This edition of *Parents as Partners in Education: Families and Schools Working Together* highlights the changes in U.S. society and effective ways for teachers and other professionals to understand and work with families. For the last 25 years, we have seen major changes in families. In particular, we have seen an increase in the number of culturally and linguistically diverse families. The beauty of this change reminds us of the diversity of our nation. Learning to work with culturally and linguistically diverse families, as well as those with diverse family structures, requires an understanding of who we are as individuals and educators, and that we acknowledge the values and beliefs that our own families have taught us.

Among other themes, this edition emphasizes the importance of *funds of knowledge* (Moll et al., 1992) for children’s development and for effective partnerships with families. We have also added the concept of “funds of identity” as a catalyst for educators to understand their own identity. Throughout the book, we make connections to these concepts. It is not only important for educators to understand and know child development theories, but also how children develop within the context of their families.

Creating strong partnerships involves the understanding and willingness to work with all families, including families that are different than our own. Once educators understand the value of families for healthy development, they can begin to create strong partnerships to assist children in successful educational experiences. This edition continues to highlight important parent involvement programs and how such programs are often successful because of an asset-based view of families, particularly of those that are culturally and linguistically diverse, as well as those with children with special needs.

**NEW TO THIS EDITION**

This edition includes updated material and additional coverage of many subjects. Of particular interest are

- Measurable learning outcomes (every chapter) to focus.
- Every chapter in the Pearson eText has four to five live links to YouTube videos that help illustrate important concepts. Students can view them directly from their Pearson eText.
- Inclusion of digital interactive elements called “Apply Your Knowledge,” “Check Your Comprehension,” and “Reflect and Analyze”—with feedback—in every chapter of the Pearson eText to support deeper understanding of chapter content. They also support application, reflection, and development of professional skills.
- Updated tables and figures for almost every chapter.
- Expanded section on school climate in order to create positive partnership with families (Chapter 5).
- New section regarding leadership styles that support family engagement (Chapter 7).
- Updated information regarding school- and home-based family engagement programs (Chapter 8).
- Updated information regarding child abuse and domestic violence (Chapter 11), as well as newer photos.
- Revised chapter on advocacy based on the concept of social justice (Chapter 12).

**GUIDELINES AND STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH FAMILIES**

The tried-and-true how-to ideas and means to help parents and educators join together include:

- Communication, an essential element in providing an environment where learning and caring coexist.
An understanding of diversity in different contexts.
- Ideas to help build a partnership of home and school.
- Ways to set up an ecology that is culturally and linguistically appropriate and where learning can take place.
- Historical development of views on children and how those views affect family life.
- Activities and programs to enrich parent–school collaboration.
- Awareness of the effects autism has on families.
- Methods needed to recruit volunteers for the school.
- Practices to develop working relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse families.

**ORIENTATION TO THE TEXT**

**Interdisciplinary.** The text studies parent engagement from an interdisciplinary approach and looks at home–school partnerships from educational, anthropological, sociological, and psychological perspectives. In this edition, there is a strong effort to view families from a diverse perspective.

**Theory and Research.** Theory and research underpin each chapter of the text. New research emphasizes the need for home–school partnerships, particularly as they relate to culturally and linguistically diverse families.

**Practical Application.** A parent, student, teacher, or administrator can pick up this book and find suggestions and descriptions of specific programs that will enable collaboration between families and schools.

**Readability.** Reviewers and students have commented on the readability of the text in its comprehensive coverage. It is written in an easy-to-read style.

**Figures and Tables.** Numerous helpful figures and tables are included in the text to help illustrate content.

**Photos.** Many new photographs that depict culturally and linguistically diverse children, families, and teachers, as well as families with children with special needs, enrich the content of the book.

**SPECIAL FEATURES**

**Situational Vignettes.** Vignettes bring alive situations that typically occur in parent–school relationships. Co-author, Mari Riojas-Cortez, has woven some personal vignettes through the book based on her experience as an immigrant from Mexico, as well as from her professional work with children and families.

**Diverse Families.** Suggestions and activities about how to work with diverse families, including a special focus on families affected by autism, are given.

**Advocacy.** Preparation and suggestions on advocating for children, plus facts about ombudsmanship for children in the United States, give families and educators the knowledge they need to encourage them to be actively involved in advocacy issues.

**Historical Outline.** An outline of historical highlights of education and parent education succinctly illustrates family involvement.

**Digital Features.** Digital features allow students to interact with the text and provide the opportunity to check their comprehension of the content as well as apply knowledge.

**INSTRUCTOR’S RESOURCES**

The following ancillaries are available for download to adopting professors via www.pearsonhighered.com from the Educators screen. Contact your Pearson sales representative for additional information.

**Instructor’s Resource Manual.** This manual contains activity ideas to enhance chapter concepts.

**Test Bank.** The test bank includes a variety of test items, arranged by chapter.

**TestGen Computerized Test Bank.** TestGen is a powerful assessment generation program available exclusively from Pearson that helps instructors easily create quizzes and exams. You install TestGen on your personal computer (Windows or Macintosh) and create your own exams for print or online use. The items are the same as those in the Test Bank. The tests can be downloaded in a variety of learning management system formats.

**PowerPoint Slides.** PowerPoint slides highlight key concepts and strategies in each chapter and enhance lectures and discussions.

**A NOTE ABOUT CENSUS DATA**

Although every effort was made to include up-to-date information in this 9th edition, we strongly
suggest that readers check the American Fact Finder on the U.S. Census Web site for the latest data.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This text developed over the years, and in this process I worked with many individuals. I would like to thank them all. Everyone was cooperative and gracious and their encouragement helped me continue.

Professionals and organizations—Susan Blosten, Phyllis Levenstein, Joyce Epstein, Don Davies, Julia Herwig, Marion M. Wilson, Bettye Caldwell, Miriam Westheimer, Cynthia Franklin, Loretta Fuddy, Virginia Plunkett, Romie Tobi, Virginia Castro, Kevin Swick, Colorado Department of Education, Parents as Partners, Parent Education and Assistance for Kids (PEAK) Parent Center, and Utah Parent Center—all have shared materials with me. Kelly and Bruce Stahlman wrote about their experiences with twins who have cerebral palsy. Clark E. Myers used his law expertise and contributed to Chapter 12. Pat Welch and David Denson of the C. Henry Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect gave me information that appear in Chapter 11. Although I am no longer teaching, I am still indebted to my students: Two of the case studies were written by Bretta Martinec and Rosina Kovar, students at MSCD. My family members have also been an essential ingredient in the entire project each time around, for they embodied what is best in families.

I also want to show my appreciation to the many organizations and government agencies for continued efforts to benefit children and share information with others.

Thanks to Karen Banks, an early childhood educator and consultant, who contributed revisions to several chapters in the seventh edition.

—Eugenia Hepworth Berger

Eugenia Hepworth Berger had a vision when she developed *Parents as Partners in Education: Families and Schools Working Together*. Her vision carried this book through seven editions—30 years of sharing ideas with educators and administrators on how to enhance parental involvement to strengthen home–school partnerships. I hope to expand her vision in this ninth edition where we further our understanding of collaborating with diverse families, and I offer my sincere gratitude for trusting me again with her book.

I want to thank all of the previous contributors to the book as well as my university students who provide me with opportunities to stay informed regarding the realities of many families.

I want to thank the staff of Pearson for their guidance, patience, and support, and in particular: Julie Peters, senior acquisitions editor, for her trust, patience, guidance, and encouragement; Krista Slavicek for providing guidance and feedback on the digital elements in the book; project manager Kris Roach for ensuring the accuracy of this edition; and Bharathi Sanjeev, senior project editor at S4Carlisle Publishing Services, as well as the copyeditors for the production services.

I also want to thank all the reviewers who took the time to read and provide feedback for this edition. Their diverse insights and expertise have strengthened it: Muriel Azria-Evans, Virginia Commonwealth University; Yash Bhagwanji, Florida Atlantic University; Linda Hall Richey, Tennessee Technological University; and Coby Long, Southern State Community College.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my husband, Armando Cortez, and our three extraordinary children for their patience in waiting for Mommy to complete the time-consuming yet wonderfully intentioned task of revising this epic textbook about the reality of families today.

—Mari Riojas-Cortez
CHAPTER 1

Family—Essential for a Child’s Development

Understanding the concept of funds of knowledge helps educators create an environment in the schools that helps children with their development because they feel respected and valued.

Mari Riojas-Cortez
This chapter stresses the importance of families, schools, and communities understanding, respecting, and valuing one another to assist children in their healthy overall development. After completing the chapter, you should be able to do the following:

**Learning Outcomes**
- Identify the influence of families on children’s development.
- Discuss and examine the concept of funds of knowledge as it relates to children’s development and families.
- Identify and describe different child development theories in relation to family involvement.
- Analyze the role of the family in a child’s brain development.

### STRONG FAMILIES, STRONG CHILDREN

Strong families are essential because they help create a nurturing society, transforming the society by actively participating in different systems that in turn help families have a healthy, successful life. Regardless of how nurturing the society, sometimes even strong families face difficulties that test their well-being, such as parents working multiple jobs to ensure the basic necessities of their children are met. Although family stressors such as these are difficult for children, families that are strong are often resilient and learn to work out problems because they care for each other, particularly their children.

For instance, consider this video in which children talk about their families.

What are the children’s opinions about their families? How are the children talking about the family members that provide support for them? The children indeed focus on those interactions with key family members that provide support for them. When children have strong family members that continuously interact with them in a safe (albeit sometimes challenging) environment, they develop a positive self-concept and self-esteem, which helps them in many aspects of their development and in school experiences.

### Defining the Term Parent

Throughout this book, the term **parent** includes those who act in a primary caregiver or parent role, whether they are the biological parent, a relative, adoptive parent, foster parent, or nonrelated caregiver. In fact, parents can be one person or a group of individuals (such as those that form part of support systems) who help meet the cognitive, linguistic, physical, socioemotional, and cultural needs of children.

### The Role of the Extended Family

Because families are so important, resources must be provided to support their needs, specifically their children’s needs. Extended family members such as grandparents, who often are given the responsibility of taking care of the children, are an important resource of support for families. Because of their role as “parents,” it is imperative that schools and communities help parents and families provide a caring environment for children.

A caring environment is one that promotes collaboration between school and families by providing adequate and supportive childcare, ensuring small class sizes for individualized attention (especially for young children), and actively involving parents and caregivers in the children’s development and education. Teachers must work together with parents by taking responsibility for children’s linguistic, social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and cultural development and giving them the opportunity to develop skills and become educated citizens.

**✓ Check Your Comprehension**

Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.
Funds of Knowledge

Caretaking and teaching other people's children are tremendous tasks. Teachers must have the desire to teach children who come from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as children who are not developing typically. Often teachers are told that they need to be aware of the differences in language and culture of the children they teach, but merely being aware of cultural and linguistic differences is not sufficient to work effectively with families. Awareness implies knowledge but no action. When working with culturally and linguistically diverse children, teachers must know about the children’s families, including but not limited to their cultural practices, childrearing practices, traditions, and each individual family’s funds of knowledge.

