

## **Chapter 2**

### **Studying Marriage and the Family**

#### **Chapter Focus**

Chapter Two examines the effect of popular culture on marriage and the family, thinking critically about marriage and the family, research methods and theories of marriage and the family. Chapter Two offers insights into approaching and understanding the family from a scientific perspective. Chapter Two discusses and analyzes theories of marriage and the family.

#### **Learning Objectives**

At the end of this chapter, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Explain the importance of studying marriage and the family rather than relying on popular culture as a source of knowledge.
2. Define objectivity and discuss ways of thinking that lack objectivity.
3. Describe social science research methods and methodology.
4. Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of survey research, clinical research, observational research and experimental research.
5. Understand and explain the major assumptions, viewpoints and criticisms of family ecology theory, symbolic interaction, social exchange theory, family development theory, structural functionalism, conflict theory, family systems theory, and the feminist perspective.
6. Understand the difference between basic and applied research.

## Chapter Outline

### I. HOW DO WE KNOW?

1. While we all tend to generalize from our own personal experience, our “common sense” understanding of family life (from experience, tradition, authority and media) is typically a poor source of accurate and reliable knowledge.
2. If we really want to know about how families work we would be better informed by seeking and acquiring more trustworthy information.

### II. HOW POPULAR CULTURE MISREPRESENTS FAMILY LIFE

1. Television, popular music, the Internet, magazines, newspapers, and movies help shape our attitudes and beliefs about the world in which we live.
2. On average, each of us will spend 3,600 hours a year using one of these media.
3. Prime-time television inaccurately portrays marriage and family life.
4. Even daytime talk shows such as Dr. Phil portray most families as dysfunctional.
5. Reality television is unrealistic; it highlights extreme cases or unusual circumstances in family life.
6. The “advice and information genre” of media offers value-laden advice.
7. To understand what family looks like for most people, we need more trustworthy information.

### III. RESEARCHING THE FAMILY

1. In order to obtain valid research information, researchers and research consumers need to keep in mind the rules of critical (clear and unbiased) thinking.
2. Personal experience creates personal perspectives, values, and beliefs, which can create blinders that keep people from accurately reading research information.
3. **Objectivity** in approaching information means that we suspend the beliefs, biases, or prejudices we have about a subject until we really understand what is being said, then relating it to the information and attitudes we already have.
4. A **value judgment** usually includes words that mean “should” and imply that our way is the correct way.
5. Opinions, biases, and stereotypes are ways of thinking that lack objectivity.
  - a. **Opinions** are based on our own experiences or ways of thinking.
  - b. **Biases** are strong opinions that may create barriers to hearing anything that is contrary to our opinions.
  - c. **Stereotypes** are sets of simplistic, rigidly held, and over generalized beliefs about the personal characteristics of a group of people.
    - i. Fallacies are errors in reasoning.
  - d. **Egocentric fallacies** are mistaken beliefs that everyone has the same experiences and values that we have and therefore should think as we do.
  - e. **Ethnocentric fallacies** are beliefs that one’s own ethnic group, nation, or culture is innately superior to others.

### IV. THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

1. Family researchers come from a variety of academic disciplines (sociology, psychology, social work, communication and family studies) but they are unified in their pursuit of accurate and reliable information about families.
2. Family science researchers use the **scientific method**, well-established procedures to collect information about family experiences.

## V. CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

1. One of the most important differences between knowledge about marriage and family derived from family research and that acquired elsewhere is that family research is guided by theory.
2. **Theories** are sets of general principles or concepts used to explain phenomenon and to make predictions that may be tested and verified experimentally.
3. Family research involves the process of **conceptualization**, the specification and definition of concepts used by the researcher, and **operationalization**, the identification and/or development of research strategies to observe or measure our concepts.
4. In **deductive research**, concepts are turned into **variables**, concepts that can vary in some meaningful way.
  - a. Researchers develop **hypotheses** or predictions about the relationship between variables.
  - b. **Independent variables** are causal variables (for example the variable of race may increase the likelihood of being married).
  - c. **Dependent variables** are influenced by causal variables introduced by the researcher (for example, marital status may be dependent upon race).
  - d. An **intervening variable** is affected by an independent variable and in turn affects a dependent variable (for example, marital status may be affected by race and may in turn affect life expectancy.)
5. **Inductive research** begins with a topical interest and perhaps some vague concepts that guide observation or interviews and form a foundation for developing **grounded theory** based on concrete data.

## VI. MACRO-LEVEL THEORIES

1. Theoretical frameworks (sometimes called paradigms) are sets of concepts and assumptions about how families work and how they fit into society.
2. Macro-level theories focus on the family as a social institution or pattern of roles, statuses, and rules established to meet certain societal needs.
3. **Family ecology theory** emphasizes how families are influenced by, and in turn influence, the wider society.
  - a. The core concepts in ecological theory include environment and adaptation.
  - b. In Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecologically based theory of human development, the environment to which individuals adapt as they develop consists of four levels: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, and (4) macrosystem.
  - c. There have been a variety of criticisms of ecological theory.
  - d. It is often unclear which level of analysis is appropriate.
  - e. There is a lack of specificity as to the process through which families are affected and what specifically is responsible for the outcomes we seek to explain.
4. **Structural functionalism** theorizes about how society works, how families work, and how families relate to larger society and to their own members.
  - a. The family is viewed as the subsystem of society that provides new members for society through procreation and socialization.
  - b. It examines how the family organizes itself for survival and what functions the family performs for its members.

