

*FOUNDATIONS OF  
FAMILY STUDIES*

*IFST 202*

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*DEFINING THE FAMILY*

- ◆ Write a definition of "what a family is" (do you include cousins, step-siblings, god parent?)
- ◆ What T.V. show portrays the "ideal" family?
- ◆ Are families in the Media different today than when you were little?

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*DEFINITION OF FAMILY*

- ◆ 98% identified married couple living with children as family
- ◆ 53% identified unmarried man and woman who lived together long time
- ◆ 27% lesbian couple raising children
- ◆ 20% two gay men committed to each other and living together

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*WHAT IS A FAMILY TODAY?*

- ◆ The basic problem today is defining the family:
  - ◆ Optimistic vs.
  - ◆ Pessimistic views (the decline of the family)
- ◆ Conservative position:
  - ◆ Traditional 2 parent family in which the husband is employed outside of the home and the wife takes care of the children
  - ◆ Nanny controversy in Boston

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*WHAT IS A FAMILY TODAY?*

- ◆ Liberal position:
  - ◆ Multiple versions: single parent, homosexual families, etc.
- Recognition of power relations/competition
- ◆ Definition v. imp. - who is in and who is out:
  - ◆ Influences economic and public policy decisions: "Who" is a family member costs billions of dollars

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*WHAT IS A FAMILY TODAY?*

- ◆ Issue of defining families cross-culturally - West as standard
- ◆ Reasons for changes:
  - ◆ Families embedded in social structure
  - ◆ Women with young children in labor force
  - ◆ Changes in marriage and divorce patterns
  - ◆ Women having less children

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*WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT  
OF FAMILY?*

- ◆ Images of married couples
- ◆ Love
- ◆ Permanence
- ◆ Children
- ◆ Sexual exclusivity
- ◆ Homemakers
- ◆ Intergenerational continuity

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*CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS OF FAMILY*

- ◆ Remarriages
- ◆ Dual careers
- ◆ Childless couples
- ◆ One parent households
- ◆ Same-sex unions
- ◆ Abusive partners

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*SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS*

- ◆ Discourse on negative transformations of family and kinship:
  - ◆ We need to return to "old" ways
  - ◆ Assumption that something of value is being lost:
- ◆ People paying price in security and well-being for gain in individual freedom
- ◆ Humans have had some form of family institution since the days when we were hunters and gatherers

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*VIEWS ON THE FAMILY IN U.S.*

- ◆ Another more positive view states that the family as we know it is dying BUT
  - ◆ Replaced by new family: supportive of everyone
- ◆ Egalitarian
- ◆ Socializes the individuals to cope with a complex world
- ◆ Individual self-realization and autonomy
- ◆ Allows for greater closeness of members

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*EFFECTS OF FAMILY CHANGES*

- ◆ As families shrink, parents in their prime work years have heavier child care burdens
- ◆ Children require more support for a longer period of time and through more years of education;
- ◆ Obligation to aging parents are increasing because people are living longer
- ◆ With increasing unwed motherhood around the world, the children of single-parent households are more likely to be poor

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*CENSUS BUREAU REPORT*

*MARCH 1999*

*1999*

*1970*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ◆ Married couples with children make up 25% of all households | ◆ Married couples with children make up 40% of all households |
| ◆ There are 2.65 people per household                         | ◆ There were 3.14 people per household                        |
| ◆ Only one out of every 10 households has five or more people | ◆ One out of every five households had five or more people    |

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*CENSUS BUREAU REPORT  
MARCH 1999*

1999

1970

- ◆ People living alone make up one-fourth of the households
- ◆ 12.2 million families maintained by women with no husband present
- ◆ People living alone made up one-sixth of households
- ◆ 5.6 million families were maintained by women with husband present

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*CENSUS BUREAU REPORT  
MARCH 1999*

1999

1970

- ◆ 3.2 million families are maintained by men with no wife present
- ◆ Four out of five households are in metropolitan areas
- ◆ 51 percent families have no own children under 18 at home
- ◆ 1.2 million families were maintained by men with no wife present
- ◆ Two out of three households were in metropolitan areas
- ◆ 44 percent of families had no own children under 18 at home

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*STATISTICS ON U.S. FAMILIES*

- ◆ POPULATION --- 272MILLION (2000)
  - ◆ 138.5 females
  - ◆ 133.5 males
  - ◆ 68.5 million family households :
    - ◆ 53.2 million married couples
    - ◆ 2.9 million - male household w/out wife
    - ◆ 12.4 million - female household w/out husband

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#### STATISTICS ON U.S. FAMILIES

- ◆ U.S. has one of the highest marriage and divorce rates in the world.
- ◆ 21.4 million single women gave birth to a child in 1992
- ◆ 39.3 million people live below the poverty line
- ◆ 12.3% of all U.S. families live below the poverty line

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#### Census Definitions

- ◆ Household: all persons who occupy dwelling such as house. Can be one or more people
- ◆ Family: two or more persons who are related by blood, marriage or adoption
- ◆ Informal definition: group of people who love and care for each other
- ◆ Which definition should provide the basis for official family policy?

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#### Family Symbolism

- ◆ Symbol for decency
  - ◆ Disney
  - ◆ Family movies
  - ◆ Profamily candidates
  - ◆ Other examples?
- ◆ Is this changing? If not - why are we clinging to this image?

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### *FAMILY MYTHS*

- ◆ Self-reliant traditional family
- ◆ Natural spheres
- ◆ Private
- ◆ Unstable African American families
- ◆ Idealized family of 50s

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### *Implications of Family Membership*

- ◆ Intensity of involvement
- ◆ Longterm membership
- ◆ Social institution in larger society
  - ◆ For ex. Parents have legal obligations to children
  - ◆ Authority over children (issue w. stepparents)

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*What influences in society do you  
see changing families and how?*

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### *Varying Functions of Family*

- ◆ Public family - provides services for society.

Vs.

- ◆ Private family - emotions and intimacy

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### *DEBATE OVER THE FAMILY*

- ◆ View of the Right (influenced by religion): men and women have innate roles

vs.

- ◆ View of the Left (influenced by feminists) that roles within the family and society need to be reorganized;

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### *DEBATE OVER THE FAMILY*

- ◆ VIEW OF THE RIGHT:

- ◆ Natural sexual order;
- ◆ Woman meets her destiny by channeling her energy into motherhood;
- ◆ Uniquely positioned to instill norms in its young;
- ◆ Imp. of biology and tradition;

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### *DEBATE OVER THE FAMILY*

#### ◆ VIEW OF LEFT:

- ◆ Women should only have children if they want them;
- ◆ Large measure of autonomy is possible for women;
- ◆ Traditional family needs to be rethought;
- ◆ Tension how to resolve relationship between autonomy and community

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### *SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS*

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*SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS*

- ◆ Contemporary View:
  - ◆ Traditional family system oppressed individuals, especially women  
Is this true?
  - ◆ Is there one type of traditional family that is more characteristic than others?
  - ◆ Does more freedom for women inevitably go with the breakup of the family?

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