Really, a family is a child’s first teacher, passing on their concepts, or funds of knowledge, to help them grow and thrive (Moll et al., 1992). These concepts can be passed along from generation to generation, and new ones can be developed as new families are formed.

As you watch this video, reflect on the meaning of funds of knowledge.

The explanation focuses on the skills and concepts that children learn at home and the importance of teachers understanding that such knowledge supports children’s learning. What are funds of knowledge? How do funds of knowledge help teachers in the classroom?

For early childhood educators, the importance of understanding the concept of funds of knowledge
This truly was “funds of knowledge” in action. By understanding a family’s funds of knowledge, teachers are also engaging in social justice because they want to create opportunities for those children and families who are often underrepresented and marginalized.

Part of my funds of knowledge include my father’s teaching regarding the value of social justice while growing up in Mexico. He taught me the value of being fair and equitable, particularly with those who work with and for you. My father, who was actively involved in the sindicato obrero, or the “blue collar” union, fought for worker’s rights. My sisters and I were used to listening to my father talk about how to make sure the workers would get treated fairly, which is something that has become part of my philosophy of teaching (providing fair opportunities to learn).

Another example of funds of knowledge is derived from an interview with an African American family. The interview showed that the family wanted to teach their children about “Black pride”—they wanted their children to know their history so they would continue to advocate for each other. They taught their children about different African American historical figures, but they also talked about their own family and how they make a difference in their community. The funds of knowledge learned by the children in this family include the need to participate in advocacy for their community.

Families who immigrate to the United States often use their funds of knowledge to learn to live in a new culture, but oftentimes, the role of “teacher” is reversed. When visiting a school on the east side of Austin, Texas, I recall listening to a mother having a conversation with her young daughter, who was probably about 10 years old, regarding the papers needed to register her in school. Her daughter knew English and had to translate for the mother to register for school. Another time, I witnessed a family at an auto parts store, and the young son was translating for his father what the salesperson was telling him in English. The father was a mechanic. In both instances, the children had knowledge of the vocabulary used in each occasion in their native language.

Examples of funds of knowledge vary between cultures, as well as between individual families. As
Divorce is one common change that causes children to lose the family system as they knew it and adapt to an entirely new one. Changes may also occur at the local, state, or federal government level. Teachers need to know not only what is happening in a student’s family but also how changes in policies may affect children and families, so they can respond in an appropriate manner and be helpful to the child.

Levels of Ecological Systems. A child’s development is related to experiences in the entire environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) recognized five levels, as shown in Figure 1–1.

1. The microsystem includes face-to-face relations with family and peers, with parents as the major influence on a child’s interactive ecological system (O’Callaghan, 1993). Examples include interactions with parents, peers, or teachers.

2. The mesosystem involves face-to-face relationships with more formal organizations. Examples include school, family, peers, health-care services, religious institutions, and the playground.

3. The exosystem, although further removed from personal interaction, still influences children through their parents. This includes the parents’ employment and government actions.

4. The macrosystem includes the attitudes and ideologies of the culture. Examples include environmental events and cultural traditions, laws, and customs.

5. The chronosystem includes the element of time as it relates to changes in a child’s environment. Examples of the chronosystem include the child getting older and the aging or death of a parent or family member.

The parents’ role in their children’s early years is significant in many ways, but it requires the support of different systems as stated by Bronfenbrenner. The support systems have a tremendous responsibility to meet the needs not only of the child but the family as well. For example, the needs of families who are living with high levels of stress due to violence, homelessness, and chemical dependence (Swick & Williams, 2006) are different than those of families that also have high stress due to different circumstances—such as a child with a disability, a
parent who works two jobs, parents that have demanding jobs, families who are not authorized to live in the U.S., and families whose first language is not English.

For children from culturally and linguistically diverse families, some of the systems may not work so successfully. A criticism of this theory is that for culturally and linguistically diverse children, the mesosystem and the exosystem often do not value their culture, and their funds of knowledge are considered deficits. For example, a study found that resiliency in nine Native American teenagers was influenced by individual and environmental factors related to the family and extended family support (Reclaiming Children and Youth, 2009), but there was no mention of how the mesosystem and exosystem have helped Native American children. In another study, Chen and Agbenyega (2012) found that conflicts between entities in the mesosystem prevented parents of kindergarten
students in China from truly becoming involved in their children’s education.

✓ Reflect and Analyze

Click here to use reflection and analysis to decide what to do in this situation.

Attachment Theory

Ecological systems should be nurturing environments where children have opportunities to develop socially and emotionally. A nurturing environment allows children to create bonds and attachments. The development of positive parent–child relationships is based on the quality of attachments the child has developed. Attachment is defined as a form of behavior that has its “own internal motivation distinct from feeding and sex, and of no less importance for survival” (Bowlby, 1988, p. 27).

Since the 1930s, there has been increasing research on bonding and attachment. Experts recognize attachment as an essential ingredient for a healthy personality. Attachment behavior is the behavior a person exhibits to obtain and maintain proximity to the attachment figure, generally the mother, but also the father—and in their absence, someone the child knows; in many culturally and linguistically diverse families, the grandparents may take that role. This attachment is strongest when the child is sick, tired, or frightened, but is crucial throughout the life cycle.

Psychoanalysts Skeels, Spitz, and Bowlby recognized the importance of the first few years in the development of attachment, as evidenced through studies of children who did not thrive. These psychoanalysts did not conduct controlled studies that gave some children love and withheld it from others, but instead they looked at what had happened to children who had failed to thrive. Why had this happened? What did these children lack that the other children had?

Skeels

During the 1930s, questions about the importance of human attachment in young children were raised. Harold Skeels, a member of the Iowa Group of child researchers, studied the effect of environment on the development of children during a period when most researchers (e.g., Gesell and Watson) were studying maturation or behaviorism. One study, a natural history investigation, had startling findings (Skeels, 1966). Skeels placed 13 infants and toddlers from an orphanage in an institution for people with mental retardation. The 13 children—10 girls and 3 boys—ranged from 7.1 to 35.9 months and had IQs from 36 to 89, with a mean IQ score of 64.3. Children in the control group of 12—also chosen from children in the orphanage, between 12 and 22 months old—had IQs of 50 to 103, with a mean IQ of 86.7 points. The children placed in the wards for mental retardation were showered with attention by the attendants and supervisors. They were cared for, played with, loved, and allowed to go along on excursions. Almost every child developed an attachment to one person who was particularly interested in the child and his or her achievements. The control group of children in the orphanage, however, received traditional care with no special treatment. When
retested, after varying periods from 6 to 52 months, the children in the institution for mental retardation had gained 27.5 IQ points, but those left in the orphanage had lost an average of 26.2 IQ points.

Although the research could be criticized because variables were not controlled—there were more girls than boys placed in the wards—and changes in IQ can be partially explained by statistical regression, the results were so dramatic and unexpected that the effect of early environment had to be considered. Skeels (1966) followed up on the subjects of this research almost 20 years later and found evidence to reinforce his initial findings. Of the 13 children in the experimental group who had been transferred to the mental institution, 11 had been adopted and reared as “normal” children. Twelve of the 13 had become self-supporting adults, achieving a median education level of 12 years of schooling. Of the control group children who had been left in the orphanage, four were still in institutions, one was a gardener’s assistant, three were employed as dishwashers, one was a floater (performed different types of jobs as needed), one was a part-time worker in a cafeteria, and one had died. Only one individual had achieved an educational level similar to that of the experimental group—a man who as a child had received different treatment from the others. He had been transferred from the orphanage to a school for the deaf, where he received special attention from his teacher.

The children who had been placed in a mental institution and later adopted received love and developed human attachments. They had achieved a lifestyle more typical of children outside the orphanage, whereas those left in the orphanage had only a marginal existence. Evidence strongly supports the importance of a nurturing environment and also indicates that a poor initial environment can be reversed by enriched personal interaction (Skeels, 1966). Interestingly, these findings also support (indirectly) the importance of funds of knowledge, which are gained through nurturing interactions between the child and immediate and/or extended family in a caring environment (regardless of income level and mental ability).

**Spitz**

In *The First Year of Life* (1965), René Spitz described his research and observations of the psychology of infants. He studied babies in different situations: private families, foster homes, an obstetrics ward, a well-baby clinic, a nursery, and a foundling home.

Both the nursery and foundling home were long-term institutions that guaranteed constancy of environment and dramatically illustrated the necessity of human attachment and interaction. Both institutions provided similar physical care of children, but they differed in their nurturing and interpersonal relationships. Both provided hygienic conditions, well-prepared food, and medical care. The foundling home had daily visits by a medical staff, whereas the nursery called a doctor only when needed. The nursery was connected to a penal institution where “delinquent girls,” pregnant on admission, were sent to serve their sentences. Babies born to them were cared for in the nursery until the end of their first year. The mothers were primarily socially challenged minors. In contrast, some of the children in the foundling home had well-adjusted mothers who were unable to support their children. Others were children of single mothers who were asked to come to the home and nurse their own and one other child during the first 3 months.

Spitz (1965) filmed a representative group of the children he studied in both institutions. He studied 203 children in the nursery and 91 in the foundling home. The major difference in the care of the two sets of children was the amount of nurturing and social interaction. The nursery, which housed 40 to 60 children at a time, allowed the mothers or mother-substitutes to feed, nurse, and care for their babies. The infants had at least one toy, and they were able to see outside their cribs and to watch the activities of other children and the caregiving mothers. These babies thrived. In the foundling home, however, the babies were screened from outside activity by blankets hung over the sides and ends of their cribs, isolating them from any visual stimulation. They had no toys to play with, and the caretakers were busy tending to other duties rather than mothering the children. During the first 3 months, while they were breast-fed, the babies appeared normal. Soon after separation, however, they progressively deteriorated. Of the 91 foundling home children, 34 died by the end of the second year.

Spitz (1965) continued to follow up on 21 children who remained in the foundling home until they were 4 years old. He found that 20 could not dress themselves, 6 were not toilet trained, 6 could not talk, 5 had a vocabulary of two words, 8 had
vocabulary of three to five words, and only 1 was able to speak in sentences. Spitz attributed the deterioration of the infants to lack of mothering. Although the children in the nursery had mothering, those in the foundling home did not, thus finding themselves in an emotional starvation stage (Spitz).

**Bowlby**

In 1951, John Bowlby reviewed studies of deprivation and its effects on personality development. In a systematic review for the World Health Organization, he described those works that supported theories on the negative aspects of maternal deprivation. In a monograph, Bowlby (1966) stated: "It is submitted that the evidence is now such that it leaves no room for doubt regarding the general proposition that the prolonged deprivation of the young child of maternal care may have grave and far-reaching effects on his character and so the whole of his future life" (p. 46).

