

Sociology in Modules

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1st Edition

The Family and Intimate Relationships

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- Module 39: Global View of the Family
- Module 40: Marriage and Family
- Module 41: Alternatives to Traditional Families

A Look Ahead

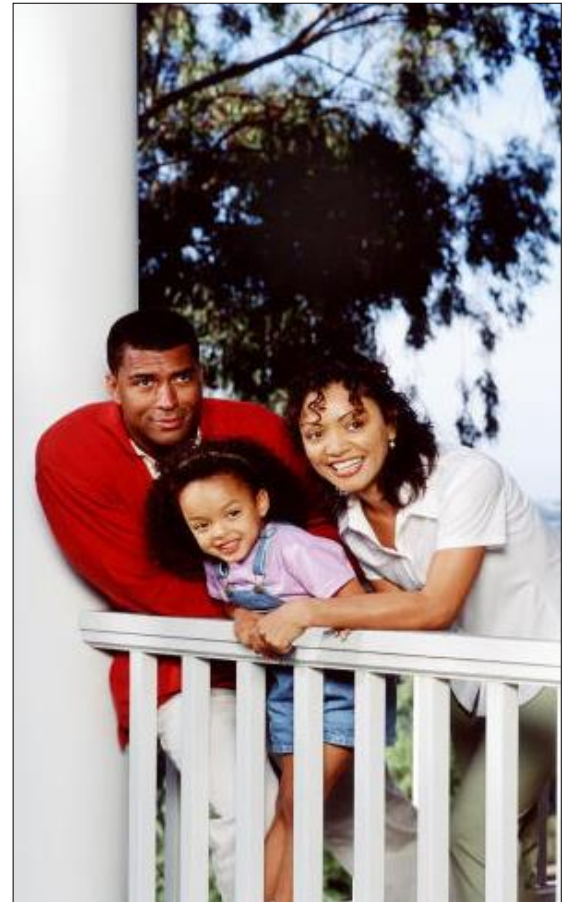
- What are families in different parts of the world like?
- How do people select mates?
- When a marriage fails, how does the divorce affect the children?
- What are the alternatives to the nuclear family and how prevalent are they?

Composition: What is the Family?

- **Family:** Set of people related by blood, marriage, or agreed-upon relations who share primary responsibility for reproduction and caring for members of society
 - **Nuclear family:** Nucleus or core upon which larger family groups are built
 - **Extended family:** Family in which relatives live in same home as parents and children

Composition: What is the Family?

