires acquisition and utilization of resources.

REALITY CHECK

Taking Care of Family Business

It is not unusual for business and family to become intertwined. The United States, like many other countries, has a strong economic base of family-operated businesses. Some have evolved over several generations. New family businesses often arise from perceived needs within a family. The Burns family launched a large-scale specialty service business to fulfill a personal need.

Jan Burns, owner and manager of her own small business, catered to the pet grooming needs of her community. For 15 years, she had been moderately successful, establishing both her skills and relationships with loyal customers. The flexibility of her schedule and the home-based location allowed her to raise her two children with little outside child care. Joanna, Jan’s daughter, was now in high school, and what had been a syndrome of learning and developmental difficulties was becoming an obvious problem in the eyes of both her teachers and her parents. Jan shares the decision-making process that followed this recognition:

Joanna’s teachers are wonderful. They are very supportive and have challenged her in the special education classrooms as best they could. When she was a junior in high school, her classmates began talking about college and future careers. Her father and I hadn’t really accepted the fact that she wouldn’t be capable of at least some training program in the local community college.

Joanna was even more belligerent. She insisted on sending in college postcards that were coming in the mail on a daily basis. She even signed up to take the ACT test. Her father and I had never applied to a junior or a regular college, so we had no idea what that really was.

Of course, we weren’t prepared for Joanna’s reaction—frustration and despair—when she went to take that test. Her coursework in middle and high school had been modified, and although she performed adequately in those specially designed situations, she had elementary math skills and science comprehension. Reality hit us all hard. Joanna would never be fully independent and socially functional. Her counselor began talking to her and us about group home living and vocational work programs in the area. We were devastated.

While her parents dealt with their new realization, Joanna turned to self-therapy and began spending more and more time at her mother’s grooming shop. Jan took notice and expanded her customer services to include short-term boarding. Joanna was given the responsibility of taking care of boarded dogs and cats at night and on weekends. She was both capable and responsible in these duties. Jan started thinking about a possible future for her daughter in her own business field.

I don’t remember just when it hit me, but one day a customer told me

about a pet resort she had toured in a neighboring city. I did some surfing on the internet and realized that there was a growing market for high-service pet care. Within the year, we had expanded my small business with the construction of a large grooming, retail, training, and boarding facility—Jan’s Pet Resort!

Like many new businesses, this endeavor started slowly. However, within the first year, it proved to be a huge success.

Our grooming business more than tripled, and the boarding is at capacity every holiday season. Joanna feeds these

pampered pets, plays with them, and even does some front-desk customer relations. I can see her working full-time here when she graduates. We, as a family, have accepted the fact that she will always need our attention and support. The increased income from this new business takes some of the stress off, however.

Creating a business to meet the needs of one family member proved to be both a positive family experience and a profitable business endeavor. Basic management skills provided Jan with answers to both personal and professional challenges.

CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

Changes in family expectations serve to alter the emphasis of the family within society. The Pew Research Center (PRC; 2015) reports that expectations differ by age, with older adults more likely to believe that society is better off when people value marriage and children. The American family is becoming increasingly more diverse, and family structures are constantly evolving, with less than half of all children living with two married parents (PRC, 2015). Marriage rates continue to decline. In 1960, 9% of adults had never been married, but by 2012, that percentage increased to 17% for women and 23% for men. There are several reasons for these changes, including more people waiting to marry later in life and a rise in cohabitation. Another reason for the decline in marriage could be that previously married adults show less interest in marrying again (PRC, 2015). There are fewer two-parent households, and families are smaller (PRC, 2015).

There is no doubt that cohabitation has increased as a family structure, and it is estimated that the majority of couples now live together before getting married. There are still cultural and religious traditions that view cohabitation as unacceptable, and research continues to point out concerns for those who cohabit. Lundberg et al. (2016) report an economic inequality among those who cohabit; those who are college-educated follow more traditional patterns of marriage and parenting than do men and women with less education. Childbearing in cohabiting unions is higher among high school graduates and those with some college, and their marital and cohabiting unions are less stable. Children of less-educated parents are more likely to grow up in a single-parent household or to experience instability. This increasing inequality has contributed to inequality in household income.

Stanley and colleagues (2006) coined the term “sliding versus deciding” to illustrate an important implication of the transition from cohabitation to marriage.