**Development of Attachment**

Bowlby (1982) described attachment in a family setting. Most babies about 3 months old show more attention and are more responsive to their primary caregiver than to others by smiling at, vocalizing to, and visually following their parent or other primary caregiver. At about 6 to 8 months of age, infants develop stranger anxiety. They become concerned about being near their caregiver and fearful of those they do not know. This attachment to primary caregivers continues and strengthens in intensity from 6 to 9 months, although when the child is ill, fatigued, hungry, or alarmed, the intensity increases. During the same period, the infant demonstrates attachment to others as well, primarily the father, siblings, and caregivers. Attachment to others does not reduce the attachment to the mother or primary caregiver. At 9 months, most children try to follow primary caregivers when they leave the room, greet them on return, and crawl to be near them. This behavior continues throughout the second year of a child’s life and on into the third. When children reach about 2 years 9 months to 3 years of age, they are better able to accept a parent’s temporary absence.

Bowlby (1966) emphasized that the greatest effect on personality development is during the child’s early years. The earliest critical period was believed to be during the first 5 or 6 months, while the mother figure and infant are forming an attachment. The second vital phase was seen as lasting until near the child's third birthday, during which time the mother figure needs to be virtually an ever-present companion. During the third phase, the child is able to maintain the attachment even though the nurturing parent is absent. During the fourth to fifth year, this tolerable absence might extend from a few days to a few weeks; during the seventh to eighth year, the separation could be lengthened to a year or more. Deprivation in the third phase does not have the same destructive effect on the child as it does in the period from infancy through the third year.

**Maternal or Human Attachment?**

Prominent child psychiatrists Rutter (1981) and Bower (1982) questioned whether the term maternal deprivation was too restrictive to cover a wide range of abuses and variables. They suggested that maternal deprivation was too limited a concept—that human attachment and multiple attachments should be considered and that warmth as well as love be regarded as vital elements in relationships. Rutter argued that the bond with the mother was not different in quality or kind from other bonds. In addition, individual differences among children resulted in some children being more vulnerable to mother deprivation.

**Tizard and Hodges**

Questions regarding the irreversibility of deprivation were raised. Would sound childrearing reverse early deprivation? It appeared that good childrearing practices and a good environment would help the child, but early deprivation continued to be a problem, and deprived infants often remained detached. Tizard and Hodges (1978) studied children raised in an institution to see if the lack of personal attachment had lasting effects. Children who were adopted did form bonds as late as 4 or 6 years of age, but they exhibited the same attention and social problems in school as those who remained in the institution: “Being one in a class of many other children may for the child have repeated some of the elements of the nursery ‘family group,’ leading to a similar pattern of competitive attempts to gain the attention of the teacher and poor relationships with other children” (Hodges, 1996, p. 71).
Ainsworth

Mary Ainsworth’s seminal work regarding classifications of attachment provides a deeper understanding of Bowlby’s critical period of attachment. Ainsworth identified three classifications of attachment—avoidant/insecure, ambivalent/insecure, and securely attached—during a controlled experimental procedure known as the Strange Situation procedure (Shore, 1997).

Brazelton and Yogman

In their extensive studies of infants, Brazelton and Yogman (1986) analyzed the process of early attachment and wrote specifically about the interaction between infant and parent, covering even the effects of experiences in utero. The child appears to be born with predictable responses, including the ability to develop a reciprocal relationship with the caregiver. Brazelton and Yogman (1986) described four stages vital to the parent–infant attachment process, which lasts from birth to 4 or 5 months. In the first stage, the infant achieves homeostatic control and is able to control stimuli by shutting out or reaching for stimuli. During the second stage, the infant is able to use and attend to social cues. In the third stage, usually at 3 to 4 months, the reciprocal process between parent and child shows the infant’s ability to take in and respond to the information as well as to withdraw. During the fourth stage, the infant develops a sense of autonomy and initiates and responds to cues. If the parent recognizes and encourages the infant’s desire to have control over the environment, the infant develops a sense that leads to a feeling of competence. This model is based on feedback and reciprocal interaction and allows for individual differences (Brazelton & Yogman, 1986).

Classifications of Attachment

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant/insecure</td>
<td>Child shows no reaction when separated from the mother.</td>
<td>Child is dropped off at day care and shows no reaction to mother leaving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent/insecure</td>
<td>Child shows high levels of distress when separated from the mother.</td>
<td>Child cries himself to sleep when mother drops him off at daycare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Child shows signs of distress.</td>
<td>Child is comforted by caregiver.</td>
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The Brazelton Institute

The Newborn Behavioral Observation (NBO) is a family-centered observation set that is designed to be used by clinicians at the Brazelton Institute as they focus on individual infants and observe their individuality and competencies, since early months of infancy, from birth until the third month, are important periods in the infant’s adaptation to his or her environment. In addition to strengthening the relationships between infant and parent as well as parent and clinician, the NBO provides information to the parents that helps them be better caregivers. The parents learn to read their baby’s communication cues, understand their baby better, and are able to respond with appropriate care (Brazelton Institute, 2005).

Challenges

Although most families successfully develop attachments with their children, a few find different challenges for a variety of reasons. For example, five groups of parents may face challenges when developing parent–child attachments. The first is made up of parents who have never had models of good parenting or have been reared in abusive homes. They need help in learning how to nurture...
and care for children as well as eliminate violence from their lives. Organizations such as the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence provide useful resources for families. The second group contains parents who tend to be isolated and insecure and do not have a support system. These groups could be helped by home-based programs such as Parents as Teachers, HIPPY, and Project CARE. The third group includes parents who are busy and away from home for extended periods and must find trusting caregivers for their children. The fourth group consists of parents who are raising a child with a disability and need financial and emotional assistance. Such parents may be able to get help from organizations such as Easter Seals (children’s services) or Through the Looking Glass Project (see Colmer, Rutherford & Murphy, 2011). The fifth group includes adolescent parents. The majority (if not all) of the parents in this group need guidance in prenatal care and early maternal-infant attachment (Feldman, 2012).

The importance of early bonding and attachment development is such that parents must be aware of the consequences of not devoting time to their young children. Children who lack attachment from infancy on may have enormous difficulty with social interaction. This can result in them having difficulties making and keeping relationships, not only between a parent and a child with insecure attachments, but also with peers. These children are often aggressive in their relationships with other children in a school setting. The attachment process and the early life of a child are the first steps in the child’s total growth. They provide the necessary emotional trust that allows the child to continue to develop relationships. Providing parents with helpful tools to enhance their understanding of how to interact and relate with their child is important. Researchers Zeanah, Berlin, and Boris (2011) provide a list of different types of attachment interventions that may help families, including Child–Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), Video-based Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting (VIPP), The Circle of Security (COS), and Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up (ABC).

✓ Reflect and Analyze
Click here to use reflection and analysis to decide what to do in this situation.

FAMILIES INFLUENCING BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Children’s lifelong learning depends on how well their brain has developed. Genes play an important part in brain development as well as the environment and early experiences. Children’s early learning experiences provide the foundations of learning (Petersen, 2012).

Research on brain development emphasizes the importance of the first years of life (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000; Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1994; Education Commission of the States, 1996; Greenspan, 2002; Newman, 1996; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Shore, 1997; Zero to Three, 1998–2001) and the crucial role of parents (Belsky & de Haan, 2011). Brain research uses different technologies such as ultrasound to study fetal brain development and neural functioning and scanning techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) to learn how the brain works after the child is born. “Functional MRI provides information about changes in the volume, flow, or oxygenation of blood that occur as a person undertakes various tasks, including not only motor activities, such as squeezing a hand, but also cognitive tasks, such as speaking or solving a problem” (Shore, 1997, p. 8). Another noninvasive way of studying activity in the brain can be through the use of neuropsychological tools such as electroencephalograms and magnetic encephalography. In these methods, the brain is studied indirectly by giving a child a task and examining which part of the brain is active, and also observing the child’s level of activity in response to different stimuli (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

A PET scan, employed when a child is thought to have neurological problems, requires an injection of a tracer chemical, making it an invasive procedure, which researchers generally avoid. Since PET scans cannot be considered noninvasive, the research comes from situations in which the child has needed the scan for medical reasons. By analyzing the results of PET scans, researchers
have furthered scientific knowledge: “Scientists can visualize not only the fine structures of the brain, but also the level of activity that is taking place in its various parts” (Shore, 1997, p. 9). Prior to these technological advances, brain research was accomplished only when operations were performed or people had strokes, and neither situation revealed what was happening in the brain at specific times.

**Brain Development**

The brain and spinal cord begin their developmental journey just a few days after conception and continue to develop in overlapping phases, with the brain cells multiplying and migrating according to where they are needed: “Once nerve cells are formed and finished migrating they rapidly extend axons and dendrites and begin to form connections with each other, called synapses” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 186). The nerve cells are able to communicate with one another. The synapses are refined through maturation and pruning followed by myelination, a protective and supportive tissue surrounding the cells.

The brain does not develop one area and then the next in a straight, linear pattern. It develops in an integrated and overlapping fashion. Structures that control cognition (thinking), perception (sensing), and action (moving) develop at the same time but not in lockstep fashion. They are linked by a network of interconnections, separate but functioning parallel to one another (Goldman-Rakic, 1996).

The development of the brain proceeds at an exhilarating rate. The number of neurons peaks before birth (new neurons are produced throughout life though far less rapidly). Brain size also increases more gradually. A newborn's brain is only about one-quarter the size of an adult's. It grows to 80 percent of adult size by 3 years of age and 90 percent by 5. Its growth is largely due to changes in individual neurons, which are structured like trees. Thus, each brain cell begins as a tiny sapling and only gradually sprouts its hundreds of long, branching dendrites. Brain growth, measured either by weight or volume, is largely due to the growth of these dendrites, which serve as the receiving point of synaptic input from other neurons. Another way of measuring brain growth is speed processing. Newborns are considerably slower than adults—16 times less efficient—and the brain does not reach maximum size until about 15 years of age (Zero to Three, 1998–2001).

**Genes and the Environment.** The environment and the genes play a very important role in brain development. Interactions between the genes and the environment are crucial for brain development and they play different roles. Genes form all cells and make general connections for the brain regions, they help children adapt to their environment (Zero to Three, 1998–2001, p. 1). According to Diamond (2009), it is experience that helps to wake up the dormant genes; therefore “the environment participates in sculpting expression of the genome” (p. 1).

**Early Interactions and Brain Development.** Engaging children from infancy is extremely important, as it is estimated that the number of synapses reaches adult level by age 2, and by age 3, a child's brain is two and one half times more active than the brain of an adult. It is estimated that by age 3, the child's brain has a quadrillion synapses. The number holds steady for the first decade. After the child reaches 19, the synapses decline in density, and by late adolescence, half of the synapses have been discarded and 500 trillion remain (Shore, 1997). Elimination varies related to the area of the brain. Huttenlocher (1979, as cited in Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000) researched the production of synapses and the pruning that reduces the amount of synapses to adult level. He estimated that various areas of the brain have different
patterns of synapse development and pruning. The visual cortex production occurs about midway of the first year, followed by a gradual reduction by the middle of the preschool period. The part of the brain responsible for language and hearing is similar but somewhat later. In the prefrontal area, which contains higher-level cognition, the proliferation of synapses begins around the first year, but adult level is not reached until middle to late adolescence.

