READING # 6

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Contemporary Structures of Inequality...

"Class, Race, and Gender."

chapter 5

Class, Race, and Gender

MYTHS AND REALITIES

MYTH	An advanced, upwardly mobile society such as the United States gives rise to a common family form.
REALITY	The United States produces great inequalities in the resources people need for family living, and this creates variation in families.
MYTH	Cultural preferences and poor lifestyles keep minority families from advancing.
REALITY	Racial-ethnic family forms are often adaptations to race and class discrimination in the wider society.
MYTH	Families are women's worlds, where female control of domestic activities gives them the power they lack in other settings.
REALITY	Families are part of a wider system of male power, giving men privileges largely at women's expense.

Twenty-first century families in the United States share some common features. All families must acquire provisions for daily living. They must do the work of feeding and caring for family members. All families must make decisions, use leisure time, and engage in countless other activities that fall within the realm of family life. Beneath the surface of similarities, there are far-reaching differences in *how* these family activities are carried out.

This chapter examines how different family arrangements are related to social inequalities. First, we introduce class, race, and gender as structural conditions that produce different contexts for families. We then analyze class, race, and gender separately. Looking at each system, we discuss conventional explanations about their meaning and significance for family life. We argue that much conventional thinking about families is flawed. We use our structural diversity framework to show how class, race, and gender produce different social opportunities and diverse family arrangements. We pay particular attention to the various layers of contexts that shape the daily life of families.

The theme of this chapter is that *all* families are embedded in the systems of class, race, and gender. This is key to understanding family life.

CLASS, RACE, AND GENDER AS STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES

Class, race, and gender are macrostructure hierarchies that profoundly affect microstructural family worlds. Of course, many other conditions produce inequalities as well, including age, family characteristics, and place of residence (see Table 5.1). Although many characteristics are associated with family diversity, class, race, and gender are most important. They organize society as a whole and create varied environments for family living.

To show how structural inequalities influence families, we will emphasize the following points: (1) class, race, and gender are forms of stratification that foster group-based inequalities; (2) class, race and gender influence family life through their distribution of social resources and opportunities; (3) class, race, and gender are relational systems of power and subordination; (4) class, race, and gender do not stand alone, but are linked systems of inequality; and (5) class, race, and gender influence families, yet the family can be a place to resist inequality. Let us look at these points.

The phrase **social stratification** refers, in essence, to structured inequality. The term *structured* refers to stratification being socially patterned. This means that inequalities are not caused by biological, cultural, or lifestyle differences. Of course, class, race, and gender can also refer to individual characteristics, but they are built into society's institutions in ways that produce advantages and disadvantages for entire groups of people. A crucial feature of social stratification is that groups are socially defined and then treated unequally. Social stratification rests on *group-based* inequalities (Collins, 1997). When groups are differentiated as inferior or superior, we have stratification.

The systems of stratification—class, race, and gender—produce different life chances. **Life chances** refers to the chances an individual has throughout his or her life cycle to live and to experience the good things in life. Stratification systems also place individuals and families in different social locations. Different social locations produce different family forms. For example, low incomes increase the likelihood that

TABLE 5.1

People and Families in Poverty by Selected Characteristics: 2005.

CHARACTERISTICS	BELOW POVERTY PERCENT	CHARACTERISTICS	BELOW POVERTY PERCENT
People		**Nativity**	
Total	12.6	Native	12.1
Family Status		Foreign born	16.5
In families	10.8	Naturalized citizen	10.4
Householder	9.9	Not a citizen	20.4
Related children under 18	17.1	**Region**	
Related children under 6	20.0	Northeast	11.3
In unrelated sub families	37.4	Midwest	11.4
Reference person	35.9	South	14.0
Children under 18	39.7	West	12.6
Unrelated individuals	21.1	**Families**	
Male	17.9	**Total**	9.9
Female	24.1	**Type of Family**	
Race		Married couple	5.1
White	10.6	Female household, no husband present.	28.7
White, non-Hispanic	8.3	Male household, no wife present.	13.0
Black	24.9		
Asian and Pacific Islander	11.1		
Hispanic origin	21.8		
Age			
Under 18 years	17.6		
18- 64 years	11.1		
65 years and older	10.1		

Source: Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, Cheryl Hill Lee (2006). "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the U.S." *Current Population Reports, P-60-231, Washington, D.C., U.S. Census Bureau,* p.14.

poor people will find themselves living in extended families even when the nuclear family is idealized (Cohen and MacCartney, 2004:182). Not only do families reflect the inequalities of their social locations, but families themselves transmit resources and opportunities to their members. For example, privileged families transmit wealth and status to their members, while others transmit unequal life chances. A common example is the disproportionate odds of poverty experienced by single mothers and their children. Both privilege and disadvantage are organized through family units (Cohen and MacCartney, 2004:182).

Class, race, and gender are structures of power as well as systems that distribute the good things in life. They structure the ability of the affluent to dominate the poor,

TABLE 5.2

Share of Aggregate Income by Each Fifth of Households, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2004

	PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AGGREGATE INCOME					
Year	Lowest Fifth	Second Fifth	Third Fifth	Fourth Fifth	Highest Fifth	Gini* Index
2004	3.4	8.7	14.7	23.2	50.1	0.466
2000	3.6	8.9	14.9	23.0	49.6	0.460
1990	3.9	9.6	15.9	24.0	46.6	0.428
1980	4.3	10.3	16.9	24.9	43.7	0.403
1970	4.1	10.8	17.4	24.5	43.3	0.394

*The income inequality of a population group is commonly measured using the Gini index. The Gini index ranges from 0, indicating perfect equality (i.e., all persons having equal shares of the agregate income), to 1, indicating perfect inequality (i.e., where all of the income is received by only one recipient or one group of recipients and the rest have none). The increase in the Gini index for household income between 1970 and 2004 indicates a significant increase in income inequality.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, "Income and Earnings Summary Measures by selected characteristics: 2003 and 2004." (August 2005). http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p60_229.pdf

each class has values, attitudes, and motives that are unique. They stem from occupations and income (Collins, 1988b:29), which then give rise to class-differentiated family patterns.

This approach suggests that lower-class people are unmotivated, incapable of deferring gratification, and as a result unable to improve their condition (Miller and Riessman, 1964). Poor families are described in negative terms: as apathetic and fatalistic, responding to their economic situation by becoming fatalistic; they feel they are down and out and there is no point in trying to improve, for the odds are all against them (Kahl, 1957:211, 213).

The cultural approach to class views the occupations of the middle class as orienting them to success and self-direction. Upper-middle-class "careers" require initiative and self-direction, whereas working-class jobs require workers to follow orders. Although these lifestyles stem from specific occupational experiences, comparisons between the classes usually turn out to be *deficit* accounts of lower-status families. Not only are these characteristics insulting, but they are also conspicuously lopsided, implying that lower-class people fail because something is missing in their families (Connell et al., 1982:27). Ideas about class-specific cultures often blame poor families for their failure.

An important concept in this way of thinking about poor families is the **culture of poverty.** The culture of poverty contends that the poor have certain characteristics that set them apart from the rest of society and that these cultural differences *explain* continued poverty. In other words, the poor, in adapting to their deprived condition, are more permissive in raising their children, less verbal, more fatalistic, less apt to defer gratification, and less likely to be interested in formal education than the well-to-do. This deviant culture pattern is said to be transmitted from generation to generation.

The notion that poverty is rooted in culture originated in anthropological case studies of Oscar Lewis (1959, 1966). Based on ethnographies of lower-class family life

poor and the nonpoor is cultural, resting in values and behaviors. Poverty is more the result of defective lifestyles than of physical environment. If poverty itself were to be eliminated, the former poor would probably continue to prefer instant gratification, be immoral by middle-class standards, and so on. This reasoning blames the victim. It says that the poor have a subculture with values that differ from the other social classes and this explains their poverty.

The culture of poverty thesis had a significant impact on social policy in the 1960s. Programs arising out of the War on Poverty (such as Head Start) were influenced by the concept of a culture of poverty. However, the theory has never been verified (Rank, 2004:475). Today, the culture of poverty theory has gone out of favor. Nevertheless, we find its ideas used in concepts such as the "underclass," a class at the bottom, said to be locked into poverty by a deficit culture.

Shortcomings of the Cultural Approach

Common values and lifestyles among families with similar occupations, education, and income are real. But placing the emphasis on culture distorts key points. Treating family diversity as the result of cultural differences amounts to little more than a statement of the tautology "Families in different social classes are different because their cultures are different." This may be true, but it is not meaningful. Although subcultural differences are important, they become fully meaningful only when they are related to social and economic conditions.

Cultural explanations of family life in different parts of the class system ignore the social and material realities of class. Instead of recognizing how the economic system produces different levels of support for family life, the conventional explanations make each class responsible for its fate.

Over the years, social scientists have disputed the typical interpretation of poverty. Today, extensive research finds that so-called cultural factors can be traced to material realities. Here, we review evidence from two studies arguing that family life among the poor is not caused by deviant values. The first study was conducted four decades ago by Hyman Rodman (1964). He analyzed many so-called lower-class family traits as *solutions* to the problems lower-class people face in life. Consensual unions and female or mother-centered households, "promiscuous" sexual relationships, "illegitimate" children, "deserting" husbands and fathers, and "unmarried" mothers—all are solutions employed by the lower class to problems they face in life. In his study of the lower class in Coconut Village, Trinidad, Rodman found that marital or quasi-marital relationships were related to persistent economic uncertainties. "Marital shifting" and fluid marital bonds were then acceptable alternatives among lower-class families in U.S. society as well.

> Within the United States, the higher rates of divorce and desertion within the lower class, as well as of "common law" unions and illegitimacy, are indicative of such fluidity. If, as I am suggesting, these lower-class patterns are responses to the deprivations of lower-class life, and if they are functional for lower-class individuals, then we can see the sense in which many of the lower-class family patterns that are often regarded as problems are actually solutions to other, more pressing problems. (Rodman, 1964:68)

More recent evidence against the culture of poverty comes from a large-scale study conducted by social scientists at the University of Michigan. For over thirty years, the

Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) has been gathering data on the economic fortunes of families and individuals over many generations. This study raised the following question: Do the poor constitute a permanent underclass out of step with the majority and doomed to continuous poverty? By following families since 1968, the PSID has found that poverty is not a permanent condition for most people (Rank and Hirschl, 2001). Instead, there is a high turnover in the families and households who are poor in any given year. The typical patterns is that families are poor for one or two years and then manage to get above the poverty line (Rank, 2004:470). For the most part, poor families experience short-term poverty spells as they slip in and out of poverty.

Contrary to the myth that the poor are poor because they lack motivation, the PSID shows that people often fall into poverty because of a dramatic change such as the loss of a job or family break-up. Once adjustments are made to those changes, people are often able to climb back out of poverty (Lichter and Crowley, 2002; O'Hare, 1996; Rank, 2000; 2004). (See Box 5.1.)

The experience of long-term poverty varies among population groups. Female-headed families, African Americans, Latinos, and the elderly have longer than average poverty spells once they become poor, because they have fewer routes out of poverty. These facts show how race and gender are linked to class in producing poverty. The PSID has found little evidence that poverty is the outcome of the way poor people think or that economic success is a function of "good" values and failure the result of "bad" ones.

The Structural Approach

A very different view of class differences in U.S. families emerges when we examine the institutional features of the class system. The structural perspective is critical of the notion that class position rests on people's own efforts and abilities. Such thinking neglects the ways in which social classes serve as the basis for allocating the resources needed for family life. Opportunities are socially structured; that is, they are built into the class system. They are far more important than individual or cultural factors.

Occupations are a key part of the class structure. They link families with resources and opportunities. Those that are highly valued and carry high-income rewards are distributed unevenly. Income has a profound effect on family life. The job or occupation that is the source of the paycheck connects families with the opportunity structure in different ways.

Are occupations, then, the main criterion for social class? The answer to this question depends on which model of social class is used. The first model places families and individuals in social classes according to occupation. Each social class is composed of social equals who share a similar lifestyle. Each class-specific culture is assumed to shape family life differently. Treating classes as groups of occupations has been a useful way of creating a picture of the class structure in which occupations and their resources and rewards are stratified (that is, divided like a layer cake, with each class or "layer" sharing certain attributes, such as level of income and type of occupation). However, this picture of classes as occupational strata implies that "class" is a static place that individuals and families inhabit, rather than a real-life grouping (Connell et al., 1982:25).

A second model of social class focuses not on occupations but on *relationships of power* between class groups. A social class in this view is not a cluster of similar

BOX 5.1

Researching Families: The Panel Study of Income Dynamics: Following Parents and Children for Four Decades

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), begun in 1968, is a longitudinal study of a representative sample of U.S. individuals (men, women, and children, and the family units in which they reside). It emphasizes the dynamic aspects of economic and demographic behavior, but its content is broad, including sociological and psychological measures. As of 2000, the PSID had collected information about more than 40,000 individuals spanning as much as thirty years of their lives. The study is conducted at the Survey Research Center, Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan.

Starting with a national sample of 5000 U.S. households in 1968, the PSID has reinterviewed individuals from those households every year since that time, regardless of whether they are living in the same dwelling or with the same people. Adults have been followed as they have grown older, and children have been observed as they advance through childhood and into adolescence, forming family units of their own. Information about the original 1968 sample individuals and their current co-residents (spouses, cohabitors, children, and anyone else living with them) is collected each year. In 1990, a representative national sample of 2000 Latino households, differentially sampled to provide adequate numbers of Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Cuban Americans, was added to the PSID database.