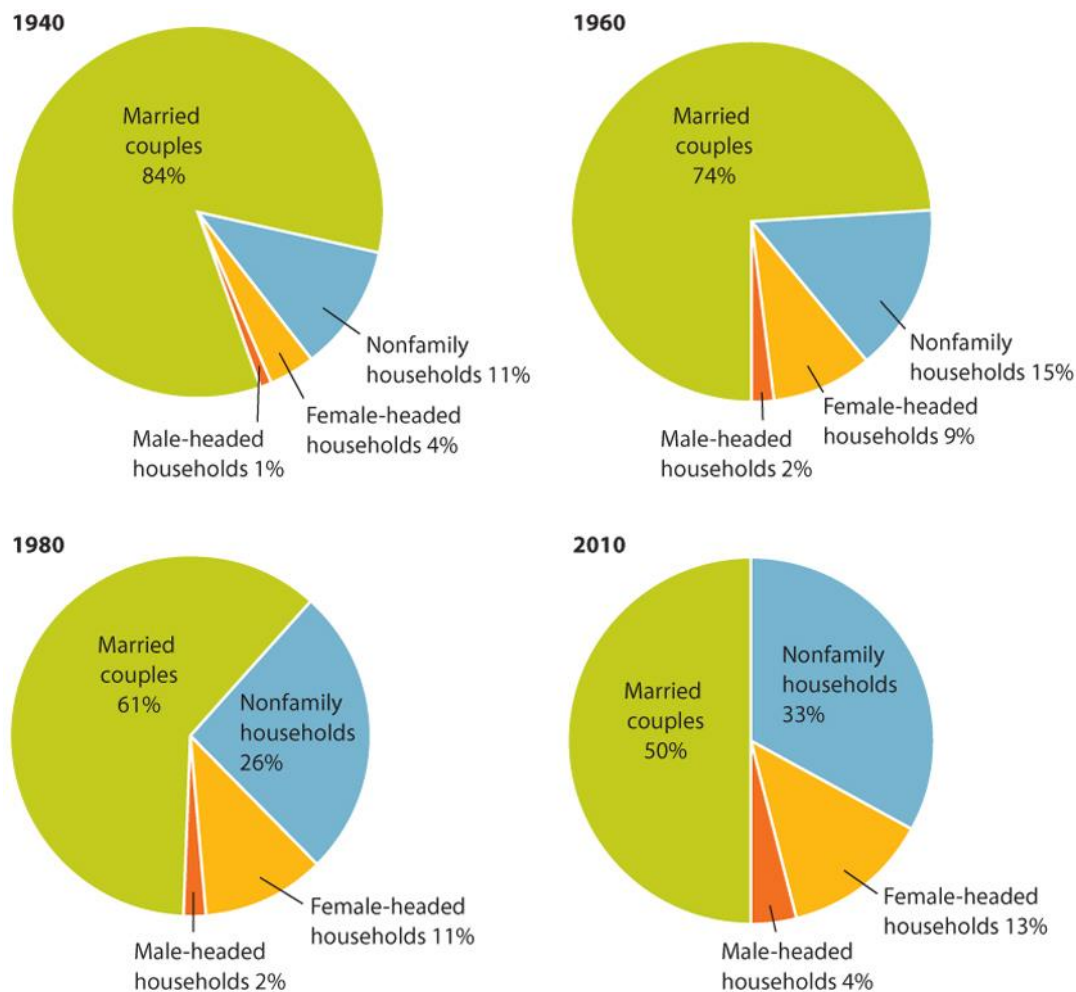
- **Monogamy:** Form of marriage in which one woman and one man are married only to each other
- **Serial monogamy:** When a person has several spouses in his or her lifetime, but only one spouse at a time



Composition: What is the Family?

- **Polygamy:** When an individual has several husbands or wives simultaneously
- **Polygyny:** Marriage of a man to more than one woman at a time

Figure 39-1: U.S. Households by Family Type, 1940-2010



Kinship Patterns: To Whom are We Related?

- **Kinship:** State of being related to others
 - **Bilateral descent:** Both sides of a person's family are regarded as equally important
 - **Patrilineal descent:** Only the father's relatives are important
 - **Matrilineal descent:** Only the mother's relatives are important

Authority Patterns: Who Rules?

- **Patriarchy:** Males are expected to dominate in all family decision making
- **Matriarchy:** Women have greater authority than men
- **Egalitarian family:** Family in which spouses are regarded as equals

Functionalist View

■ Family serves five functions for society:

1. Reproduction
2. Protection
3. Socialization
4. Affection and companionship
5. Provision of social status

Conflict View

- Family reflects inequality in wealth and power found within society
- In wide range of societies, husbands exercised power and authority within the family

View family as economic unit that contributes to social injustice

Interactionist View

- Focuses on microlevel of family and other intimate relationships
- Interested in how individuals interact with each other, whether they are cohabiting partners or longtime married couples



Feminist View

- Interest in family as social institution
- Urge social scientists and agencies to rethink notion that families in which no adult male is present are automatically cause for concern
- Feminists stress need to investigate neglected topics in family studies

Table 39-1: Sociological Perspectives on the Family

Theoretical Perspective	Emphasis
Functionalist	The family as a contributor to social stability Roles of family members
Conflict	The family as a perpetuator of inequality Transmission of poverty or wealth across generations
Interactionist	Relationships among family members
Feminist	The family as a perpetuator of gender roles Female-headed households

Marriage and Family

- Over 95% of all men and women in U.S. marry at least once during their lifetimes
 - Internet is second to friends as a source of romantic partners
 - Process of mate selection is taking longer today than in past

Courtship and Mate Selection

■ Aspects of Mate Selection

- **Endogamy:** Specifies groups within which spouse must be found; prohibits marriage with members of other groups
- **Exogamy:** Requires mate selection outside certain groups, usually family or certain kin