A look at the development of vision illustrates one journey of growth. Infant vision is still developing when the child is born. At 1 month, the infant has poor contrast sensitivity and relatively poor color recognition. By 2 months, the baby can distinguish between many colors, including red, blue, and green. While their visual acuity and sensitivity to contrast at this age improves, it is still about 20 times less developed than adults' and has an immature focus. By the third month, dramatic changes help the infant see shapes clearer, although depth perception is not fully developed. Color vision is similar to that of an adult’s color vision. The baby has also developed a sense of recognition so that when a parent picks up and holds the infant, the child is aware and recognizes the parent. By 6 months of age, there is rapid improvement in eye development. The baby can focus at different distances as well as an adult can, and their motion detection continues to improve (Restak, 2001).

As infants continue to develop, their need for exploration increases. Soska, Adolph, and Johnson (2010) indicate that the infant's motor and perceptual abilities help with exploration. The more opportunities for exploration and movement the infant is given, the greater the chances for acquisition of new skills. Therefore, the early experiences that parents provide for their children are crucial for their development, though individual experiences for children will vary depending on their families.

The Wiring of the Brain
The proliferation of synapses occurs around the sixth month and reduces to an adult amount later in early childhood. Experience is critical in the “wiring” of a child's brain. When a stimulus activates a neural path, the synapses receive and store a chemical signal. If synapses are used repeatedly, they are strengthened, reach a threshold level, and become permanent. If not used repeatedly, they are pruned and eliminated (Shore, 1997).

The Importance of Family Interactions for Brain Development
Parenting experiences for young children help shape children's brain development (Morgan, Shaw & Forbes, 2014). Children learn and develop with their own developmental timetable, but they need interaction with their caregivers, mothers, fathers, and others to help in that development. When one realizes how rapidly the newborn infant's brain develops, a question emerges: How should the mother, father, and caregivers respond to best aid the development?

Language Interactions with Parents or Caregivers. Providing a safe environment helps infants and young children as well as families feel valued and respected. It is also important to develop a secure and positive relationship with the infant by holding him or her in a loving and comforting manner. Babies need cradling, gentle touching, and eye contact. They also need to hear a voice, whether singing or talking to them, while they are being dressed or fed. Be sure to respond to the baby’s sounds; they too will try to imitate the sound they hear. This will help them develop a sense of language.
It is also important for families to continue to share their cultural values with their children, because these values are assets to their children’s development. For example, parents can play culturally significant music for their children. Interestingly, Soley and Hannon (2010) found that infants appear to prefer music that has culture-specific meaning—music from their native culture. Nursery rhymes in the child’s heritage language assist young children in learning the sounds of that language. For instance, parents can recite Mother Goose rhymes to increase language awareness because they are just fun to repeat. Young children also enjoy looking at colorful picture books and reading books with their caregivers, particularly when they can relate to the book themselves. A great example is Sandra Cisneros’s book Hairs/Pelitos, in which the main character talks about the different types of hair of family members.

Providing a safe environment is important so that infants and young children, as well as families, feel valued and respected. It is also important for families to continue to share their funds of knowledge with their children because these are assets to their children’s development.

**Emotional and Cognitive Interactions with Parents and Caregivers.** According to Dowling (2010), there is a link between feelings and brain development that is crucial in the early years. Children who have healthy emotional development have supportive families that guide them through different emotions in order to develop strong cognitive skills such as problem solving, perception, and reasoning.

Six levels of developing emotional and intellectual health in children are described by Greenspan (2002). At the first level, when a familiar caregiver touches and talks with the infant, the child responds with interest and pleasure. This helps the child develop a feeling of security and also helps the child organize his or her senses and motor responses. When children do not receive interaction from their caregiver, they withdraw and become apathetic and despondent.

The second level of development occurs by 4 months, when infants begin to respond to a parent’s smile. Emotional responses precede the child’s motor ability. These emotional responses can be observed by watching a 4- or 5-month-old baby smile in response to another’s smile. By 9 months, there are early forms of communication and thinking. Two-way communication, with the mother talking and the baby responding, occurs.

The emotional abilities developed earlier become the building blocks in the third level at 12 to 18 months. The child has a greater ability to problem solve. The fourth level focuses on the toddler who needs to increasingly develop the use of emotional cueing, more often referred to as affect cueing.

The fifth level includes symbols that have purpose and meaning, as seen in preteen play. The sixth level finds the child able to use cause-and-effect thinking, recognizing others’ ideas with his or her own intent and feelings. This level allows impulse control, judgment, and reality testing (Greenspan, 2002).

**Positive Environment, Healthy Families, and Children**

As already discussed, a child’s brain is not fixed at birth but rather is affected by the nourishment, care, and stimulation it receives. The interactions that children have with their families and other support systems are crucial for a healthy development.

Because the environment has an impact on the brain even before birth, trauma and abuse can harm it and interfere with its development. For example, exposure to nicotine, alcohol, or other drugs affects the child before and after birth. It influences not only the child’s general development but also the wiring of the brain. For educators, it is important to understand that early experiences such as interactions help stimulate brain activity. Nourishing young children means that adults actively engage with them. With new technologies, caution should be taken since early exposure to screen media may have negative effects for young infants (Napier, 2014). All this shows the importance of promoting nourishing, caring, responsive environments for healthy brain development.

**Early Experiences**

Children are primed for learning during the early years. Their experiences in the first 3 years affect
their growth and abilities for the rest of their childhood and as adults. According to Newman (1996), “Early stimulation is essential to normal development” (p. 15)—both normal brain development as well as emotional development. This is because when the environment is nurturing and stimulating, it results in both neurological brain development and human attachment (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000). Parents must be able to read their babies’ cues and respond to infants’ feelings, knowing when they need stimulation, when they need to be left alone, and when they need comforting.

**Apply Your Knowledge**
Click here to apply your knowledge to this scenario.

**✓ Check Your Comprehension**
Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

**SUMMARY**
Strong families have strong parents who know how to meet the needs of their children regardless of the stressors they face. Families need to know that what they offer their children—their funds of knowledge—are valued by the school and other extended systems. In order to identify funds of knowledge, teachers must know the family’s cultural and social background. When working with diverse families in an early childhood program, it is very important to keep in mind ethnicity and national origin, language, religion or spiritual practice, special needs, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, as these characteristics of families help in the creation of funds of knowledge. It is important to keep in mind too that systems vary, and they change related to the circumstances in the family.

Parents are their child’s first educators and as such are responsible for providing an environment that facilitates attachment and brain development in their child. All three responsibilities are extremely important for the child’s subsequent development.

Child development theories help teachers and parents identify appropriate and quality environments for children. Theories of attachment help parents understand that when they provide children with strong attachments from birth, children will develop a healthy understanding of friendships and relationships that may last a lifetime. The Ecological Systems Theory provides parents and educators with a blueprint regarding how the community, the school, the teacher, and the family work together to promote children's overall development.

**SUGGESTED CLASS ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS**

1. Make a list of the funds of knowledge that have been given to you by your family. Interview two families different than your own. Make a list of their funds of knowledge. Find similarities and differences between families. Share with the class.

2. Using the book *Cuadros de Familia* (or *Family Pictures*) by Carmen Lomas Garza, make your own book with your family pictures. You can draw the pictures or use real photographs. Write in the text that describes your family’s traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices. Share with the class.

3. Using Family Ecological Systems Theory concentric circles, look for resources in your community that collaborate with families. Make a list including addresses, phone numbers, and Web sites to begin creating a Support Systems Resource Guide. Add information as needed.

4. Take the quiz regarding brain development on the Zero to Three Web site (www.zerotothree.org) to test your knowledge of brain development.
USEFUL WEB SITES

National Center for Families Learning
Zero to Three

National Association for the Education of Young Children
Respect and value from teachers and administrators will help diverse families achieve emotional well-being.

Mari Riojas-Cortez
**FAMILIES**

**The Definition of Family**

The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) defines a *family* as “a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption,” while a *household* is defined as “all people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence” (see Figure 2–1 for different types of households from 1970 to 2012). A family is a socially constructed concept (Weigel, 2008). The definition of *family* fits many of the families today, particularly those who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those who are raising children with special needs.

The importance of the family unit in the socialization of children cannot be overstated. It is essential that children have a supportive, interactive environment that provides loving, caring relationships so that children develop emotionally, intellectually, and physically. Families in the United States and around the world are living with change, but the essence of the family remains stable, with family members needing a permanent relationship on

**FIGURE 2–1**

Different types of households from 1970 to 2012.

which they can count for consistency, understanding, and support. Qiu, Schvaneveldt, and Sahin (2013) in a cross-cultural study found that children thought that the function of a family was to provide “affection, nurturance, interaction, and support” (p. 10). If the family provides for the basic needs of its members and is connected, reducing isolation and alienation, then the family will flourish—truly, as the provider for and socializing agent of children, the family has no match. Regardless of the structure, the family gives the nurture and support needed by its members and is a viable, working unit. Families need to be respected as such.

The Survival of Society Depends upon Families

Families across cultures have different ways of displaying affection, but children cannot thrive physically or emotionally without the nurturance of those who love and care for them. This is particularly true of children with special needs. For example, my son, who has autism, does extremely well when people who work with him praise him and respond to his hugs. This is important to note, because in our family we like to give hugs and praise one another as part of our funds of knowledge. Therefore, educators must have a cultural understanding of a family's socialization practices in order to collaborate with the family and thus provide safe and healthy experiences to assist in the child’s development (Casper, Cooper & Finn, 2003; Nelson, Leerkes, Perry, O’Brien, Calkins & Marcovitch, 2013). This understanding will help create stronger bonds between families and educators since parenting is a difficult task.

Just like educators, extended family members such as grandparents provide support for children. Grandparents often take on the responsibility of teaching child-rearing practices (Backhouse & Graham, 2012). In the Latino community, for example, this may be done through consejos (Valdés, 1996), or cultural narratives, that elders within the family provide not only to maintain traditions but also to help in the healthy development of children.

 ✓ Check Your Comprehension

Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

:: THE STAGES OF PARENTHOOD

The stages of parenthood, developed by Galinsky (1987), divide parenthood into six levels of development, much like the child’s stages of development.
Although this is a good model that may be applied to many families in Western society, it is important to contextualize the six stages within the child’s cultural background.

The first stage, **image making**, takes place before the birth of a child. Images are formed and preparation is made for the birth. This is where parents may get the nursery ready and buy clothes for the infant. Family members and other systems may help those parents who may not be able to provide for the infant. The second stage, **nurturing**, is when attachment develops during infancy. Parents and infants begin to develop their relationship through different types of interactions such as breast-feeding, playing, reading, singing, and just holding the baby.

