The phenomenal growth of the Latino population in the United States is a frequent media topic. Magazines and newspapers feature daily stories of the social transformations wrought by large-scale immigration from Latin countries. Latinos are now tied with African Americans as the largest minority, soon destined to surpass the black population. Despite such recent attention, the family patterns of this minority group are often misunderstood. Common stereotypes treat Latino families as cultural artifacts. They are thought to be traditional and close-knit, and to weather adversity better than families of other racial-ethnic backgrounds. Such myths only obscure the reality of family life among people of Mexican origin.

This chapter examines Mexican-heritage families from several different vantage points. After a brief glance at the general characteristics of the Mexican-origin population, the chapter presents a historical overview of family life in the South west. This is followed by a look at how social science perspectives on Mexican-heritage families have changed over time. It considers current economic and demographic upheavals in society and their effects on Mexican-origin families. The chapter then examines contemporary family patterns and trends, and concludes with a critical examination of family dynamics.

Two fundamental themes guide this inquiry of Mexican-origin families. These families are constructed by powerful social, economic, and political forces in the larger society. At the same time, they are settings in which different family members adapt in a variety of ways to changing social conditions. These themes set the foundation for understanding how and why Mexican families in the United States will continue to change in the next decade. Contrary to the thinking that viewed minority family patterns as a cause of their subordination in American society, this chapter underscores the adaptational qualities of Mexican-origin families.

Often the larger society lumps various Latino groups together under the hybrid label Hispanic. This practice can obscure important differences between Hispanic groups. The category Hispanic was created by federal statisticians to provide data
Hispanic American Families in the United States

On people of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and other Hispanic origins in the United States. Many prefer the term Latino or use it interchangeably with Hispanic. Although these terms are useful for charting broad demographic changes in society, they have little value as an ethnic group category. When used as panethnic terms, Hispanic and Latino conceal variation in the family characteristics of Latino groups (for a review of the widespread family diversity among Latino groups, see Baca Zinn and Wells 2000).

Since it first attempted to gather information on Hispanics in the 1960 Census, the U.S. Bureau of the Census has modified its method of identifying the Hispanic population with each decennial census. Consequently, intercensus comparisons are somewhat uncertain. For most data-collection activities, including the census, self-identification is used to identify Hispanics. In the 1990 census, information was collected on five "racial" groups-White, Black, Asian, Pacific Islanders, and American Indians-and two "ethnicities"-Hispanic and non-Hispanic. In that census, more than 40 percent of Hispanics identified their race as "other." The census bureau counted these Hispanics as "White." The 2000 census changed racial and ethnic classification by allowing people to select more than one race and as either Hispanic or non-Hispanic (Pollard and O'Hare 1999:8).

Hispanics, according to the U.S. Census guidelines, are an ethnic group, not a racial group. Despite this official government designation, Hispanics are racialized in the United States. This is the Hispanic population paradox: Hispanics are classified as an ethnic category, yet "Hispanic" encompasses heterogeneous ethnic groups. At the same time, although Hispanics are not officially defined as a race, they are socially defined in racial terms. In other words, Hispanics are treated as a racial group, and many identify themselves as belonging to a distinctive racial category.

In reality, there is no such thing as biological race. Instead, the characteristics that distinguish racial categories are socially defined. Whereas past racial classification in the United States was based on a black white dichotomy, the social definition of race has changed over time. Groups previously defined as members of specific ethnic backgrounds such as Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans have been racialized as Asians and Hispanics. New patterns of immigration and the power relations that accompany them are changing our social definitions of race. The social construction of the categories "Hispanic/ Latino" as a racial group is what is important. Social relations with Latinos are institutionalized. People identified and labeled Hispanics are treated differently—that is, as a distinctive racial group. As a social category, Latinos experience distinctive treatment in virtually all areas of social life. In the aggregate, Latinos fall well behind non-Hispanic whites on most indicators of status and well-being. They face obstacles to entering the economic mainstream of society. They have lower levels of educational completion, lower incomes, lower standards of living, and lower life expectancy. These inequalities reflect ongoing patterns of institutional discrimination that create serious problems for families. Like blacks, Asians, and Native Americans, Latinos are defined in racial terms. They are viewed as different from and inferior to whites. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, the Latino label masks extraordinary diversity.

In this chapter, we disaggregate the family characteristics of Mexican-origin families from those of other Latino groups. The terms Mexican-origin, Mexican-heritage,
and for simplicity, *Mexican*, include those who have been in the United States for several generations as well as the immigrant population. Both native-borns (Mexican Americans or Chicanos) and immigrants are subordinated by the wider society. And although they share many features, Mexican-origin families are multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual. They are marked by differences of nativity, citizenship status, region, religion, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

Several characteristics distinguish Mexicans from other minorities in the United States (see Table 1). First, they make up the largest segment of the diverse groups that comprise the Latino population. In 2000, they numbered 21.7 million, accounting for 66.1 percent of Hispanics in the United States and making Mexican-origin Hispanics more than seven times the estimated number of 2.95 million Puerto Ricans (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). Second, the Mexican-origin population continues to receive migrants in waves that have made America a "permanently unfinished" society (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Mexicans have been at the forefront of newcomers making their way into the United States. Although immigration from Mexico is not a new phenomenon, it has changed in important ways. Originally it was a rural flow. Today, it has become mostly urban, with 88 percent of the new arrivals going to metropolitan areas (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1998). In addition, the flow of Mexican immigration is formed overwhelmingly by urban workers, farm laborers, and their families (70 percent). Only 6 percent of the new arrivals are professionals (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:40-41). In some areas, large-scale immigration is changing the proportion of Mexicans born in the United States and those who are immigrants. For example, in 1960, immigrants were a rarity among Mexicans in California when 82 percent of all Mexicans were born in the United States. Today, 61 percent of all Mexicans are born in the United States, whereas 37 percent of Mexicans are foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998b).

By 2000, the concentration of immigrants was so high that it formed a virtually new population with family characteristics that differ from those of the native-born Mexican or "Chicano" brethren. Although immigration has become a major social trend, little attention has been given to key aspects of family life among U.S.-born and foreign-born, to Mexican immigrants and second generation Mexican families (Romo 1986; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 1995). Along with continued immigration, the Mexican population will continue to grow disproportionally because of high birthrates and a young age structure. Women of Mexican origin have the highest fertility levels of any Hispanic group and higher fertility levels than non-Hispanic whites. Taken together, these distinguishing characteristics of Mexican-origin families present compelling challenges to students of the family.

**MEXICAN FAMILY HISTORY IN THE SOUTHWEST**

Families of Mexican descent have been incorporated into the United States both by conquest and by migration (the following is based primarily on Baca Zinn and Eitzen forthcoming). In 1848, at the end of the Mexican War, the United States
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>Families below Poverty Level (in percentages)</th>
<th>Poverty Rate for Children under 18 (in percentages)</th>
<th>Female Head of Household (in percentages)</th>
<th>High School Graduate (in percentages)</th>
<th>Labor Force Participation (in percentages)</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate (in percentages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All U.S.</td>
<td>$38,885</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$40,912</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>$25,351</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>$46,637</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$28,330</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>$27,088</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>$23,729</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>$37,537</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central/South American</td>
<td>$32,030</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hispanic</td>
<td>$30,130</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


acquired a large section of Mexico, which is now the Southwestern United States. With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, as many as 100,000 Mexicans living in that region became residents of U.S. territory. The American takeover disrupted traditional family life through land displacement of the indigenous people, new laws, and new labor systems.

The military conquest was accompanied by the beginnings of industrial development and by the growth of agriculture, ranching, railroads, and mining in the region. Rapid economic growth in that region resulted in a labor shortage. U.S. businesses recruited Mexican workers to migrate north for work at low wages in railroad construction and agriculture (Portes and Rumbaut 1996).

Prior to the American takeover and the beginnings of industrial development, Mexicanos, whether natives of northern Mexico or immigrants from southern Mexico, were people of Mexican heritage, largely peasants, whose lives had been defined by a feudal economy and daily struggle on the land for economic survival. This pastoral life was disrupted. With the coming of the railroads and the damming of rivers for irrigation, Mexicans were denied most of the advantages that went to ruling-class Anglos. They no longer owned the land; now they were the source of cheap labor, an exploited group at the bottom of the social and economic ladder.

Mexican immigration to the United States increased substantially in the early twentieth century, although immigration from Mexico had been growing since the late 1880s. But Mexican workers who migrated north for work in the late nineteenth century and late in the first half of the twentieth century often did not settle down permanently:

The prevailing "ebb and flow" or "revolving door" pattern of labor migration was calibrated by seasonal labor demands, economic recessions, and mass deportations. Although some employers encouraged the immigration of Mexican women and entire families in order to stabilize and expand the available, exploitable work force, many other employers, assisted at times by government-sponsored "bracero programs," recruited only men for elastic, temporary labor supply, a reserve army of labor that could be discarded when redundant. Employers did not absolutely command the movement of Mexican workers, but employers' needs constructed a particular structure of opportunities that shaped migration. (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1995:177)

Migratory labor made families highly susceptible to disruption. Historian Richard Griswold del Castillo (1984) provides a powerful historical example of family arrangements among Mexican Americans in Southwestern cities during the latter half of the nineteenth century, concluding that a large proportion of households (38 percent) were female-headed, even though extended, two-parent families remained the "ideal type." Although migratory labor systems clearly restricted family life, Mexican families were flexible, pluralistic, and adaptive in surviving the rigors of economic marginality and frontier life. Disruptions and reformulations in family structure were commonplace, but family networks were durable (Griswold del Castillo 1984; Vega 1995:5).

Cities in the American Southwest served as focal points for reconstituting the Mexican family constellations and for the construction of new families north of the
Extended family networks were crucial in dealing with migration and in reinforcing Mexican customs and values (Sanchez 1990:252).

Mexican familism (a strong orientation and obligation to the family) took several forms and served many purposes. The family consisted of a network of relatives, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, married sisters and brothers and their children, and also compadres (coparents) and padrinos (godparents) with whom Chicanos actively maintained bonds (Ramirez and Arce 1980:9). The compadrazgo system of godparents established connections between families and in this way enlarged family ties. "Godparents were required for the celebration of major religious occasions in a person's life: baptism, confirmation, first communion, and marriage." At these times, godparents "entered into special religious, social, and economic relationships with the godchild as well as with the parents of the child." They acted as coparents, "providing discipline and emotional and financial support when needed." As compadres they were expected to become the closest friend of the parents and members of the extended family (Griswold del Castillo 1984:40-44).