In the early years, the purpose was to find out more about what the policy makers then called the "culture of poverty." Culture-of-poverty theorists believed that lack of motivation and other psychological factors were deeply rooted in the poor and kept many of them isolated from society's mainstream. The panel study measures individual attitudes about achievement, personal effectiveness, and the future with a series of psychological tests. Findings did not support theories that low motivation contributes to poverty. Highly motivated people were not more successful at escaping poverty than those with lower scores on these tests.

If the panel study did not support common ideas about what causes poverty, what did it show? A new and emerging definition of poverty has resulted from the PSID, as the data helped transform research on poverty from a static view of poor and rich to a dynamic view in which families experience episodes of poverty. Changes in family living arrangements are important to understand many of the shifts in and out of poverty. Researchers have found that family structure changes such as divorces are as important to well-being as unemployment.

The PSID has been used to design more effective welfare policies nationwide. Citation studies show that it is one of the most widely used social science data sets in the world. Since 1968, more than 2167 articles, papers, and other publications were based on this data. Today, on average, there is one publication using the PSID every 3.9 days.

Today, the PSID continues to provide long-term histories of marriage, childbirth, and living arrangements to contribute to the understanding of these demographic trends and their effect on the socioeconomic well-being of families and individuals. In 2005, the 75-minute interview collected data on employment, earnings, income

(*continued*)

BOX 5.1

(continued from)

from all sources, food expenditures, housing, geospatial data, health and health insurance, educational expenditures, marriage and fertility, participation in government programs, vehicle ownership, wealth and pensions, and philanthropy. Many of these areas have been included in the study since 1968.

Sources: Anne Rueter, "Myths of Poverty," *The Research News.* Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan (July–September 1984): pp. 18–19; PSID Home Page, "An Overview of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics" (April 1997), http://www.umich.edu/psid; PSID Newsletter (April 2000), http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/psid/newsletter/news042000.html; and "An Overview of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics: Key Contributions of the PSID to the Knowledge Base," http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/psid/overview.html

Katherine A. McGonagle and Robert F. Schoeni, "The Panel Study of Income Dynamics: Overview and Summary of Scientific Contributions After Nearly 40 Years" (January 30, 2006). http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/Publications/Papers/montrealv5.pdf

occupations, but rather a number of individuals who occupy a similar position within the social relations of economic production (Wright et al., 1982). What is important in this model is that class is not merely a relative position in a layered system, but a dynamic connection between different groups of people that dictates interaction between them. Classes are *power* relationships, involving domination and subordination. Some groups have more power than others through their structural control of society's scarce resources. The key, then, is not the occupation itself but the *control* one has over one's own work, the work of others, decision making, and investments. People who own, manage, oppress, and control must be distinguished from those who are managed, oppressed, and controlled.

Both models of social class are important in understanding how class shapes family life. In this section, we refer to families in five categories in order to illustrate two points: (1) that different connections with society's opportunity structure shape families in distinctive ways and (2) that structured power relationships produce advantages for some families and disadvantages for others. Class privileges shape family relationships. **Privilege** refers to the distribution of goods and services, situations, and experiences that are highly valued and beneficial (Jeffries and Ransford, 1980:68). **Class privileges** are those advantages, prerogatives, and options that are available to those in the middle and upper classes. They confer dominance, power, and entitlement (McIntosh, 1992:98). They involve help from "the system": banks, credit unions, medical facilities, and voluntary associations. Class privileges create many differences in family patterns.

Traditionally, the family has been viewed as the principal unit in the stratification system because it passes on privilege (or the lack thereof) from generation to generation. We will see that even though the family is basic in maintaining stratification, life chances are affected by race and gender inequalities as well as by social class. In most families, men have greater socioeconomic resources and more power and privileges than do women, even though all family members are viewed as members of the same social class. While a family's placement in the class hierarchy does determine rewards

and resources, hierarchies based on sex create different conditions for women and men even within the same family (Acker, 1973).

Gender cuts across class and racial divisions to distribute resources differently to men and women. Therefore, both family units and individuals are important in our understanding of different family experiences. In the following description of family life and social class, we examine how families in different parts of the class hierarchy are connected to society. The following points are important: (1) Class composition and class formation are always in flux; (2) the classes as they are described here contain many contradictions; and (3) the classes are always being entered and exited by individuals in either direction. Nevertheless, the class structure does organize families differently. Poverty, stable wage earning, affluent salaries, and inherited wealth create different material advantages, differences in the amount of control over others, and class differences in how families are shaped and how they operate.

The distinction we have been making between family and household helps us understand why family formation patterns differ by social class. Households are economic sites. They support themselves in different ways: through inheritance, salaries, wages, welfare, or various involvements with the hidden economy, the irregular economy, or the illegal economy. These different ways of acquiring the necessities of life produce variations in family life. Economic circumstances involve more than income. Economic circumstances affect every aspect of family life. The following descriptions situate class-based family differences in factors outside the family.

Families in Poverty

The lack of opportunities at the lower levels of the class hierarchy make the nuclear family a difficult arrangement to sustain. Studies over the past four decades show that the poor are more likely to expand their family boundaries in order to stretch the few resources they have. They are more likely to use a larger network of kin than the nonpoor (Rank, 2001:894). The extended network provides services such as babysitting, sharing meals, or lending money. It represents a coping mechanism for dealing with poverty.

Poverty reduces the likelihood of marriage. The reason for a great proportion of female-headed households among the poor is that individuals who contemplate marriage generally seek or desire to be economically secure partners. Because poverty undermines the availability of such partners, individuals in these situations are likely to delay or forego marriage (Rank, 2000:309). Many poor women give up on marriage, not because they reject the institution of marriage, but because they believe marriage will probably make their lives more difficult. If they cannot enjoy economic stability and gain upward mobility from marriage, they see little reason to marry (Edin, 2000b:130).

These themes are reflected in many studies of the past three decades that show how poverty affects family life. A labor market that fails to provide stable jobs prevents families from lifting themselves out of poverty. The solutions that poor families devise would surprise most nonpoor people. An important addition to the growing body of research on how low-income families really get by is Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein's *Making Ends Meet* (1997). This study, completed before welfare reform, shows what poor single mothers who are welfare recipients and those who work in low-paid, unskilled job sectors of the U.S. economy must do to survive. Welfare mothers are not an

underclass of women with deviant values. Many mothers struggle in low-wage jobs even though they may have been better off on welfare. Over a twelve-month period, Edin and Lein found that both welfare mothers and low-wage working mothers experienced devastating hardships. Both groups faced the same fundamental dilemma each month, and they relied on similar kinds of survival strategies to generate the additional money they needed to bridge the gap between their income and their expenditures.

> These survival strategies were dynamic rather than static. They resembled a continuously unraveling patchwork quilt, constructed from a variety of welfare- and work-based income; cash and in-kind assistance from family, friends, absent fathers, and boyfriends; and cash and in-kind assistance from agencies. Though welfare- and wage-reliant mothers drew from the same repertoire of strategies, wage-reliant mothers were less likely to rely on supplemental work because they had so little extra time. For the same reason, they relied much more heavily on their personal networks to meet household expenses. Although maintaining this web of social relations took time, the "work" fit more flexibly into working mothers' schedules. (Edin and Lein, 1997:224–225)

This study highlights both the hardships and creativity of poor single mothers. With the high rate of unemployment and limited social opportunities, poor families must do whatever it takes to survive. Even though they were clever at devising strategies to make up their budget shortfalls, these strategies took a great deal of time and energy. They were highly unstable and sometimes illegal (Edin, 2000b).

In a new study of motherhood and marriage, Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas ask the question—Why do poor women have children outside of marriage? Their findings show how marriage patterns are closely tied to class factors. Neighborhoods without economic stability or community supports make it difficult for childbearing and marriage to go hand in hand. Poor women value both children and motherhood, but they see them differently. For the women in this study, children are a main source of identity and well-being. Yet they avoid marriage to men who do not meet their standards for financial and emotional security. According to Edin and Kefalas, they take marriage so seriously that they are unwilling to risk failure (Edin and Kefalas, 2005).

Since welfare reform was enacted in 1996 (see Chapter 13), many mothers have been dropped from welfare rolls without any other form of financial support. Those who do obtain employment are often in low-earning jobs and find that employment is not necessarily a ticket out of poverty (Murray et al., 2002:112). Even full-time work is no guarantee of livelihood for many U.S. families. A recent national study has found that 71 percent of low income families work, but they earn such low income that they are struggling financially (Waldron, Roberts, and Reamer, 2006). Survival often means expanding their family boundaries in order to stretch and sustain the few resources they have (see Box 5.2).

Blue-Collar Families

Working-class families are the largest single group of families in the country. As Rubin described the working class in the 1990s,

> These are the men and women, by far the largest part of the American work force, who work at the lower levels of manufacturing and service sectors of the economy; workers whose education is limited, whose mobility options are severely restricted, and who usually work for an hourly rather than a weekly wage. They don't tap public resources; they reap no benefit

BOX 5.2

Inside the Worlds of Diverse Families: Survival Strategies

The unskilled and semiskilled mothers we interviewed chose between welfare and work. Their choices were partly shaped by another set of decisions: Each mother also had to choose among a range of survival strategies to scratch together enough supplementary income. These survival "choices" were not entirely up to the mother, since other factors, including her personal characteristics and the characteristics of the neighborhood and city she lived in, often limited the range of options available to her. Despite these constraints, however, most mothers said they still had a range of strategies to try.

Some mothers relied on the father of their children or a boyfriend for help. Others relied mainly on their own mother or other family members. In cases where neither a child's father, a boyfriend, nor a relative could help, mothers often relied on an off-the-books job. Some sold sex, drugs, and stolen goods. Still others moved between informal and illegal jobs. When these strategies failed, many went to churches or private charities to get help to pay the light bill or the rent.

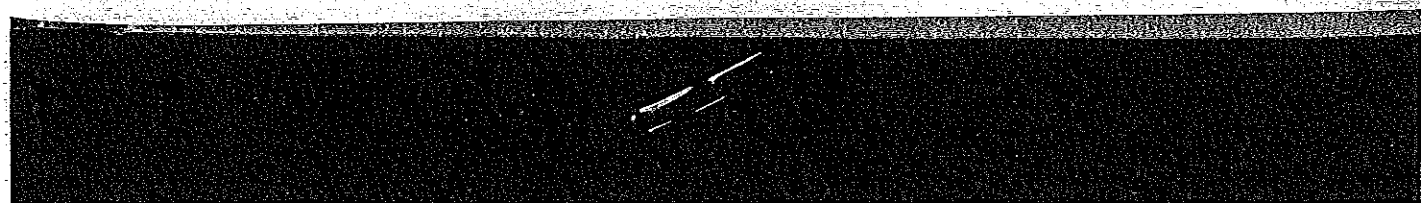
Mothers who did not have supportive friends and relatives generally had to find some kind of side work. But some mothers told us they could not do side work because they had no one to watch their young children. Others could not get a side job because they were disabled; still others did not have the know-how to get an off-the-books job without getting caught by their welfare caseworker; and others lived in small, tight-knit communities where a side job would be hard to hide from authorities.

Mothers who could get neither network support nor side work were the most dependent on churches and private charities. Not surprisingly, these mothers invested a lot of time learning about the range of public and private sources of help available in their communities. Some mothers had a relatively easy time finding out about agencies because members of their social networks offered them guidance or because such services were well publicized. Other mothers lived in neighborhoods or cities with poor service environments, making agency help more difficult to obtain.

Most women expressed clear preferences for some strategies over others. These preferences had two dimensions. First, most mothers thought some strategies compromised their self-respect more than others. Second, mothers felt that some strategies involved more blatant violations of the welfare rules—and could be more easily tracked by caseworkers—than others.

Self-reliance through work remained most mothers' long-term goal. The vast majority said that they wanted to pay all their bills with what they earned. Full financial independence, allowing them to forgo any outside help, was the only strategy that, in these mothers' eyes, involved no loss of self-respect; yet, not one mother earned enough to make this possible. Instead, they turned to their second-, third-, and fourth-best alternatives to make ends meet. In general, both welfare- and wage-reliant mothers felt that their second-best alternative was to rely on cash help from members of the personal networks. Mothers thought this strategy was the most acceptable for a number of reasons . . . not the least of which was that network help was seen as the best bet for moving from welfare to work. But the quality and extent of mothers' networks varied a lot, and some had no one to whom they were able (or willing) to turn.

Source: Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low Wage Work.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997, pp. 143–144.



> from either the pitiful handouts to the poor or from huge subsidies to the rich. Instead, they go to work every day to provide for their families, often at jobs they hate. (Rubin, 1994:30–31)

In Chapter 4 we examined the macroeconomic shifts displacing manufacturing workers and creating new vulnerabilities for family life. These economic pressures move working class families even farther from the idealized nuclear family model. Of course, working class families have always been vulnerable to economic fluctuations. Their class position offers little economic support for economic dislocations. As their jobs are downsized or disappear, many working class families must at one time or another live on a combination of wages, unemployment insurance, and social security benefits (Bridenthal, 1981). Like those in the lower class, they may depend on government assistance, food stamps, and various sectors of the irregular economy. For minorities and women in the working class, economic pressures are compounded by racial discrimination and sex discrimination. Minority groups and women heading households are disproportionately found in this category.

Families in this class location struggle creatively, often heroically, drawing on whatever resources they can to sustain the family. Support from kin turns out to be one of the most important solutions to social and economic pressures. Working-class reliance on extended kin is not new. Practically every study of working-class families shows that they interact more with kin than do middle-class families. For example, Mirra Komorovsky's classic study, *Blue Collar Marriage* (1962), revealed that kin relations were the main experience of group membership.