In the third stage, **authority**, families teach children rules and consequences. Parents discover the type of authority they want to use with their children. Parents learn that setting limits and enforcing the rules become important for positive guidance. During the **interpretive** stage which is the fourth stage, parents and children learn to interpret their social reality. Children throughout elementary and middle school practice social skills that will help them at home and school. As children get closer to the teen years, they tend to question rules and consequences. The **interdependent** years make up the fifth stage of family development. This stage occurs during high school or the teen years. Parents during this stage learn to reinforce authority in order to help children grow emotionally but responsibly. For example, during the high school years, children develop a different type of independence that allows them to go out in the world to practice what they learned throughout their childhood. When the children are ready to go out into the world for themselves, the parents enter the last stage: **departure**. During each of these stages, parents self-evaluate their parenting skills. This is when others reassure parents that if they trust in the values instilled in their children, the children will follow them. Once the children leave home, parents evaluate their children’s experiences by measuring them against what they taught them. Depending on the family’s culture, children physically leave home or stay to help their parents and contribute to the household.

**✓ Reflect and Analyze**

Click here to use reflection and analysis to decide what to do in this situation.

**THE DIVERSITY OF FAMILIES**

The structure, stage of family development, family size, and ages and genders of the children all figure into the makeup of each unique family. According to Knopf and Swick (2007), families in today’s society are very different than those from previous generations. The families presented in the following vignettes represent a few examples of the diversity—especially the diversity of structure—encountered in many families. Think about your own family and the families you work with and see if any are similar to the ones presented in these examples.

**The Single-Parent Family**

Tina is a young divorced mother with one son, Tommy, age 3. They live with Tina’s parents. In addition to working part-time at a department store, Tina takes 6 hours of classes at the community college. Each morning she prepares breakfast for Tommy and herself, bundles him into his coat during cold weather, hopes that her aging automobile will start, and heads into her long day. First, she drops Tommy off with her sister, who runs a family childcare home. She feels fortunate to have a relative who enjoys children to care for Tommy. He has been anxious ever since his father left, and the security of spending his days at Aunt Georgia’s helps compensate for his loss.

Tina’s ex-husband, Ted, does not send support money consistently, and Tina knows her parents can help only so much. As she works as a clerk in the department store, she dreams of the time when she will make enough to give Tommy the home and opportunities he needs. Tina figures that with family help and her part-time college work, she will be able to graduate in a little more than 2 years, just about the time Tommy will start school.

**The Teenage Mother**

As Sherrill thinks back, she can’t remember when she didn’t want a baby. “When I have a baby,” she thought, “I’ll be treated like an adult by my
mother, and I’ll also have a baby all my own who will love me.” At 3 months, though, Gerald has already become a real handful.

Sherrill turned 15 yesterday, and instead of being able to hang out with her friends, she had to take care of Gerald. “If only my mother hadn’t had to work,” Sherrill complained. “I would have had a couple of hours between feedings just to get out. I never dreamed a baby would be so demanding. What makes him cry so much?”

The school down the street offers a program for teen mothers and their infants. Sherrill is on the waiting list and plans to enroll at the end of summer. “I never thought I’d want to go back to school,” she says, “but they help out by caring for my baby while I’m in class and my mother says that I need to be able to make a living for Gerald. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families will help me for only 24 months. I really don’t like school, but I guess I’d better go. If only Gerald would start being more fun.”

The Two-Parent Family Experiencing Homelessness

When Barbara married Jed, the future looked good. Young, handsome, and hardworking, Jed thought his job at the plant would last forever. Who would have expected the layoffs? Jed’s father worked at the plant for 25 years before he retired. Now Jed and Barbara, along with Jessie, age 2, and Bob, age 6, are moving west in hopes of finding work.

It’s hard to live out of a car. Barbara worries about Bob because he is missing first grade. She and Jed put him in school whenever they are in a city for any length of time, but schools want his permanent address. It embarrasses Barbara to say their family is homeless, so she finds out the name of a street near the school and pretends they live there. Bob doesn’t like school anyway. He says the children make fun of him and the teacher gives him seatwork that he doesn’t understand.

Jed feels as if he has failed as a father and provider for his family. If he could just find a good job, his family would not be homeless. Minimum wage doesn’t give him enough to pay for rent, let alone buy clothing and food. Last month they spent time at a church-run mission for the homeless. Jed was glad they were in a town far from home so that none of his old school friends would recognize him and Barbara. Jed hopes that maybe a good factory job will turn up, but the challenge is that he does not have technology skills or a high school diploma.

The Two-Income Family

“Joe, the alarm. It’s your turn to get up and start breakfast,” Maria says as she turns over to get 10 more minutes of sleep before the drive to school. Each day, Maria teaches 28 second graders in the adjoining school district. Joe teaches mathematics at the local middle school. It works exceedingly well for them. Their children, Karen and Jaime, stay with a neighbor until it is time for them to walk to school. Joe and Maria take turns dashing home early enough in the afternoon to supervise the children after school.

At times, the stress of work and the demanding days get to Joe and Maria. Some days their schedules do not blend and they scurry to find someone to care for the children after school. Karen and Jaime occasionally have been latchkey children, providing for themselves. Neither Joe nor Maria wants their children to be left on their own. They see too many children in their classrooms in similar situations who feel as if no one cares. Joe tries to be a nurturing father who helps with the home, but he relies on Maria to clean, shop, and cook.

Summers are the best time for the family. Joe works for a summer camp, but Maria is able to spend more time at home, enjoying the children and organizing for the coming year. Periodically, she thinks about how much easier it would be for her to quit teaching and be a full-time homemaker, but then reality sets in. They could not make the house payments if they were not a two-income family—and a family needs a home.

The Immigrant Family

The Gonzalez family moved to the United States from San Luis Potosí, México, 10 years ago when their two older children were very young. After Juan and Leticia married, they decided to move to the United States to provide a better life for their children. Without proper documents, the newly wed couple decided to venture to a new country where life is very different from their life in rural Mexico. Juan found work in construction, while Leticia worked as a babysitter for children from an affluent neighborhood. Because Leticia and Juan work long hours, they have not been able to attend
It is important for educators to understand how each of these structures (and others not discussed) is diverse and affects families. All families need guidance but in different ways, depending on their immediate needs. For instance, families not familiar with the school system will need more guidance to understand the school’s expectations. Teachers should ensure that information is relevant for all families. For example, teachers can make school routines and procedures parent-friendly by making things easy for parents. It is never a good idea to scold parents who do not follow procedures, because this only creates barriers between the home and the school.

✓ Check Your Comprehension

Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

THE FUNCTIONS OF FAMILIES

Although their forms vary, families provide similar roles. Swick (1986) described these roles as “(1) nurturing, (2) guiding, (3) problem solving, and (4) modeling” (p. 72). Cataldo (1987) described similar roles: providing “care, nurturance, and protection”; socialization; “monitoring the child’s development as a learner”; and supporting “each youngster’s growth into a well-rounded, emotionally healthy person” (p. 28).

The first function of a family is to nurture by supplying the basic needs of nutrition, protection, and shelter as well as the emotional needs of interaction, love, and support. The family has a responsibility to see that the child receives adequate care but also a right to rear the child as it sees fit. This is important to remember because families in the United States are becoming more diverse as more families come from different countries and as American families (with children born and raised in the United States) develop new childrearing practices and beliefs. Educators need to understand these differences in order to better work with young children and their families. When differences are understood—particularly cultural differences—educators open the door to create partnerships with families that aid in the healthy development of children.

Part of understanding cultural differences is having knowledge of how parents socialize their children according to their native culture’s norms.
Socialization varies, depending on the culture. For example, respect for elders is a norm in most cultures, but in others, such as Latino and Asian cultures, it is even more important in the socialization process. Another example is the role the extended family plays in the raising of children—for some cultures, the role is very integral, whereas in others, this may not be the case. There are also variations within cultures that often result from how the parents were raised. For instance, in some African American families, speaking Ebonics is very important (Boutte & Strickland, 2008). Whatever the rearing process, most children learn and internalize their parents’ value system.

**Apply Your Knowledge**

Click here to apply your knowledge to this scenario.

### PARENTING STYLES

Parents play a key role in ensuring that their family creates a strong bond regardless of the family structure. The roles that a parent plays are largely based on his/her parenting style, which is also culturally based. Parents display an array of behaviors and interactions with their children which can be described as their parenting style (Laukkanen, Tolvanen, Ojansuu, Alatupa & Aunola, 2013). Parenting styles (some of which are more effective than others) are often identified as authoritative, authoritarian, or laissez-faire (see Table 2.1).

Each of these types has different ways of handling issues and concerns within the family. In addition, depending on the circumstance, responses even in families with the same parenting style may vary. The style recommended by parent educators is the authoritative, democratic style because it is thought that children raised under that style will achieve, be dependable and responsible, and feel good about themselves. A child’s temperament also influences parenting styles (Meng, 2012).

Children raised with authoritative parents will be allowed to analyze and recognize the issues confronting them. Guidance will be available but will not be dictated. Children will learn to make decisions. Through working and talking together, they will be able to learn why angry, quick decisions are not effective. Children with authoritarian parents are expected to mind their parents without any question about what precipitated the issue. The children do not get an opportunity to resolve a conflict or learn from actions, except to learn that punishment will follow no matter what the situation. They receive little training in decision making. Under this parenting style, children may learn to mind, but they also learn to avoid being caught and perhaps to lie when they are.

Children of laissez-faire rearing often think that their parents are not interested in them. The children may be depressed, act out, or take risks because they do not feel their parents care. In addition, they get little to no guidance to help them make decisions. While children may think they enjoy the freedom of a laissez-faire parenting style, too much freedom makes it possible for children to think that they do not matter.

**TABLE 2.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenting Styles</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authoritative</strong></td>
<td>Democratic decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guidelines and parameters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-discipline and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authoritarian</strong></td>
<td>Demanding parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(might be overprotective)</td>
<td>Absolute rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restrictive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Punitive control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Laissez-faire</strong></td>
<td>Anything goes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(might be very indulgent)</td>
<td>Neglectful parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No one cares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Withdrawal from parental responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dysfunctional</strong></td>
<td>Alcohol or drug-addicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(includes authoritative, authoritarian, and laissez-faire families)</td>
<td>Neurotic or mentally ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abusive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are also two subtypes that do not fit into the three major types. One is the overprotective parent, who can often become authoritarian. The other is the indulgent parent, who may not guide the child. Dysfunctional families—including those that are abusive or that have parents who are addicted to drugs or alcohol or are mentally unstable—may fluctuate between authoritarian (to the point of abuse) and laissez-faire, with abdication of parental roles. One of the most difficult issues children in dysfunctional families face is the inconsistency. Dependable families in which children understand the guidelines and can communicate with and rely on their parents are extremely important to children’s mental health.

If the types of families are multiplied by the number of configurations of families (single-, two-parent, and blended) and the individual personality differences of each child and parent, it becomes apparent that to work effectively with parents, teachers and childcare workers must individualize their suggestions and responses.

✓ Reflect and Analyze

Click here to use reflection and analysis to decide what to do in this situation.