Family roles in the nineteenth century were strongly gendered. Women did domestic work and cared for children within the home while men did productive work outside the household. Exceptions to this pattern could be found in rural areas, where women tended gardens or looked after domestic animals (Barrera 1979). This division began to break down as more and more women entered the paid labor force, stimulated by the dire economic situations that affected so many Chicano families after 1870. Albert Camarillo has described how traditional patterns of employment and family responsibilities were altered in Santa Barbara, California:

The most dramatic change was the entrance of the Chicana and her children as important wage earners who contributed to the family's economic survival. As male heads of household faced persistent unemployment, their migrations to secure seasonal work in the other areas of the country or region became more frequent. In these instances the Chicana assumed the triple responsibilities of head of household, mother, and wage earner. No longer able to subsist solely on the income of the husband, the Chicana and her children were forced to enter the unskilled labor market of Anglo Santa Barbara. The work they performed involved domestic services and agriculture-related employment. (Camarillo 1979:91)

During the 1800s, Chicanas were incorporated into the agricultural labor market as entire families entered the pattern of seasonal and migratory fieldwork. Initially, Chicanas and their children were employed as almond pickers and shellers and olive harvesters. During the almond and olive harvests, men were usually engaged in seasonal migratory work. During some seasons, however, especially the early summer, the entire family migrated from the city to pick fruit. Chicano family labor had become essential for the profits of growers. Families often left their homes in Santa Barbara for several weeks, camping out in the fields where they worked (Camarillo 1979:93).
Large-scale immigration from Mexico greatly expanded the Mexican/Chicano presence in the Southwest. Migrating in a chainlike pattern, Mexican family units were reconstructed in the United States. This process provided an increase in the supply of cheap Chicano labor, which was "placed" in the labor force according to gender. Men were incorporated into the segmented labor market in agriculture, ranching, mining, and railroads, and as common laborers in urban industrial occupations. Women were incorporated into the segmented labor market in domestic work, canning and packinghouses, the textile industry, and agriculture (Camarillo 1979:221). The gender system of work prevailed throughout the Southwest. In El Paso, Texas, for example, Mario Garcia (1981) found that from 1890 through 1920, women worked mainly as servants and laundresses, as garment workers, and as cooks and dishwashers.

Race and gender placed Mexican-heritage women in subordinate work outside the home. In addition, a distinctive system of Mexican patriarchy controlled the private-sphere activities of women. As both daughters and wives, Mexican women were instructed to be obedient and submissive to both their parents and their husbands. Domesticity and motherhood were primary virtues. Whether or not they labored outside the home, they were subject to a gender division of labor in which their primary task was to care for their husbands and children and to accept subordination as a natural condition. The "private" patriarchy meshed neatly with the patriarchy of the Southwest economy. Wage-earning mothers and daughters were responsible for domestic duties. The work women did outside the home was considered less important than that of men, and their wages only supplemented those of men. Despite these conditions, the wage labor of Mexican-heritage women contributed greatly to family adjustment in a colonized setting (Garcia 1980).

Besides their roles as workers, wives, and mothers, women in particular guarded Mexican cultural traditions within the family—not consciously, but as a matter of practice (Garcia 1980:128). Certain customs practiced during the 1920s by Mexican immigrant families throughout the Southwest promoted Mexican tradition. These customs included folklore, songs and ballads, birthday celebrations, saints' days, baptisms, weddings, and funerals in the traditional Mexican style. Through the family, Mexican culture was nurtured.

Immigration to the United States during the nineteenth and early twentieth century served to replenish both the Mexican population and their cultural traditions in the areas of settlement. The large presence of poor immigrant families in Southwestern cities gave rise to studies portraying Mexican family life as a social problem for American society.

This thinking was rooted in the development of family studies as a new field. Family studies emerged out of a deep fundamental belief in the need to study and ameliorate social problems (Thomas and Wilcox 1987:27). During the 1920s and 1930s, the social-problems approach to family life led to studies of Mexican immigrants that highlighted (1) their foreign patterns and habits, (2) the moral quality of family relationships, and (3) the prospects for their Americanization. A prominent sociologist of the time, Emory Bogardus, observed that fathers had primitive attitudes concerning large numbers of children and that mothers had fatalistic
whole create different contexts for family living and different group-based family patterns through their unequal distribution of social resources and opportunities. Instead of being an intrinsic property of Mexicans themselves, their family forms are shaped by the adaptations of family members to the social situations and contexts in which they are socially located (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 2002).

GLOBAL REORGANIZATION AND FAMILY UPHEAVALS

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, profound social transformations swept the United States and fundamentally redefined family life. Among the best-documented family changes are family composition, the participation of women in the workforce, patterns of marriage and divorce, and the proportion of households headed by women. These trends reflect social changes that are more far-reaching and occurring faster than at any other time in history. They are global in scope and are produced by economic and demographic transformations that are redefining families throughout the world. Mexican-origin families are not exempt. They have been bombarded by global reorganization that includes (a) the structural transformation of the U.S. economy and (b) immigration and the new demands for immigrant labor. These social upheavals have extraordinary consequences for Mexican-origin families and the individuals within them.

Economic Restructuring

Four factors are at work in economic restructuring: new technologies based primarily on the computer chip, global economic interdependence, capital flight, and the domination of the information and service sectors over basic manufacturing industries (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 2001). Together, these factors have redesigned jobs, reorganized cities and regions, and exacerbated inequalities. They have affected the lives of people in all social categories, families, and communities, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. However, the magnitude of economic restructuring is different throughout society. The disproportionate effects of economic and industrial change are most visible in three trends: (1) structural unemployment, (2) the changing distribution and organization of jobs, and (3) the low-income generating capacity of jobs. Each of these three trends has significant consequences for Mexican-origin families in that they create a socioeconomic context in which family life is constructed and maintained.

Families are affected when their resources are reduced, when they face economic and social marginalization, and when family members are threatened by unemployment or are actually laid off. The economic deprivation that they face forces them to adjust in ways that other poor families do: having single-parent families, relying on kin networks, sharing housing costs, and having multiple wage-earners among family members.

As a firmly established blue-collar workforce, Mexicans have tended to work in economic sectors most vulnerable to cyclical unemployment and in some manufacturing industries that are threatened with decline. Mexican-origin workers have
been hard hit by plant closings created by the exodus from the West and Southwest for cheaper locales. Although most of the Mexican-origin population lives in areas with booming economies, they do not always profit from regional growth. Many of the growth industries that employ Mexicans pay poorly and have weak unions. Thus, although growth does create jobs, many of these are in service and low-wage manufacturing. Few in the population have enough training for high-wage jobs in the new industries (Moore 1989).

The restructuring of the U.S. economy has reshaped economic opportunities for Mexicans (Ortiz 1996). The shift away from manufacturing to services has meant that new jobs offer low wages and poor working conditions. New immigrants who are vulnerable to exploitation by employers generally fill these jobs.

The impact on Mexicans of economic restructuring has been and will remain uneven. Where plant closings and factory layoffs have been studied among Mexican-origin workers, predictable family stresses and disruptions have been documented (Castro-Selipe et al. 1987). In other cases, industrial restructuring has been found to generate employment. Many Mexican-origin women have found their work opportunities expanded in electronics and apparel factories. Such work not only often creates new forms of race and gender exploitation but also offers only marginal income. However, it also allows many Mexican women to keep their families afloat when their husbands have lost their jobs because of economic reorganization (Zavella 1984). Changes in industrial employment affect women and men differently, and these patterns have staggering effects on family life.

As industrial restructuring reorganizes work, women in all social categories are drawn into the labor force. Mexican women are no exception. Of the 66 million women in the civilian labor force in 2000, 6.35 million (9.6 percent) were of Hispanic origin. Of this 6.35 million, 60 percent were of Mexican origin (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). This represents an important departure from the earlier patterns. Mexican-origin women have historically had among the lowest rates of labor force participation. This increase in women's employment has created far-reaching changes in family life, but it has not stabilized Mexican families nor diminished the impact of poverty. Like women in the larger society, Mexican women have experienced both rising levels of employment and higher poverty rates that are associated with the growth of female-headed households. Although Mexican-origin people have the highest proportion of married-couple families, they are not immune to the feminization of poverty. Poor female-headed households with or without the support of extended kin mean problems for mothers and their children.

The Mexican-origin population has been affected by changes in the larger economy that polarized the occupational structure into "good" jobs and "bad" jobs. Few in the Mexican-origin population have enough training for high-wage jobs. They are dropping further behind in education and training just when jobs require more technical knowledge and higher levels of education. This trend is one of the most crucial barriers to the well-being of Mexican families. Mexicans (along with other Latino ethnic groups) have the highest rates of school dropouts in the country. Undereducated people suffer in the employment world, and their families pay a high price.
Immigration in the Current Era

Another transformation that is changing society and families is massive immigration. The United States is currently experiencing its second major wave of immigration. Between 1991 and 1998, a record number of 7.6 million immigrants were admitted for permanent residence in the United States (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1998). One million immigrants are being added to the U.S. population annually.

Two features of the current immigrant population make it different from previous waves of migration into the United States. First, immigrants arrive not from Northern Europe but from the Third World, especially Asia and Latin America. Almost 80 percent of today's immigrants hail from Asia, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1999). Second, women and children make up a large share of today's immigrants. In 1998, 53.5 percent of all immigrants admitted to the United States were female (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1998). Immigrant children and U.S.-born children of immigrants are the fastest-growing segments of the U.S. child population. For example, in 1997, 20 percent of the child population were either immigrant children or U.S.-born children of immigrants (fortes and Rumbaut 2001).

Today, Mexicans lead in both legal and undocumented immigration. In 1998, 20 percent of all immigrants legally admitted to the United States were from Mexico, more than the four next-largest groups combined (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1999). In contrast, between 1901 and 1910, migrants from Mexico comprised less than one percent of the U.S. immigrant population. Mexican immigration reflects broader immigration trends. Over half (57 percent) of legally admitted immigrants from Mexico are female, whereas 35 percent are 19 years old or younger (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1998).