Those couples who slide into cohabitation may also remain in a relationship or move toward marriage regardless of the quality or the commitment to the relationship. In contrast, those couples who have discussed their future intentions and what cohabitation means to their relationship—the “deciders”—are more successful as they move into marriage.

The National Marriage Project (Hymowitz et al., 2013) reports that the institution of marriage has also changed. Continuing to support earlier trends of delayed marriage for young adults, research finds that while some may see this as evidence that marriage is becoming undesirable, a large majority of young adults say they hope to marry in the future. There are several benefits of marriage delay, which include better economic opportunities and a lower divorce rate. However, more women are now becoming mothers before getting married, with 47% of twentysomethings giving birth outside of marriage. The result of these changes can include economic, social, and family stability consequences, especially for children.

Americans are sharply divided when it comes to recent structural changes in the family, such as cohabitation, single parenting, mothers working outside the home, intercultural marriage, and so forth. The Pew Research Center reports that about one third of people accept these changes, one-third reject or believe these changes are harmful for families, and one-third are tolerant of the changes but believe they may not be good for the family (Morin, 2011).

Although many changes have taken place and the family may be difficult to define, the concept of family is an integral part of the fabric of American culture. Policymakers, educators, and service providers acknowledge the importance of the family as the core of individual well-being and growth.

WORLDVIEW

The National Family

Nations vary greatly in terms of governance structures. The United States is considered to be a constitutional federal republic. A president is elected or reelected every 4 years. The presidential family holds that place only during the period of time the parent holds active office. After a presidential term, they become a “former” first family. In other countries, royal family lines maintain a presence over generations and even centuries. In the United Kingdom, for example, the House of Windsor has reigned for over 100 years. There is a distinct line of succession, or passage of the crown from one generation to the next. At one

time, only males were allowed to be in that line for the United Kingdom. Some countries still refuse to acknowledge female succession.

Within royal families, social roles are essential to maintain the acceptance of and the continued financial support of the subjects, or citizens of those countries. Because they often have very little political power, royal families are evolving with the social movements of the times to hold onto the influence that was once guaranteed solely by birth. As these royal families begin to reflect the families within the general population, will they eventually become obsolete and unnecessary?

FAMILIES WITHIN CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Families exist within the cultural contexts of race, ethnicity, religion, politics, and economics. These frameworks impact how individuals and families define and evaluate their relationships. As the global community continues to evolve, it is important to recognize, understand, and be responsive to cultural differences between and among cultural groups.

Families pass learned behaviors and experiences, or a cultural heritage, from generation to generation (Johnson, 1998). Drawing from the worldview framework introduced in Chapter One, the values held by cultural groups are expressed in unique patterns through the formation and perpetuation of family units. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) propose that the three primary cultural expressions of group membership are lineal, collaborative, and individualistic. Family units within these cultural groups reflect the orientation of the larger social group. For instance, Native American families reflect stronger lineal relationships, often defining family membership based on a clan or group of related families (Johnson, 1998). However, few cultural groups will fit neatly into any one of the three orientations. Although many Native Americans may have a more developed awareness of their tribal membership (lineal), the basic functions of these tribes have historically been collaborative in nature.

As cultural groups coexist within a larger society and because more than one quarter of the U.S. population is now made up of immigrants, individuals from different racial, ethnic, and religious groups have begun drawing life partners from distinctly different cultural groups. Interracial marriages include the joining together of individuals from the white, African American, Asian, and Native American races with people from outside their race. Interethnic marriages consist of partners who marry within their ethnic groups, such as unions between Hispanic groups or between Asian groups. Today, 15.5% of new marriages represent two people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Restuccia, 2014).

Although religious homogamy is still important for some, **interfaith** marriages are increasing in the United States. The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (Pew Research Center, 2014) reports that 39% of Americans are married to a spouse with a different religious affiliation. In contrast, 49% of people who are cohabitating are in an interfaith relationship. The report also points out that religion is much more fluid, meaning that although individuals may not identify with any particular religion, spirituality or religious ideals are at least somewhat important in their lives. Certain religious groups are more likely to marry within their faith, such as Hindus, Mormons, and Muslims. Religious orientations often affect decisions about money, children, social networks, and relationship issues.