✓ Check Your Comprehension

Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

Social Issues Affecting Families Today

Fatherhood

From the Puritan times until industrialization, a “good” father was the breadwinner and provider of moral guidance. Fathers have long held these two roles, but in the 20th century, the importance of fathers’ roles in their children’s development underwent change based on social conditions and beliefs as well as research in child development. In the 21st century, fathers exhibit a willingness to expand their role, becoming companions, standard setters, guidance counselors, play partners, teachers, providers, caregivers, and role models. The National Center for Fathering (2013) lists the following situations for many fathers in the United States today:

adoptive dad, at-home dad, divorced dad, noncustodial dad, single dad, stepdad, traveling dad, special needs–kids dad, and urban dad. Also very important but not listed is the married dad.

The Children’s Bureau, established in 1912, provides information to families about caring for their infants in the publication Infant Care. Historically, although fathers were mentioned in the publication, the advice was directed to mothers. Fathers were not considered as important to the child’s development until the 1940s. Awareness of the father as a gender-role model came about toward the end of World War II, but it was not until the 1970s that the role of nurturant father was emphasized (Lamb, 1997). In the last two decades, the number of intervention and support programs for fathers has increased (Bronte-Tinkew, Burkhauser & Metz, 2012).

Some advocates for fathers argue that in the 20th century fathers were viewed as superfluous: “The retreat from fatherhood began in the 1960s, gained momentum in the 1970s, and hit full stride in the 1980s” (Horn, 1997, p. 24). In the 1990s, however, organizations that focused on fathers emerged, including the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Development, Promise Keepers, National Center for Fathering, and the National Fatherhood Initiative. These groups responded to data about the negative aspects of being raised without a father, including that children are “three times more likely to fail at school, two to three times more likely to experience emotional or behavioral problems requiring psychiatric treatment . . . three times
High levels of father involvement indicate positive outcomes in cognitive and socioemotional development (Halme, Astedt-Kurk & Tarkka, 2009). Indeed, the presence of a father indicates that a child will have the opportunity to have a healthy upbringing (The National Center on Fathers and Families, 2010). The Fathering Indicator Framework provides six positive fathering indicator categories: father presence, caregiving, children’s social competence, cooperative parenting, father’s healthy living, and material and financial contribution. Operational categories accompany the fathering indicator categories. These are used by programs to guide research regarding the importance of a father in a child’s life, as well as how a father’s participation creates a change of behavior in the child and family, and how these effects are threaded together to help men become more positively involved in their children’s lives (National Center on Fathers and Families, 2011).

The research regarding father involvement shows that in any family, regardless of the structure, children will benefit from a positive involvement with their fathers.

Research on Father Involvement

If the parents have supportive relationships with one another and their children, the children thrive. But, as studies show, stressors such as drinking, marital conflict, and negative parenting are directly related to children internalizing problems (Schacht, Cummings & Davies, 2009), and children “who have secure, supportive, reciprocal, and sensitive relationships with their parents are much more likely to be well-adjusted psychologically than individuals whose relationships with their parents—mothers or fathers—are less satisfying” (Lamb, 1997, p. 13). Current studies suggest that fathers’ involvement may help offset negative effects on child development when mothers are not as supportive (Martin, Ryan & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). Even when mothers are supportive, research shows that fathers’ more physical style of interacting with their children supports and adds to the nurturing and verbal style of the mother (Horn, 1997; Lamb, 1997).

As a father’s parental role grows beyond just that of a breadwinner, so do the father’s attitudes toward parenting. In a national survey conducted by Zero to Three (2010), it was found that fathers today are not satisfied with their work/family balance, find challenges in a variety of parenting situations, and need more information regarding social development. However, the National Center for Fathering and the National Parent Teacher Association (2009) surveys indicate that fathers today seem to be more involved with their children than 10 years ago.

The Importance of Fathers

Heightened interest in fatherhood goes hand in hand with the increasing number of women who work outside the home. Many young fathers see the expression of love toward their children as a way of fulfillment in their own lives through meaningful relationships. Some fathers are full-time homemakers and care for the children while their wives work outside the home.

Although fathers and mothers are similar in their connection with their children, fathers tend to be more physically stimulating through unpredictable play, whereas mothers tend toward containment and soft, repetitive verbal expression. A father’s physical play largely benefits the child’s socioemotional development (Fletcher, St. George & Freeman, 2013). Furthermore, fathers of children with special needs have a tremendous responsibility in making sure they bond with the child and yet maintain a strong bond with their other children (Huhtanen, 2009).

In the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited childcare programs, fathers preferred involvement in (a) family
activities, (b) Daddy and Me programs, (c) activities for both parents to learn about their child’s future, (d) activities for both parents to learn about child development, and (e) sporting events (Turbiville, Umbarger & Guthrie, 2000).

✓ Reflect and Analyze
Click here to use reflection and analysis to decide what to do in this situation.

Suggestions for Fathers

1. Be there. Engage in activities with your child, from the early caregiving bathing and bedroom routine to the later reading, storytelling, and playing together activities.

2. Accept your child. Accept your child for who she or he is. Each child has an individual personality. Trying to change a quiet child into a boisterous one or an uncoordinated child into an outstanding athlete makes the child feel unaccepted.

3. Use positive parenting. Praise is better than punishment in guiding children. Help the child express anger constructively.

4. Share parenting. Work as a team with your spouse or with the mother of your children.

5. See fathering as worthwhile and satisfying. Fatherhood can be a prideful role. Think about how you can influence the future by working positively with your child.

6. Be there for your children. Listen and be involved in their education from early childhood on. Listen to the needs and interests of your children and show interest in what they like. The PTA (Parent Teacher Association) is a good way to be involved in your child’s education.

Involving Fathers in Schools and Centers

The first step in getting fathers, brothers, uncles, and other male role models involved is to keep in mind that the term father extends to all father figures. Because many children do not have a father in the home, the inclusion of father figures is extremely important. Encourage family friends, uncles, grandfathers, stepfathers, and interested others to become support systems for children.

Many schools and centers have developed ways to involve fathers and other male role models. Fourteen of these programs are described in Getting Men Involved (Levine et al., 1993), but there are several others that are more current. For example, there is the National Fathering Network, which has affiliates in 35 states and provides different opportunities for involvement. Another example is the Kindering Center in Bellevue, Washington, a support group for fathers raising children with special needs. The Parents as Teachers program in Ferguson-Florissant, Missouri, has established programs for teenage parents and parents-to-be. The FRED (Fathers Reading Every Day) program focuses on reading. AVANCE also offers a father involvement program that focuses on increasing father interactions with children and decreasing violence in the home (AVANCE, 2011).

DIVORCE

The divorce rate in America has fluctuated between 2000 and 2011, with the highest rates in 2000 and 2002 (see Figure 2–2).

The economic status of parents who divorce changes drastically—about one quarter or 24.6 percent of all custodial parents and their children had incomes below the poverty level in 2007. Issues such as health care and child support that custodial and non-custodial parents face affect their and their children’s economic well-being (Grall, 2007).

Divorce Causes Changes in Families

Divorce involves change for both parents and children but can be particularly difficult for children. Children are usually ashamed of the divorce and feel rejected because of a parent’s departure, but the effects of divorce on children are related more to the previous situation and the subsequent events that affect the child than to the divorce itself. Despite most children’s negative feelings about their parents’ separation, divorce may improve the situation for a child in cases where a successful re-established single-parent family or a remarriage provides the child with a good quality of life. Oftentimes, too, children’s initial adverse feelings reduce over time; their risk at school is much lower even just a year after the divorce than immediately following it. Separation or divorce can be difficult on children; therefore, parents must continue to do positive parenting, limit conflicts, and increase the quality of parent–child interactions (Clark, 2013).
Children’s Responses

Children of all ages respond to the divorce of their parents; some children are more resilient than others. When I was a teacher, one of the most challenging times I had with a child was when her parents were going through a divorce. The father had decided to leave back to his home country so the mother had to go back to work, thus spending less time with her daughter. As a teacher, I had to learn how to adjust my classroom environment to ensure the child felt safe and nurtured.

Another part of helping children adjust to divorce is to reassure them they are not the cause of it. They also need to know by the parents’ actions and words that they will continue to have their parents’ love. Adapt your caring for children to their level of development—their understanding and response are related to their age and maturity (Leon & Cole, 2004).

Teachers and administrators must recognize that during the period of divorce, the family may be in turmoil. Children will bring their distress with them to the classroom. The school can offer the child a stable and sensitive environment—one the child can count on during that period. The school can also provide support and understanding by trying to meet the family’s needs. Talking with both parents can help the child feel safe, secure, and accepted. Keep positive expectations for the children. Be kind, but encourage them to keep up with their classwork. Find ways that the child can contribute to the class. Use special projects or activities that may interest the child. Provide a “Talk About Feelings” learning center where children can talk to you about their feelings or write or draw what they are feeling.

How Do you Feel?

This single parent supports her child’s education by coloring with him.

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FIGURE 2–2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Divorces and annulments</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000 total population</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Divorces and annulments</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000 total population</th>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>246,273,366</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>847,000</td>
<td>233,495,163</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>872,000</td>
<td>244,122,529</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>879,000</td>
<td>236,402,656</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>840,000</td>
<td>242,610,561</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>927,000</td>
<td>243,902,090</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>240,545,163</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>243,108,303</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>944,000</td>
<td>233,550,143</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Excludes data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota. 2Excludes data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, and Louisiana. 3Excludes data for California, Hawaii, Indiana, and Oklahoma. 4Excludes data for California, Indiana, and Oklahoma.

Note: Populations are consistent with the 2000 census.

Note: The term “provisional” in this context indicates that the statistics are constantly changing.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, CDC. www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm
Single-Parent Families

Single-parent families are not a new phenomenon. From the 1860s until the mid-1960s, there was no increase in the proportion of single parents because the growing divorce rate was offset by the declining death rate. Young children in the last half of the 1800s and first half of the 1900s were raised in single-parent families, most often because the mother was widowed; 25 percent had lost a parent to death (Amato, 1994). According to the U.S. Census, in 2011 there were 32 million one-person households in the U.S. Grall (2009) indicates that 27 percent of custodial single mothers and their children live in poverty, whereas 12.9 percent of custodial single fathers and their children live in poverty. In 2012, 24% of children in the U.S. lived with only their mother, while 4% lived only with their father (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2013).

Gender differences exist for mothers and fathers. For example, during the period that a mother is raising her children alone, she has a much higher risk of poverty. Twelve percent of single parents who work full time find themselves in poverty; 49 percent of those who work part time are also poor. Almost 74 percent of single parents who do not work are in poverty, and 79 percent of single parents are in the labor force (Litcher & Crowley, 2002). Most divorced parents remarry, however, making it possible for 80 percent of children to live in two-parent homes with a reduced risk of poverty.

Parents and teachers need to communicate throughout a child’s education, but it is essential during periods of change to know what is happening both at home and at school and to help children overcome the isolation and distress they feel. Although only one in every five children will probably be from a one-parent family, she has a much higher risk of poverty, half of all children will spend part of their childhood in a one-parent family. Thus, it is important for teachers to offer convenient times for parent–teacher conferences, so ask the parents for their best choices.