Among legally admitted Mexican immigrants, 57 percent live in the West (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). The majority reside in California, Texas, and Illinois, in the following metropolitan areas. Los Angeles-Long Beach, Riverside-San Bernardino, and Chicago (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1998). Although it is difficult to track undocumented immigration, it has been estimated that, in 1998, 2.7 million of the 5 million undocumented immigrants came from Mexico (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1999).

Today's immigrants face a new set of problems, which are a result of global reorganization, discussed before, including the structural transformation of the U.S. economy and the demands for immigrant labor. Because Mexicans comprise a large proportion of today's immigrant population, Mexican immigrant families are especially affected by these changes.

How are Mexican families involved in immigrations Under the provisions of the Immigration Act of 1990, gaining immigrant status generally requires a sponsor, who may be a U.S. citizen, a legal resident, a U.S. employer, or in the case of refugees, the U.S. government. Of those options, the most common route to immigration involves a close family member. The majority, 55 percent, are immediate relatives of U.S. citizens (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 1999). Thus, immigration to the United States is largely a family affair.
Adaptation is a central dynamic in immigrant family life. Although immigrant families have always been fluid and flexible, today's immigration is adding new forms to U.S. family arrangements. The immigration laws, which favor migrants with family connections, have a snowball effect that enhances the potential for further migration (chain migration), both legal and extralegal (the following is based primarily on Baca Zinn and Eitzen forthcoming). Such chaining processes often lead to dense ethnic concentrations in cities where extended families are closely networked:

Such spatial concentration of kin and kith serve to provide newcomers with manifold sources of moral, social cultural, and economic support that are unavailable to immigrants who are more dispersed and help to explain the gravitational pull exerted by places where family and friends of immigrants are concentrated. (Rumbaut 1997:7)

**Family connections make immigration possible, and they help migrants cope with life in a new social setting. At the same time, immigration is transforming families and households in fundamental ways.**

Exceptions to the family-oriented immigration often occur. For example, many young, typically manual workers, leave their families behind for months at a time while they work in the United States. These transnational families find their family ties stretched across national boundaries, thereby causing extraordinary emotional, financial, and physical stress for family members (Chavez 1992:119). Even motherhood can be stretched across national boundaries. Transnational motherhood is an arrangement whereby Mexican immigrant women work in the United States while their children live in Mexico (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). This arrangement is difficult for parents and children, but it is sometimes the only choice if workers are to take advantage of better wages in the United States. Transnational mothering is closely linked with the globalization of economies that create new demands for immigrant labor (Chang 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

In other circumstances, undocumented immigrants may have families in the United States. This situation occurs by having their spouse join them or by marrying U.S. citizens or legal residents. The children of these unions, if born in the United States, are U.S. citizens. This arrangement leads to the unusual situation of families that consist of a mix of legal statuses. Chavez (1992) calls these families binational, since they consist of both undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens or legal residents.

Recent feminist scholarship has inspired some fundamental changes in migration studies. Early migration scholarship often ignored women, making it seem as if only men migrated. Today's scholarship examines how immigration and gender relations are reshaping family dynamics. Several important studies have examined the relationship between immigration and gender. In her study of undocumented Mexican immigrants, Hondagneu-Sotelo demonstrated that gender shapes migration and that the migration process itself reduces traditional patriarchal relations:

As traditional family patriarchy weakens, immigrant women assume more active public and social roles, and these activities ultimately advance their families' integration in the
United States ... in the aggregate, these activities anchor family settlement. Women advance settlement for their families, and in the process, they consolidate their own newfound status in the family. (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994:149)

Like gender relations, generational relations are a new topic in migration research. Immigration is often shaped by children's needs and involvement. For example, Thorne and her colleagues found that parents' decisions to bring children to the United States from Mexico were based on the following considerations: possession of money to pay for the journey; needs and circumstances of family members here and at home; expressed desires of the children themselves; and parents' views of what is safe, appropriate, or good for children of different ages and genders. Mexican immigrant children not only participate in housework activities but also use acquired skills to negotiate for family members in various social contexts. They may use their knowledge of English to translate for parents and other adults (Thorne et al. forthcoming). Family dynamics are transformed as ideas about adult power and authority, as well as children's autonomy and status, change.

SELECTED PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Evidence that accumulated over the past two decades reveals that Mexican-origin families are undergoing many of the transitions facing U.S. families in general, yet important differences exist. The continuing influx of immigrants from Mexico combines with systems of class and racial inequality to produce hardships not faced by mainstream families.

Several characteristics of the Mexican-origin population create severe disadvantages for family living. Mexicans in this country lag behind the white population on most measures of socioeconomic status. This situation is not surprising because many are immigrants, and immigrants typically have low status. Making generalizations about Mexican-origin families is particularly complex because it involves assessing two distinct groups-the native-born and the foreign-born. On most indicators of well-being, native-born Mexicans are better off than their foreign-born counterparts (O'Hare 1989). Although native-born Mexicans are better off in general, some rather startling findings have emerged from recent research on the family patterns of immigrants to Los Angeles. Hayes-Bautista (1989) discovered that immigrants arrive in the United States with strong families but that they do not sustain "positive" family characteristics over time and generation. Studying census data on Mexican immigrant families, this sociologist discovered high rates of family formation, low welfare dependency, and high labor-force participation. In successive generations, these characteristics appear to become weakened.

Low-status occupations and high unemployment have especially serious consequences for family life because they translate into low incomes and high poverty rates. Median family income for Mexican-origin families in 2000 was $30,400, compared with the non-Hispanic median income of $51,206 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). Whereas the median family income for Mexicans is below that of
non-Hispanics, per-person income is actually lower because Mexican-origin people tend to have large families.

In 1999, 21.2 percent of Mexican-origin families had incomes below the poverty threshold, compared with only 5.5 percent of non-Hispanic families (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). This is the case despite the fact that a large proportion of poor Mexican families have members in the workforce.

Marriage and Divorce

Marriage is very much the norm for Mexicans. Compared with other Hispanics and non-Hispanics, Mexicans (both women and men) are more likely to be married. Despite their overall precarious economic existence, they are more "pro-nuptial" than other disadvantaged groups. Family demographers describe the inconsistent pattern of Mexican American nuptiality as follow: First-marriage rates among Mexican Americans are similar to those among Anglos despite economic circumstances that closely resemble African Americans (Oropesa, Lichter, and Anderson 1994). Their age at first marriage is also somewhat lower than that for both other Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Marriage patterns have often led to conjectures that Hispanics in general and Mexicans in particular have more stable families than others. The evidence does not support this assumption. Vega reports that

Bean and Tienda's review of 1980 census data found negligible variations in rates of marital disruption between non-Hispanic Whites, Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans, but Puerto Rican rates that are much higher than those of the other groups. Although other investigators ... had reported lower divorce rates for Mexican Americans, Bean and Tienda point out that when separation is included in marital disruption, such differences disappear. (Vega 1990:1016)

Fertility and Family Size

As noted earlier, an important characteristic of Mexican-origin families is their large size. Average household size for Hispanics in 1998 was 3.92 compared with 3.02 for non-Hispanic whites (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998a). Among Hispanic subgroups, Mexican families had the highest proportions of families with five or more members. For example, in 2000, 33 percent of Mexican families, compared with 12.1 percent of non-Hispanic families, had five or more members (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001).

Although steadily declining, the high rates of childbearing among Mexican-origin women are evident in all age categories and levels of education. The persistently high birthrate among Mexican women has been variously interpreted in terms of religion, class, and culture. With reference to religion, the question is whether Mexicans as a group overwhelmingly self-identify as "Catholic" and support the national pattern of Catholics being less supportive of contraceptives and more positive about large families. The second explanation has emphasized the generally low socioeconomic status of Mexicans in the United States, explaining that their low income and lack of education make fertility control difficult for them. The third interpretation focuses on a cultural explanation to account for high fertility; that is, their values are assumed to
be different from those of others in terms of family size. Contrasting evidence can be found for each explanation (Andrade 1980). New evidence shows that increasing proportions of Mexican women approve of and/or use birth control when it is available (Moore and Pachon 1985:105).

Type of Family

The large increase in the number of families headed by women is one of the most important social developments of the past decade. A small but growing proportion of Mexican-origin families are headed by women. Still, female-headed households are less prevalent among Mexicans (21 percent in 2000, compared with 23.4 percent among Hispanics in general) and slightly more prevalent than among non-Hispanics (17 percent) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001). A clear relationship exists between household composition and economic well-being. Female-headed households are especially vulnerable. In 1999, 38.4 percent of Mexican-origin families maintained by women were below the poverty threshold (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2001).

Traits commonly associated with Mexican-origin families in the United States are (1) familism, an assortment of beliefs and behaviors associated with family solidarity and kinship networks, and (2) a gender-specific division of labor.

Familism

For decades, familism has been considered to be a defining feature of the Mexican-origin population. Presumably, family is one of the strongest areas of life, more important for Mexicans than for Anglos. This characteristic pertains not only to the nuclear family but also to a wider circle of kin—the extended family that includes aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, in-laws, and even compadres.

In contrast to the prevailing view that familism is primarily a Mexican cultural preference handed down through the generations, studies show that Mexican kinship patterns are socially constructed. In other words, familism is shaped by structural and contextual factors. Mexican-origin familism has different components, it serves varied purposes, and it takes multiple forms.

Familism contains four key components. The first component, demographic familism, refers to macrocharacteristics of Chicano families, such as family size, whereas the second component, structural familism, measures the incidence of multigenerational or extended households. The third component, normative familism, taps the value that Mexican-heritage people place on family unity and solidarity. The fourth, behavioral familism, refers to the level of interaction between family and kin networks (Ramirez and Arce 1980).

Compadrazgo is another feature of familism among Chicanos and Mexicans. It refers to two sets of relationships with 'fictive kin': (1) "padrinos y ahijados," or godparents and children, and (2) parents and godparents who become "compadres," or
Hispanic American Families in the United States

coparents. The compadrazgo system of godparents enlarges family ties by creating connections between families. According to Griswold del Castillo, "Godparents were required for the celebration of major religious occasions in a person's life: baptism, first communion and marriage." At these times, godparents "entered into special religious, social and economic relationships with the godchild as well as the parents of the child." They acted as coparents, "providing discipline and emotional and financial support when needed." As compadres, they were expected to become the closest friend of the parents and members of the extended family (Griswold del Castillo 1984:40-44).

