

Marriages and Families

Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths

Chapter 2

Cultural Diversity and Diversity in Family Structure: Family Strengths and Challenges

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Chapter Outline

- Diversity and strengths in family structure and cultural context
- Why culture matters
- Intimacy and diversity
- Gay and lesbian couples and families
- The concepts of race, culture, and ethnicity
- U.S. demographics and future trends
- Challenge to researchers and practitioners

Chapter Outline

- Cultural competence
- Kin relationships across cultures
- Family system and sociocultural characteristics
- Family strengths and challenges across ethnic groups
- Cross-cultural family studies
- Challenges for ethnic families

Ethnic Groups

- Have different strengths that can be seen at:
 - Individual level
 - Family level
 - Cultural level
- **Cultural identity:** Evolves from shared beliefs, values, and attitudes

Ethnic Groups

- Diversity of different ethnic groups provides a broad range of options and ideas
 - Improves the ability to solve problems
 - Strength by which a country prospers

Why Culture Matters

- Everything in families happens within a cultural context
 - Definition of family
 - How intimacy is expressed
 - What it means to be male and female
 - Role expectations

Intimacy and Diversity

- Factors affecting the ability to maintain intimate family relationships
 - Poverty
 - Prejudice
 - Education level
 - Life experiences
- Intimate family relationships
 - Extended-family
 - Parent-child
 - Couple

Intimacy and Diversity

- Ability of **cultural groups** to develop intimacy is influenced by:
 - Their entry into the country
 - Period of arrival
 - How they were received

Gay and Lesbian Couples and Families

Defense of Marriage Act

- A gay or lesbian marriage that takes place in one state will not be recognized across state lines

State and federal legislation

- Reflects the controversial nature of same-sex marriages

Ethnic minorities

- Deal with discrimination related to their family structure and racism

Children

- No difference in developmental outcomes when raised by same-sex couples

Challenges of Gay and Lesbian Couples and Families

- Based on the illegality of marriages for same-sex couples
 - No right of inheritance unless specified by a will
 - No right to visit their partner in hospitals or prisons
 - Do not have spousal health insurance coverage

Challenges of Gay and Lesbian Couples and Families

- Many states do not allow same sex adoption
- Gay and lesbian couples experience societal stigma as they develop and maintain intimate relationships

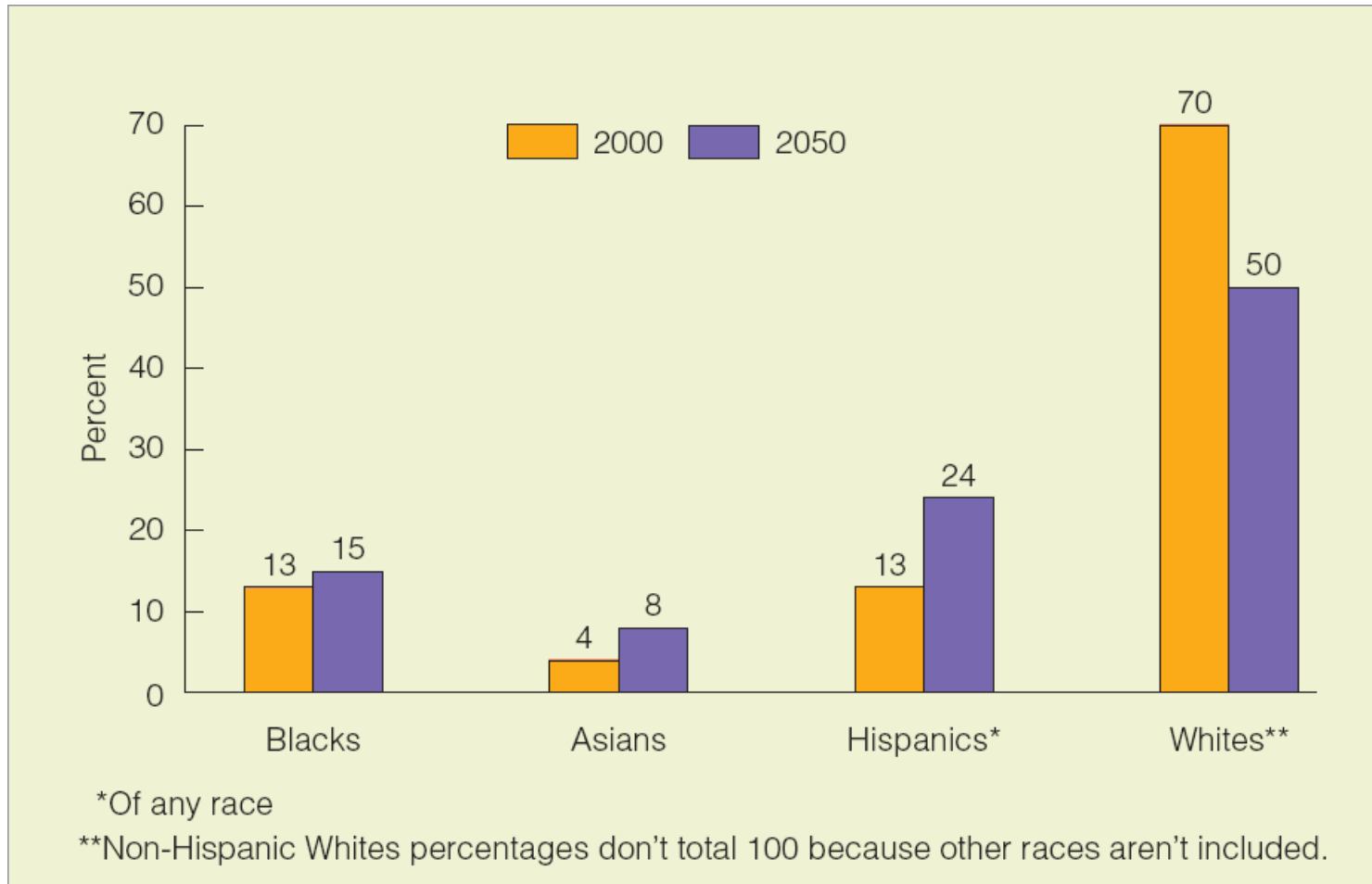
Concepts of Race, Culture, and Ethnicity