Courtship and Mate Selection

■ Aspects of Mate Selection (continued)

- **Incest taboo:** Social norm common to all societies prohibiting sexual relationships between certain culturally specified relationships
- **Homogamy:** Conscious or unconscious tendency to select mate with personal characteristics similar to one's own

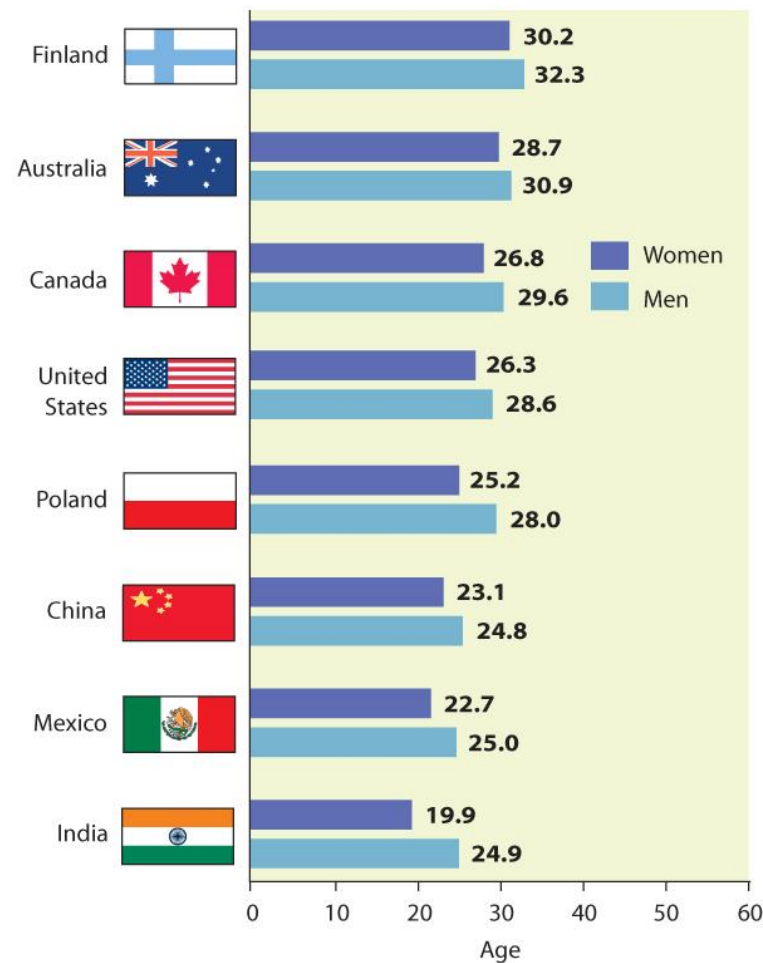
Courtship and Mate Selection

■ The Love Relationship

- Coupling of love and marriage not universal
- U.S. parents and peers expected to help child confine search for a mate to “socially acceptable” members of opposite sex

Many world cultures give priority to factors other than romantic feelings

Figure 40-1: Median Age at First Marriage in Eight Countries



Variations in Family Life and Intimate Relationships

■ Social Class Differences

- U.S. upper class emphasizes lineage and maintenance of family position; lower class families likely to have one parent at home, and children typically assume adult responsibilities