Familism serves varied purposes. Studies spanning the past three decades have found that kinship networks often compensate for resources withheld by the larger society. In poor Mexican-origin communities, family extension is a system for coping with socioeconomic marginality (Alvirez and Bean 1976; Angel and Tienda 1982; Hoppe and Heller 1975; Keefe 1984; Lamphere et al. 1993; Mindel 1980; Uttal 1999; Velez-Ibanez 1996). Yet, kinship networks are not maintained for socioeconomic reasons alone. They operate as systems of cultural, emotional, and mental support (Keefe 1984; Mindel 1980; Ramirez 1980). Familism among Mexican-heritage adults has been associated with high levels of education and income (Griffith and Villaviciencio 1985), and among adolescents as a form of social capital linked with academic success (Valenzuela and Dornbusch 1994).

Kinship networks have long been used in the migration of Mexicans to the United States (Chavez 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Macklin 1996; Portes and Bach 1985; Samora and Lamana 1967; Wells 1976). As discussed earlier, Mexican immigrants create a process of chain migration, using kin to find housing and employment, and to be a buffer against the upheavals associated with migration. Among immigrants, extended kinship is a classic social adaptation as transnational families are stretched across space, time, and national borders.

Kinship networks among Mexican-origin people are varied depending on distinctive social conditions such as immigrant versus nonimmigrant status and generational status. Comparing Mexican immigrants with Mexican Americans, Glick (1999) found differences in the types of extended family households formed by each group. Mexican immigrants were more likely than Mexican Americans to share living arrangements with relatives from within the same generation, but they are much less likely to live with relatives from multiple generations. At the same time, the simple description of "immigrant" versus "native" patterns does not adequately characterize the pattern of exchange. Rather, Glick found a life course dimension to exchanges with extended kin:

Mexican Americans, who are more likely to live in extended family households consisting of multiple generations, engage in economic exchanges from older adults to younger adults. Mexican immigrants, who are more likely to live with relatives at similar stages of the life course are more likely to exchange resources with these kin in other households as well. (Glick 1999:745)

As with other racial-ethnic groups including African Americans and Asian Americans, Mexican-origin people with higher socioeconomic standing retain by
choice strong patterns of kin interaction. Although a cultural perspective would predict that familism fades in successive generations, Velez-Ibanez (1996) found high elaborated second- and third-generation extended family networks actively maintained through frequent visiting, ritual celebrations, and the exchange of goods and services.

Gender, Power, and Family Activity

No assumption is more deeply ingrained in scholarly and popular thinking about Mexican-origin families than that of male dominance. Machismo, the Mexican masculinity cult, has long been thought to be responsible for many of the family and socialization patterns that create problems for Mexicans. The term machismo has gained popular usage in American society, referring to exaggerated masculinity, physical prowess, and male chauvinism. In the social science literature about Mexicans and Chicanos, machismo is the primary concept used to explain family structure and inadequate personality development. It is based on the assumption that exaggerated masculinity represents a compensation for cultural inferiority (Baca Zinn 1982:2). Early research on Mexican families in the United States focused on the "macho-dominated" authoritarian Mexican American family in which the male demands complete deference, respect, and obedience from his wife and children.

From today's vantage point, these early studies "sound like ludicrous stereotypes-projections of the scholars' individual racism rather than valid indicators of the culture and its people" (Segura and Pierce 1993). Although such stereotypical writings about overcompensating men and submissive women have given way to more balanced empirical works on gender, questions about male domination continue to be important. Although themes of patriarchy remain, the nature of male domination is different from that described in earlier studies.

A wave of revisionist work on marital power conducted in the 1970s and 1980s found that wives and husbands share in family activities and decision making (Baca Zinn 1980; Cromwell and Cromwell 1978; Grebler et al. 1970; Hawkes and Taylor 1975; Ybarra 1982). These studies refute the stereotype of macho-dominated Mexican-origin families, but they do not dispute that gender is still a major determinant of family activities. Marital role relationships in Mexican-origin families are neither male-dominated nor egalitarian, but, like families in general, they reveal a range of patterns between these opposing models.

Certain social conditions appear to be associated with greater equality for wives. The most striking is wives' employment. Again, there are parallels between historical and current patterns. Richard Griswold del Castillo (1979), in his historical work on the Los Angeles barrio from 1850 through 1890, found that increased female involvement outside the family altered the role of women in the household as well as relations between women and men. Contemporary studies have suggested that Mexican women's employment patterns, like those of women around the world, provide them with resources and autonomy that alter the balance of family power (Baca Zinn 1982; Coltrane and Valdez 1993; Pesquera 1993; Williams 1990; Ybarra 1982; Zavella 1987). But women's employment, by itself, does not eradicate male dominance. This is one of the main lessons of Zavella's (1987) study of
Chicana cannery workers in California's Santa Clara Valley. Women's cannery work was circumscribed by the inequalities of class, race, and gender. As seasonal, part-time workers, the women gained some leverage in the home, thereby creating temporary shifts in their day-to-day family lives, but this leverage did not alter the balance of power.

Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia's (1990) comparative study of women's work and family patterns among Cuban Americans and Mexican American's found strikingly different configurations of power. Immigrant Mexican women in Los Angeles found themselves in a process of proletarianization, where their labor was required for family survival, whereas many Cuban women left the labor force when short-term goals of improving living standards were attained.

Other conditions associated with varying patterns in the division of domestic labor are women's and men's occupational statuses and relative economic contributions to their families. Studies by Pesquera (1993), Coltrane and Valdez (1993), and Coltrane (1996) found a general "inside/outside" dichotomy (wives doing most housework, husbands doing outside work and sharing some child care), but women in middle-class jobs received more "help" from their husbands than did women with lower earnings.

Recent works on Mexican-origin families have sought to bring men more fully into view (Coltrane 2001). In an important study of Mexican immigrant men, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994) discussed the diminution of patriarchy that comes with settling in the United States. They showed that the key to gender equality in immigrant families is women's and men's position in the larger society. Mexican immigrant men's status is low, because of racism, economic marginality, and possible undocumented status. Meanwhile, as immigrant women move into wage labor, they develop autonomy and economic skills. These conditions combine to erode patriarchal authority.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM MEXICAN-ORIGIN FAMILIES

These are truly extraordinary times for family study. Accelerated social changes that are affecting families in all racial categories are creating widespread variation in "the American family." The growing diversity of family life offers the potential to sharpen, as never before, our understanding of how families are related to the larger social world. In this renewed concern for how families respond to and absorb external changes, Mexican-origin families can be a vital thread in the overall family revisioning effort. They are both similar to and different from families in other racial groups. Similarities stem from social changes that are reshaping all families, whereas differences emerge from the varied social locations of Mexican-origin families.

Mexican-origin families can teach us much about the interplay between families and society—about how people with severely constrained options and choices nevertheless forge family lives that are suited to their needs and social settings. In the twenty-first century, new demographic realities and their accompanying social divisions pose great challenges to family scholars and society at large. The future of the
United States as a postindustrial democracy may well depend on improving the status of its diverse racial groups and their families.

REFERENCES


Hispanic American Families in the United States


Today, when the academic achievements of Asian American "whiz kids" are widely touted in the popular media, it is easy to forget that for much of their history, Chinese Americans were among the most vilified minorities in the United States. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese immigrants were depicted as backward, immoral, filthy, rat-eating, opium-crazed heathens (Dower 1986; Miller 1969; Saxton 1971). They constituted a "yellow peril," an unassimilable horde whose willingness to work long hours for low pay threatened the livelihood of white working men.

Public attitudes took a 180-degree turn in the post-civil rights era, as Chinese Americans, along with the Japanese and other Asian Americans, came to be proclaimed a "model minority." It was asserted that through sheer hard work, they had overcome racism and poverty to reach educational and income levels exceeding even those of European Americans. Seeking an explanation for the extraordinary "success" story, observers turned to the family and cultural values. Strong family ties, discipline and close control over children, and emphasis on collective solidarity over individual interest, made for children who were motivated, well behaved, and obedient in school (Sollenberger 1968; Tsai 1986:162). Many of these characteristics could be traced to traditional Chinese culture, in particular to Confucianism, with its emphasis on filial piety, respect for elders, and reverence for tradition.

The praise heaped on the Chinese American family, although seemingly beneficent, has less benign implications. It tends to gloss over the long history of legal and political assaults on Chinese American family life: laws and policies that restricted immigration, economic activity, residence, political participation, and legal rights. It also shifts attention away from the economic and social difficulties that many immigrant families experience today, some of which are a legacy of past policies. The elevation of the Chinese American family also serves to deny the needs of other minority groups who are deemed less worthy. Thus, the supposed fortitude of Chinese American families is contrasted to the alleged "family disorganization"
of blacks and Hispanics. The case of the Chinese, along with other Asian American groups, seems to support the argument that some groups have cultural resources that enable them to resist the demoralizing effects of poverty and discrimination. By implication, the lack of success of other groups can be attributed in some measure to weaknesses in their cultures. The Chinese family is held out as an object lesson to other minority groups that if they only emulated the Chinese, they too could pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

Social science treatments of the Chinese American family have shared the tendency to focus on supposedly unique aspects of Chinese American family structure and to rely on cultural explanations. In contrast to the weight given to economic and political constraints shaping black and Hispanic family life, social science research on Chinese families has interpreted characteristics of Chinese American families as expressions of traditional Chinese values and practices. This approach has grown out of the dominant assimilationist school of race relations. The assimilation model focuses on the initial cultural and social differences of the immigrant groups and attempts to trace the process of assimilation over time. In the case of family, studies have typically begun by examining traditional Chinese family patterns, then discussing how these patterns are expressed in a new setting and undergo gradual change through acculturation (for example, Haynor and Reynolds 1937; Hsu 1971; Kung 1962; Weiss 1974). The features identified as typical of Chinese American families and as evidence of cultural continuity are (1) stability, indicated by low rates of divorce and illegitimacy; (2) close ties between generations, shown in low rates of adolescent rebellion and delinquency; (3) economic self-sufficiency, demonstrated by avoidance of welfare and a propensity toward involvement in family businesses; (4) conservatism, expressed by retention of Chinese language and customs in the home (Glenn 1983); and (5) female subordination, shown in close controls over women and wives' responsibility for domestic work.

