How do you define family?
U.S. Census Bureau Definition

- A group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing together

- Who is excluded in this definition?
Why do we care?

- Health insurance
  - Medical decisions in emergency
- Life insurance
  - Inheritance
- Family leave
- Parental rights
  - Child custody
Recent Family Changes & Reasons Why…
Marriage Changes

- Age at first marriage:
  - 1890: Men (26 yrs.) — Women (22 yrs.)
  - 1950: Men (22.5) — Women (20.1)
  - 2000: Men (26.8) — Women (25.1)

- Why are people getting married later?
Marriage Rates

Def. The number of people during the preceding 12 months per 1,000

- 1945: Peaked at 12.2 per 1,000
- 2001: Declined to 8.4 per 1,000

- White and African Americans have had a more drastic decline in marriage rates than Hispanics
Marriage Rates

- Part of decline in marriage has been matched by an increase in non-marital unions

Why are there less people getting married?
- Increases in female earning power explains about 70% of the recent decline in marriage for white women
Singlehood

- Increased number of single people and people living alone
- Permanent singleness – 1 in 3 African American women don’t marry
- Nearly 90% of people will eventually marry
Employed Mothers

- Increased participation of mothers in the workforce
  - In 2001 only 30% of families were traditional (breadwinner and homemaker)
- Increase especially among married women with young children
  - Married women with youngest child between 6-18 have highest labor force participation rates (80%)
Education’s impact on Marriage

- In the past, women with more education were less likely to marry.
- Recent college graduates are now forecast to marry at higher levels (just later entry into marriage).
- Why do you think college graduates have a higher chance of marrying?
Fatherhood

- New definition of fatherhood
  - Should be involved
  - Increased shared custody

- Although women still do the majority of childcare responsibilities
Cohabitation

- Majority of marriages and remarriages begin as cohabiting relationships
- Most younger men and women will cohabit at some point in their lives
- Types of cohabitation:
  - Stage in marriage process
  - Substitute for marriage
  - Alternative to singlehood: extension of dating
Single Parenthood

- Increase in the number of single-parent families
- Why the increase?
  - Births to single mothers
    - 1 out of 3 children is born outside of marriage (70% of African American children)
  - Divorce
  - Cohabitation
- Transition stage: Over 60% of U.S. children born since 1986 spend a year or more in a single parent family.
- Why are there more children being born outside of marriage?
Divorce

- About 50% of recent first marriages and 60% of remarriages end in divorce.
- Most critical times for chance of divorce:
  - First 7yrs of marriage – negative affect
  - When the first child reaches 14yrs old – absence of positive affect

- Why has there been an increase in divorce?
Remarriage

- Half of all marriages are remarriages for one or both people
  - Most divorced people remarry within 4 yrs

- 1 out of 3 kids will live in a remarried or cohabiting stepfamily at some point before reaching adulthood
Gay and Lesbian Families

- Over 600,000 same-sex couples (sharing a household) in U.S. and Puerto Rico
  - At least 30 percent have children
- Many in long-term relationships
  - No legal recognition
  - Increased societal acceptance
Societal changes that impact Family
Life Expectancy

- Life expectancy:
  - Average age of the population has increased
    - In 1900 -- 49.2
    - In 1950 -- 68.1
    - In 2004 -- 77.9yrs
Lengthened adolescent period

- Marriage use to be **THE** central events that started all aspects of transitioning a person to adulthood – school departure, work, moving out of parent’s house

- **NOW:**
  - People delay family formation for school and work
  - Moving out of the parent’s house occurs before marriage, but many move back home
What is the meaning of marriage today?

ACTIONS

- People are having premarital sex
- People are living together before they get married
- People are putting school and a career as the focus – not focusing on marriage
- Marriage isn’t necessary to have children – 1 out of 3 kids are born outside of marriage
What is the meaning of marriage today?

**ATTITUDES**

- Marriage and parenthood aren’t necessary
- Increasing acceptance of alternative lifestyles and family choices
- Increasing acceptance of divorce
  - “Shouldn’t stay together just for the kids”
- Marriage isn’t necessary for sexual expression
- Increasing acceptance of cohabitation
  - Most acceptance is when the couple has plans to marry
  - Younger generations see cohabitation as a good idea to try things out
- Unmarried childbearing has lost some of its stigma
What is the meaning of marriage today?

- Current context of marriage:
  - Individuals have choice – marriage isn’t a necessity
  - Change in nature of rewards that people seek from marriage – personal growth, intimacy, communication
- Symbolic significance of marriage remains high and may even have increased
Changing meaning of marriage ➔
Changing definition of family

- Family based more on voluntary ties, choices and needs – rather than obligation
Changing meaning of marriage →
Changing definition of family

U.S. Census Bureau Definition:

- A group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing together

A more appropriate definition:

- Two or more people who:
  - See their identity as importantly attached to the group
  - Share close emotional ties and functions