Social class differences
less striking today

Variations in Family Life and Intimate Relationships

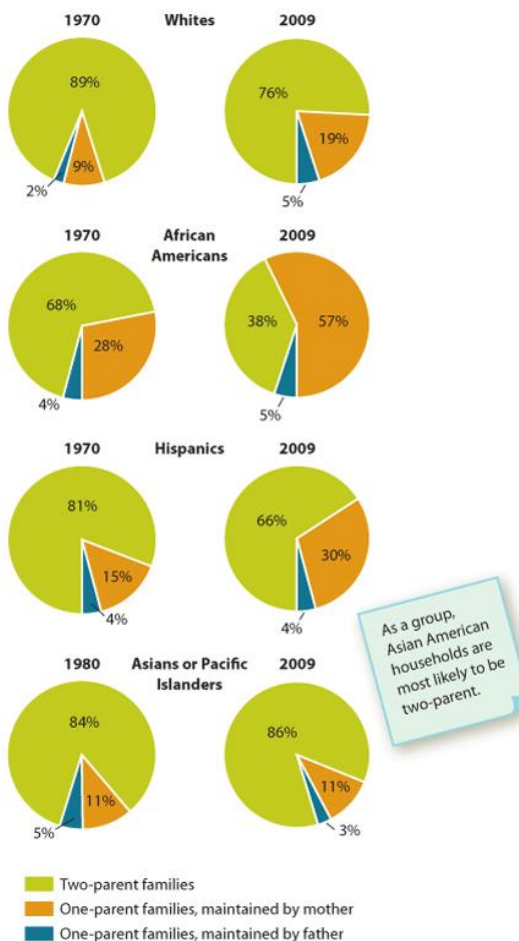
■ Racial and Ethnic Differences

- Subordinate status of racial and ethnic minorities in U.S. affects family lives
- Black single mothers belong to kin networks
- Native-American families cushion hardships
- Mexican Americans are more familistic
 - **Machismo:** Sense of virility, personal worth, and pride in one's maleness
 - **Familism:** Pride in extended family

Sociology in the Global Community

- Family Life, Italian Style: Thirty-Something and living with Mom
 - Do you or someone you know live at home with parents? If so, do you see the situation as similar to that of the *bamboccioni*?
 - In the U.S., what other factors might contribute to adult children choosing to live with their parents?

Figure 40-2: Rise of Single-Parent Families in the United States, 1970-2009



Child-Rearing Patterns

■ Parenthood and Grandparenthood

- One of most important roles of parents is socialization of children
 - Little anticipatory socialization
 - Limited learning during pregnancy
 - Transition to parenthood is abrupt

Little consensus on how to produce
happy, well-adjusted offspring

Child-Rearing Patterns

- Parenthood and Grandparenthood (continued)
 - Recently, U.S. witnessed extension of parenthood with adult children living at home

Sometimes called “boomerang generation” or “full-nest syndrome”

Child-Rearing Patterns

■ Adoption

- Process that “allows for the transfer of the legal rights, responsibilities, and privileges of parenthood” to a new legal parent or parents

■ Dual-Income Families

- Among married people between 25 and 34, 95% of men and 68% of women in labor force

Child-Rearing Patterns

- **Single-parent families:** Only one parent is present to care for children
 - In 2009, single parent headed about 24% of White families with children under 18
 - 34% of Hispanic families with children
 - 62% of African-American families with children