Each of these characteristics can be interpreted in terms of specific aspects of Chinese culture. For example, familism—the valuing of family over the individual—is credited for the rarity of divorce. Similarly, the principles of Confucianism, filial piety, respect for elders, and reverence for tradition are cited as the philosophical bases for absence of adolescent rebellion and retention of Chinese language and customs in the home. The family-based agricultural system is seen as the precedent for immigrants' involvement in family enterprise. Patrilineal inheritance, patrilocal residence, and ancestor worship are seen as elevating the status of men and devaluing that of women. Changes in the patterns over time are seen as evidence of acculturation. Thus, for example, changes in husband-wife relations are expected to become more egalitarian as Chinese Americans adopt dominant culture (that is, "American") norms.

A close examination of the history of Chinese American family life and of the dynamics within contemporary families, however, reveals the inadequacy of the cultural assimilationist model. The cultural approach emphasizes the uniqueness and homogeneity of Chinese American families. In actuality we find considerable diversity among classes and subgroups and variation in family structures in different historical periods. Further, we find evidence of similarities between Chinese American families and those of other oppressed minorities, groups subjected to
similar constraints. Although the assimilation model emphasizes continuity and gradual, linear change, we find dramatic shifts in family organization correlated with alteration in external constraints.

The perspective that we adopt in this chapter starts at a different point, not with Chinese culture but with conditions Chinese Americans have confronted in the United States; of special note are legal and administrative practices governing immigration, labor market structures restricting economic mobility, and laws limiting political rights. Our focus is on the dialectic between institutional structures that constrain family formation and the efforts of individuals and households to carry out the production and reproduction needed to maintain themselves both on a daily basis and intergenerationally. Within this schema, culture is not an autonomous determinant, but a resource that individuals and households actively shape and mobilize for survival. In short, we recognize the interaction of social structure, culture, and human agency.

In line with recent Third World, feminist, and Marxist critiques of family sociology (see Glenn 1987), we challenge the view of the family as a bounded private sphere separate from "nonfamily." Indeed, it is precisely the interaction between larger political economic forces and family dynamics that needs to be understood. Also in line with these critiques, we reject the view of family as a monolithic entity with unitary interests. Although the family is bound together by economic interdependence and survival needs, it is also divided along gender and generational lines. The interests of husbands and wives, children and parents, are not the same; family members do not make equal contributions or gain equal benefits. Therefore, conflicts arise over division of labor and distribution of resources. Different family forms have different patterns of gender and generational relations. Looking at the Chinese American family in this way leads us to recognize areas of continuities and discontinuities with experiences of other oppressed racial groups.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The lives of Chinese Americans have been shaped by their presence in the United States as labor migrants. In the second half of the nineteenth century, capitalists who controlled the economies of the Far West needed a vast labor force to build the region's infrastructure (Cheng and Bonacich 1984). The Chinese were the first and largest stream of Asian labor recruited to perform the arduous work of extracting wealth from the mines, reclaiming agricultural land, building the transcontinental railroad, and performing domestic services for the largely male white population (Saxton 1971). The U.S. presence as a colonial power in China made it a logical source of labor. Economic chaos, partly engendered by colonial incursions, had displaced a significant portion of southern peasantry from the usual means of livelihood, leaving them free to migrate (Ling 1912). As an imperial power, the United States could impose special conditions to ensure a cheap and easily controlled workforce.
That the Chinese population did not die out altogether despite the obstacles is a testimony to their ingenuity and determination. How they managed to survive and what kinds of families they forged is the subject of the next sections.

We can identify three distinct historical periods demarcated by shifts in legal and political conditions. In each period we find one or more distinct family formations that represent specific strategies for carrying on production and reproduction under prevailing institutional constraints.

1850 to 1920: The Split-Household Family

During the first 70 years of Chinese presence in the United States, from 1850 to 1920, one can hardly talk about family life among the immigrants. As Table 1 shows, the population was overwhelmingly composed of adult men with very few women and children. Between 1860 and 1910, the gender ratio fluctuated between 13 and 27 men for every woman (see Table 1). In 1900, the Chinese population consisted of less than 4 percent children 14 and under, compared with 37.4 percent of the U.S. population of whites of native parentage.

The first 30 years, from 1850 to 1882, was a period of relatively open immigration. An estimated 300,000 Chinese left Guangdong Province to work in California and the West. The vast majority were male laborers, about half of whom left wives behind (Coolidge 1909). Many were too poor to pay for their own passage and came on the credit ticket system, which obligated them to work for a term of 7 years to pay off the transport. These "birds of passage" intended to return after accumulating enough to acquire land and retire; in the meantime, they sent remittances to support relatives. At least two-thirds succeeded in returning, so that the population of Chinese never exceeded 110,000.

A small segment of the immigrants were merchants who were allowed to bring wives or concubines and children. Thus the few Chinese families in the United States were of the wealthier merchant class. We know little about what went on in the households, because outsiders rarely penetrated their walls. Women had bound feet and seldom ventured abroad (Haynor and Reynolds 1937). An observer of New York's Chinese quarters noted, "... especially is the wife thus carefully excluded from view, except to those of her own sex; and if she has occasion to visit another woman every precaution must be taken to avoid observation. Usually a closed carriage is employed to convey her, even though the distance be less than a block away." Another writer described the living quarters of merchants in San Francisco as modest: "Married people indulge in a little more room than the bachelor of the same class, but the furniture even of the merchant's family home is of the simplest, and more limited than at the store establishment save an extra plant or so. Indeed the wife is kept so secluded that all show may be dispensed with" (quoted in Lyman 1968:325).

At the other end of the scale of "respectability" was the only other sizable group of Chinese women, prostitutes (Goldman 1981; Hirata 1979). Most of these were "indentured" or "enslaved" women who had been lured, bought from impoverished parents, or kidnapped by Chinese procurers working for the tongs that controlled the trade. Once transported to the United States, the women were sold,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE:FEMALE RATIO</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE FOREIGN-BORN</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE AGED 14 OR UNDER</th>
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<td>58,633</td>
<td>4,566</td>
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<td>431,583</td>
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<td>204,850</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>812,178</td>
<td>410,936</td>
<td>401,242</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Figures for California, Oregon, and Washington—which together has a somewhat lower male-female ratio (11.33) than the United States as a whole—show 7.0 percent of the Chinese population to be under age 15 in those states.

forced to sign long-term contracts, and held in bondage in brothels in the Chinese
quarters of San Francisco and other Western cities and in Western mining camps.
According to Pascoe (1990), the severe shortage of women subjected them to se-
vere exploitation but also presented them with some opportunities. Escaping from
prostitution was difficult, because the tongs and individual pimps who reaped
enormous profits from their exploitation relentlessly tracked down runaway
women. Women who were unable to escape rarely lived out the 4 or 5-year terms
of their contracts. Fortunate women were rescued by a lover or a missionary group
or were redeemed by a wealthy client. Because of the shortage of women, they had
a good chance of becoming respectable wives. Pascoe (1990) found records show-
ing that the Presbyterian Mission House in San Francisco arranged for several hun-
dred marriages for rescued prostitutes in the peak years of operation between 1874
and 1928. The largest group of husbands came from the stratum of small mer-
chants, just below the Chinatown elite, who came to form the "middle class" in
Chinatown.

It seems likely that many Chinese laborers in America eventually would have
sent for wives, as overseas Chinese did in Singapore and Hawaii (Glick 1980; Pur-
cell 1965). Or they might have married native women, as their compatriots in the
Philippines and Peru did (Hunt and Walker 1974; Wong 1978). Both these possi-
bilities were precluded for Chinese men in the United States. An antimiscegena-
tion statute in California forbade marriages between Chinese and other races, and
in 1870 the Page Law, designed to curb the Chinese prostitution trade, was passed.
The application process for Chinese women was made difficult and arduous, and
female applicants were subjected to repeated questioning and badgering. Its effect,
according to Pfeffer (1986), was to discourage and bar laborers' wives, resulting in
a decline in the proportion of women among the immigrant population. Whereas
the male population increased by 42,000, the female population grew by a mere
213 between 1870 and 1880. Passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 cut off
any possibility of wives of laborers entering. Renewals of the act in 1892 and 1902
further restricted entry and return. Finally, all immigration from Asia was cut off
by the 1924 Immigration Act. By that time the various restrictions had had their de-
sired effect. The population of Chinese had dwindled from a high of 107,000 in
1890 to 61,000 by 1920. Chinese men left in this country confronted a stark choice.
They could return to China to face the same economic hardships that drove them
to migrate in the first place, or they could remain, condemned to eternal bachelor-
hood or to permanent separation from wives and children.

A small loophole remained: relatives of U.S. citizens-Chinese born in the
United States-were allowed entry. This group was small, but the 1906 earthquake
and fire that destroyed most municipal records in San Francisco expanded the
number of those who could make the claim without its being disprovable. After
that event, Chinese residents could claim American birth, visit China, report the
birth of a son, and thereby create an entry slot. Years later the slot could be used by
a relative, or the papers could be sold to a young man wanting to immigrate. In
such cases the "paper son" assumed the name and identity of the alleged son.
These slots enabled many families to adopt sojourning as a long-term economic
strategy. Successive generations of men were sent abroad as paper sons to work and
remit money to support the kin group. In some Guangdong villages, remittances from overseas workers constituted the main source of income. It has been estimated that between 1937 and 1940 alone, overseas Chinese in the United States, Southeast Asia, and other overseas locations remitted $2 billion.

This sojourning strategy gave rise to a distinct family formation, the split-household family (Glenn 1983). In this arrangement, production or income earning was separated from the main household and carried out by a member living abroad, while reproduction—that is, maintaining the family home, socializing children, caring for the elderly and infirm, maintaining family graves, and the like—was the responsibility of wives and other relatives in the home village. The family as an interdependent economic unit thus spanned two continents. This arrangement allowed maximum exploitation of the male worker. His labor could be bought cheaply because the cost of reproduction was borne by the labor of wives and other relatives in the home village.

**Gender and Generational Relations.** The split household is perhaps the ultimate form of gender segregation, with husbands and wives leading completely separate lives. Men abroad lived in "bachelor" societies (Nee and Nee 1973). Employed as laborers or engaged in small business, they resided in rented rooms or shared quarters with other men. Lacking actual kin ties, they constructed fictive "families," district, dialect, and clan associations, the latter based on descent from a mythical ancestor (Lyman 1986). These associations provided security, sociability, and mutual aid. As is common in predominantly male communities, many sojourners found outlets in opium, gambling, and prostitutes. The irregular legal status of "paper sons" made them especially vulnerable to exploitation; fearful of exposure, they were forced to work long hours in shops, restaurants, and factories for low pay and to remain obedient to the associations that provided aid. Those frugal or lucky enough to save passage money returned periodically to China to visit and father more children. Others, either through ill fortune or personal problems such as gambling, never accumulated passage money and had to stay on year after year.

