

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Family: Roles, Responsibilities, and Rights**

#### **Overview**

This chapter considers the family of today and how it nurtures and supports children. The overall function of the family and the types of family configurations today are followed by a discussion of the family as a system with subsystems, roles, communication patterns, and rituals. The importance of attachment (bonding) on the developing child is also discussed.

The chapter continues with a section discussing families from different culture groups: Arab/Middle Eastern American, Native American, Asian and Pacific Islander American, African American, Hispanic American, and European/Caucasian American Families. It is, of course, impossible to assume that any one family from a certain cultural group is just like another in that group. However, to begin to understand how certain families function within the culture, we turn to research to generalize some generalized values that may espoused by each group—recognizing that it is then necessary to be particularly sensitive to the variations of individual families.

The chapter concludes with a look at family dysfunction and outlines the rights of parents and children.

#### **Objectives**

After reading this chapter, students should be able to:

- Explain the function of the family in the United States today.
- Describe how the family can be seen as a system.
- Outline the various types of cultural variations in family and how they differ.
- Cite the other types of family systems often defined by structure and explain what you should consider when working with each.
- Describe the types of problems that might bring families to the attention of service providers.
- Discuss the rights of children and parents and how these might involve child maltreatment.

#### **Key Words/Phrases**

Nuclear/Extended family

Single parent family

Blended family

Kinship networks

Subsystems

Boundaries

Roles

Attachment

Filial piety

*Respecto*

Independence

#### **Key Points for Students to Learn**

1. The family has changed a great deal in the last few decades with the nuclear family replacing the extended family, as divorce and single parenting increase.
2. Although there may be different family configurations, each family is responsible for reproduction, socialization, assignment of social roles, economic production and consumption and emotional support.
3. The family is a complex system with subsystems, roles assigned to its members, and boundaries. Attachment is a bonding between infants/children and their parents, and it is an essential element in their social development.
4. The family members develop different communication patterns and rituals that might be functional or dysfunctional to the family well-being.
5. Arab/Middle Eastern American families may be patriarchal, and the communication patterns are often less direct to show respect.
6. Grandparents among Native American families may have important roles and status in raising children. Sharing is often a primary value, as is the importance of patience. Children may be taught to control their emotions. Spirituality may involve being in tune with natural events.

7. Asian and Pacific Island American families may have strong family ties and often value harmony in their relations. The older generation is often revered and there may be a hierarchy in relationships.
8. African-American families may have close kinship ties, rely on each other for support, expect members to work hard, and be involved in a faith community.
9. Hispanic-American families may have strong extended family ties with the male members often serving as the authority figure. Concepts such as *Respecto*, respect for elders, may permeate their belief system.
10. The European or Caucasian American families may value independence in children and may recognize individual achievement as more important than group identity or harmony. Direct and expressive communication is often encouraged.
11. Families are said to be dysfunctional when they are not performing basic family tasks such as providing food, shelter, protection, and education. Moreover, families need to be able to deal with changes associated with developing children, with crises, or societal pressures in order to be functional.
12. Both parents and children have specific rights and responsibilities.

## References

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## Essay/Discussion Questions

1. What is the purpose of a family? How does it accomplish this task?
2. Discuss some of the recent changes in society that may impact the dynamics of family lives and the way children are raised, socialized, and educated.
3. What constitutes as being a dysfunctional family?
4. What are some of the cultural values that families hold which may come into conflict with the Social Services' perspectives?

## Multiple Choice Exam Questions

- The functions of a family include the following elements EXCEPT
  - socialization of children
  - assignment of social roles for family members
  - economic production and consumption
  - dismissing all boundaries
- A family whose members include grandparents, aunts and uncles is known as
  - a functional family
  - a family of long-term commitments
  - an extended family
  - a legal family
- One subsystem of a family can be comprised of
  - the parents, grandparents, and children
  - the siblings
  - toys and pets
  - the biological parents of adopted child
- If the boundaries between the family and the outside world are too rigid, the result is
  - little interaction between subsystems
  - the family becomes isolated
  - there isn't much expression of emotions within the family
  - the family members become very ego-centric
- Expected family roles
  - are not necessary for family functioning
  - could cause family dysfunction
  - may stop the interactions between family subsystems
  - cannot help the family complete tasks
- Communication within family systems include all of the following EXCEPT
  - family rules and expectations
  - nonverbal gestures
  - family traditions and rituals
  - connection to exosystem, such as banks, schools, or workplaces
- Today's families may include
  - nuclear families but not extended families
  - group of people who live together with expected roles
  - military families but not LGBTQ families
  - adopted children but not foster kids
- The four types of issues that prevent adequate family functioning include all EXCEPT
  - failure to complete basic tasks
  - failure to adapt to changes brought on by developmental tasks
  - failure to deal with crises
  - failure to protect nuclear family values
- The boundaries between subsystems within a family
  - hinder family members from operating freely
  - promote better functioning of the total family unit
  - restrict family members to stay only within the physical boundaries
  - prohibit family members from fulfilling their expected roles
- Two factors in the agreement between society and the family that contribute to child maltreatment include
  - society's belief in the sanctify of the family
  - society places high value on children
  - society will intervene whenever a family does not complete the basic tasks of child rearing

d. society afford more rights to children than to their parents

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1. d; 2. c; 3. b; 4. b; 5. b; 6. d; 7. b; 8. d; 9. b; 10. a.