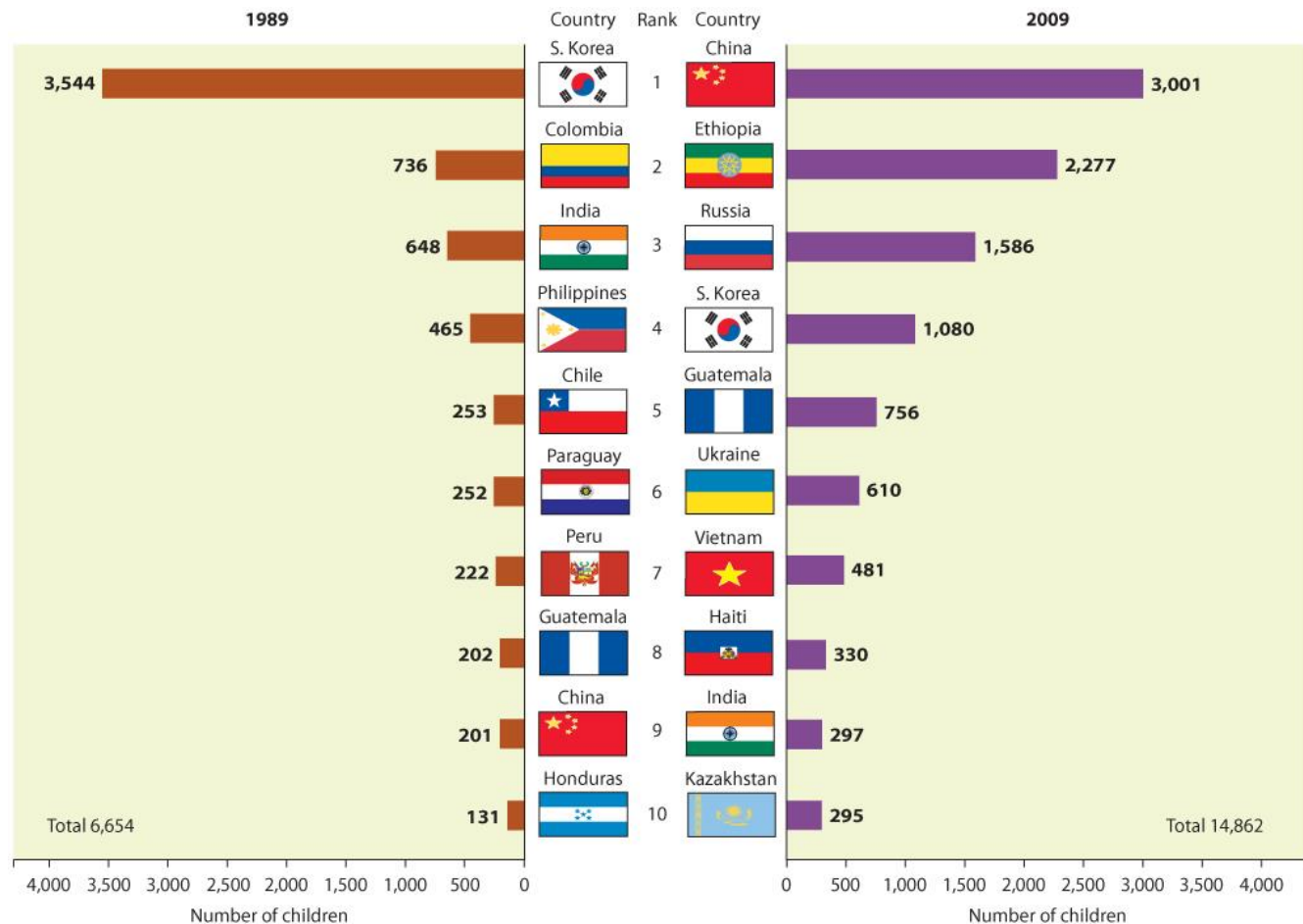
Households headed by single fathers more than quadrupled from 1987 to 2008

Child-Rearing Patterns

■ Stepfamilies

- Approximately 45% of all people in U.S. will marry, divorce, and remarry
- Nature of blended families has social significance for adults and children
- Cherlin: “Well-being of children in stepfamilies is no better, on average, than the well-being of children in divorced, single-parent households”

Figure 40-3: Foreign-Born Adoptees by Top 10 Countries of Origin, 1989 and 2009



Statistical Trends in Divorce

- Divorce rates increased in late 1960s, then leveled off
- Since late 1980s, it has declined by 30%
 - Partly due to aging baby-boomer population and decline in proportion of people of marriageable age

About 63% of all
divorcees have remarried

Factors Associated with Divorce

■ Factors in increase in divorce:



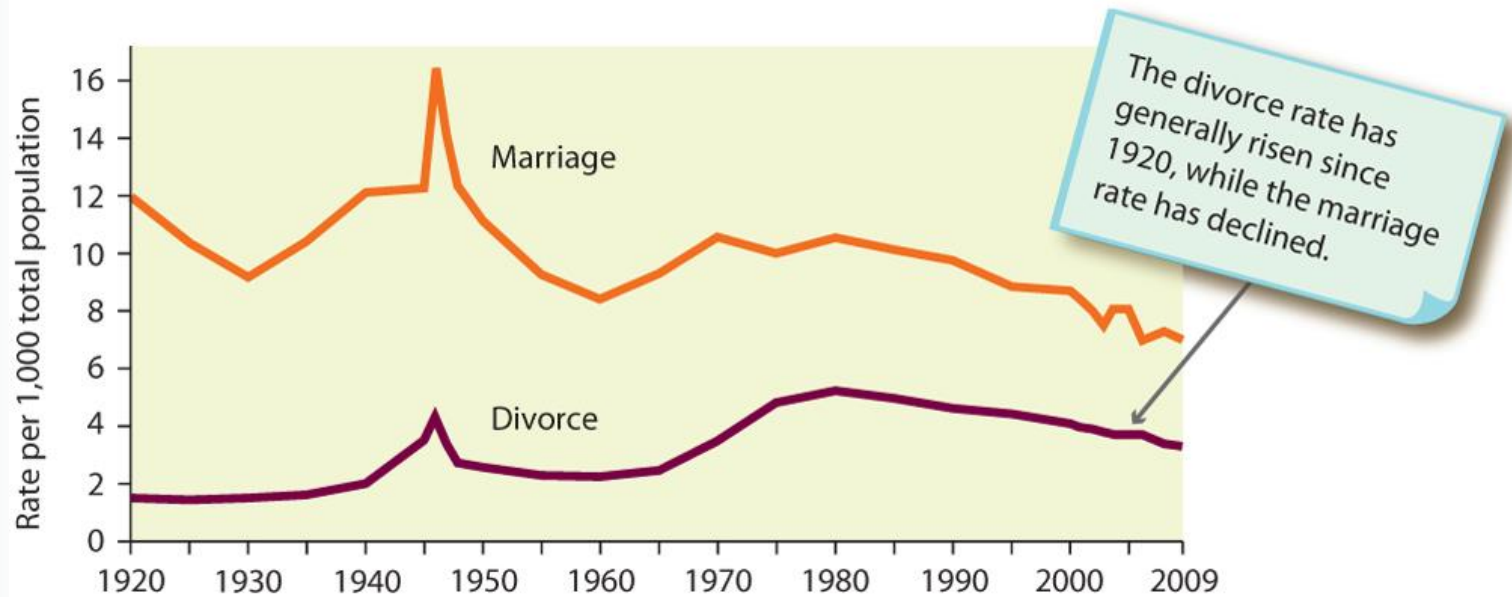
- Greater social acceptance of divorce
- More liberal divorce laws
- Fewer children
- Greater family income
- More opportunities for women

Impact of Divorce on Children

- National study that tracked 6,332 children before and after divorce found their behavior did not suffer
- Other studies have shown greater unhappiness among children who live amidst parental conflict

Simplistic to assume children are automatically better off following breakup

Figure 41-1: Trends in Marriage and Divorce in the United States, 1920-2009



Diverse Lifestyles

- Marriage has lost much of its social significance as a rite of passage
- U.S. marriage rate declined since 1960
 - Postponing marriage until later in life
 - Forming partnerships without marriage

Diverse Lifestyles

- **Cohabitation:** Male-female couples who choose to live together without marrying
 - About half of currently married couples in U.S. say they lived together before marriage
- **Remaining Single**

Trend toward maintaining single lifestyle for longer period related to growing economic independence of young people

Diverse Lifestyles

- Marriage without Children
 - About 16% to 17% of women will complete childbearing years without children compared with 10% in 1980
- Lesbian and Gay Relationships