For women left behind, it was a period of massive social change and political upheavals, and they struggled to keep the family together against daunting odds. The ideal was for wives to reside with the husbands' kin group; the in-laws were responsible for safeguarding their chastity and keeping them under the ultimate control of their husbands. Yet a Chinese American sociologist who lived in villages inhabited chiefly by women, children, and older folks left behind by sojourners in the 1930s and 1970s reported that wives had a great deal of power and independence: "They had to make the daily decisions affecting the life of the family, and they learned how to handle money and deal with people outside the home. Naturally these women became extremely self-reliant" (Sung 1987:175).

Maxine Hong Kingston's stories of three women in her family illustrate the diverse fates of women left behind by husbands. The first, about a young unnamed aunt who became pregnant by another man, suggests that the community imposed heavy penalties on women who "strayed," even if she were the victim of rape. Another aunt was abandoned by her husband, who married another woman in America and never visited or sent for her, despite repeated pleas. Unlike some husbands who
"disappeared," he at least continued to send remittances. Her own mother exercised considerable initiative during her father's absence. She attended a traditional Chinese medical college and became a village doctor to support herself and three children. Her father, a small laundry owner, sent for her after nearly 20 years abroad; the couple established a new family with several more children. Kingston's mother's story and Sung's observations remind us that assumptions about Chinese women's complete lack of self-determination need to be questioned. Many women displayed considerable resourcefulness to ensure their own and their children's survival.

Generational relations were inevitably affected by parental separation. The life story of Lao T-ai-t'ai, a Han woman who lived from 1867 to 1938, suggests that for Chinese women the uterine family-based on ties between mother, children, and grandchildren-rather than the patriarchal family was the emotional center of life (Pruitt 1967; see also Wolf 1972). With fathers gone, these ties became even more central; Sung (1987:175) reported, "Female influence in childbearing was dominant. The children were surrounded by their mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and perhaps grandfathers returned from abroad." The mother-child tie, especially with the eldest son, normally an important source of leverage in the extended kin household, was further strengthened. In contrast, the father-child tie was weakened by prolonged absence. Because many years passed between visits, children were spaced far apart, and the father was often middle-aged or elderly when the youngest child was born. The age difference increased the formality and distance of the relationship.

1920 to 1965: The Small Producer Family

Despite obstacles to family formation, we start to see the growth of families in urban Chinatowns in the 1910s. The increase in women and children in the population reflects this growth. Between 1910 and 1930, the ratio of men to women fell from about 14:1 to 4:1, and the percent of children (14 and under) rose from 3.4 percent in 1900 to 20.4 percent by 1930 (Table 1). Most of these early families were formed by small entrepreneurs, former laborers who had managed to accumulate sufficient capital to start a small laundry or shop, often in partnership with other men. They could then register as merchants and send for wives. Aside from sentimental reasons—a desire for companionship and affection—small entrepreneurs had sound economic motives for wanting families in America because women and children were a source of free labor. The intensive exploitation of family labor gave hand laundries and grocery stores the margin needed to make a profit.

The number of families took an even more dramatic leap in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s because of changes in immigration regulations. The 1924 immigration law was modified in 1930 to permit wives of merchants and women married to American citizens before 1924 to immigrate (Chinn and others 1969), and in recognition of its alliance with China in World War II, the U.S. government repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and created a token quota of 105 entrants a year. More openings were created by two other changes: the "Bride's Act" of 1946, which permitted entry to wives and children of permanent residents (as well as citizens), and the Immigration Act of 1953, which gave preferential entry to
relatives of citizens. The vast majority of those who entered under these two acts were women. They fell into two general categories: wives who had been separated from sojourning husbands, sometimes for decades, and brides of servicemen, citizens, and residents who had visited China and had a "hasty" marriage arranged (Lee 1956; for a novelistic treatment, see Chu 1979).

During this period, roughly 1920 to 1960, the typical immigrant and first-generation family operated as a unit of production, with husband, wife, and children engaged in work in the family business—a laundry, restaurant, or small store. Members worked long hours for no wages. For convenience or lack of means, living quarters were often located above or behind the shop. Thus family and work life were fused. Production and reproduction were integrated and carried on simultaneously. Responsibilities for both were allocated along gender and generational lines. A woman who grew up in a family laundry in the 1930s and 1940s noted that the family's work day started at 7 A.M. and ended at midnight 6 days a week. Although the laundry was sent out for washing, it was dried, sprinkled, starched, and ironed in the back room. Tasks were assigned by age and gender. Father did the difficult hand ironing of shirts, while mother operated the collar and cuff press, younger children folded laundry and made up parcels, and older children ironed handkerchiefs and underwear. At the same time, mothers supervised their children's homework, related folk stories and legends, and prepared meals. Fathers admonished children and chatted with relatives. Older children entertained and supervised younger children (for popular accounts see Kingston 1976; Lowe 1943; Wong 1950).

**Gender and Generational Relations.** The small producer family was in many ways a continuation of the peasant family in China and similar to agrarian families engaged in family production around the world (see Young and Wilmott 1973). In sharp contrast to the complete separation of men and women in the split household, husband and wife were constantly together as partners. Husband and wife were mutually interdependent in that he needed her as much as she needed him. Another circumstance contributing to relative egalitarianism was the absence of in-laws. This freed wives from subordination to their husbands' parents. Many of the informants who grew up in a small producer family recalled their mothers as the disciplinarians and dominant figures in the household (Glenn 1983).

The interdependence did not mean that husband-wife relations were necessarily harmonious. Women who had rejoined their husbands or who were "hasty brides" suffered many adjustment problems. Many were appalled by the squalor of their living quarters and dismayed by having to work as hard as or harder than they had in China (Yung 1986:43). They often suffered from isolation because they spoke little English and had no friends or relatives for support and sympathy. This isolation often put them at a disadvantage in relation to husbands, who had resided in the United States for years. Long separation made even long-time mates strangers to each other. Brides who came over after arranged marriages scarcely knew their husbands. Relations were sometimes strained by age disparity. In many cases, men in their forties, who had worked in the United States for years before returning, married women in their teens or twenties.
Working long hours in cramped, damp, or overheated conditions took its toll on the health of family members, a burden felt especially by women, who were primarily responsible for the welfare of children. Tuberculosis and other diseases were rampant in Chinatown (Lee and others 1969). Although men typically worked hard, wives worked longer hours, first up to fix the morning meal and last to bed after cleaning up and preparing for the next day.

Despite the stresses, most marriages remained intact. The low divorce rate may reflect lack of choice. Spouses could not survive on their own, and there was no place for divorced women in the community. Some women believed that their only recourse was suicide. Sung (1967) found that the suicide rate among Chinese in San Francisco was four times that of the city as a whole and that victims were predominantly women.

Close parental control of children was fostered by living and working conditions. There was constant interaction, with parents speaking to children in Chinese and supervising them. Language and cultural tradition were transmitted through this daily interaction. With so many individuals working in close quarters for extended periods of time, conflict had to be kept to a minimum. Discipline and cooperation were stressed, and self-expression was curbed. Children were expected to obey parents; older brothers and sisters helped discipline younger siblings, who were expected to defer to older siblings.

A circumstance limiting parental authority was the family's location in an "alien" culture. Arriving as adults, they rarely acquired more than a rudimentary knowledge of English. Children, once they reached school age, rapidly learned to speak and write English. They became cultural mediators and agents for the family. Children of 8 or 9 years accompanied their parents to the bank, read documents, translated notices in stores, and negotiated with customers. They could exercise considerable discretion in deciding what information to relay to their parents (see Tan 1989). Thus the normal pattern of dependence was reversed.

Among families in which the father was abroad for many years before sending for wife and children, the dominance of the mother-child tie often continued after reunification. Initially the father seemed a virtual stranger to the children, so mother continued to play the central role in child-rearing, education, and discipline. Although Sung calls this pattern matriarchal, it is probably more accurate to call it matrifocal (cf. Stack 1974). Women did not have economic power or authority, but they were the emotional centers of the household. Women were the keepers of family tradition, keeping track of ancestors' anniversaries, passing on family stories, and organizing activities for New Year's and other festival days. If we recall the importance of the uterine family to Chinese women, we see matrifocality not as a departure from the past but as an adaptation of established relationships.

1965 to the Present: Diverse Chinese American Families

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of growing heterogeneity among Chinese Americans along class and generational lines. Although there have always been class divisions, particularly between the merchants who controlled the large businesses in Chinatown and workers employed in those businesses, a number of fac-
Without question, the family is a preeminent institution in American Indian and Alaskan Native cultures. In an earlier era, family organization made physical survival possible through mutual defense and economic cooperation. In such circumstances, estrangement from one's family was almost certain to produce extreme physical hardship. Among contemporary American Indians, the family perhaps plays a smaller role in ensuring physical survival, yet family networks continue to make up the fabric of social organization in modern American Indian communities.

Compared with what is known about other groups in American society, not much is known about American Indian families. Because American Indians are small in number and often live in remote rural areas, they are one of this nation's least visible minority groups. The 1980 census recorded approximately 1.5 million American Indians, about one-half of whom resided outside of metropolitan areas. American Indians and Alaskan Natives represent about 0.5 percent of the total U.S. population-341,000 families. Consolidating what is known about American Indian families, this chapter first surveys the available demographic data and then reviews the literature on American Indian families.

THE DEMOGRAPHY OF AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES

Before the demographic data about American Indian families and households is presented, it is important to note the precise definition that the U.S. Bureau of the Census uses to describe family and household characteristics. According to the Census Bureau, a family consists of "two or more persons, including the householder, who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, and who live together as one household" (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1983). Note that not all households have families and that no household contains more than one family. For example,
either persons living alone or two or more unrelated individuals in a single
dwelling would constitute households without families. Furthermore, a second
family in the household would not, by Census definitions, be considered a family if
those individuals were not related to the householder. Instead, these individuals
are counted as "unrelated household members" despite the fact that they belong
to a second family in the same household.