Herbert Gans's study of "urban villagers," Italian American workers in Boston, also painted a kin-based picture of working-class families (Gans 1962:245). And Lillian Rubin's classic study, *Worlds of Pain* (1976), described the extended family as the heart of social life. Rubin exclaimed that "even in mobile California, the importance of extended kin among working-class families is striking" (Rubin, 1976:197). The classic literature on working-class families shows that the kin network helps families reduce financial stress (Perry-Jenkins and Salamon, 2002). Of course, living in the context of a large and supportive kin network can have both costs and benefits. On the one hand, kin can provide support when times are hard. On the other hand, they also require assistance and they can be the source of family conflict.

Working-class families continue to be stereotyped as "traditional." However, many blue-collar families keep themselves above the official poverty line through wives' employment. Classic studies of working-class families (Komorovsky, 1962; Rubin, 1976) and more recent examinations by Stacey (1991) and Rubin (1994), reveal consistent themes of financial stress and marital strife. Studies conducted in the last decade of the twentieth century found that family life took place amid precarious financial conditions. The current economic downturn has put families at even greater risk "where any unexpected event such as a child's illness or a brief layoff threatens their financial stability. Moreover, divorce is splitting many working-class families" (Perry-Jenkins and Salamon, 2002:198).

Middle-Class Families

The middle-class nuclear family is idealized in our society. This form, a self-reliant unit composed of a breadwinning father, a homemaker mother, and their children has long been most characteristic of middle-class and upper-middle-class families. Middle-class families of the new century are quite different from the television stereotyped

family of the 1950s. Today, many families sustain their middle-class status only through the economic contributions of employed wives. Such families must find ways to provide care for their children. How families in different class locations do this in the twenty-first century is the subject of a new study by sociologist Karen Hansen. Her research challenges the myths that middle-class families are self-sufficient and disconnected from kin. Even if they are middle class, families with two breadwinners must build social networks to help them care for children. In today's world, they have increased their reliance on kin. Hansen concludes that structural changes have given rise to middle-class families that are "not-so nuclear" (Hansen, 2005).

But even if middle-class families are less less kin-oriented than those in the working class, their "autonomy" is shaped by supportive forces in this class location. When exceptional resources are called for, nonfamilial institutions usually are available in the form of better medical coverage, expense accounts, credit at banks, and so on (Rapp, 1982:181). These links with nonfamily institutions are precisely the ones that distinguish the family economy of middle-class families. Class distinctions are often complicated by race:

> Two main things tend to distinguish black middle-class people from middle-class whites. One is the likelihood that many more of their relatives will come to them first for help. The other is that they tend to lack the resources of people who started in the middle class. (Billingsley, 1992:284)

Middle-class families generally receive salaries rather than wages. Their salaries provide them with a stable resource base, a factor that differentiates them from those below. Even more important, the middle class exerts power and control in relation to the working class. Those in the middle class can control their working conditions in a way that the working class cannot (Vanneman and Cannon, 1987). According to Randall Collins (1988b), this power position distinguishes the middle class from the working class. In his distinction, the middle class are "order-givers" while the working class are "order-takers." This is a useful way of thinking about class as a social relationship. However, gender complicates matters, because paid work gives women and men different connections with society's opportunity structures. Some women's jobs seem to be in middle-class sectors, but Collins argues that, in fact, most women's jobs are "white-collar working-class" because they take rather than give orders:

> Secretaries, clerks, and retail sales positions are order-takers, not order-givers. Many of them are also manual workers, operators of machines (telephones, photocopiers, typewriters, word processors) within an office setting. Nurses, who are conventionally classified as professionals, nevertheless tend to be clerical workers within a medical setting and assistants who perform manual work for physicians (although they may sometimes have some order-giver power vis-à-vis patients). Of the most common female occupations, only schoolteachers (5.3 percent of the female labor force) would be considered genuinely middle class by the criterion of order-giving and order-taking. (Collins, 1988b:30)

Gender can create class inconsistencies in middle-class marriages because many middle-class males have married downward to white-collar working-class women.

Families of Professionals

Families in the professional class are likely to merge the spheres of work and family. Leisure activities often revolve around occupational concerns and occupational associates. Studies of corporation executives and their families reveal a strong corporate

influence. For example, Rosabeth Kanter found that both executives and their wives were closely tied to the corporation. Here is her description of "corporate" wives:

> At a certain point in their husbands' climb to the top [these wives] . . . realized that friendships were no longer a personal matter but had business implications. Social professionalism set in. The political implications of what had formerly been personal or sentimental choices became clear. Old friendships might have to be put aside because the organizational situation makes them inappropriate, as in the case of one officer husband who let his wife know it would no longer be seemly to maintain a social relationship with a couple to whom they had previously been close because the first husband now far outranked the second. The public consequences of relationships made it difficult for some wives to have anything but a superficial friendship with anyone in the corporate social network. Yet since so much of their time was consumed by company related entertainment, they had little chance for friendships and reported considerable loneliness (Kanter, 1984:116).

In many professional homes, family life is subordinate to the demands of the husband-father's occupation. Family can be a respite, "dad's place of leisure" (Larson and Richards, 1994). Family can take a backseat to the male involvement in work, success, and striving. Corporate relocation is commonplace. In many cases employers subsidize moves by paying for moving expenses. Commonly, professional employees are relocated repeatedly, "sometimes as often as every two or three years and on average every five to seven years (Eby and Russell, 2000:4).

Moving to a new community for a job change affects family members in a variety of ways. There may be some benefits from the move, but there are also costs. An employee's family members must give up their previous home, including the physical dwelling and the surrounding community with its offerings . . . of arts, activities, stores, scenery, etc. Also, they give up a sense of familiarity, and they give up close proximity to individuals and organizations with whom they were connected and from whom they drew varying levels of resources such as companionship or support. In some cases, this effect is large. In other cases it is small. And the effect often differs for different members of the family (Whitaker, 2005:89). (See Box 5.3.)

In spite of the work pressures that often mold professional families, husbands (and perhaps wives) in careers have both economic resources and built-in ties with supportive institutions. These ties are structural. They are intrinsic to some occupations, and to middle-class neighborhoods. Such class-based connections strengthen the autonomy of these families, allowing them to emphasize the nuclear unit.

Wealthy Families

Vast economic holdings give elite families control over social resources as well as opportunities and choices not available to other families in society. Although small in number compared to other class categories, the elite have great power and influence through their ownership or control of the major units of the economy. This is class control. Their network of influence in the global economy and their ability to generate additional resources is what distinguishes the elite from the rest of society. "It is not simply bank interest that generates more money, but income-producing property: buildings, factories, natural resources; those assets Karl Marx referred to as the means of production" (Mantsios, 1996:101). Decisions about what is most profitable for them affect what happens to other families in the nation and the world.

BOX 5.3

Emergent Family Trends: Women Pay a Price for Corporate Relocation in Today's Global Economy

The United States has a national job market for employment, especially professional or managerial employment. As more and more companies become national or global, employment possibilities within a company are geographically widespread. People are expected to relocate to other areas of the country or the world in order to take a job, keep a job, or advance in a job. In fact, more than half of all moves in the United States are believed to be work-related, and promotions, new job responsibilities, and even just job retention are sometimes attached to geographic moves (Hodson and Sullivan, 2002).

Corporate relocation has different implications for men and women. Although the movers are primarily professional middle and upper-middle class employees, this form of work-related family migration is disproportionately male-centered. According to *MOBILITY Magazine,* the monthly publication of the Employee Relocation Council, a trade association for relocation professionals, 83 percent of domestic corporate transferees and 87 percent of international corporate transferees are male (Marshall and Greenwood, 2002). Most are married (84 percent of domestic) and most have children (about 60 percent of each).

We often think of wives in professional middle-class marriages as both privileged and educated and therefore immune to gender discrimination and gender disadvantage. Employee relocation today is one area that refutes that image and where being a woman can exact a high price. To understand how corporate relocation affects women, we must consider gender role expectations. Productive activity, or paid labor, is treated as men's domain while reproductive activity, unpaid labor necessary for the reproduction of everyday life, is treated as women's domain. Even when women work outside the home, they are still responsible for most family and household work. While relocation maintains or improves the situation in the productive realm, it requires that a family forfeit many of the resources of the reproductive realm. Relocated families must give up their homes and the surrounding communities. Also, they must give up a sense of familiarity and the close proximity to individuals and organizations with whom they were connected and from whom they drew varying levels of resources such as companionship or support.

To study the relationship between families, work, and community in the new millennium, I talked with ten women who had been moved for their husbands' jobs (Whitaker, 2005). We spoke about the decision process that preceded their move, the changes they underwent with regard to home and place, and the process of reestablishing a family in a new community. Although the women spoke in terms of "opportunity," it was clear that pressure and guilt influenced them to "go along" with the move. The pressure came from their feelings of vulnerability in the precarious global economy and from the sense that they didn't have the right to stand in the way of their husbands' aspirations. The following statement reveals the sentiments of several women who followed a transferred husband.

> For me absolutely [there was a time we considered not taking it], but not for him. We talked a lot about it, but at this time I was a stay-at-home mom and the guilt was overwhelming. What exactly did I have to stay in [city] for? Just pretty much because I didn't want to be away from friends and family was the only reason. It was my husband's

(continued)

BOX 5.3

(*continued from*)

> career, and I didn't have a career then other than being a full time mom. . . . Ultimately this is his career and if I was going to follow him up the corporate ladder then this was what we had to do.

While transferred husbands are engaged with their careers and are immediately immersed in work activities and work communities, their wives are charged with recreating and then maintaining the private aspects of life, the very aspects that are a hidden cost of relocation. One relocated wife said this when she thought about what she was giving up by moving to allow her husband to advance in his career:

> I really loved where we lived. It was a perfect fit. It wasn't right on top of my family but close enough to see them. And the town, they'd just made so many great improvements. It is just a great place to live and I hated to leave. To leave the town, our friends. [My husband] and I, that was like our little family. (Whitaker, 2005)

About half of these professional, educated women gave up their own jobs in addition to taking on the responsibility of re-establishing their families with new networks of support and companionship. Overwhelmingly, the women said that a move is successful only when they were connected and supported within their new community. One wife defined a successful move like this:

> To define successful would be that I'm no longer sitting here sobbing, we have made very good friends here that I have called on in bad times and they have helped me out.

Professional middle and upper-middle class individuals may enjoy privileges in the work arena. They have high levels of autonomy and authority on the job and good compensation compared with working-class and low-income workers. But, the individuals and families who are subject to corporate pressure to forgo place to maintain class status in a corporate world are, in fact, wage earners. They often enjoy good salaries and benefits but most are not independently wealthy where employment circumstances are irrelevant to their abilities to pay their bills, maintain their lifestyles, and provide for their families. Also, the employment stability of professional middle-class managers has evolved in such a way that the privilege of this group may be more tenuous than it once was. While managers' unemployment rates have traditionally been very low, the prevalence of organizational change affects the long-term job-security of managers. Women and men face different costs and challenges with women bearing a disproportionately large share of the costs and burdens on the home front. Corporations readily ask families to change their homes and their lives, and they rely on women to do the rebuilding.

References:

Hodson, Randy and Teresa A. Sullivan. *The Social Organization of Work.* Belmont, California: Wadsworth/Thomas Learning. 2002.

Marshall, Edward L. and Peggy Greenwood, "Setting Corporate Policy to Meet the Changing Definition of Family", *MOBILITY Magazine,* Employee Relocation Council, April 2002.

Source: Elizabeth Ann Whitaker. Department of Sociology, Michigan State University, 2006. This essay was written expressly for *Diversity in Families,* 8th Edition.

Some examples of upper-class families are the Du Ponts (who control General Motors, U.S. Rubber, and various chemical companies), the Rockefellers (who control Standard Oil and Chase Manhattan Bank), and the Mellons (who control Alcoa, Gulf Oil, the Mellon Bank, and numerous appliance companies) (*Forbes,* 2000). Day-to-day family life among the elite is "privileged" in every sense:

> Wealthy families can afford an elaborate support structure to take care of the details of everyday life. Persons can be hired to cook and prepare meals and do laundry and to care for the children. (Stein et al., 1977:9)

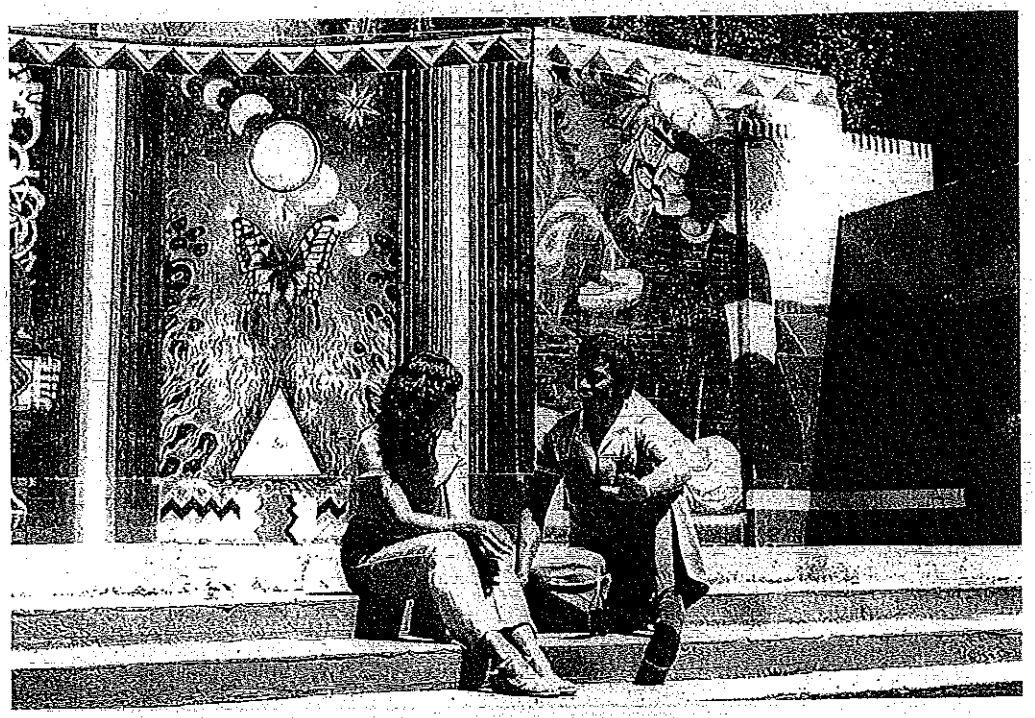
Elite family lifestyles are made possible by their control of labor of others—the subordinate classes whose own families must often suffer as they do the work required to support elite privileges. The point is not only that domination and subordination coexist, but that the lifestyles of the wealthy cannot exist without denying the rights and privileges of those who serve them.