Interfaith:
involving or
occurring between
people of different
religious faiths



► **Photo 2.3**
Traditional dress
and ceremony
express cultural
beliefs about
marriage.

FAMILY FUNCTIONS

Perhaps it would also be beneficial to look at the various structures of the family and concentrate on the critical functions of the family. As noted earlier, families provide individuals with a sense of belonging and emotional security, as well as provide for their physical needs. The family is the most basic economic unit in society and is responsible for reproduction. The family is also the principal component in the socialization process. It is in the family setting that a child learns his or her place in society, as well as the roles and behaviors that give him or her status in that society.

In the past, one of the most popular theories about family was the structural-functional theory. This theory views individuals as members of many interrelated systems, one of which is the family. Talcott Parsons (1968), one of the creators of this theory, believed that four basic functions were necessary for any system to survive. These functions help explain duties that families perform and that have caused the family to continue throughout history. These functions are latent pattern maintenance, or loyalty; adaptation, or ability to adjust to change; integration of members; and goal attainment, or the ability to mobilize resources. This theory has been criticized for its patriarchal views, as well as for not being able to explain the differences between culture and ethnicity (Aulette, 2002).

Juliet Mitchell (1984) suggested that families provide four activities or functions: production (producing or purchasing food and shelter, preparing workers to earn wages, and consumption of goods and services), reproduction (bearing and raising children), socialization (teaching the rules of society), and sexuality (“legitimate” sexual activity).

Although some social scientists have acknowledged that many families have lost some of the functions of previous generations, such as growing their own food and educating their own children, they generally agree on three basic functions: to raise children responsibly, to provide economic support, and to give family members emotional security (Lamanna et al., 2015). Reproduction—bearing and raising children—has been largely the responsibility of the family. Although the family is no longer self-sufficient in the production of goods, the family is responsible for meeting the basic economic needs (food, clothing, and shelter) of its members. In addition, families can provide individuals with an important source of emotional support, which includes affection and companionship. Identification of the functions of families describes the family by defining the work of families.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES

Adults bring resources into the family as income, inheritance, or social resources. Income (Chapter Nine) provides the ability to exchange money for goods and services. Inheritance (Chapter Twelve) is money or anything of value that is passed from someone who dies to designated survivors. Social resources (Chapter Six) include social programs that provide resources to qualifying citizens, like disability payments, food subsidies, and rent assistance. All of these resources must be managed and maintained to provide a steady flow of income for the family to meet their needs.

Over time, families may accumulate resources that they can hold over time, such as homes, automobiles, savings, and personal property. These resources, often

referred to as **assets**, also require management and maintenance. Retaining, or holding, their value presents ongoing demands on family members in terms of time, repair, and storage.

Credit is another resource for families to use to meet expenses. Adults can qualify for credit if they have established a history of responsible debt management. Use of credit creates obligation, so while it can be viewed as a resource, it also becomes an expense. Borrowing money through credit cards or loans requires pledging future income for an immediate want or need. Credit debt must be repaid to the lender, usually with an additional interest amount. Managing credit requires planning and monitoring of that payback process.

Assets: resources that families may accumulate that they can hold over time, such as homes, automobiles, savings, and personal property

Credit: money available to consumers from lending institutions based on future repayment

MANAGING FAMILY RESOURCES

As resources move into and out of a family, the need for planning and managing the necessary exchange functions requires knowledge, effort, and diligence. As presented in the previous chapter, family resource management is rooted in the evolution of home economics.

Home economics, as a discipline and field of study, purposefully began the metamorphosis to better serve the changing needs of its mostly female constituency and the changing social scripts of both men and women during the 1950s and 1960s. As the nation struggled with civil rights issues and the escalating women's movement, traditional female roles were being questioned, and the definition of family was being modified to align with emerging social programs and practices. Reflective of the broadening worldviews across the nation, home economics was divided into five different but interrelated areas: human development and the family, home management and family economics, food and nutrition, textiles and clothing, and housing.

In response to these environmental and curricular changes, the focus of this discipline moved heavily into what is now characterized as family resource management—family values, goals, standards, resources, decision-making, organization and process, and **optimization** of families. Less emphasis was placed on work performance within the home, and more energy was devoted to understanding the family unit and its interaction with the greater social structure. This family structure, or family culture, became a model for new developments in the field of business management.