One of the most significant problems posed by this view of families is that it ob-
scures the existence of extended family relationships. Extended families might be
regarded as groups of individuals related by birth, marriage, or adoption who func-
tion as an economic unit by sharing economic resources such as rent or groceries.
When extended families reside in a single household, they are enumerated as
members of subfamilies related to the householder. However, extended families
involving large numbers of individuals may not reside in single living quarters, al-
though they may reside in close proximity to one another. For example, an ex-
tended family that functions as a single economic unit might nonetheless reside in
several separate dwellings, perhaps all within a few hundred yards of each other.
Yet by Census procedures, this family would not be recognized as a single entity but
instead as independent households. Another perhaps more common situation is
parents or grandparents residing in a dwelling such as a mobile home near chil-
dren or grandchildren. Again, this type of family relationship would not be cap-
tured by Census procedures.

Another potential problem arises from cultural conceptions of family relation-
ships that differ in meaning from those intended by the Census Bureau. For exam-
ple, an Indian "grandmother" may actually be a child's aunt or grandaunt in the
Anglo-Saxon use of the term. In another instance, extended families may form
around complex kinship networks based on clan membership instead of birth,
mariage, or adoption. The term "cousin" also may have a variable meaning, not
necessarily based on birth or marriage. To make these matters even more complex,
definitions of family relationships vary from one tribal culture to another. The
lesson to be taken from this variability is that the categories used by the Census Bu-
reau to describe family relationships are not uniformly consistent and unambig-
uous when applied to American Indians. They are, however, useful approximations
and the best information available about American Indian families.

Household Composition

Table 1 shows the composition of households occupied by blacks, whites, and
American Indians. The data in the first two rows are for "nonfamily" household-
ers-persons who live alone or with persons with whom they have no family rela-
tionship, at least not in the sense that the Census Bureau uses the term. It is easy to
see that such persons make up a very small part of the total population and that
there are few differences between men and women or between blacks, whites, and
American Indians.

Among householders residing with family members, blacks, whites, and Indians
are appreciably different. Compared with the white population, nearly 24 percent
of which are male family householders, nearly 40 percent of which are male family
householders, American Indians and blacks have substan-
tially smaller percentages of their populations in this role, 17 and 14 percent, respectively. On the other hand, Indians and blacks have noticeably higher percentages of female householders than the white population has. In this respect, blacks and Indians have considerably more in common with each other than they do with whites.

The differences among American Indian, black, and white householders are the same for non householders. Predictably, American Indians and blacks have smaller percentages of persons as spouses, just as they have fewer male householders. In fact, the percentages of spouses and male householders are about the same for all three groups. For example, 17 percent of American Indians are male householders, and 16.8 percent are spouses. Again, blacks and Indians are relatively similar and clearly different from whites. Indian and black households also have significantly more children than white households.

The distribution of black and Indian household composition is similar in a number of ways, but there are some important differences. American Indians typically live in larger households and families than either blacks or whites. This circumstance is not because Indians have more children or more nonrelatives and extended family members. On the contrary, blacks and Indians have almost the same percentages of children, and Indians have 1 percent less of their number residing in households as "other" or nonrelatives. The most obvious explanation for why Indian households and families are larger than those of blacks is that American Indians have larger percentages of persons who are male householders and spouses and smaller percentages of female householders, who typically live in smaller households. This finding means that American Indians are more likely than blacks to live in husband-wife family units, but with about the same number of children, relatives, and nonrelatives as in black households (see Table 3).

TABLE 1. Percent Distribution of Household Types and Family Relationships among Blacks, Whites, and American Indians and Alaskan Natives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BLACKS</th>
<th>WHITES</th>
<th>AMERICAN INDIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonfamily householder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family householder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonrelative</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons per household</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons per family</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Native American Families in the United States

TABLE 2. Percent Distribution of Marital Status and Median Age at First Marriage for Blacks, Whites, and American Indians and Alaskan Natives Age 15 and Over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BLACKS MALES</th>
<th>BLACKS FEMALES</th>
<th>WHITES MALES</th>
<th>WHITES FEMALES</th>
<th>AMERICAN INDIANS MALES</th>
<th>AMERICAN INDIANS FEMALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married except separated</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL Median age at first marriage</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age at first marriage</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Marriage and Divorce

Marriage and divorce rates for blacks, whites, and American Indians and Alaska Natives are shown in Table 2. For all of these groups, women are more likely than men to be separated, widowed, or divorced. On average, American Indians tend to get married about a year earlier than either blacks or whites, and Indians are more likely than blacks but less likely than whites to have been married. A particularly curious finding in Table 2 is that unlike other women, American Indian women are more likely to exit their marriage through legal proceedings than through the death of their spouse. Among black and white women, widowhood is more common than divorce, but the opposite is true for American Indian women.

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

Many different types of families and households exist. It should be remembered, however, that in Census data, all families reside in households but not all households include families. This discussion deals mainly with married couples and with families headed by single women. Collectively, these family and household types represent approximately 67 percent of the households occupied by American Indians; most of the balance reside in nonfamily households.

Table 3 shows the distribution of family types among blacks, whites, and American Indians. White households are most likely to contain a married-couple family (63.3 percent). About 55 percent of American Indian households include a married couple, which is a smaller percentage than for white households but significantly larger than the percentage of black households with married couples. Similarly, American Indian households have a smaller percentage of single female householders than black households, 17.5 percent and 27.0 percent, respectively,
TABLE 3. Percent Distribution of Households with Families and Nonfamilies among Blacks, Whites, and American Indians and Alaskan Natives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th></th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th></th>
<th>NONFAMILY</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MARRIED</td>
<td>HOUSEHOLDER,</td>
<td>MALE</td>
<td>HOUSEHOLDER,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COUPLES</td>
<td>SPOUSE ABSENT</td>
<td></td>
<td>SPOUSE ABSENT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks, Whites,</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


and both of these groups are substantially above the 8 percent of white households with single female householders.

American Indians occupy a position about midway between blacks and whites in terms of their propensity to live as married couples or as single female householders. However, another way of viewing this finding is that American Indians are noticeably less likely than either blacks or whites to live singly or with unrelated individuals in nonfamily households. About 23 percent of American Indian households consist of nonfamily units, compared with approximately 27 percent for blacks and whites, suggesting that American Indians have a somewhat stronger tendency than blacks or whites to reside in a family environment, either as married couples or as single family householders.

Children and Family Structure

One of the primary reasons for family formation is the care and rearing of children. By the traditional norms of American society, children are best raised in the stable environment of a married-couple household. Rearing children in households where a spouse is absent is considered undesirable for a number of reasons. One belief is that the absence of a spouse deprives children of important role models for socialization and development. A second belief is that homes with single parents provide a less stable social environment for the upbringing of children. A third belief is that single parent families, especially those of single women with young children, are economically marginal and more likely to be subject to economic hardships.

Whether single-parent homes are intrinsically unstable or whether absence of role models causes lasting harm cannot be studied with the demographic data available from the Census Bureau. However, the economic status associated with different types of families can be examined in detail. Before looking at the economic characteristics of different types of families, a good place to begin is with data for the distribution and age of children. Table 4 shows the presence and age of children for different types of families and households. Among married couples, about one-third have children age 6 to 17 years, and another third have no children in their households. This finding does not necessarily mean that these couples are childless but
only that there are no children living with them. Among the remaining third of couples, about half (16.1 percent) have young children under the age of 6, and the other half (16.6 percent) have children over and under the age of 6.

Single Female Householders

Single female householders are not very different from married couples in terms of the presence and ages of children in their households, except in one very apparent way. These women are substantially more likely than other types of householders to have children age 6 to 17 living with them, about 42 percent compared with about 31 percent for single male householders and 33 percent for married couples. This finding is undoubtedly the result of marital disruptions-divorce and separation-which occur within a few years after childbirth, combined with legal and social traditions that typically assign child custody to mothers. As one sociologist has noted, "the typical outcome of a marital breakup is that the man becomes single, while the woman becomes a single parent" (Pearce 1982). American Indians, it appears, are not very different from other parts of American society in this respect. This also is consistent with the statistic that single female householders also are the least likely to be in a household without children, 28 percent.

The fact that, nationwide, about 18 percent of Indian households are headed by a single female householder (see Table 3), combined with the fact that more than 70 percent of these women are caring for children under 18 years of age (see Table 4), underscores the importance of information about the socioeconomic conditions of these households, especially in relation to other types of households. This situation occurs because single female householders responsible for the care of their children frequently experience economic hardship and limited opportunities, for themselves and their children.

Education

The figures in Table 5 show that about 48 percent of single female householders have less than 12 years of schooling. In contrast, 39 percent of the householders in married couples and 38 percent in nonfamily households have an equally low level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4. Percent Distribution of the Presence and Age of Children in American Indian and Alaskan Native Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARRIED COUPLES, FEMALE HOUSEHOLDERS, SPOUSE ABSENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children under age 6 only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children age 6 to 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children age 0 to 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families without children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of education. Especially significant is that about 24 percent of single female householders are high school dropouts with 9 to 11 years of schooling. This finding is significant because other data show that American Indians with 8 years or less of schooling tend to be older, whereas high school dropouts are younger (Snipe 1989). Younger single female householders with less than 12 years of schooling may have dropped out of school to become mothers.

**Labor Force Participation**

The limited education and the child care responsibilities of single female householders predictably translate into a marginal attachment to the labor force. As the data in Table 6 show, 47.2 percent of single female householders do not participate in the labor force, and only 46.1 percent are employed. These figures are especially striking compared with those for the householders in married couples. Only about 21 percent of this group are not in the labor force, and 72 percent are employed. The only group that even distantly approaches the marginal labor force attachment of single female householders are householders in non-family households, with 38 percent of their number not in the labor force. A

### TABLE 5. Percent Distribution of Educational Attainments by American Indian and Alaskan Native Householders by Household Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS OF EDUCATION</th>
<th>MARRIED COUPLES</th>
<th>FEMALE HOUSEHOLDERS, SPOUSE ABSENT</th>
<th>NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-8</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-11</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 and over</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 6. Percent Distribution of Labor Force Participation of Civilian American Indian and Alaskan Native Householders by Household Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MARRIED COUPLES</th>
<th>FEMALE HOUSEHOLDERS, SPOUSE ABSENT</th>
<th>NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in labor force</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td><em>47.2</em></td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

clear indication of the marginal economic status of single female householders is that 33.5 percent of these women received public assistance income in 1979 (Table 7). In comparison, only 6 percent of the householders in married couples required public assistance. The differences between these households are equally dramatic for the incidence of poverty. About 17 percent of married-couple householders reported incomes below the official poverty threshold in 1979. This figure is slightly higher than the poverty rate for the nation as a whole, but it also is well below the figures for single female Indian householders. Among these women, 47 percent are poverty stricken. This statistic is even more alarming by recalling that nearly three-fourths of these women have child care responsibilities.