- **Race:** Common physical characteristics of a group
- Ethnicity - Nationality or ancestry
- Culture - How people make sense of their environment and their experiences
 - Values, beliefs and practices

Concepts of Race, Culture, and Ethnicity

- Determining membership in an ethnic or cultural group
 - Key issue is whether the individual believes he or she is a member of that group
 - Classifications cannot be based solely on:
 - Religious views
 - Language
 - Ancestry
 - Physical characteristics

Figure 2.2 - Increasing Diversity in America from 2000 to 2050



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a.

Immigration and Family Life

- Ethnic composition of the immigrant population is primarily Latino and Asian
- Women immigrants leave their children with extended family members in their country of origin
 - They work for wealthy families by cleaning and taking care of children

Immigration and Family Life

- Many immigrants come to the U.S. without documentation or have allowed their documentation to expire
 - Do not have access to services for themselves or their children
 - Risk of deportation

Immigration and Family Life

- Refugees come to the U.S. because conditions in their country of origin are unsafe
- Able to access social and financial services
- Face many challenges
 - Learning the new culture
 - Finding ways to make a living

Challenge to Researchers

- Conducting research with minority populations
 - Be respectful of the wishes of cultural groups
 - Collaborate with and develop partnerships with members and organizations in diverse cultures
 - Accept the conditions imposed by the community
 - Know about belief systems
 - Require informed consent in a language and reading level that participants understand
 - Interpretation of findings requires involving members of the population studied

Challenge to Practitioners

- People will not participate if there is cultural clash between:
 - Information and services provided
 - Values of a cultural group
- Even if they participate, they will not benefit from the information provided

Challenge to Practitioners

- Relying on cultural heritage is the most effective way for people to be:
 - Resilient
 - Capable of handling difficulties
- Positive ethnic identity has a positive influence on the lives of youth
 - **Ethnic identity:** Geographic origin of a particular group

Cultural Competence

- Effectiveness in working with a variety of cultural groups
- Components
 - Awareness
 - Knowledge
 - Skills

Awareness

- Self-exploration leads to self-awareness
- Starts with an understanding of one's own cultural heritage and belief system
 - Knowing that culture affects one's judgment of people from other cultures

Knowledge

- Factual information necessary to understand another person's culture
- General knowledge includes understanding:
 - Discrimination
 - Prejudice
 - Oppression and how these experiences affect a person or group of people

Knowledge

- Strategies to gain knowledge about a cultural group
 - Read scholarly information that describes the history of the culture
 - Attend activities, markets, art galleries, or places of business frequented by members of the culture

Knowledge

- Specific knowledge about a cultural group might include:
 - Group's history
 - Cultural beliefs and values
 - Family dynamics
- Cross-cultural understanding leads to a more liberal work environment with members of different cultures

Skills

- Cultural competence skills are demonstrated by language used and by showing knowledge of:
 - History
 - Beliefs and values
 - Cultural practices in implementing programs and providing services