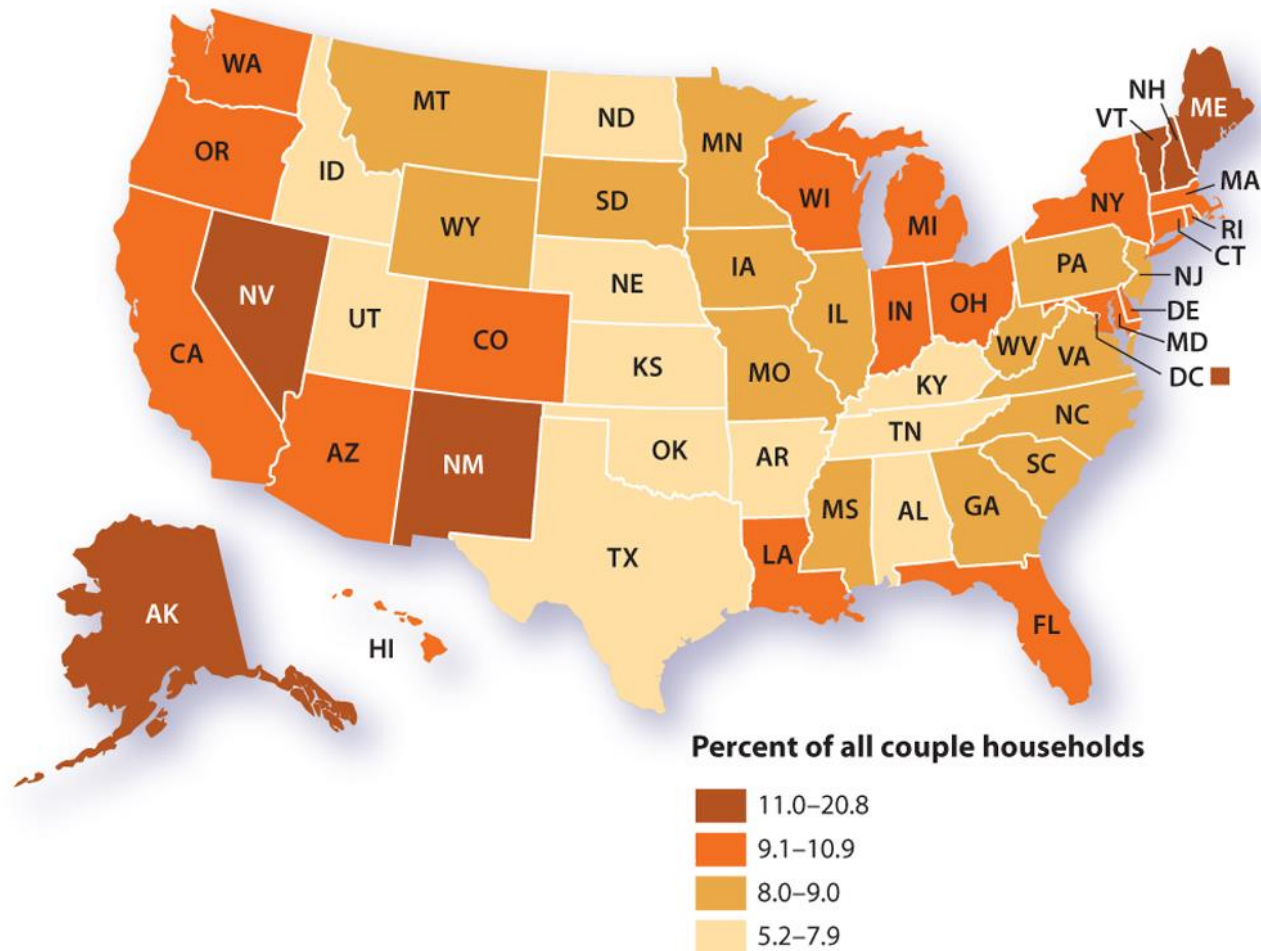
Gay and lesbian couples face discrimination on both personal and legal levels

Research Today

■ Divorce and Military Deployment

- Do you know any married couples who have been separated by military deployment overseas? If so, what was the effect on their children?
- Can you think of some other reasons why military marriages might survive the strain of war as well as they do?

Figure 41-2: Unmarried-Couple Households by State



Gay Marriage

■ Understanding the Issue

- Attitudes toward marriage are complex
 - Society and culture suggest youth should find perfect mate and marry
 - Young people also bombarded with acceptability of divorce
 - Idea of same-sex marriage strikes some in U.S. as attack on traditional marriage

Gay Marriage

■ Understanding the Issue

- Vermont gave gay couples legal benefits of marriage through civil union
- Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled state's constitution gives gay couples right to marry



Gay Marriage

■ Applying Sociology

- Functionalists: marriage closely tied to reproduction; religious views cannot be ignored
- Conflict theorists: denial of right to marry reinforces second-class citizenship
- Interactionists: focus on support or opposition of family, co-workers, and friends

Gay Marriage

■ Initiating Policy

- Recognition of same-sex partnerships not uncommon in Europe
 - Trend toward recognition in North America
- **Domestic partnership:** Two unrelated adults sharing a caring relationship, residing together, who agree to be jointly responsible for dependents, basic living expenses, and common necessities

Figure 41-3: Gay Marriage by State