Optimization: the process of finding the solution that is the best fit to the available resources

It was also during this time that Abraham Maslow presented his theory of motivation, with its famous visual pyramid of needs. This pyramid has since been applied to the study of psychology, sociology, economics, families, and business. It is explored in more depth in later chapters. Maslow was also interested in how values and goals impacted the behavior of workers and how teamwork may be used in the realm of business.

The field of home economics has undergone many transformations since the 1960s. One obvious change is in the way the field identifies itself. Few programs still exist under the title of home economics. In 1993, five leading associations recommended changing the name from home economics to family and consumer sciences. As it became necessary to reposition and reframe its mission, the discipline found the old title too restrictive and too laden with incorrect assumptions about contemporary research, application, and curriculum. In spite of the general change to family and consumer sciences, the field continues to evolve and to align with

other disciplines across campuses. One problem emerging from that evolution is a lack of consistency in program names. Students, professionals, and the general public can be confused by the variety of titles used (see Table 2.1). In spite of all of the growing pains within this profession, Gentzler (2012) believes that there will always be a need for the core of home economics, a field that has made a positive difference for more than a century.

Table 2.1 Diversity of Program Titles

Family and Consumer Sciences	Family Science
Human Sciences	Family Studies
Human Ecology	Family and Community Studies

KEY FAMILY MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Time Management

Commodity:
an economic good

Although not all cultures believe that time is manageable, the general belief in American culture is that time is a **commodity**. One can measure time, keep time, save time, and waste time. Major activities that require the expenditure of time in the family setting include sleeping, eating, grooming, learning, working, maintaining the environment, and relaxing. A common problem expressed by working parents is the lack of sufficient time to accomplish all of these tasks. It is often a fine line on which working parents balance.

Imagine that Maggie and John are both employed outside of the home and they have two children, a toddler and a grade-school child. Not only is this family juggling schedules for four different individuals; it is also trying to mesh the schedules of two workplaces, an elementary school, and a day care provider. Even with the highest commitment to organization and planning, there will be times when one change in one of these schedules causes intense discomfort for one or more family members.

If both parents work 40-hour weeks and work 8-hour shifts each workday, they must make arrangements to ensure that each child will be delivered to the child care or school setting as needed daily. These children may need to be picked up and delivered to multiple locations at times. The flexibility of parents' work hours enhances a family's ability to juggle such arrangements. Stringent, depersonalized work schedules and demands can elevate the pressure the family must endure.

Career Management

Reflecting the future orientation of the worldview, it is common for school children to think about possible future careers. Time spent training for those careers,

in formal schooling or on-the-job internships, is considered a current sacrifice for future gain. College requires time and money, so the exchange of these resources must be balanced against the prospects that a degree and/or training will ensure a job that pays more and provides more self-satisfaction than what could be acquired without that extra effort.

College graduates no longer assume that a single educational program will be sufficient for a lifetime of employment. There is an expectation of continual education, training, and improvement to reach career goals across the life course. Advanced degrees, or even employer-based educational programs, are necessary to meet the constant change in expectations and skills necessary to keep jobs and to advance on the payscale.

Molly has just completed her clinical training to be an obstetrical nurse supervisor. She has a job in the local hospital and is anxious to begin work. During her first week on the job, Molly is informed that she will be required to earn at least 10 additional credits each year to maintain her position. The hospital provides funding and time for her to attend both classes and conferences to gain the latest skills and knowledge she will need to perform her job in the dynamic field of medicine. Another employee benefit is tuition remission if she decides to pursue an advanced degree in the field. After just 4 months at this position, Molly decides to start taking coursework toward a degree in perinatal reproduction assistance.

Molly is actively managing her current and future career. Unlike past decades, young professionals can expect to significantly change careers at least five times in their lives. Those changes may be from one employer to another, or they may be drastic changes from one career track to another. They can also count on career changes that they have little control over. Changes in technology and delivery of goods and services force changes in terms of skills and knowledge needed to meet those demands.

Family Planning

Never before in the history of science has a woman had as much control over childbearing decisions as she does today. However, not every woman finds herself in a position to exercise all options available to her. Nevertheless, it is assumed by many that having one child or multiple children is something that can be managed or planned. The average age of women giving birth in the United States has gradually increased over the last few decades. Lamanna et al. (2015) suggest that there are four emerging trends for those of childbearing age: remaining child-free, postponing parenthood, having only one child, and nonmarital births. These options are discussed in more detail later in this book but serve as important references in this discussion of management.