Kinship

- Relatedness of certain individuals within a group
- Describes the norms that govern:
 - Marital forms
 - Family structure and organization
 - Inheritance
 - Authority
 - Residence

Kin Relationships Across Cultures

- **Nuclear family:** Smallest, most elementary kinship unit
 - **Conjugal family system:** Emphasizes the relationships formed through marriage
- **Consanguineal family systems:** Emphasize blood ties more than marital ties
 - **Extended family:** Consists of a nuclear family and those people related to its members by blood ties

Kin Relationships Across Cultures

- **Plural marriage** or **polygamy**
 - **Polygyny**: Man has more than one mate
 - **Polyandry**: Woman has more than one mate
- **Monogamy**: Man or woman has only one mate
- **Pseudo-kin group**: Relationships resembling kinship ties develop among unrelated individuals

Kin Relationships Across Cultures

- Cultural norms influence:
 - Family structure
 - **Lineage:** Lines of descent
 - Who holds authority in a family
 - Where newly married couples should reside

Kin Relationships Across Cultures

- Descent - Traced by gender
 - **Matrilineal societies:** Trace descent through females
 - **Patrilineal societies:** Trace descent through males
 - **Bilateral descent:** Children are equally tied to relatives of both the parents

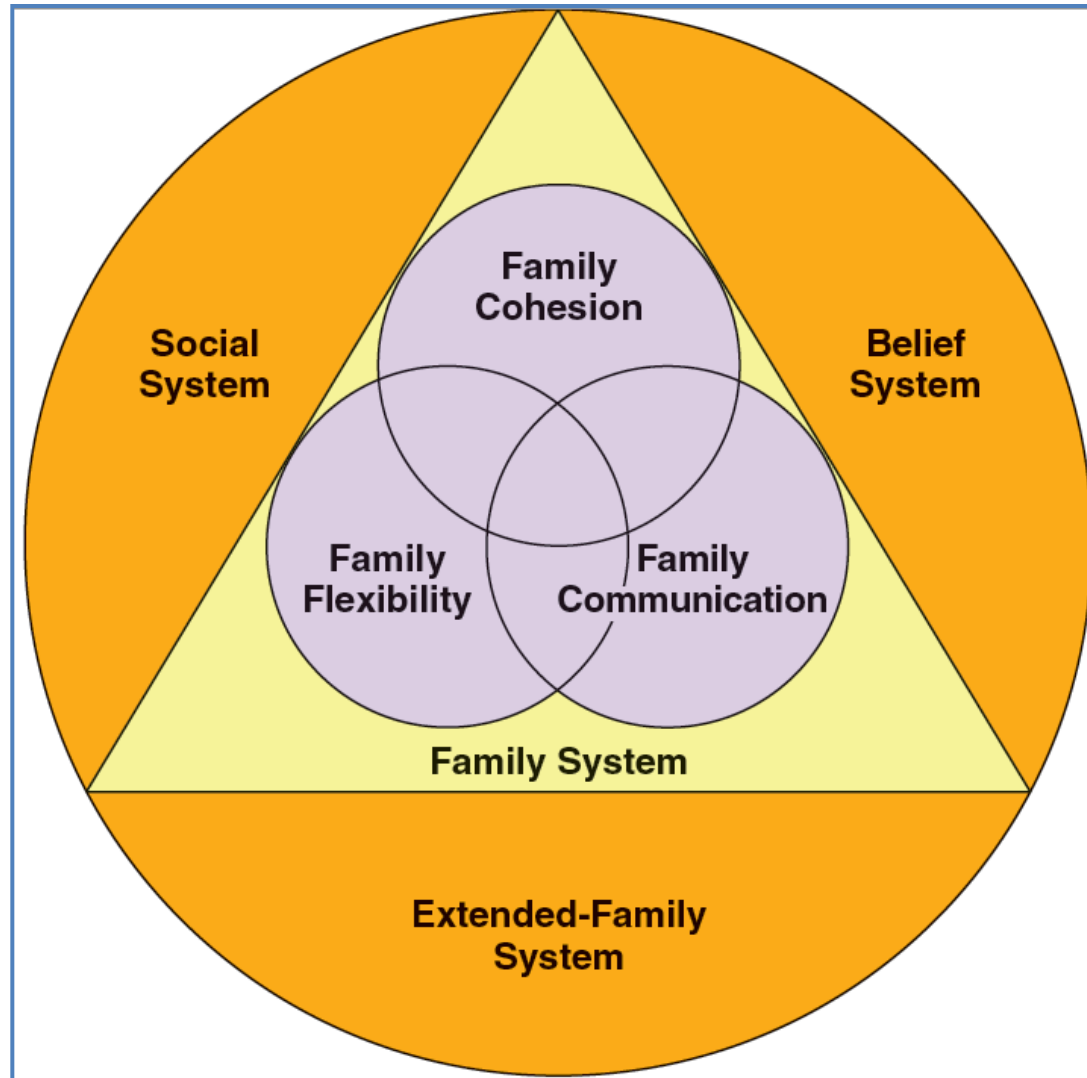
Kin Relationships Across Cultures

- Norms for lines of descent may or may not be linked to lines of authority within a kinship group
 - **Matriarchal group:** Females exercise the authority
 - **Patriarchal group:** Males exercise the authority
- **Egalitarian groups:** Rights and perspectives of both genders and all generations are respected

Kin Relationships Across Cultures

- Norms of residence for newly married couples
 - **Matrilocal society:** Couples live with or near the wife's kin
 - **Patrilocal societies:** Couples live with or near the husband's kin
 - **Neolocal society:** Couples establish a separate, autonomous residence

Figure 2.3 - Family System and Sociocultural Characteristics



Family System Characteristics

Family cohesion

- Emotional closeness a person feels to other family members

Family flexibility

- Ability to change and adapt when necessary

Family communication

- Sharing of information, ideas, and feelings with each other

Sociocultural Characteristics

Extended-family system

- Relatives, kin, and other family members connected to the family system

Social system

- Economic, educational, and other related resources available

Belief system

- Family's spiritual beliefs and values

Family Strengths and Challenges Across Ethnic Groups

| Strengths of White Families | Strengths of African American Families |
|---|---|
| Commitment to family | Strong kinship bonds |
| Enjoyable time together | Flexibility in family roles |
| Ability to manage stress and crisis effectively | Strong motivation to achieve |
| Spiritual well-being | Strong religious orientation |
| Positive communication | Egalitarian marriages |
| Appreciation and affection | |

Family Strengths and Challenges Across Ethnic Groups