It is important to learn parents’ names by checking records to determine the names of the children and the parents because they may not be the same. Calling the parents by their correct names is a simple gesture of courtesy. Find ways that single parents can be involved without putting great stress on the family. Parents who work outside the home might be able to attend early morning breakfasts, especially if childcare is provided and the children get breakfast, too. Keep the number of parents at each breakfast small so you can talk with each parent individually. Find out how they would like to be involved, what their needs are, and if they have any ideas for their partnership with the school. Acknowledge their suggestions for improved home–school collaboration.

Acknowledge and communicate with noncustodial parents. If noncustodial parents receive report cards and other information, they likely will be more interested in the child’s work and can be better involved with the child. Most noncustodial parents are men, and the percentage of men who pay child support is low. Schools can help sustain or even increase the father’s interest by keeping him informed, if such communication is specified in the custody papers.

Use care in communication. In all partnerships with parents, one of the most important elements of cooperation and understanding is the ability to communicate. The first objective is to have effective communication. The second objective is to prepare written materials that project positive and knowledgeable feelings toward the parent. Take care when preparing invitations to programs. Perhaps you may wish to emphasize one group, but make sure the child and parent know they do not need to have a father, mother, or grandparent to attend. For example, saying, “Bring your grandparent or a grand­friend to class next week” implies that the visitors, not their titles, are important. At the program, make sure you have some get-acquainted activities so no one feels left out or alone. Activities also encourage networking among parents, and may be the best opportunity for new single parents in the neighborhood to become acquainted with others.

Be aware that if the parent remarries, the child is affected again, and concerns may arise regarding the loss of the parent as the sole caregiver, as well as the strong relationship that may have developed between parent and child. There could also be issues with relationships between the stepparent and the children.

**Blended Families**

There is a complex social organization in blended families. In remarried families, some children may be offspring of the mother, some of the father, and the remaining may be born to the remarried couple. A child may be living in a home with a brother or sister, a stepbrother or stepsister whose biological
parent is the mother or father in the home, and a half-sister or half-brother who is the child of the re-married couple. In addition, they may have a similar situation with their other biological parent and have another set of siblings, stepsiblings, and half-siblings when they are living or visiting there. In fact, families may have as many as 30 configurations (Manning & Wootten, 1987). In addition, there is an increase in families that have blended cultures.

**Blended-Family Cycle**

When two people marry and one or both have children from a previous relationship, the road to a secure, happy family becomes more challenging. The members of the new family come with different backgrounds, have no family history together, and have no established way of doing things. Newly blended families need to recognize and mourn their losses, develop the ability to make decisions as a family, support each other, nurture the parent–child relationship, and foster new relationships among their new stepparent and other stepchildren as well as their own parent and siblings (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2004). Building a strong new family can be accomplished, but the initial excitement of the children and acceptance of the new arrangement by ex-spouses are complicated by the realities of the situation. One of the complications occurs because both parent and child have come from single-parent family status (even if the single-parent stage is short-lived). During the single-parent stage, parent and child tend to become extremely close. The parent may have turned to the children for emotional support and decision making help in the absence of the former spouse. Children of the newly married couple often see the remarriage as a double loss: First they lost a parent through divorce, and now they are losing their special relationship with the other parent by having to share their custodial parent with a new stepparent.

Papernow (1993, 1998) breaks down the development of the blended family into three stages: fantasy, which includes fantasy, immersion, and awareness; restructuring; and solidifying. In the first two stages, the family is generally divided according to biological lines, but by the third, the family has created a new bond. During the fantasy phase of the first stage, parents visualize that the new marriage will provide a supportive, loving family; however, the children often want their biological parents back together. Papernow (1993, 1998) explains that, “because the adults in the new family adore each other, [they assume] stepparents and stepchildren will also” (p. 13). In the second phase of the first stage, immersion, the nonbiological parent becomes the outsider parent, not able to relate in the same way a biological parent does to the biological children. Because of this and other tricky situations in the immersion phase, the parents may be concerned about the family because of negative feelings occurring. It is a period of sinking versus swimming. During the last phase of the first stage, awareness, parents become more able to understand the dynamics of the new relationship. Once the outsider parent acknowledges the bond between biological parent and child, they are ready to go to the next stage. If parents can recognize the areas of concern in the three phases and deal with them, the family will probably thrive, but if they get stuck in the first three phases, the family will probably dissolve.

The middle, or restructuring, stage includes mobilization—during which the airing of differences occurs—and action, during which power struggles are resolved and new agreements are made, with changes in family structure and new boundaries. In this stage, “Every family activity is no longer a potential power struggle between insiders and outsiders” (Papernow, 1993, p. 16).

The final stage, solidifying, includes contact, during which intimacy and authenticity in real relationships are forged: “The marital relationship becomes more of a sanctuary and source of nourishment and support, even on step issues” (Papernow, 1993, p. 16). Finally, resolution occurs. Although issues may recur and the family may reexperience the stepparenting cycle, the family is able to go forward. Differences no longer threaten the family.

Though by the final stage the family unit is set, the entire blended-family cycle affects the children. They may go through stages of grief similar to those experienced after divorce, death, or moving away from loved ones. During the first stage, while the children are still feeling a loss, their participation in school often suffers. Children may act out in class, they may be despondent, and they may have no interest in schoolwork. For school-age children, the school is a stable environment and can be a support for them. Staying in the same school with their friends can ease the transition.

The stages of the blended-family cycle affect the adults as well. During the early stage, stepparents
become aware that they are not able to nurture children in the same way biological parents do, because biological parents already have a strong bond with their children. Parents develop an awareness of these family pressures. Both partners recognize what they can handle and which attitudes need to be changed. In some cases, the family is never able to restructure their lives, and many of these marriages do not succeed.

The restructuring period of stepfamily development allows for more openness in discussion of change. Parents and children continue to have strong biological ties, but the differences lead to action. In this action phase, family boundaries are clarified and the couple attempts to work together to find solutions.

Keep in mind that blended-family stages cannot be rushed, and that “learning how to work as a team is crucial to stepfamily integration, and usually essential for a close couple relationship to develop and grow” (Visher, 2001, p. 4). The biological parent can help the stepparent become part of the family by showing understanding of the stepparent’s position: “Requiring civility within the household allows relationships to have the opportunity to develop, and demonstrating love and caring for both his or her children and new partner is an important element in the success of the family” (p. 3). Be patient with this process—Papernow (1993) found that from 4 to 7 years were needed to complete the entire cycle; without patience, some families may never be able to develop their blended family into a strong family. This patience will pay off, because when issues are resolved and the blended family develops into a strong family, children will rebound and will resume normal behavior, including being more engaged in school.

Families Headed by Grandparents

Grandparent caregivers may also be an integral part of a family. In 2000, this role was acknowledged by the U.S. Census, which, for the first time ever, included questions regarding the grandparents’ part in childrearing. Results of this census showed that the number of grandparents maintaining families doubled from 2.2 million in 1970 to 4.5 million in 2000, and care for grandchildren was maintained by 2.4 million grandparent caregivers. This equates to 3.9 percent of all households in 2000. Of these families, 19 percent had incomes below poverty. These are families in which parents may live with the family, but where the grandparents provide the financial support, different from families who have a grandparent move in with them (Simmons & Dye, 2003). These statistics mean that schools will have some families in which the children’s grandparents are the primary caregivers, oftentimes for extended periods of time. Actually, only 12 percent had their grandchildren less than 6 months; 11 percent cared for their grandchildren for 6 to 11 months; 23 percent for 1 to 2 years; 15 percent for 3 to 4 years; and the most, 39 percent, for 5 or more years (Simmons & Dye, 2003). Thus, schools will have grandparents who are responsible for their grandchildren for differing lengths of time. In 2009, the U.S. Census reported that the majority of the children who live with their grandparents only live in poverty (Kreider & Ellis, 2011 [U.S. Census report]).

Funds of knowledge are also transmitted by grandparents, who often take care of children.
Grandparents may need help in obtaining accurate information about, and assistance with, support services for themselves and their grandchildren. These issues may include counseling, mentoring, and tutoring for the children. The grandparents may need counseling as well as information on legal and financial aid. Information given should be easy to understand. The information needs to be geared so all grandparents, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, or educational background, can understand and use the information. When grandparents drop off or pick up their grandchild or grandchildren at school, be available to talk with them, just as you would with other key figures in the child’s life. Make telephone calls to share something the grandchild has done that was a positive contribution. This could include such things as a painting, drawing, story, or just an interest in a subject. If there is a grandparent support group, encourage the grandparents with children in your class or school to attend. If there isn’t a support group in your school, start one or find one nearby. Invite them to visit the class and help out! The experience of grandparents can be used as a great resource for projects.

Today, one child in 10 lives with a grandparent; about 41 percent of those are primarily raised by a grandparent (Livingston & Parker, 2010). By 2009, 2% of White and Hispanic children lived with grandparents (and no parents) and 5% of African American children lived with their grandparents (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). Byers (2010) indicates that Native American grandmothers have the highest percentage of rearing grandchildren than any other ethnic group. The U.S. Census estimates that 51.1% of American Indian and Alaskan Native grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The research indicates that the majority of grandparent-maintained families differ from households maintained by parents. These differences include the educational level of the grandparent, who may not have graduated from high school, and the grandparent’s profession, which may not be high income. Even when grandparents work and have health insurance, the insurance programs often do not cover grandchildren living with them. In 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This law became highly controversial, but it seeks to provide health care insurance for families who otherwise would not be able to obtain coverage.

Grandparents play a significant role in raising children in different cultures.

**POVERTY**

**Poverty** is defined in the United States according to the income of the person or family. Poverty implies that people lack resources relative to what they need (Cancian & Reed, 2009). In Figure 2–3, we can see how poverty (number of people and rate) has fluctuated in the United States from 1959 to 2011. The number of children living in poverty increased from 2008 to 2009, from 19 percent to 20.7 percent (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor & Smith, 2010). Many families live in poverty due to unemployment or loss of employment, a change in family structure, lack of education, addictions, or health problems, among other reasons.

What are some of the reasons families live in poverty? Have you ever met families who are in this situation? The video explains that for many families it is difficult to pay bills when salaries are low or when family members lose their jobs.

The economic downturn in 2007 increased the poverty rate due to the loss of employment and earnings (Cancian & Danziger, 2009). According to Cancian and Reed (2009), researchers associated with the Institute for Research on Poverty, changes in family structure and single-parent homes also increased the likelihood of poverty. In fact, the researchers state that single-mother families are five times as likely to be poor as married families. Most single mothers also qualify for government assistance programs, including income support
Throughout history, discrimination has had a negative effect on the social and economic well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse families such as African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. According to Cancian and Danziger (2009), half of the nation’s poor are African American or Latino. From 2008 to 2009, the poverty rate increased for all groups except for the Asian population, as shown in Table 2.2 (DeNavas-Walt, 2010).