Compared to other categories of families, relatively little recent data are available on the wealthy. The elite have a distinctive family structure. They are "lineal, ancestor oriented, and conscious of the boundaries that separate the 'best' families from the others. The Social Register (names of upper-class families) is used even today to consolidate upper class repute, support class cohesion, and maintain 'good breeding' in their interest in continuity of lineage. Families are the units within which wealth is accumulated and transmitted" (Eshleman and Bulcroft, 2006:145–146).

Among the elite, "family constitutes not only a nuclear family but the extended family as well." The elite often have multiple households (Rapp, 1982:182)— that is, numerous townhouses and country places. For years, the Kennedy "compound" at Hyannis, Massachusetts, was an obvious case in point, as were the Rockefeller estates (managed by employees). The compound is usually only one of several residences that serve as community centers for extended kin. Multiple residences are not nuclear households in form, nor are they independent entities (Leibowitz, 1978:165). The concerns and much of day-to-day life exist within the larger context of a kinship network. The kin-based family form of the elite serves to preserve inherited wealth. It is connected with national institutions that control the wealth of society.

Elite families are nationally connected by a web of institutions they control. Families throughout the country are linked by private schools, exclusive colleges, exclusive clubs, and fashionable vacation resorts. In this way the elite remains intact, and the marriage market is restricted to a small (but national) market (Blumberg and Paul, 1975:69). Marriage legally clarifies the lines of inheritance in a way that is less important to those without property (Hansen, 2005: 69). But marriage among the elite is more than a legal-emotional commitment. It is a means of concentrating capital and maintaining the in-group solidarity of the class (Langman, 1987:224). Even the division of labor between women and men sustains class solidarity. In the upper class, women's philanthropic work serves a "gatekeeping" function. Their work in private schools, social clubs, and charity functions is vital in preserving the institutions that benefit family and class (Ostrander, 1984; Daniels, 1987).

We have reviewed studies showing extensive class variation in household and family formation. Kinship ties, obligations, and interests are more extended in classes at the two extremes than they are in the middle (McKinley, 1964:22). In the upper extreme



Murals in Chicano communities reflect their distinct identity within the larger culture.

and toward the lower end of the class structure, kinship networks serve decidedly different functions, but at both extremes they are institutions of resource management.

RACE

Like the class and gender hierarchies, racial stratification has structural foundations. It operates as a system of advantage and disadvantage through its unequal distribution of power and privilege. In this section of the chapter, we show that racial stratification produces persistent racial differences in families.

The racial hierarchy, with White groups of European origin at the top and racially defined groups at the bottom, serves important functions for society and for certain categories of people. It ensures that some people are available to do society's dirty work at low wages. The racial hierarchy has positive consequences for the status quo: It enables the powerful to retain their power and advantages. Many people think that multi cultural attitudes and a "color-blind" climate have replaced old-fashioned racism. Yet many family features among racially defined groups show that racial inequalities persist in today's multicultural world. White groups receive racial privileges in the form of better occupational opportunities, income, and education. Racially defined groups lack the same opportunities as everyone else. This affects family life in important ways.

The different family experiences of racial groups are systematically produced even though races do not exist biologically. What does exist is the *idea* that races are distinct biological categories. But despite the common belief, social scientists now reject the bi-

ological concept of race. Scientific examination of the human genome finds no genetic differences between the so-called races. Fossil and DNA evidence shows that humans are all one race, evolved in the last 100,000 years from the same small number of tribes that migrated out of Africa and colonized the world (American Sociological Association, 2003; Angier, 2000; Bean et al., 2004; Mukhopadhay and Henze, 2003). Although there is no such thing as biological race, races are real insofar as they are *socially defined.* In other words, racial categories *operate* as if they are real.

Racial classification in the United States is based on a Black/White dichotomy—that is, two opposing categories into which all people fit. However, social definitions of race have changed throughout the nation's history. At different points in the past, "race has taken on different meanings. Many of the people considered White and thought of as the majority group are descendents of immigrants who at one time were believed to be racially distinct from native-born White Americans, the majority of whom were Protestants" (Higginbotham and Andersen, 2005:3). Racial categories vary in different regions of the country and around the world. Someone classified as "Black" in the United States might be considered "White" in Brazil and "Colored" (a category distinguished from both "Black" and "White") in South Africa (Bamshad and Olson, 2003:80). In the United States, a Black/White color line has always been complicated by regional racial divides. Today, those divides are taking on new meaning with "the arrival of unprecedented numbers of Asians and Latinos" (Lee and Bean, 2004b:224). Their non-White racial status marks them as "other" and denies them many social opportunities (Pyke, 2004:258). Global events also complicate the color lines. Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Arab Americans, Muslims, and people of Middle-Eastern descent (viewed by many as a single entity) are stereotyped as different and dangerous.

In Chapter 4 we discussed present immigration patterns that are profoundly reshaping the U.S. racial landscape. Immigration from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean is also changing the character of race and ethnic relations. Sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994:55) call this **racial formation,** meaning that society is continually creating and transforming racial categories. Groups that were previously defined in terms of specific ethnic backgrounds (such as Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans) are now racialized as "Hispanics" and "Asian Americans." Even the U.S. Census Bureau, which measures races on the basis of self-identification, revised its racial categories for the 2000 Census. For the first time, people were allowed to record themselves in two or more racial categories. Of the U.S. population, 2.4 percent or 7 million people identified themselves as multiracial, reporting that they were of two races. This option of choosing more than one race provides a more accurate and visible portrait of the multiracial population in the United States. We can expect that the use of the multiracial option will grow, especially among the younger population. Marrying across racial lines is on the increase, as attitudes toward interracial unions become more tolerant 13 percent of U.S. marriages now involve someone of a different race (Lee and Bean, 2004:228). (See Chapter 8.) Already, children are more likely to identify themselves as multiracial than adults. Four percent of the population under age 18 were identified in more than one racial category in the 2000 census, twice the percentage for adults (Kent et al., 2001:6; Prewitt, 2003:39).

Despite the past and present racialization of different groups, we tend to see race through a Black/ White lens. At the same time, Whites as the dominant group are

usually seen as raceless, or having no race at all (McIntosh, 1992). In this view, Whiteness is the natural or normal condition. It is racially unmarked and immune to investigation. This is a false picture of race. In reality, the racial order shapes the lives of all people, even Whites who are advantaged by the system. Just as social classes exist in relation to each other, "races" are labeled and judged *in relation to other races.* The categories "Black" and Hispanic are meaningful only insofar as they are set apart from, and in distinction to, "White." This point is particularly obvious when people are referred to as "non-White" (a word that ignores the differences in experiences among people of color) (Lucal, 1996:246). Race should not be seen simply as a matter of two opposite categories of people but as a range of power relations among differently situated people (Weber, 2001).

Whereas race is used for socially marking groups based on physical differences, **ethnicity** allows for a broader range of affiliation. Ethnic groups are distinctive on the basis of national origin, language, religion, and culture. Today's world is replete with examples of newly constructed ethnicities. In the United States, people began to affiliate along ethnic lines such as Italian American or German American much more frequently after the civil rights movement.

In the United States, race and ethnicity both serve to mark groups as different. Groups *labeled as races* by the wider society are bound together by their common social and economic conditions. As a result, they develop distinctive cultural or ethnic characteristics. Today, we use the concept racial-ethnic groups (or racially defined ethnic groups). The term **racial-ethnic** refers to groups that are socially subordinated and

Race-ethnic groups are socially subordinate and culturally distinct within society. Muslim American fifth grader showing henna designs for Muslim Ramadan.

remain culturally distinct within U.S. society. It is meant to include (1) the systematic discrimination of socially constructed racial groups and (2) their distinctive cultural arrangements. We saw in Chapter 3 that, historically, the categories of African American, Mexican American, Asian American, and Native American were constructed as both racially and culturally distinct. Each group has a distinctive culture, shares a common heritage, and has developed a common identity within a larger society that subordinates it (Baca Zinn and Dill, 1994).

As we saw in Chapter 4, the growing presence of racial-ethnic groups is changing U.S. society. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the United States was 70 percent White, 12 percent African American, 12 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian American, and 1 percent Native American. Figure 5.1 shows how the racial composition of the United States is expected to change through the year 2050. Terms of reference are also changing, and the changes are contested within groups as well as between them. For example, *Blacks* continue to debate the merits of the term *African American,* while *Latinos* disagree on the label *Hispanic.* In this book, we use such terms interchangeably because they are currently used in popular and scholarly discourse.

Racial-Ethnic Families

Although racial stratification affects families throughout society, we focus here on racialized patterns of family formation among African Americans and Latinos. Our intent is not to limit our understanding about racial stratification to African Americans and Latinos but to examine some of the ways in which racially subordinated groups are denied social opportunities that benefit family life. We conclude this

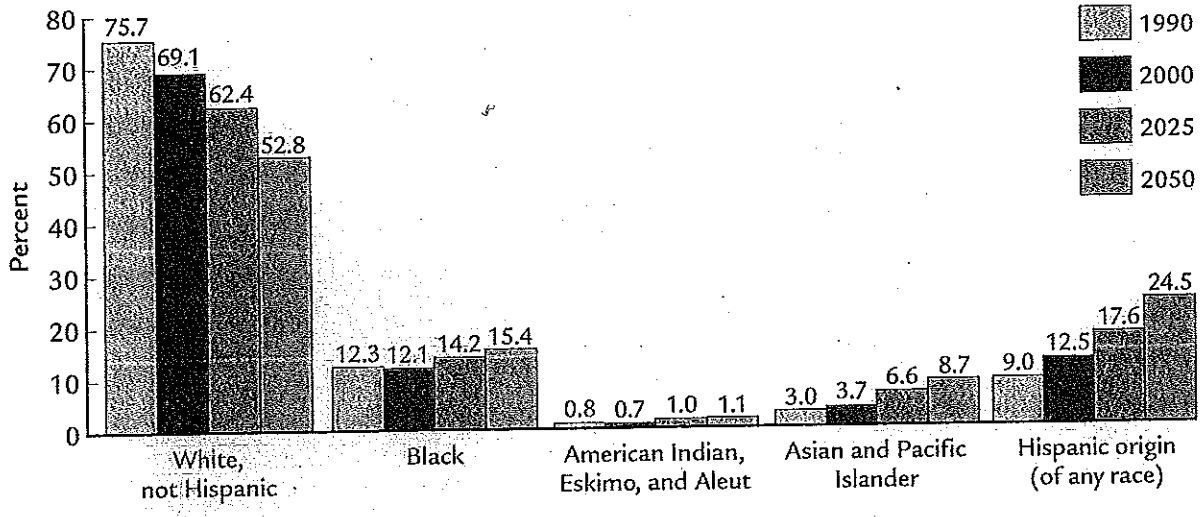


Figure 5.1

Percent of the population, by race and Hispanic origin: 1990, 2000, 2025, and 2050 (middle-series projection)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports,* Series P23-194, *Population Profile of the United States: 1997.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 9; U.S. Bureau of the Census. Online: http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000.

section with a brief overview of Asian American, Native American, and Middle Eastern families.

The Cultural Approach

Common thought applies cultural stereotypes to racial-ethnic families. An idealized model of White family life is viewed as the norm, whereas racial-ethnic families are thought to be cultural artifacts. Racial-ethnic families are defined as different from the idealized model, a model that is defined as "normal"— the cultural standard against which all others are judged. When an idealized model of White families is used as the norm, racial-ethnic families are seen as culturally deficient. Family patterns handed down from generation to generation are said to be out of step with the demands of modern society. These ideas suggest that African American and Latino families are historic relics. Latinos, among whom extended family networks play a strong part in integrating family and community, are criticized for being too "familistic"— their lack of social progress is blamed on family values that keep them tied to family rather than economic advancement. African American families are criticized as "matriarchal" because of the strong role women play in extended family networks (Dill et al., 1993:16; Hill, 2005). In each case, a social deficit approach is used to explain the minority group's place in society. Walter Allen (1978:125) has called this the "cultural deviant" approach. This approach was used in Daniel P. Moynihan's (1965) well-known study of Black families (see Chapter 3). The Moynihan report was widely criticized for its harmful and inaccurate view of family arrangements among Blacks as deviant. The main objection to the Moynihan report is that it is a classic case of blaming the victim, locating the problems in the so-called matriarchal structure of the Black family, not in the racial inequalities of the larger society.