| Strengths of Latino Families | Strengths of Asian American Families | Strengths of American Indian Families |
|--|---|--|
| Familism | Strong family orientation | Extended-family system |
| Children are highly valued | Filial piety | Spiritual beliefs |
| Religion | High value on education | High family cohesion |
| Family members provide support to each other | Well-disciplined children | Respect for elders |
| | Extended-family support | Bilingual language skills |
| | Family loyalty | Tribal support system |

Historical Trauma

- American Indians experienced through history with the loss of land, language, and culture
- Has resulted in social and individual problems
- Tribes teach children their almost lost tribal language
 - Because culture is embedded in language

Cross-Cultural Family Studies

- Focus on how particular cultural contexts influence a wide variety of issues
- **Ethnocentrism:** Assumption that one's own culture is the standard by which other cultures should be judged

Cross-Cultural Family Studies

- **Etic perspective:** Looking at a society from the outside and seeing its characteristics in isolation
 - Rather than as they relate to the structure of the society as a whole
- **Emic perspective:** Looking at a society from the inside and analyzing behaviors in terms of the internal structural elements of the society

Challenges for Ethnic Families

Assimilation

- Old cultural traits and values are relinquished and replaced by those of the dominant culture

Acculturation

- Cultural traits and values from one ethnic group become blended with those of the dominant culture

Segregation

- Ethnic group isolates itself or is forced into isolation within the dominant culture

Challenges for Ethnic Families

Stereotypes

- Standardized, oversimplified, and mean-spirited views

Prejudice

- Prejudging
- Closely linked with stereotyping

Racism

- Develops when the most powerful group in a society creates an elaborate mythology about a minority group

Challenges for Ethnic Families

- Advantages of being in the majority
 - People speak the same language you speak
 - Educational system is patterned after the ways of thinking and honors the history, beliefs, and values
 - Job market is more open
 - People will not discriminate in renting an apartment or selling a house in their neighborhood

Challenges for Ethnic Families

- The laws, the police, and the courts are sensitive to cultural values and are open-minded
- Religious and spiritual values of the culture are ideals that can be agreed upon
- Music, literature, movies, and art reflect the tastes and values

Challenges for Ethnic Families

Multiracial marriages

- Marriages between two people from two different cultural or ethnic groups

Relationships between men and women

- Different socialization processes and biological inheritances produce misunderstanding and conflict

Relationships between parents and children

- Conflicts rise because:
 - Younger generation strives to create a relatively independent life
 - Older generation tries to maintain control of the children