

multifamily households consisting of an older married couple, their unmarried children, their married sons, and their sons' wives and children.

Few societies have residential patterns known as *matrilocal residence*—the custom of a married couple living in the same household (or community) as the wife's parents. In industrialized nations such as the United States, most couples hope to live in a *neolocal residence*—the custom of a married couple living in their own residence apart from both the husband's and the wife's parents.

To this point, we have examined a variety of marriage and family patterns found around the world. Even with the diversity of these patterns, most people's behavior is shaped by cultural rules pertaining to endogamy and exogamy. *Endogamy is the practice of marrying within one's own group.* In the United States, for example, most people practice endogamy: They marry people who come from the same social class, racial-ethnic group, religious affiliation, and other categories considered important within their own social group. *Exogamy is the practice of marrying outside one's own social group or category.* Depending on the circumstances, exogamy may not be noticed at all, or it may result in a person being ridiculed or ostracized by other members of the "in" group. The three most important sources of positive or negative sanctions for intermarriage are the family, the church, and the state. Participants in these social institutions may look unfavorably on the marriage of an in-group member to an "outsider" because of the belief that it diminishes social cohesion in the group (Kalmijn, 1998). However, educational attainment is also a strong indicator of marital choice. Higher education emphasizes individual achievement, and college-educated people may be less likely than others to identify themselves with their social or cultural roots and thus more willing to marry outside their own social group or category if their potential partner shares a similar level of educational attainment (Hwang, Saenz, and Aguirre, 1995; Kalmijn, 1998).

Theoretical Perspectives on Families

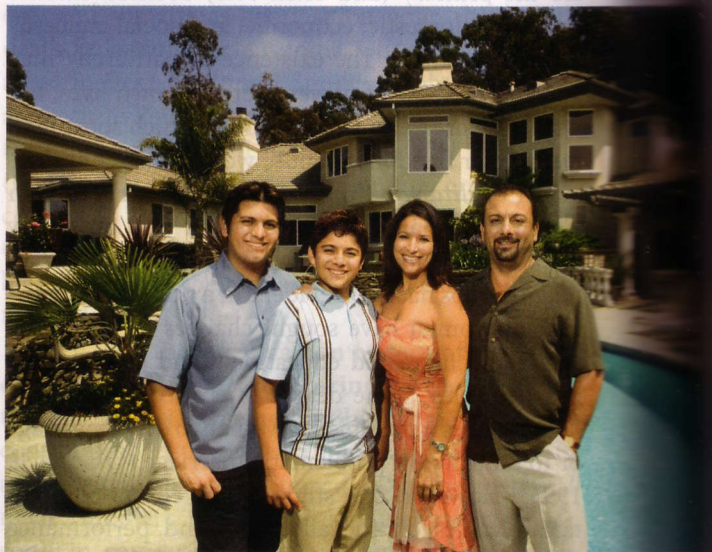
The *sociology of family* is the subdiscipline of sociology that attempts to describe and explain

patterns of family life and variations in family structure. Functionalist perspectives emphasize the functions that families perform at the macrolevel of society, whereas conflict and feminist perspectives focus on families as a primary source of social inequality. Symbolic interactionists examine micro-level interactions that are integral to the roles of different family members.

Functionalist Perspectives

Functionalists emphasize the importance of the family in maintaining the stability of society and the well-being of individuals. According to Emile Durkheim, marriage is a microcosmic replica of the larger society; both marriage and society involve a mental and moral fusion of physically distinct individuals (Lehmann, 1994). Durkheim also believed that a division of labor contributes to greater efficiency in all areas of life—including marriages and families—even though he acknowledged that this division imposes significant limitations on some people.

In the United States, Talcott Parsons was a key figure in developing a functionalist model of the



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▲ Functionalist theorists believe that families serve a variety of functions that no other social institution can adequately fulfill. In contrast, conflict and feminist theorists believe that families may be a source of conflict over values, goals, and access to resources and power. Children in upper-class families have many advantages and opportunities that are not available to other children.

- **ASA Task Force Recommendation:** #6 Empirical and Theoretical Analysis
- **Sociological Imagination:** "The life-fate of the modern individual depends not only upon the family into which he was born or which he enters by marriage, but increasingly upon the corporation in which he spends the most alert hours of his best years" (C. Wright Mills). Have the class discuss and write a brief evaluation of this statement.

- **Research:** "If it is to be done well, child-rearing requires, more than most activities of life, a good deal of decentering from one's own needs and perspectives. Such decentering is relatively easy when a society is stable and when there is an extended, supportive structure that the parent can depend upon" (David Elkind). Have the class research this decentering process and factors that affect it.