The social deficit model of Chicano families also sparked criticism. Several works on Mexican American families that were published about the same time that the Moynihan report appeared (Heller, 1966; Madsen, 1964; Rubel, 1966) found the problems of Mexican American people to be the result of the patriarchal family structure.

Since the 1960s and 1970s, scholars have roundly criticized social deficit approaches and produced research challenging cultural misconceptions of racial-ethnic families. A large body of family research has moved the family field away from cultural stereotypes about racial-ethnic families.

Shortcomings of the Cultural Approach

The cultural argument is deeply flawed. First, and most important, it reduces family life to a group's culture while at the same time viewing the family as the bedrock of society, rather than one largely shaped by social forces. Second, and closely related, it blames the victim and ignores the impact of racism and economic structure on family formation. Third, it treats all African American families and all Latino families as monolithic entities rather than acknowledging a wide range of family forms among people of color.

Structural Inequalities and Racial-Ethnic Families

Social conditions associated with racial inequalities produce aggregate differences between minority and White families. Different racial groups make their homes in neighborhoods that are typically segregated, thus living in "separate societies." An entire arsenal of social institutions creates paths in which families assigned to one group re-

ceive better jobs, housing, health care, schooling, and recreational facilities, while those relegated to other groups do worse, or do without (Collins, 1997:397). For minorities, segregation, employment problems, and poverty are barriers to family well-being and to family formation. As a result, the family arrangements of racial ethnics, and their definitions of what families *are,* often depart from the idealized family organized around a self-reliant, heterosexual couple living in a single-family dwelling.

Extended kinship systems and informal support networks spread across multiple households have long been common among people of color, who spend much more time "helping people they know, especially their relatives" (Gerstel et al., 2002:200). Extended families and "fictive kin"— people treated like family even though they are not related by blood or marriage—are found in all racial-ethnic groups. These patterns are not shaped by culture alone. Instead, they are often the result of social conditions that fail to meet family needs. Extended family structure is a way of sharing resources denied by the larger society. In saying that family structure is influenced by racial inequality, we should recognize the varied contexts within which different racial ethnics experience their family lives. There are no "typical" racial-ethnic families. Like families throughout the nation and the world, U.S. people of color live in diverse social and economic settings that produce multiple family outcomes. Furthermore, many characteristics of racial-ethnic families *are* culturally unique, such as how their members relate, spend leisure time, and worship. In addition, forms of entertainment, language, and food customs are different from those of families in the dominant society.

Nevertheless, racism produces many common characteristics associated with limited economic resources. In the past decade, the research emphasis was on how these conditions affect family structure, especially the shift to family types more vulnerable to poverty (McLoyd et al., 2001). Compared with Whites, people of color have higher rates of female-headed households (see Figure 5.2), out-of-wedlock births, divorce, and other factors associated with a general lack of support for family life. In Chapter 3 we saw that minority families have long experienced the juggling of work and family roles for women, single parenthood, extended family relationships, and poverty—conditions that are now affecting more and more families throughout society (Stack and Burton, 1994:42; Hansen, 2005).

Economic hardship among people of color has tended to reinforce the stereotype of poor minority families. However, we must realize that not all people of color are poor. The tendency to view racial-ethnic families as a collection of the problems they face is misleading. Class differences exist among African Americans and Latinos. By the end of the last century, many well-educated people of color had climbed into the middle class, with incomes, education, and lifestyles similar to those of their White counterparts. They had made considerable advances as professionals, managers, elected officials, and entrepreneurs. In 2004, about 34 percent of African American and Latino families had incomes of $50,000 or more (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006a, b). However, as successful African American and Latino families have improved their life chances, others have been marginalized.

There are great disparities in the income levels of White families and Black and Latino families, and the disparities have persisted over time. In 2004, the median income of White households was $48,977. Black median household income was $30,134 while Hispanic median household income was $34,241 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005c). Family income differs greatly by family type as shown in Table 5.3.

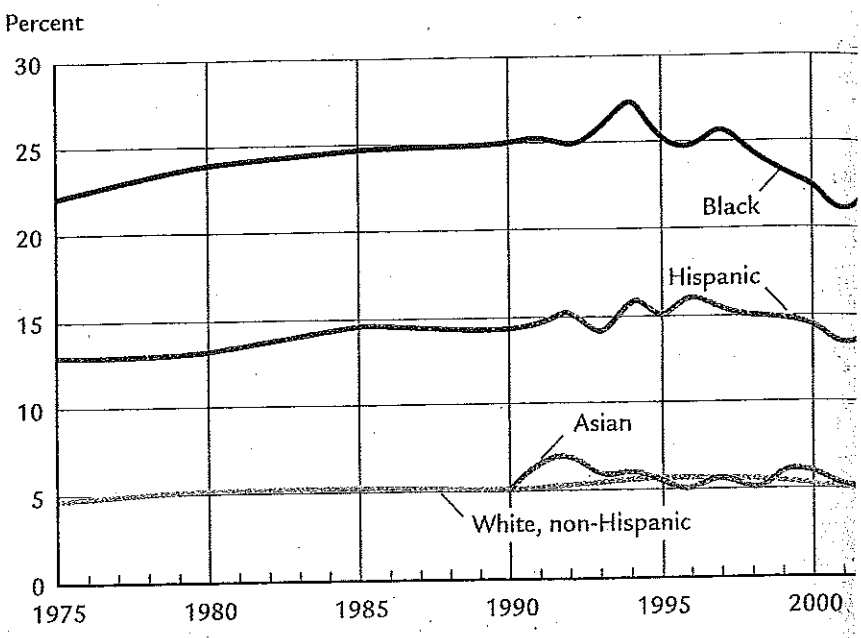


Figure 5.2

Female-headed households with children, by race, 1970–2002

Source: AmeriStat, "Diversity, Poverty Characterize Female-Headed Households" (March http://www.ameristat.org/pdf/DiversityPovertyCharacterizeFemaleHeadedHouseholds

Although the racial income gap is wide, the racial wealth gap is even w families generally have a greater net worth than Black or Latino families. Th of Black households is only 12 percent of what White households are wort net worth of Latino households is only 8 percent that of Whites (Collins et a In their book, *White Wealth/Black Wealth,* Melvin Oliver and Thomas Sha define wealth as the command over financial resources that a family has a over its lifetime, along with those resources that have been inherited acr tions. In general, White families have greater resources for their children ar them as assets at death. Oliver and Shapiro call this "the cost of being Blac portant indicator of a family's wealth is home ownership. Paying off a hom is the way most Americans build net worth over their lifetimes. More mi buying homes, but because of discrimination in employment, housing, an they are still less likely than Whites to own the homes in which they live. thirds of all U.S. households are homeowners, over half of racial minority are renters (53 percent of Black households, 50 percent of Latino househ percent of other racial minorities). Rampant racial discrimination prevails ing market, even after forty years of federal fair housing laws (Crowle African American and Latino households are likely to be located in segre borhoods, where median home values are lower.

African American and Latino families are three times as likely as Whit be poor (see Figure 5.3). In 2005, 24 percent of African Americans and 2 Hispanics were living below the poverty level, compared with 8 percen

TABLE 5.3

Median Income by Race and Family: 2005

WHITE	
Married couple families	$70,307
Wife in paid labor force	82,367
Wife not in paid labor force	47,534
Male household, no spouse present	44,782
Female household, no spouse present	32,963
BLACK	
Married couple families	$56,054
Wife in paid labor force	66,563
Wife not in paid labor force	32,787
Male household, no spouse present	31,309
Female household, no spouse present	21,962
HISPANIC	
Married couple families	$43,614
Wife in paid labor force	56,666
Wife not in paid labor force	31,116
Male household, no spouse present	38,114
Female household, no spouse present	22,096

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, "Annual Social and Economic Supplements" Table F-7. Type of Family. http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/f07n.html

(DeNavas-Walt et al., 2006). Regardless of whether they are living in poverty, most African American and Hispanic families must get by on far less income than White families. Table 5.3 shows clearly that the average income for White families is greater than the average income for Black and Hispanic families. In addition, per-person income for Black and Hispanic families is lower than for White families because Black and Hispanic families have more children (De Vita, 1996:30; Pollard and O'Hare, 1999.) This difference in household composition reflects the older age structure of White adults, delayed childbearing, and lower fertility among White couples (O'Hare, 1992:19).

These inequalities reveal that race inequality is in part a class issue, because class is linked to low income. But, many economic inequalities have more serious consequences for people of color than for Whites. This shows that economic inequality is racialized. Race and low-class position combined reduce the life chances far more than does low-class position alone.

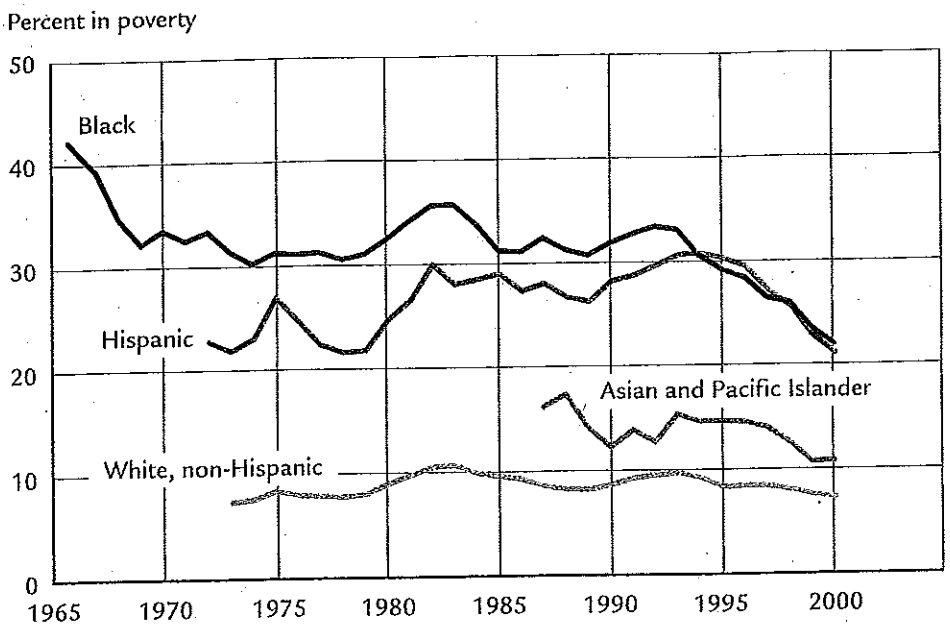


Figure 5.3

U.S. poverty rates by race or ethnicity, 1965–2000

Source: Daniel T. Lichter and Martha L. Crowley, "Poverty in America: Beyond Welfare Reform." *Population Bulletin 57,* no. 2. Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, June 2002, p. 9; and Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Cheryl Hill Lee (2006). "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005." *Current Population Reports,* P-60-231 (U.S. Census Bureau).

Let us examine some contemporary realities of African American and Latino families. Rather than using a middle-class White family model as the norm, we will examine distinctive family characteristics as they relate to the racial organization of U.S. society.

African American Families in the New Century

The past four decades have brought profound changes in the family lives of Black Americans, including increases in nonmarital child bearing, female-headed households, and children living in poverty. Declines and delays in marriage, along with high divorce rates, have also contributed to distinctive family patterns among African Americans (Taylor, Lichter and Qain, 2001:38; 2004).

Marriage

Although two-parent families were strong during and after slavery, sometime after 1925 the proportion of African American families headed by two parents began to decline, and this decline became more pronounced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. During this period, divorce rates more than doubled, marriage rates declined, fertility rates fell to record levels, the proportion of families in which children lived with both biological parents declined, and the proportion of children reared in single-parent house-

holds rose dramatically (Taylor, 2000). Married couple families constitute the majority of all households in all racial-ethnic groups except African Americans. By 2000, only about one-third of all Black households were headed by married couples (Lichter and Qain, 2004:15). A much higher percentage (82 percent) of White families were headed by married couples, although this percentage also has slipped over the past two decades (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999; 2002d).

African Americans tend to marry later and have higher rates of marital disruption than Whites. In 1980, 51 percent of persons 18 years and over were married. In 1998, only 41 percent were married. In 2004, only 28 percent of African American women were married and living with their husbands. Over the same period, the percentage of divorced Black persons 18 years and over grew from 8 to 12 percent, and the percentage who had never married grew from 30 to 43 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999, 2002d, 2005). A similar movement away from marriage occurred among White women as well. Still, the change was much more dramatic among Blacks (see Figure 5.4). The marriage gap between Whites and Blacks was just as strong among women without children as it was among women with children. Regardless of parental status, African American women are less likely than those in the general population to be married.