In terms of other kinds of income, the situation of single female householders is no different, and married-couple households are decisively ahead of other household types. Focusing on median family and household income, the gap between married-couple households and the households of single female householders is substantial. For instance, the median family income of married householders ($18,005) is more than twice the median family income of single female householders. The largest disparity between these household types is with respect to family income. The median incomes of the families of married couples is 2.3 times larger than the incomes of the families of single women. One reason why the income gap between these households is slightly greater for family income than for household income is that single women may share their residences with persons outside their immediate family to generate additional income for household expenses, thereby raising their household but not their family incomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MARRIED COUPLES</th>
<th>FEMALE HOUSEHOLDERS, SPOUSE ABSENT</th>
<th>NONFAMILY HOUSEHOLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of householders receiving public assistance</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent below poverty</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median wages and salaries of householders</td>
<td>$12,005</td>
<td>6,005</td>
<td>8,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median total income of householders</td>
<td>$11,165</td>
<td>5,005</td>
<td>6,305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income</td>
<td>$18,005</td>
<td>8,610</td>
<td>8,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median family income</td>
<td>$17,870</td>
<td>7,710</td>
<td>NAa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'X9: Not applicable.

MARRIAGE WITH NON-INDIANS

Not all American Indians choose other American Indians as their spouses; they also marry persons with black, Asian, Hispanic, or white backgrounds. The racial characteristics of the spouses of American Indians are significant from at least two perspectives. In one respect, the extent to which American Indians are selected by non-Indians as marriage partners is an important indicator of racial discrimination. Discriminatory practices and prejudicial beliefs reduce intermarriage by making numbers of particular racial or ethnic groups unacceptable as potential marriage partners. From another standpoint, intermarriage represents an important form of cultural diffusion. As Indians marry non-Indians, they are likely to become more active in mainstream American culture, and by the same token, some non-Indians who marry Indians become incorporated into the tribal cultures of their spouses.

Patterns of Intermarriage

Patterns of intermarriage are usually cast in terms of endogamy and exogamy. Endogamous marriages result when persons of the same race marry. Racially exogamous couples involve persons with different racial backgrounds. Table 8 shows patterns of racial endogamy and exogamy among blacks, whites, and American Indians and Alaskan Natives. As the statistics in this table make amply clear, American Indians have extraordinarily high rates of exogamy compared with blacks and whites. Among married American Indian men and women, only about 47 percent are married to other Indians; or alternatively, 53 percent are married to non-Indians. In contrast, marital endogamy is close to 99 percent among whites and nearly 98 percent for blacks.

A number of explanations are possible for why American Indians have such remarkably high rates of intermarriage. The most readily apparent reason is that American Indians are perceived, especially by whites, as socially acceptable marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wife's Race</th>
<th>Whites</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>American Indians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian'</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos.

partners. Among American Indian men, 48.0 percent were married to white women. Similarly, 48.3 percent of Indian women were married to white men. It is interesting that Indian men resemble white men in being slightly less likely than their female counterparts to choose a black person as a spouse. Among American Indian women, about 2 percent have black husbands, whereas only 1 percent of Indian men are married to black women. Very clearly, American Indians are more likely to have white than black spouses.

Assimilation and Intermarriage

The extraordinarily high level of racial intermarriage for American Indians provides a good reason to expect that growing numbers of American Indians and their descendants will choose non-Indians for spouses and, to a greater or lesser degree, become absorbed into the dominant culture. Some of these Indians will abandon their cultural heritage altogether, whereas others may make only minor accommodations as the result of having a non-Indian spouse. This probability raises a question that is extremely controversial within many quarters of the American Indian community. Namely, are American Indians assimilating so quickly through racial intermarriage that they will eventually, in the not too distant future, marry themselves out of existence?

For most of this century, anthropologists and other social scientists have predicted that American Indians as a distinctive ethnic group would vanish in the wake of poverty, disease, and the demands of Western civilization (Linton 1963). By the mid-1950s, many of these anthropologists began revising their predictions about the inevitable extinction of American Indians (Vogt 1957). However, the data on marriage patterns raise the prospect that Indians, through their spousal choices, may accomplish what disease, Western civilization, and decades of federal Indian policy failed to achieve.

Predicting the future viability of the Indian population is a risky and difficult, if not inadvisable, venture. However, recently published data from the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment provide some interesting insights into the impact of racial exogamy on the Indian population. "Blood quantum" is a measure of Indian ancestry in which, for example, a "full blood" is someone who is entirely descended from American Indians and has no non-Indian ancestors. One-half blood quantum might denote a non-Indian father and a full blood Indian mother, or some other large number of possible combinations. Although it is not necessarily so, persons with say, three-fourths or full blood quantum are typically less assimilated and more committed to traditional Indian lifestyles than persons of one-thirty-second or one-sixty-fourth blood quantum. With this idea in the background, the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) published a number of population projections showing the changing distribution of blood quantum within the Indian population through the year 2080 (U.S. Office of Technology Assessment 1986).

Some of the OTA projections were based on patently unreasonable assumptions—for instance, that American Indians do not marry non-Indians or that all Indians are full bloods. However, one projection in particular is interesting because it is based on Bureau of Indian Affairs data for the distribution of blood quantum
and takes into account the prevalence of racial intermarriage among Indians, using data from the 1980 Census. The results from this OTA projection (referred to as Scenario II in the original report) are limited to the 32 states with reservations served by the Bureau of Indian Affairs; these data are shown in Table 9. These projections predict, not surprisingly, that in relative numbers, the percentages of persons with one-half or more Indian blood quantum will decline continuously throughout this and the next century, dropping precipitously from 87 percent to 8 percent in the next 100 years. The percentage of persons with one-fourth to one-half Indian blood quantum is predicted to grow from about 10 percent of the Indian population in 1980 to a peak of 40 percent in the year 2040 and then decline to 33 percent in 2080. However, the percentage of persons with less than one-fourth Indian blood quantum is expected to increase from 4 percent to 59 percent in the 100 years following 1980.

The changing distribution of blood quantum shows that persons with one-half blood quantum or more will shrink, if not disappear, as a significant segment of the American Indian population. Does this finding mean that persons with predominantly American Indian ancestors are drifting toward numerical extinction? This question is best answered with absolute rather than relative numbers. In viewing these numbers, it is easy to make two conclusions. One is that the OTA projections forecast massive growth in the American Indian population of the 32 states that it covers, from 1.3 million Indians in 1980 to 15.8 million in 2080. Most of these persons, over 90 percent, will have a minority of Indian ancestors-less than one-half blood quantum-but the number of persons with one-half or more Indian blood quantum is projected to be 1,292,911 in 2080, only slightly less than the total Indian population, including all blood quantum, residing in reservation states in 1980: 1,295,450 persons. The OTA forecasts predict that the 50 percent blood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>50.0 AND ABOVE</th>
<th>25.0 TO 49.9</th>
<th>LESS THAN 25.0</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,125,746</td>
<td>123,068</td>
<td>46,636</td>
<td>1,295,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(86.9)</td>
<td>(9.5)</td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,722,116</td>
<td>345,309</td>
<td>146,092</td>
<td>2,213,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(77.8)</td>
<td>(15.6)</td>
<td>(6.6)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>2,119,717</td>
<td>1,106,345</td>
<td>465,084</td>
<td>3,691,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(36.1)</td>
<td>(39.9)</td>
<td>(24.0)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2060</td>
<td>1,866,738</td>
<td>3,971,782</td>
<td>4,090,935</td>
<td>9,929,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.8)</td>
<td>(40.3)</td>
<td>(41.2)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2080</td>
<td>1,292,911</td>
<td>5,187,411</td>
<td>9,286,884</td>
<td>15,767,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.2)</td>
<td>(32.9)</td>
<td>(58.9)</td>
<td>(100.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on 32 states with federal reservations. Percent of population in parentheses.

quantum group will grow and then decline over the next 100 years. In any event, persons with a majority of Indian ancestors certainly are not expected to disappear, according to these predictions.

Racial exogamy is hardly a new phenomenon in the American Indian population; a long history exists of relations with non-Indians, especially among tribes from the eastern United States that had very early contact with white immigrants. Among Indians enumerated from the 1910 Census, only 56.5 percent reported full blood quantum. Full blood Indians were most likely undercounted in this census for a variety of reasons, yet this statistic indicates a surprising degree of racially mixed marriages at a time when American Indians were still highly isolated from the mainstream of American society.

STUDIES OF AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES

The data for American Indian families are sparse, and studies of Indian families are no more abundant. In the balance of this chapter, we turn from the empirical record to published studies detailing the lives of American Indian families. In this discussion, we give special attention to qualities that make American Indian families unique in the social landscape.

Traditional versus Nontraditional Lifestyles

A great deal of the American Indian family literature has focused on sociocultural behavior such as the use of Native language, values, and beliefs, and the acculturation of non-Native family practices (Lewis 1970; Miller 1979; Price 1976; Red Horse 1980; Red Horse and others 1978; Wagner 1976). A typology of Native American families constructed on an acculturation framework classifies American Indian families on a sociocultural continuum ranging from "traditional" to "nontraditional" practices (John 1987).

Price (1976) investigated the cultural practices of four North American Indian groups and one Eskimo group and found that, although the impact of European culture on American Indians has reduced the linguistic, racial, and cultural diversity among various groups, many still maintain traditional family practices. However, as Price makes clear in these case studies, practices vary from tribe to tribe according to the contact and acculturation experienced by each group. For example, Price maintains that the Hopi of Northern Arizona have enjoyed more "continuity" and "homogeneity" in their culture than most other Indian tribes in the United States. To this end, Price asserts that the Hopi is an

Indian society that has had sufficient autonomy from Euro-American pressures to gradually evolve a modern culture with a consistently high level of internal integration. Wage work, Western education, automobiles, electrical appliances, Western dress, weekend supermarket shopping, etc., are now being accepted practices, but the aboriginal language is being retained as second language to English, and the Hopi religion has never been replaced by Christianity. (p. 262)