Poverty’s Casualties

Currently, there are about 15 million children living in poverty in the U.S., creating a major health problem (Hanson, Hair, Shen, Shi, Gilmore, Wolfe & Pollak, 2013). To exist in the culture of poverty often means to feel depressed, powerless to effect change, and unable to control one’s destiny. Alienation, anomie, isolation, and depression are common partners of poverty, as well as information processing in infants (Hanson et al.). Although poverty has a look of despair, many families work together to provide the best for their children. Education and training appear to be the keys in helping families in poverty.

**The Changing Face of Poverty**

Programs such as cash welfare and food stamps. Furthermore, the high rate of divorce and the fact that more people are opting not to marry increase the chances that a family will live in poverty (Cancian & Reed, 2009). Policies that help such families increase their economic well-being, in particular, open the doors for young children to participate in experiences that will help them grow and develop as their parents struggle to find a better life by obtaining assistance through different programs and agencies. Following are a few of the nonprofit organizations that help people who are poor. An online search will easily locate their Web sites.

YMCA
Catholic Charities
Salvation Army
American Red Cross
United Jewish Communities
Goodwill Industries International
Boys and Girls Club of America
Feed the Children
Habitat for Humanity International
Shriners Hospitals for Children
Food for the Poor

**FIGURE 2-3**
Number of people in poverty and poverty rate, 1959–2011.

Recommend community agencies for parents who need additional help. If your school has a parent liaison, put him/her in contact with parents needing help. Children in poverty are likely to have poor health and inadequate care.

**Ways to Counteract Poverty**

To counteract the stress of poverty on families, parents and children need at least the following:

- A decent standard of living (jobs that pay enough to adequately rear children)
- Flexible working conditions so children can be cared for
- An integrated network of family services
- Legal protection for children outside and inside families
- A place to live, preferably on their own

### HOMELESSNESS

Before reading this section on homelessness, please watch this [video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvL_tpkBFT8) and think about your perceptions of the families represented in the video.

**TABLE 2.2**

Percentage of children under age 18 living in poverty, by race /ethnicity: 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asian</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pacific Islander</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American Indian/Alaska Native</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two or more races</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The measure of child poverty includes families in which all children are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

**Source:** U. S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2012. See Digest of Education Statistics 2013, table 102.60.
What are your perceptions of people who are homeless? How does the video change your perception? This video portrays examples of families who become homeless for a variety of reasons. It is important to understand that often people’s circumstances render them incapable of affording shelter, due to no fault of their own. The National Coalition for the Homeless (2011) states that each year 3.5 million Americans experience homelessness, and children make up 23 percent of the homeless population. A report from the U.S. Conference of Mayors (2009) points out that the three main reasons why people experience homelessness are lack of affordable housing, poverty, and unemployment.

Single mothers without homes lack more than just housing. In another report, only 38 percent of the young homeless single mothers had ever held a job for longer than 6 months. They were generally undereducated, had few job skills, probably had abused alcohol and other drugs, and were often the victims of domestic violence (Home for the Homeless, Institute for Children and Poverty, 2004). According to the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (2011), currently there are over 1.35 million children who are homeless. Children who are homeless have acute and chronic health problems, experience emotional and behavioral problems, and have issues with school performance (Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2010).

Other people without homes, in addition to young single mothers with children, include unemployed two-parent families, single men and women, jobless people with mental illness, people with mental and physical disabilities, homeless independent children and young adults, alcoholics, and transients. It is estimated that families with children make up 40 percent of the homeless. Schools are directly concerned with single- or two-parent families with children who should be in school, as well as runaway children who have dropped out of school. Federal legislation has been passed to help mediate these problems.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-77) was reauthorized in January 2002 as the McKinney-Vento Amendment. The act was designed to ensure that homeless children have access to education. Although it offers incentives and nominal grants to encourage states to provide for homeless children, the responsibility is left to each state (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2002b; Stronge & Helm, 1991). The authorized federal funding is $70 million. The minimum amount of funding any state receives is $150,000 (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2002b).

Authorized Rights for Students Who Are Experiencing Homelessness

The National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty recognized some issues that need to be addressed to help persons who are homeless. Less than 30 percent of the people eligible for low-income housing receive low-income housing. Only 11 percent of the 40 percent eligible for disability benefits receive such benefits. Only 37 percent have food stamps, even though most are eligible for them. Similarly, most are eligible for welfare benefits, but only 52 percent receive them (National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty, 2002a, pp. 1–2).

Children and youth who are considered homeless include those who are living with someone who cannot afford a home or who has lost their home, be they a friend, relative, or someone else. It also includes those staying in a motel, hotel, or emergency shelter because they do not have adequate accommodations (National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2002b). Regrettably, in spite of the law, 12 percent of homeless children are still denied their education (National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty, 2002a, pp. 1–2).

Concern for Children Experiencing Homelessness

When families are dislocated because of losing their home, they may move to various locations, such as shelters or relatives’ homes, which may be in other school districts. Not only do the children
lack the security of living in a stable environment, but if the school will not accept them because of residency requirements, they also lack the stability provided by attending the same school.

Children who are without homes also have a higher risk of nutritional deficiency and other health problems, including delayed immunization, poor iron levels, and developmental difficulties. In a study of children without homes compared with low-income children who had homes, it was found that the children without homes were delayed in their growth (Fiernan et al., 1991). It may be a combination of factors—malnourishment, diarrhea, asthma, elevated lead levels, or social factors including family violence, drug exposure, alcohol abuse, mental disorders, and child abuse and neglect—that affect the child's growth (Bassuk, 1991; Fiernan et al., 1991).

Administrators and teachers should be particularly aware of this and other special concerns of homeless children, including the opportunity for education, acceptance by staff and peers, and referrals as needed for special services. They should also be aware that homeless children may suffer from learning difficulties, speech delays, behavioral problems, depression and anxiety, short attention spans, aggression, and withdrawal (Bassuk & Rubin, 1987; Klein, Bittel & Molnar, 1993; McCormick & Holden, 1992). Children experiencing homelessness who come to school are usually ashamed of not having a home, instead living out of a car, tent, or shelter. They need support, not blame; they need acceptance, not rejection; and they need a curriculum that allows them to succeed. They may need special tutoring and a buddy assigned to help them learn the routine. If they are continuing in the same school that they attended before becoming homeless, they need to be assured that they are still valued. Administrators and teachers should keep in mind that because the family and children are under a lot of stress, it is better to let them offer information than to inquire into personal concerns.

Parents’ Desires

In a research survey (McCormick & Holden, 1992), parents without homes indicated they would like assistance with transportation, developmentally appropriate child care, opportunities to share with others, flexible opportunities to be involved, respite opportunities, mental health self-esteem groups, information on services, an easy intake process for preschool participation, and classes.

The McKinney-Vento Act (Sec. 722[g][4]) offers the following standards for parents:

4.1. Parents or persons acting as parents will have a face-to-face conference with the teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker within 30 days of enrollment.

4.2. Parents or persons acting as parents will be provided with individual student reports informing them of their child’s specific academic needs and achievement on academic assessments aligned with state academic achievement standards.

4.3. Parents or persons acting as parents will report monitoring or facilitating homework assignments.

4.4. Parents or persons acting as parents will share reading time with their children (i.e., parent reads to child or listens to child read).

4.5. Parents who would like parent skills training will attend available programs.

4.6. Parents or guardians will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento rights.

4.7. Unaccompanied youth will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento rights.

Programs for Homeless Families

Homes for the Homeless (2011) developed the American Family Inns, where parents and children can live for a year, establishing stability in the family and allowing the parents to become self-sufficient. The American Family Inn meets the educational needs of each parent, children have supplemental help to compensate for skills they need to develop, and infants and preschoolers go to child development centers, giving the children a jump-start. Recreation and cultural programs are also provided. Similar programs have been established across the country. They give single mothers and two-parent families the time to develop skills and establish stable lifestyles.

The extra effort works. After a family moves from the American Family Inn to their own permanent housing, they are provided with aftercare services for an additional year. Studies show that approximately 94 percent of those who lived in an American Family Inn were still self-sufficient and living independently 2 years later (Nuñez, 1996, p. 76). The continuing concerns for families and their children affected by homelessness require giving top priority to schools and programs that help these families survive and flourish. The United States has more of a challenge compared to many other nations: Although the United States provides many successful and effective
programs to help the poor, more improvement is needed because the United States ranks 21st among industrialized countries for low birth weight rates, 28th in infant mortality rates, and last in relative child poverty (Children’s Defense Fund, 2011).

All of these suggestions can help the family, but families need time to develop skills and stability. Due to the way homeless shelters are usually set up, the family can stay only a limited time. Some programs have begun to recognize that this does not provide homeless families enough time to gain skills for employment or enough stability to provide for the family.

✓ Check Your Comprehension

Click here to gauge your understanding of chapter concepts.

Teachers should create an environment where children have empathy for all but particularly for those who need it the most. Establishing a buddy system in the classroom can help promote empathy and collaboration. Providing a place where children can keep their school materials and a supervised area where homework or enrichment activities can be completed at school will help children who are homeless have a place of their own. Encourage parents to become involved. Let the parents of homeless children participate in the classroom. As with all parents, they will need to know how you want them to participate. Plan a workshop for parents, or mentor them individually. Their involvement will not only provide extra help in the classroom, but it can also become an educational program for parents. They may learn more about how they can help their children.

SUMMARY

The population of the United States has increased dramatically in the last 50 years. Along with growth in numbers, several trends are evident, such as the diversity within families that form part of the U.S. society. Diverse families include traditional two-parent, single-parent, divorced, blended, homeless, and immigrant families, as well as families living in poverty, among others. All families have the responsibility to provide for their children, so each family has functions it must exercise in order to ensure that children’s needs are met. Parents also have different parenting styles that affect children’s development. Grandparents play an important part in raising children in today’s society, because not only do families depend on them for taking care of the grandchildren, but also many parents need the grandparents to take custody of their children. Fathers need to have a strong presence in their children’s lives in order for children to have healthy relationships. Homelessness and poverty affect many diverse families, but there are laws that protect such families so their quality of life can improve.

SUGGESTED CLASS ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Survey your class and find out the different types of family structures represented.
2. Interview different types of families. Ask them questions, including what kinds of things help them be a family, some of their favorite things to do, the challenges they face on a daily basis, and what keeps them together.
3. Who are the immigrant families in your city? Do a search for your city and discover where families live and the conditions in which they live. Compare your answers with another classmate and see what he or she found.
4. List ways that fathers can become involved in a school or childcare center.
5. Examine the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). Is it working? Is it causing hardship for children? What are the changes to the PRWORA?
6. Count the number of residential moves the members of your class have made. Why have they moved? Where have they moved? How many times have they moved?
7. Research the effect of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) on childcare and families. What services does it provide? Has it been helpful? Are there any concerns? Learn where the TANF office is located in your community.

USEFUL WEB SITES

Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP)
Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)
National Fatherhood Initiative

GLOSSARY TERMS

Family: A group of people living together and supporting each other.
Household: The place where a family gathers.
Poverty: Scarcity, lacking materials or money.