What has caused the movement away from marriage among African Americans? Research points to demographic and economic factors (McLoyd et al., 2001; Taylor, 2000; Tucker et al., 2004). Many social scientists focus on the gender ratio, or the balance of women and men in the Black population. African American women outnumber men

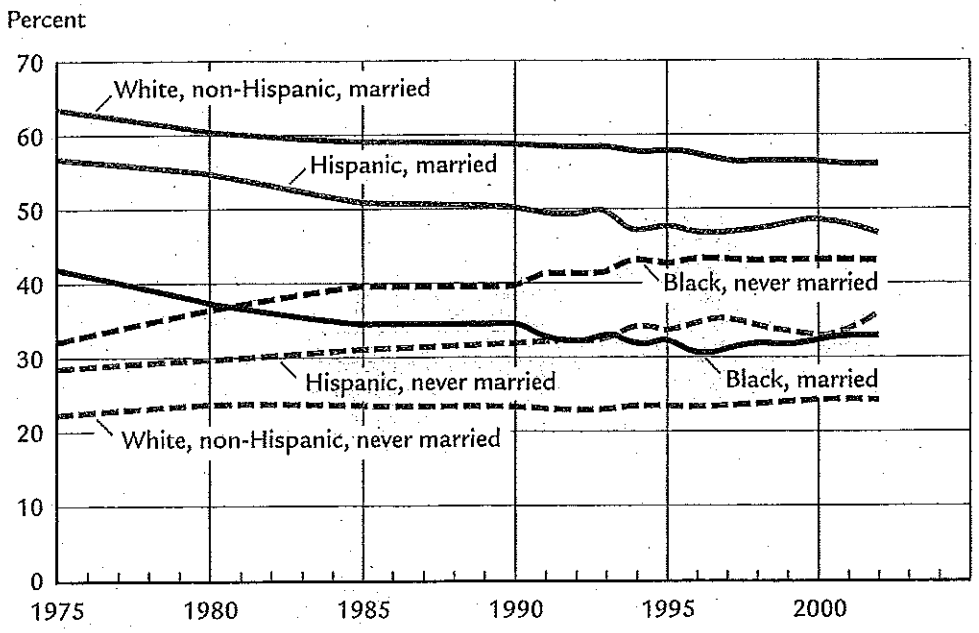


Figure 5.4

Marital status of people ages 15 and older, by race, 1975–2002

Source: AmeriStat, "Americans Increasingly Opt Out of Marriage," Population Reference Bureau, March 2003. http://www.ameristat.org/pdf/AmericansIncreasinglyOptingOutofMarriage1.pdf.

in the age range (20 to 49) when most people marry and start families. Following this reasoning, fewer Black women are getting married because there are too few suitable Black male partners (that is, those with a good education and a job (Spain and Bianchi, 1996b:42). Various social forces undermine marriage among African Americans. African American men of marriagable age have been in short supply due to incarceration, lower levels of education than African American women, death, and unemployment, all symptoms of chronic institutional racism (Root, 2002:71). African American men with low wages and little job security have difficulty fulfilling the traditional role as the major breadwinner for a family. The rise in female-headed families, whether formed through divorce, separation, or out-of-wedlock childbearing, has exacerbated Black/White differences in economic well-being.

Many studies have found a link between economic stressors and marital patterns among African Americans. For example, sociologist Robin Jarrett shows that economic factors play a prominent role in women's decisions to forgo marriage, to bear children outside of marriage, and in some cases to head households. Her interviews with never-married mothers uncovered a range of economic pressures that work against marriage. The prospective mates of Jarrett's informants were generally unemployed, underemployed, or relegated to insecure jobs, including car wash attendants, drug dealers, fast food clerks, grocery store stock and bag clerks, hustlers, informal car repairmen, lawn workers, street peddlers, and street salvage workers. Although most women remained unmarried, this did not preclude strong and stable male/female partnerships existing outside of legal marriage (Jarrett, 1994:40–41). Edin's more recent study of why poor mothers (both Black and White) do not marry found little stigma in remaining single. If marriage could not bring economic stability, poor women found little reason to marry regardless of race (Edin, 2000a; Edin and Kefalas, 2005).

Marital patterns among African Americans are related to class and race. It is not that African American people per se have different values regarding marriage and family (Tucker et al., 2004). Research indicates that aggregate differences in marital patterns are determined largely by economic differentials between the races. Billingsley's detailed analysis of the variation in Black family structures and social class experience indicates that the higher up in the social class structure families are, the more likely they are to be husband–wife families. They are also more likely to have employed wives to help sustain this status. Social class and family status are directly related (Billingsley, 1992:57).

Based on prevailing economic conditions, social scientists have proposed that marriage is less important than kinship ties for Blacks (Cherlin, 1992, 1999b).

> The Black family is not primarily based on a conjugal relationship or on a single household as in the case of the idealized American family. Rather, it consists of a wide-ranging group of relatives involved in relationships of exchange and co-parenting. (Aschenbrenner and Carr, 1980:463)

This arrangement can be viewed as a protective strategy against the uncertainties of marriage. Marriage involves economic as well as affective relationships. Greater economic support can be provided by a kinship exchange network than by a conjugal bond alone. If we see female-headed households within the context of the larger kinship system, we can appreciate how children and other dependents are cared for when other factors undercut marital unions. Marriage is as much the *result* as the cause of economic security and well-being. Therefore, marriage is a form of class and race privilege.

Because widespread economic marginality threatens long-lasting marriages, African Americans are more tolerant of out-of-wedlock births and informal adoptions. Some scholars have argued that this is one way in which African Americans have managed a relatively high rate of nonmarital births without widespread use of abortions or access to formal adoption agencies sensitive to their needs (Hill, 1977).

Social Support Networks

Extended family structure and social support networks among minorities have been consistent themes in social science literature for decades. Scholars have been debating about the extended family in Black communities and whether it is different from that of Whites. One side argues that Blacks have stronger family ties and more kin support that Whites. The other side of the debate argues that kin support has declined, especially in the inner city (Rochelle, 1997). Which side is correct? According to the latest research, Blacks receive neither more or less kinship support than Whites. Instead, they have different patterns of kin support. Sarkisian and Gerstel found that Blacks are more involved in practical support (help with transportation, household work, and child care); Whites report greater involvement in financial and and emotional kin support (Sarkisian and Gerstel, 2004:812). Of course, such forms of kin support are only one feature of family organization. Research has consistently documented the fact that Blacks are more likely than Whites to reside in extended-family households (Hill, 1993; Taylor, 2000). Extended-family arrangements involve many forms of support and consist of both kin and nonkin spread over several households—networks of unrelated kin (fictive kin as well as persons in the same household and in separate households).

In a pathbreaking study of ghetto families conducted over three decades ago, Carol Stack revealed that extended-family arrangements are a way of coping with poverty and racism. She found that Black families pooled their limited resources in order to survive and that the urgency of their needs created alliances between individuals. According to Stack, "Kin and friends exchange and give and obligate one another. They trade food stamps, rent money, a TV, hats, dice, a car, a nickel here, a cigarette there, food, milk, grits, and children" (Stack, 1974:32).

While kin networks help compensate for resources withheld by the wider society, they also remain strong among middle-class African Americans. Harriette McAdoo (1978) found that socially mobile Blacks continue to draw on their families for more than financial aid; they depend on them for emotional support as well. Mary Pattillo-McCoy (1999) suggests that the precarious class status of middle-class African Americans ties them closely to their relatives. For African Americans of all social classes, the kin network is a survival strategy.

Current research stresses the role of women in the struggle to maintain family life. For example, caring for other people's children, whether kin or not, is an old tradition. "Othermothers" are women who assist blood mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities (Collins, 1990). According to Collins, othermothers are key in supporting children and in helping blood mothers. Men are not absent from these families, but women are central in these resilient networks of grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and cousins that share responsibility for child care.

Similar arrangements are found among other racial ethnics. For example, an Indian "grandmother" may actually be a child's aunt or grandaunt in the Anglo-Saxon use of the term, and extended families may form around complex kinship networks

based on conditions other than birth, marriage, or adoption (Yellowbird and Snipp, 2001:129). Asian Americans also have a high proportion of extended families. Therefore, a focus on parents and children alone misses the social and cultural resources that other relatives bring to Asian American families (McLoyd et al., 2001).

The Underclass Debate

Changing household and family patterns have prompted many observers to proclaim a "crisis" in the African American family. Common thought blames a "disintegrating" Black family for the urban underclass. This cultural (and flawed) explanation, has produced a national debate over the relationship between family structure and poverty among African Americans.

Two distinct models of the underclass now prevail—one cultural, one structural. Both focus on issues of family structure and poverty (see Baca Zinn [1989], Marks [1991], and Jarrett [1994] for elaborations of cultural and structural models of the Black underclass). Cultural models assign the cause of the growing underclass to ghetto-specific behaviors and a lifestyle of out-of-wedlock childbearing. These theories argue that family breakdown and welfare dependence lock inner-city people into a cycle of poverty. This explanation is wrong on many counts. It relies too heavily on cultural preferences and behavioral traits to explain poverty. It falls back on blaming the victim to explain patterns that are rooted in social structure. It reverses cause and consequence: Single-parent families are not the cause of poverty but the *consequence of economic deprivation.* The macrostructural economic transformations we examined in Chapter 4 have removed jobs and other opportunities from inner-city residents. This is a better explanation of marriage patterns and family life. This explanation is detailed in William J. Wilson's compelling books, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987) and *When Work Disappears* (1996). According to Wilson, the social problems of the ghetto are caused by economic marginalization. Wilson draws a connection between Black male unemployment, high divorce rates, non-remarriage rates, and the high proportion of children born to unmarried women.

Black men's declining employment has other consequences. Together with high levels of poverty and underemployment, joblessness contributes to the disproportionate number of Black males killed in wars and criminal homicide. This shortage of Black men with the ability to support a family causes many Black women to leave marriage or to forgo marriage altogether. Wilson shows that marriage is itself an opportunity structure that does not presently exist for large numbers of Black people.

The economic foundations of African American families are undermined by changes in the urban economy and the class structure of ghetto neighborhoods. The movement of middle-class African American professionals from the inner city has left behind a concentration of the most disadvantaged segments of the Black urban population. Ghetto residents are socially isolated from both mainstream behaviors and opportunity structures. These forces have led to more unemployment, fewer marriages, more female-headed households, and higher poverty rates among African Americans.

Many scholars agree with Wilson on the causes of family disruption among African Americans, but they argue that this captures only a portion of the problem. Inner-city women are also affected by the new economic realities. They, too, need training, employment, wage equity, and day care. The underclass is not a group of people lacking

cupational structure (Kornblum, 1991:203). This analysis explains how structural changes affect family and household patterns. The reshaping of class, race, and gender systems leave African American women disproportionately separated, divorced, and solely responsible for their children.

When critics lament the state of African American families, they often call for policies that would restore the two-parent family. However, the two-parent family is not a guarantee against poverty for minorities (see Figure 5.3). Although living in a married-couple family generally improves the chances of having high relative income, family structure alone is not responsible for child poverty. "If there were no single parents, Black children would still have much higher poverty rates (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994:85). More precisely, for African Americans, emulating the White family structure would close only about one-half of the income gap (Hacker, 1996:309). Raising the life chances of Black children will require changes in the economic status of their parents.

The recent escalation of African American single parenthood is a social and economic problem that warrants close attention. However, we should not use single mothers and their children as the "typical" African American family. This distorts the complex reality of African American families. Sociologist Andrew Billingsley has examined family myths and stereotypes in his book, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder* (1992). He argues that no one pattern describes African American families. There are both weak families and strong families. Furthermore, contrary to the popular wisdom, Black families are not vanishing. Instead, they are doing what they always do:

> They are adapting as best they can to the pressures exerted upon them from their society in their gallant struggle to meet the physical, emotional, moral, and intellectual needs of their members. It is a struggle for existence, viability, and a sense of worth. (Billingsley, 1992:44)

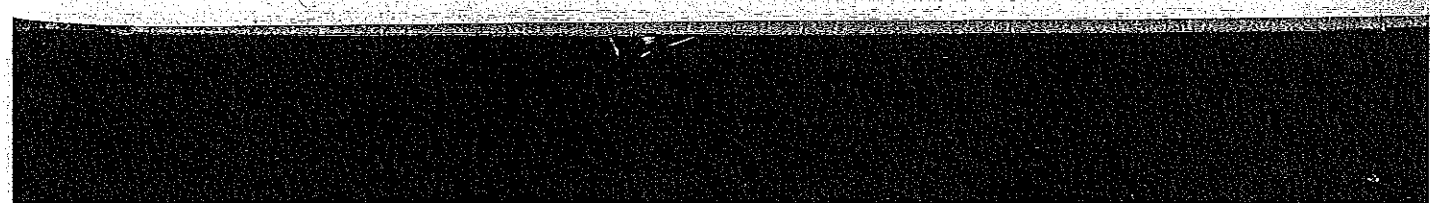
Latino Families in the New Century

In Chapter 4 we examined the diversity among Latinos. In spite of important family differences among the groups, Latino families show some similarities. In all regions of the United States Latinos are experiencing many of the transitions facing all U.S. families. Nevertheless, they remain distinctive. The influx of immigrants, together with class and racial inequalities, produce hardships not faced by mainstream families.

A Hispanic Underclass?

As the Hispanic presence in the United States has increased in the last decade, poverty rates among Hispanics have remained high. Hispanic children are more likely than White children to be living below the poverty level. In 2003, 29 percent of Hispanic children under 18 were living in poverty, compared to 9 percent of White children.

Among Hispanic groups, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have the highest poverty rates (24 percent for Mexicans, and 23 percent for Puerto Ricans compared with 14 percent for Cubans). Do high poverty rates and changing household patterns among Latinos mean that they have joined inner-city African Americans to form part of the underclass? In other words, do changes in the economy and jobs have the same effects on Blacks and Latinos? Certainly, the broad changes wrought by economic transformations have affected Latinos. Puerto Ricans have been especially hard hit by economic restructuring over the past three decades. For families of Mexican origin, the conditions



that place them in poverty are different. A large proportion of Mexican-heritage families have members in the workforce. The problem is that they are in low-wage jobs and do not earn enough to bring them above the poverty line (Aponte, 2006).