Candela purposefully chose to wait until she had completed her graduate study and established a secure position in her professional field to have children. She also chose to be a single parent. Her sister Paula married and chose to have children early in her 20s. Caring for children, regardless of

situations, shares common actions and obligations. Paula may share those costs and obligations with her spouse, while Candela will find ways to supplement her own resources to meet the needs of her children through child care, friends, and possibly family support. The resources needed to raise children will be very similar for both sisters. The way they access and employ those resources will differ.

The choice to have one child or multiple children has a substantial impact on the resources needed by a family and how those resources will be managed. Each additional member creates multiple ripples in the family system. The roles and expectations of children have also been changed in light of new childbearing attitudes and behaviors. A child within a large agricultural family during the 1920s may have been viewed as another source of labor for family farming operations, whereas a child today may be viewed more as a visible extension of his or her family's social position.

CHAPTER TWO CASE ASSIGNMENT

A key concept as discussed in this chapter is the continuity of families. They exist over time, and during that time, they accumulate possessions of value—assets. Those assets require purposeful management at the present time and in relation to asset-building for the future.

Purpose: To determine the current value of possessions the case family has in its possession as the result of purchases and savings over time.

Budget: Areas addressed in this case include asset values of home, auto, real estate, and accumulated savings.

Tasks:

Home. Check your family description to see if your case family owns or rents their place of residence. If they own a home, it has value. Using a local realty company's website, find an actual home that matches the value as stated in the family description. Keep the address and information about that home available for use in future cases. Include a screenshot of this in your report.

Real estate. Some families own more than one home and additional land. Check your family's description to see if they have additional real estate of value.

Automobiles. Most families own at least one automobile. In highly urban areas, public transport and lack of parking are issues that discourage automobile ownership. Your family's description presents the type of vehicle(s) they own. Using a website that sells vehicles, find something that is similar to the description(s). Save that information, especially the VIN number, for use in future cases. Include a screenshot in your report.

Non-liquid savings. If your family description presents ownership of stocks or bonds or money in certificates of deposit, those assets are not immediately available for spending, thus "non-liquid." Collections of coins, antiques, and other valuables are also non-liquid.

Liquid savings. Money that is immediately available and without any penalty for withdrawal is considered "liquid." Checking accounts, simple savings accounts, and debit

card funds are liquid. The family description will provide you with your case family's liquid cash assets.

Pension/retirement fund. Many adults in the workforce have access to an employer benefit allowing them to save money for eventual retirement. Most often, that money is directly deducted from their paychecks but still needs to be on the budget sheet because they are regularly scheduled deductions from income. Some employers “match” these savings with funding, but that is not a part of the family's budget sheet or income statement. Your case family description presents information about options available to working family adults.

Report: After inserting all of the asset values in their appropriate places on the budget

spreadsheet, make sure that the heading has all necessary filing information—case family name, case number (2), current date, and your name. The report heading must have correct filing information also. Use the summary paragraph created in Case One as an introduction to this report. Devote a separate paragraph of explanation for each number you added to the budget sheet, fully explaining where and how you found or calculated the information. Include screenshots as appropriate. Remember that you are writing this report for your office supervisor, not your instructor.

Submit your report and budget sheet as instructed.

SUMMARY

The family is one of society's most basic institutions. Historically, the family has existed for centuries and was organized for economic purpose. Although it is still an organization that depends on economics, family members also rely on each other for emotional support and security. It is difficult to find a definition that would represent what the family has come to mean today or what it will be in the future.

Management is a key process for any family's survival. There are limited resources and limitless needs of group members, and the matching, evaluation, and distribution of resources within the unit present a continual challenge. Financial security is important, but interpersonal linkages are also essential to families. The decision-making process is the key to the management success of family units.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

1. If you were asked to give a definition of “family,” what would that be? How does it differ from those presented in the chapter?
2. In some cultures, ancestry is very important, and multiple generations of a family may live in the same dwelling. How much do you know about your own family tree?
3. Food and rituals differ between and among cultural groups. Within your own family, do you have specific foods, gatherings, and rituals that might differ from your friends? Where do those practices originate?

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