Chapter 2
Cultural Diversity and Diversity in Family Structure: Family Strengths and Challenges

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Chapter Outline

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

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

- Have different strengths that can be seen at:
  - Individual level
  - Family level
  - Cultural level

- Cultural identity: Evolves from shared beliefs, values, and attitudes
Ethnic Groups

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

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

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

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

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

State and federal legislation
- Reflects the controversial nature of same-sex marriages

Ethnic minorities
- Deal with discrimination related to their family structure and racism

Children
- No difference in developmental outcomes when raised by same-sex couples
Challenges of Gay and Lesbian Couples and Families

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

- Many states do not allow same sex adoption
- Gay and lesbian couples experience societal stigma as they develop and maintain intimate relationships
Concepts of Race, Culture, and Ethnicity

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

- Key issue is whether the individual believes he or she is a member of that group

Classifications cannot be based solely on:

- Religious views
- Language
- Ancestry
- Physical characteristics
Figure 2.2 - Increasing Diversity in America from 2000 to 2050

*Of any race
**Non-Hispanic Whites percentages don’t total 100 because other races aren’t included.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a.
Immigration and Family Life

- Ethnic composition of the immigrant population is primarily Latino and Asian
- Women immigrants leave their children with extended family members in their country of origin
  - They work for wealthy families by cleaning and taking care of children
Many immigrants come to the U.S. without documentation or have allowed their documentation to expire

- Do not have access to services for themselves or their children
- Risk of deportation
Refugees come to the U.S. because conditions in their country of origin are unsafe

- Able to access social and financial services
- Face many challenges
  - Learning the new culture
  - Finding ways to make a living
Challenge to Researchers

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

- People will not participate if there is cultural clash between:
  - Information and services provided
  - Values of a cultural group
- Even if they participate, they will not benefit from the information provided
Relying on cultural heritage is the most effective way for people to be:

- Resilient
- Capable of handling difficulties

Positive ethnic identity has a positive influence on the lives of youth

**Ethnic identity**: Geographic origin of a particular group
Cultural Competence

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

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

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

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

- Specific knowledge about a cultural group might include:
  - Group’s history
  - Cultural beliefs and values
  - Family dynamics

- Cross-cultural understanding leads to a more liberal work environment with members of different cultures
Skills

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

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

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

- **Plural marriage** or **polygamy**
  - **Polygyny**: Man has more than one mate
  - **Polyandry**: Woman has more than one mate

- **Monogamy**: Man or woman has only one mate

- **Pseudo-kin group**: Relationships resembling kinship ties develop among unrelated individuals
Kin Relationships Across Cultures

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

- Descent - Traced by gender
  - **Matrilineal societies**: Trace descent through females
  - **Patrilineal societies**: Trace descent through males
  - **Bilateral descent**: Children are equally tied to relatives of both the parents
Norms for lines of descent may or may not be linked to lines of authority within a kinship group

- **Matriarchal group**: Females exercise the authority

- **Patriarchal group**: Males exercise the authority

- **Egalitarian groups**: Rights and perspectives of both genders and all generations are respected
Kin Relationships Across Cultures

- Norms of residence for newly married couples
  - Matrilocal society: Couples live with or near the wife’s kin
  - Patrilocal societies: Couples live with or near the husband’s kin
  - Neolocal society: Couples establish a separate, autonomous residence
Figure 2.3 - Family System and Sociocultural Characteristics
Family System Characteristics

Family cohesion

- Emotional closeness a person feels to other family members

Family flexibility

- Ability to change and adapt when necessary

Family communication

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

Extended-family system

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

Social system

- Economic, educational, and other related resources available

Belief system

- Family’s spiritual beliefs and values
### Family Strengths and Challenges Across Ethnic Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths of White Families</th>
<th>Strengths of African American Families</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to family</td>
<td>Strong kinship bonds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoyable time together</td>
<td>Flexibility in family roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to manage stress and crisis effectively</td>
<td>Strong motivation to achieve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual well-being</td>
<td>Strong religious orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive communication</td>
<td>Egalitarian marriages</td>
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<td>Appreciation and affection</td>
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## Family Strengths and Challenges Across Ethnic Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths of Latino Families</th>
<th>Strengths of Asian American Families</th>
<th>Strengths of American Indian Families</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familism</td>
<td>Strong family orientation</td>
<td>Extended-family system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children are highly valued</td>
<td>Filial piety</td>
<td>Spiritual beliefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>High value on education</td>
<td>High family cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family members provide support to each other</td>
<td>Well-disciplined children</td>
<td>Respect for elders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extended-family support</td>
<td>Bilingual language skills</td>
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<td>Family loyalty</td>
<td>Tribal support system</td>
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Historical Trauma

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

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

- **Etic perspective**: Looking at a society from the outside and seeing its characteristics in isolation
  - Rather than as they relate to the structure of the society as a whole

- **Emic perspective**: Looking at a society from the inside and analyzing behaviors in terms of the internal structural elements of the society
Challenges for Ethnic Families

Assimilation

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

Acculturation

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

Segregation

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

Stereotypes

- Standardized, oversimplified, and mean-spirited views

Prejudice

- Prejudging
- Closely linked with stereotyping

Racism

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

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

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

- **Multiracial marriages**
  - Marriages between two people from two different cultural or ethnic groups

- **Relationships between men and women**
  - Different socialization processes and biological inheritances produce misunderstanding and conflict

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