Different economic contexts shape Latino families in different ways. The causes of poverty across Latino communities differ. And different community and family patterns produce a range of responses to poverty. Therefore, the underclass model does not apply evenly to the many diverse Latino barrios across the country. Even in the poorest Latino communities, poverty differs in fundamental ways from the conventional underclass portrait (Moore and Pinderhughes, 1993). For example, while Mexicans (both U.S. born and immigrants) have high rates of marriage despite their impoverished circumstances, a pattern called "the paradox of Mexican American nuptuality" (Oropesa et al., 1994). Family structure in Latino barrios is different from African American family patterns in the inner city. In the next section, we focus on Chicanos (Mexican-origin Latinos).

Extended Kinship Systems

Latinos are commonly portrayed as a family-centered group. **Familism**—an obligation and orientation to the family—is depicted as a defining feature of the Mexican-heritage population. Presumably, family relations are more important for Mexicans than for Anglos. This pertains to both the nuclear family and a wider circle of kin—the ex-

Familism is a defining feature of Mexican-heritage people. Four generations of women make tamales.

tended family, which includes aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, in-laws, and even *compadres* or co-parents (Alvirez and Bean, 1976:277).

Familism contains four key components. The first component, *demographic familism,* involves characteristics of Chicano families, such as family size. The second component, *structural familism,* measures the incidence of multigenerational households (or extended households). *Normative familism,* the third component, taps the value Mexican-heritage people place on family unity and solidarity. Fourth, *behavioral familism* has to do with the level of interaction between family and kin networks (Ramirez and Arce, 1981).

Compadrazgo is another feature of familism among Chicanos and Mexicans. It encompasses two sets of relationships with "fictive kin": (1) *padrinos y ahijados* (godparents and children) and (2) parents and godparents who become *compadres,* or co-parents. The *compadrazgo* system of godparents enlarges family ties by creating connections between families (see the discussion of *compadrazgo* in Chapter 3).

Common thought assumes that extended family ties among the Mexican origin population are stronger than those of all other groups. In fact, studies of kinship and its varied forms are not conclusive. (The following discussion is based on Baca Zinn and Wells, 2000.) Economic changes and the resulting dislocations of Latinos have raised questions about extended family relationships in today's world. Ann Rochelle (1997) analyzed a national sample of minority families and found that extended kinship networks are declining among Chicanos (as well as among Puerto Ricans and Blacks). On the other hand, a large body of past and present research documents long-standing participation in kinship networks. Studies spanning the last three decades have found kinship networks to be important. They operate as a system of cultural, emotional, and mental support (Keefe, 1984; Mindel, 1980; Ramirez, 1980), as well as a survival strategy to maximize resources (Angel and Tienda, 1982; Glick, 1999; Lamphere et al., 1993; Saenz, 2004; Uttal, 1999). Familism among Mexican-heritage adults has been associated with high levels of education and income (Griffith and Villavicienco, 1985) and among adolescents has been viewed as a form of social capital linked with academic success (Valenzuela and Dornbusch, 1994).

Kinship networks are also used in the migration of Mexicans to the United States (Chavez, 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Portes and Beck, 1985; Wells, 1976). As we saw in Chapter 4, Mexican immigrants use kin to find jobs and housing and to be a buffer against the upheavals associated with migration. This is profoundly important. In contrast to the common view that extended families are mainly a cultural preference, this research helps us understand that among immigrants, family extension is a classic adaptation. Transnational families and their networks of kin are stretched across space, time, and national borders. This family form is a way of dealing with the challenges of immigration.

Kinship networks among Mexican-origin people are not uniform. Differences have been found between immigrants and nonimmigrants and among different generations. Even though immigrants use kin for assistance, they have smaller social networks available than second-generation immigrants, who have broader social networks available consisting of multigenerational kin (Vega, 1990). Regardless of class, studies have shown that Mexican extended families in the United States become more extensive and strong through successive generations and socioeconomic mobility (Velez-Ibanez, 1996:144).

Although a cultural perspective would predict that familism fades in succeeding generations, Velez-Ibanez's study (discussed earlier as a refutation of the underclass) finds highly elaborated second- and third-generation extended-family networks actively maintained through frequent visiting, ritual celebrations, and the exchange of goods and services (Velez-Ibanez, 1996).

Are the kinship ties of Latinos in general stronger than those of Anglos? Sarkisian and Gerstel use data from a national survey to answer this question. Their study finds that Latinos are more likely to live with and near kin and to have more face-to-face interactions with them than Anglos. However, they are less likely to give financial assistance and emotional support and more likely to give practical help (Sarkisian and Gerstel, 2006).

More Racial Ethnic Diversity in Families: Asians, Native Americans, and Middle Easterners

The family experiences of other groups reinforce a theme of this section—that family arrangements must be seen in the race and class contexts in which they are embedded.

Asian Americans, for example, are commonly seen as the "model minority" a strong, well-educated, and upwardly mobile group. But this view ignores both the history of discrimination against Asians and the wide differences among different Asian-origin populations (see Chapter 4). The experiences of different Asian immigrant groups (such as Cambodians and Vietnamese) are different from those of other Asian immigrant groups (such as Chinese and Japanese), who have large third-generation populations (Lichter and Qian, 2004:10). Kinship networks are important for all Asian groups. Yet experiences related to immigration produce family diversity among Asian-origin families. Recently arrived immigrants who settle in areas with no ethnic enclaves often find it difficult to find jobs and establish family lives (Ishii-Kuntz, 2004).

Native Americans have tremendously diverse family arrangements, representing tribes throughout North America. In the early nineteenth century, U.S. government policies imposed Western family forms on Indians whose families ranged from simple monogamy to various forms of multiple marriage. But all of them relied on extended family networks for survival and social organization (Coontz, 1999b:xiii). Although good studies of native American families are rare, recent research identifies several unifying pan-Indian principles for modern Indian families. Among these are extended family networks and traditions of respect for elders. Elders, whether biologically related or created kin, are important for children's care and upbringing, contributing to Indian family cohesiveness and stability (Kawamoto and Cheshire, 2004:388).

Middle Easterners have been arriving in the United States since the 1970s, coming from countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iran. Their ethnic and religious diversity, different levels of education, and places of settlement in the United States makes it impossible to generalize about their family arrangements. Even Muslim families are not all the same. The terms "Arab family," "Islamic family," and "Middle Eastern family," each have distinctive meanings and should not be used interchangeably to describe a monolithic family form with static gender roles. Middle Eastern families (both in the United States and abroad) can no longer be viewed in opposition to a

opportunities as other families with respect to matters of gender, marriage, and parenting (Sherif-Trask, 2004:402).

Human Agency and Family Formation

People of color use their families in adapting to their circumstances. Family arrangements have been vital in ensuring survival, and they have also served as a means of resisting social domination (Caulfield, 1974; Cohen and MacCartney, 2004). The concept of **family strategies** (or household strategies) helps us think about some of the ways in which people use their families to cope with the problems in their lives. Instead of responding passively to the outside world, family members can take actions and engage in certain behaviors, including labor force participation, migration, co-residence, marriage, childbearing, food allocation, and education, in order to adapt to changes in the wider society (Wolfe, 1992:12–13). Strategies often differ for women and men. Strategies also change as people use their social locations to shape their family lives.

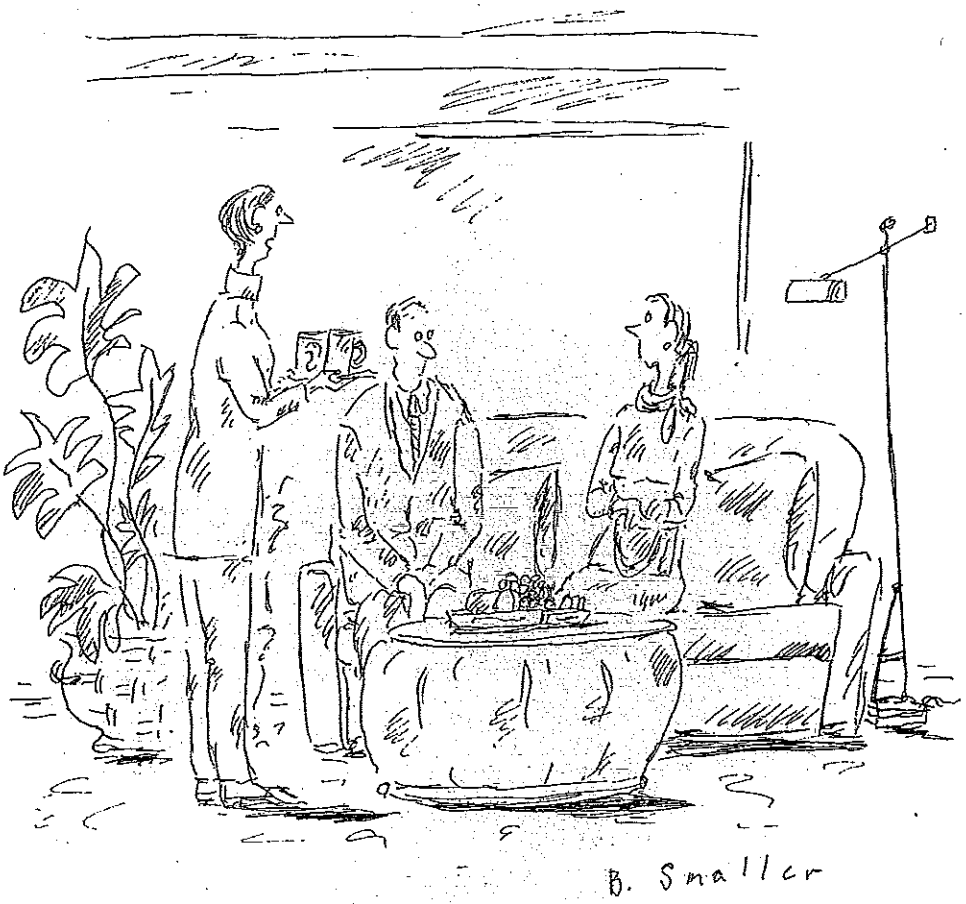
Strategies are always contingent on conditions in the immediate environment. Different kinds of constraints determine what actions people can take in their own interests. Although racial-ethnic families have adaptive capabilities, they are often restrained by oppression that is systematic and institutionalized. Therefore, family strategies cannot completely solve the problems at hand. Some adaptations can exact a price in family well-being. If individuals and families are able to survive because of nonconventional family structures, they also pay enormous costs. For example, **household augmentation** among minorities is a common economic family strategy. But when African Americans, Hispanics, or Asian Americans are forced to double-up in households, there may be fewer resources to go around, even though the intent is to add earnings. Ronald Angel and Marta Tienda have studied Black, Hispanic, and White households in which multiple earners had been added. They wanted to know whether additional workers helped buffer the effects of job discrimination. They found that household extension did alleviate some of the harsher aspects of poverty, but it did not lift minority families out of poverty. This means that the extent of income inequality between minority and nonminority groups would be even greater without alternative strategies to compensate for the inadequate earnings of household members (Angel and Tienda, 1982:1377). Many of the family adaptations associated with immigration, including binational families and their networks of kin are age-old "strategies for mustering social resources' (Chavez, 1992:135).

In addition to adapting their household structures, racial-ethnic women and men often use their families politically, as major sources of support in struggling with poverty and other forms of race and class oppression. For example, African American women, Latinas, Native American women, and Asian American women have a long tradition of extending their mothering roles to the realm of political resistance. For example, many Native American mothers weave tribal traditions with a "motherist stance' in fighting together for the survival of their children (Udell, 2001). Nancy Naples (1992) found African Americans and Latinas engaged in different kinds of *activist mothering* for the benefit of the entire community. And in the Chicano movement of the 1960s, the Chicano/Mexicano family was the basis of group solidarity. In *political familism*, the emphasis on family ties was not only symbolic, but also an organizational means of involving entire families in activist work (Baca Zinn, 1975).

GENDER

Gender, like race and class, is a way of organizing social life. Gender inequality is built into the larger world we inhabit. From the macro level of the global economy, through the institutions of society, to interpersonal relations, gender is the basis for dividing labor, assigning roles, and allocating social rewards. Until recently, this kind of gender differentiation seemed natural. However, new research shows that gender is not natural at all. Instead, "women' and "men' are social creations. To emphasize this point, sociologists distinguish between sex and gender. *Sex* refers to the biological differences between females and males. **Gender** refers to the social and cultural meanings attached to femininity and masculinity.

Gender is not only about women. Men often think of themselves as "genderless,' as if gender did not matter in the daily experiences of their lives. However, their experiences in families and other social settings are deeply gendered (Kimmel and Messner, 2004).



"Larry is a white male, but he hasn't been able to do much with it."

In the big picture, gender divisions make women and men unequal. Still, we cannot understand the gender system by looking at gender alone. Gender is linked with other characteristics such as class, race, and sexual orientation. These interconnected inequalities mean that different groups of men exhibit varying degrees of power, while different groups of women exhibit varying levels of inequality. Nevertheless, the gender system ranks women and men differently, and it denies both women *and* men the full range of human and social possibilities. The social inequalities created by gender influence family life in profound ways. In fact, "gender relations and family are so intertwined, it is impossible to pay attention to one, without paying attention to the other" (Coltrane, 1998:1).

Like class and race, there are two main ways to think about gender and family. The first, a **gender roles approach,** treats gender differences as roles learned by individuals. The second approach, a structural or **gendered institutions approach** (Acker, 1992), emphasizes factors that are external to individuals, such as the social structure and social institutions that reward women and men differently. These approaches differ in how they view women and men, in how they explain inequality, and in the solutions they suggest for change. The main difference between the two approaches lies in whether the individual or society is the primary unit of analysis.

The Traditional Gender Roles Approach

Until very recently, most family scholars assumed that the modern nuclear family was the basis of social order in a modern society. According to this view, industrialization made the various components of society more specialized, and it also separated women and men into distinctive roles. Men fill the "instrumental" or breadwinning roles outside the family, while women fill the "expressive" or domestic roles inside the family. Separate gender roles were seen as the building blocks of stable families.

This model of the family was developed by Talcott Parsons and called "structural functionalism." It was the dominant family framework in the 1950s and 1960s. It was based on a family form that was more statistically prevalent in the 1950s than today, but it was not the only family form even then. Today, many of Parsons's assumptions about family life are found in conventional thought and in some strands of family social science (Mann et al., 1997; Smith, 1993).

Shortcomings of the Gender Roles Approach

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, functionalist theory came into question. Real-world changes in gender and family challenged the old framework. Many scholars argued that this model ignored class and race differences in families even though they were at the core of family life. The gender roles approach made it seem that role division between the sexes was needed for families to operate efficiently. Instead, the critics of this approach charged that role division was not functional at all, but was based on stereotypes of men and women (Andersen, 2006).

The gender roles approach ignores what is most important about roles—that they are unequal in power, resources, and opportunities. When terms such as "sex roles," the "female role," and the "male role" are used in an uncritical manner, male dominance

can be easily overlooked (Thorne, 1982:8). Furthermore, when ideas about role division in the nuclear family ignore inequality, it becomes easy to overlook the conflicts that role division can produce.

The gender roles approach assumes that the family is defined by its emotional quality. Families are portrayed as havens of intimacy and love. Husband–wife relations are thought to be simply matters of love and agreement. But whether husbands and wives love one another or not, their relations develop within the larger system of male dominance. What is thought to be a private relationship of love is also a social relationship of power. Husband–wife relationships are *political.* Recent research has given us a more complex picture of husband–wife relations. Families are not always havens and may often be settings of conflict. Love between the sexes is complicated by an unequal balance of power.

The Family as a Gendered Institution

Today, sociologists focus on how gender is embedded in the institutions of society. Everywhere we look—the global economy, politics, religion, education, and family life—men are in power. The term *gendered institutions* means that gender is the basis for distributing resources and opportunities in the various sectors of social life.

Families throughout society are closely bound up with a broad system of gender inequality. In addition, the family is an important foundation of the gender system. Together with other social institutions, the family does the work of creating two dichotomous genders from biological sex. Understanding the institutional basis of gender does not mean that we should ignore interpersonal relationships. Unequal relationships between women are men are built into social processes at all levels of social interaction (Mc Graw and Walker, 2004:178). How women and men interact, and what they *do* every day in families, is essential in reproducing gender. When we look carefully at everyday family activities, we see how deeply gendered family worlds can be. Few areas of family life are untouched by gender—family tasks, work and leisure, care giving, conflicts and episodes of violence, and decisions about employment and moving are all gendered. Even mundane decisions such as what to watch on television are gendered. Women, men, and children experience the family in gendered ways that vary by class and race.

Patriarchy is the term used for forms of social organization in which men are dominant over women. Patriarchy is both interpersonal and structural, private and public; therefore, we distinguish between private patriarchy and public patriarchy. The concept of **private patriarchy** refers to male dominance in the interpersonal relations between women and men; that of **public patriarchy** encompasses dominance in the institutions of the larger society.

Patriarchy is connected with other structural forces. For example, its development in the United States is closely tied to capitalism. The United States can be defined as a **capitalist patriarchy.** Capitalism and patriarchy are interrelated in complex ways. They should be analyzed together if we are to understand the position of women (Acker, 1980). Women and men do different work, both in the labor force and in the family, and they have different resources in both of these settings. Men have greater control in both public and private arenas. Their economic obligations in the public sphere ensure that they have control of highly valued resources that give rise to male privileges.

Male privilege refers to those advantages, prerogatives, and benefits that systematically uplift men and are denied to women.

Structured gender inequality works with other inequalities such as race, class, and sexuality to sort women and men differently. These inequalities also work togther to produce differences *among women* and differences *among men.* Some women are subordinated by patriarchy, yet race and class intersect to create for them privileged opportunities and ways of living (Baca Zinn et al., 2004).

Men are encouraged to behave in "masculine" fashion to prove they are not gay (Connell, 1992). In defining masculinity as the negation of homosexuality, *compulsory heterosexuality* is an important component of the gender system. Compulsory heterosexuality imposes negative sanctions on those who are homosexual or bisexual. This system of sexuality shapes the gender order by discouraging attachment with members of the same sex. This enforces the dichotomy of "opposite" sexes. *Sexuality* is also a form of inequality in its own right because it systematically grants privileges to those in heterosexual relationships. Like race, class, and gender, sexual identities are socially constructed categories. Sexuality is a way of organizing the social world based on sexual identity and a key linking process in the matrix of domination structured along the lines of race, class, and gender (Messner, 1996:223).

Although there is considerable variation in how different groups of women and different groups of men are placed in society, men in general gain privileges at the expense of women. Although women increasingly work for pay, they are still in charge of the home—responsible for the unpaid and undervalued work of maintaining family relationships. Both men and women participate in unpaid family work, but women do more regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or marital status (McGraw and Walker, 2004:174). Much of the work that women do in the home remains invisible. Yet recent research has found that women's invisible work sustains family life. For example, not only do women do most household labor, they also do the *planning* needed for household management. They keep a mental account of what needs to be done and they organize the schedules of family members (De Vault, 1991). Although such work is necessary, it is low in prestige. Apportioning household labor and child rearing (reproductive labor) to women upholds male privilege by freeing men from such responsibilities. Individual males—adults, adolescents, and children—gain leisure time and the opportunity to pursue their own careers or boyhood interests. If wives, mothers, and sisters tend to existence-related needs such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of clothing, men gain time at women's expense. (In Chapter 6, we give further attention to household labor.)

The domestic division of labor, in turn, can limit women's occupational activities. Women burdened with domestic duties have less time and energy left over to devote to careers. The gendered division of family labor reinforces the division of labor in the workforce and upholds men's superiority. The interlocking systems of capitalism and patriarchy create a cycle of domination and subordination.

Looking at family activities in terms of power and domination challenges the very concept of "the family" as a unit. Many scholars argue that the image of the unified family is erroneous. As Heidi Hartmann says, the family is a "locus of struggle":

> In my view, the family cannot be understood solely or even primarily as a unit shaped by affect or kinship, but must be seen as a location where production and redistribution take

> place. As such, it is a location where people with different activities and interests in these processes often come into conflict with one another. (Hartmann, 1981:368)

Hartmann does not deny that families also encompass strong emotional ties, but she concentrates on the ways in which unequal division of labor inside and outside the family generates tension, conflict, and change.

Agency within Constraint

Although women are subordinate, they are not passive victims of patriarchy. Like other oppressed groups, they engage in various activities that subvert power and give them some control over their lives (see Box 5.3). Women's resistance takes different forms. It can be subtle or passive. It can also be active defiance of patriarchal constraints. Within patriarchal settings like the family, women negotiate, strategize, and bargain to get what they can in return for their domestic services and subordination. Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) calls these exchanges "patriarchal bargains." Although such bargains do not eradicate women's inequality, they often pave the way for various forms of resistance and control in family matters. In the chapters that follow, we take a closer look at the gendered family and how it varies by class and race.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. Class, race, and gender are socially constructed categories that create varied environments for family life.
2. Macrostructural forces press in on families. They determine the resources people in different social locations have available for family life. At the same time, family members themselves are active participants in creating family life.
3. Households are material sites with different ways of acquiring the necessities of life. This creates varied family arrangements.
4. Two models of social class have different implications for understanding families: (a) conventional explanations of class differences place families into social classes according to occupation and shared lifestyles; (b) structural explanations of class differences focus on society's opportunity structures, which produce advantages for some families and disadvantages for others.
5. According to the culture-of-poverty view, poor families have certain characteristics that set them apart from the rest of society.
6. Contrasting explanations of racial inequality have different implications for understanding families: (a) cultural approaches blame racial-ethnic families for their fate; and (b) structural approaches focus on the socioeconomic system, which creates different contexts for family living.
7. No matter what their structure, White families fare better economically than their minority counterparts.
8. Family structure is a crucial determinant of well-being, because the potential for having two earners in the household increases the likelihood of achieving higher income levels.
9. Inner-city male joblessness has encouraged nonmarital childbearing and undermined the economic foundation of the African American family. This explanation applies more to family changes among African Americans than among Latinos, who require a different model to understand poverty and family issues in each group.
10. Racial-ethnic families in the United States have some important commonalties, including (a) extended kinship networks and multiple households spread across several generations and (b) high rates of female-headed households, out-of-wedlock births,

and other factors associated with family disruption.

11. Two views of gender influence our understanding of families: (a) In the first view, gender inequality is a consequence of behavior learned by individual women and men. (b) In the second view, gender is an institutional force closely intertwined with other forms of inequality. In this view, patriarchy shapes families along with other social institutions.
12. Women of all classes and races are subject to patriarchal control, but they experience that control differently.
13. Families are not cohesive units. Instead, they are settings of power and control where gendered family roles and responsibilities often conflict.

RELATED WEBSITES

http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu

Panel Study of Income Dynamics. The PSID is a nationally representative longitudinal study of nearly 8000 families. Following the same families and individuals since 1968, the PSID collects data on economic, health, and social behavior.

http://www.irp.wisc.edu

Institute for Research on Poverty. The IRP is a center for interdisciplinary research into the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality in the United States. It is based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As one of three Area Poverty Research Centers sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, it has a particular interest in poverty and family welfare in the Midwest.

http://www.iwpr.org

Institute for Women's Policy Research. The IWPR conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. They focus on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, health and safety, and women's civic and political participation.

http://www.jcpr.org

Joint Center for Poverty Research. The Northwestern University / University of Chicago JCPR supports academic research that examines what it means to be poor and live in the United States. JCPR concentrates on the causes and consequences of poverty in the United States and the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing poverty in an effort to advance what is known about the economic, social, and behavioral factors that cause poverty and to establish the actual effects of interventions designed to alleviate poverty.

http://www.legalmomentum.org

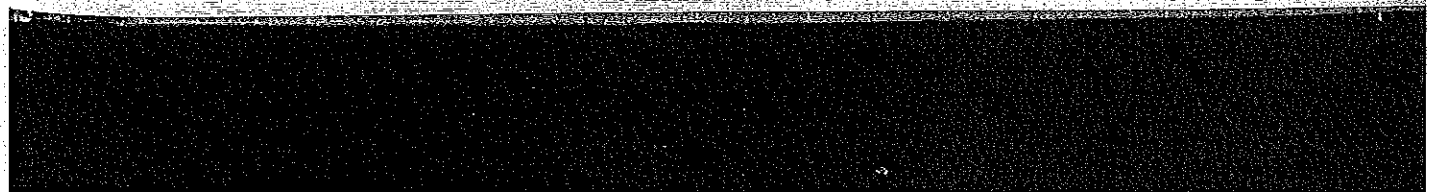
Legal Momentum. Founded in 1970 as NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, Legal Momentum has employed cutting-edge legal, legislative, and educational strategies to secure equality and justice for women. Legal Momentum advances the rights of women and girls by using the power of the law and creating innovative public policy.

http://www.aclu.org

American Civil Liberties Union. Founded in 1920, the ACLU is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization of more than 500,000 members and supporters whose mission it is to protect the civil rights of all Americans. They handle nearly 6,000 court cases annually in almost every state.

http://www.nccp.org

National Center for Children in Poverty. The NCCP is the nation's leading public policy center dedicated to promoting the economic security, health, and well-being of low-income U.S. families and children. Using research to inform policy and practice, NCCP seeks to advance family-oriented solutions and the strategic use of public resources at the state and national levels to ensure positive outcomes for the next generation. Founded in 1989 as a division of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, NCCP is a nonpartisan, public interest research organization.



http://www.naacp.org

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The NAACP was founded in 1909. Its primary mission continues to be to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.

http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/hotlinks.html

Minority Links for Media. This website is provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and offers links to the latest data on racial and ethnic populations in the United States.

http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/grhf/WoC

Women of Color Web. This site is dedicated to providing access to writings by and about women of color in the United States. It focuses specifically on issues related to feminism, sexualities, and reproductive health and rights. The site also provides links to organizations, discussion lists, and academic tools concerned specifically with women of color.

http://www.coloredgirls.org

Women of Color Resource Center. Founded in 1990, WCRC is headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area and promotes the political, economic, social, and cultural well-being of women and girls of color in the United States. Informed by a social justice perspective that takes into account the status of women internationally, WCRC is committed to organizing and educating women of color across lines of race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, and age.

www.nclr.org

National Council of La Raza. NCLR is the nation's largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization and works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas—assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health. Founded in 1968, NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCLR serves all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country.

http://inequality.org

Inequality.org. Inequality.org is a nonprofit organization made up of journalists, writers, and researchers whose aim is to provide data and essays on various aspects of inequality in the United States.

http://www.inequality.cornell.edu

Center for the Study of Inequality. The Center for the Study of Inequality (CSI) fosters basic and applied research on social and economic inequalities, as well as the processes by which such inequalities change and persist. The focus of CSI is on developing theory-based and empirically tested models of inequality that will ultimately assist not only in understanding ongoing changes in inequality but also in evaluating public policy and social interventions.