- c. Structural functionalists encourage men to develop instrumental traits and women to develop expressive traits to ensure survival.
  - d. Criticisms of this theory include: (1) it cannot be tested empirically; (2) it is not always clear what function a particular structure serves; (3) it is not easy to know which family functions are vital? (4) it has a conservative bias against change; and (5) it looks at the family abstractly and often has little relevance to real families in the real world.
5. **Conflict theory** maintains that life involves discord; society is divided rather than cooperative.
- a. In addition to love and affection, conflict theorists believe that conflict and power are fundamental to marriage and family relationships.
  - b. Conflict theorists view conflict as a natural part of family life and not necessarily bad.
  - c. Conflict theory recognizes four sources of power: legitimacy, money, physical coercion, and love.
  - d. Everyone in the family has power although the sources and degree of power may vary.
  - e. Conflict theory seeks to channel conflict and to search for solutions through communication, bargaining, and negotiations.
  - f. Criticisms of conflict theory include: (1) it fails to recognize the power of love or bonding; (2) it assumes differences lead to conflict; and (3) conflict in families is not easily measured or evaluated.
6. The **feminist perspective** is not a unified theory. It is a shared concern regarding family life.
- a. Feminists maintain family and gender roles have been socially constructed as ways by which men maintain power over women.
  - b. Feminists urge a more extended view of family to include all kinds of sexually interdependent adult relationships regardless of the legal, residential, or parental status.
  - c. Feminists campaign to raise society's level of awareness to the oppression of women and associate their concern for greater sensitivity to all disadvantaged groups.
  - d. The feminist agenda is to attend to the social context as it impacts personal experience and to work to translate personal experience into community action and social critique.
  - e. Many social scientists now focus on how men's experiences are shaped by cultural ideas about masculinity and by their efforts to either live up to or challenge those ideas.
  - f. With a recent refocusing of attention to men as "gendered beings," we now have a greatly enlarged and still growing body of literature about men as husbands, fathers, sexual partners, ex-spouses, abusers, and so on.
  - g. The feminist perspective has been criticized for not being a unified theory and for putting too much focus on power and economics as a description of family.

VII. MICRO-LEVEL THEORIES

1. Micro-level theories emphasize what happens in a family by looking at what happens in everyday behavior and interaction.
2. **Symbolic interaction** looks at how people interact with one another.
  - a. Interactions are reciprocal acts that take place between people and are conducted through symbols, words, or gestures that stand for something else.
  - b. The family can be seen as a unity of interacting personalities, with each member having a social role.
  - c. Over time, our interactions and relationships define the nature of our family.
  - d. Our identities emerge from the interplay between our unique selves and our social roles.
  - e. Symbolic interaction has several weaknesses.
  - f. Symbolic interaction tends to minimize the role of power in relationships.
  - g. It does not account for the psychological aspects of life, emphasizes individualism, and does not place marriage or family within a larger social context.
3. **Social exchange theory** examines actions and relationships in terms of costs and benefits.
  - a. Much of this cost-benefit analysis is unconscious.
  - b. In personal relationships, resources, rewards, and costs are more likely to be things like love, companionship, status, power, fear and loneliness, rather than tangibles, such as money.
  - c. People consciously or unconsciously use their various resources to obtain what they want.
  - d. Exchanges that occur have to be fair and must have equity. Both partners feel uneasy in an inequitable relationship.
  - e. Because marriages are expected to endure, exchanges take on a long-term character and are either cooperative or competitive.
  - f. Exchange theory has been applied to decisions to divorce.
  - g. A marriage in which we obtain more rewards than costs likely will be considered attractive and satisfying to us.
  - h. If we perceive greater rewards in some alternative, we will think about and/or seek a divorce.
  - i. Barriers to divorce may be understood as costs associated with leaving the marriage.
  - j. If these barriers are too great exchange theory would predict that we would stay, even unhappily, married.
  - k. Problems with social exchange include: it assumes rationality when humans are not always rational; it has difficulty ascertaining the value of costs and rewards; and values that are assigned are highly individualistic.
4. **Family development theory** emphasizes the patterned changes that occur in families through stages and across time.
  - a. In its earliest formulations, family development theory borrowed from theories of individual development and identified a set number of stages that all families pass through as they are formed.

- b. The **family life-cycle** model gives insight into the complexities of family life, the different tasks families perform, and changing roles and circumstances over time.
  - c. The **family career** is said to consist of subcareers like the marital or parental career.
  - d. The **family life course** has been used to examine the dynamic nature of the family experience.
  - e. An important criticism sometimes made of family development theory is that it assumes the sequential processes of intact, nuclear families and assumes that all families go through the same process of change across the same stages.
5. **Family systems theory** sees the family as a structure of related subsystems: Each **subsystem** carries out certain functions.
- a. An important task of subsystems is maintaining boundaries: When the boundaries become blurred, the family becomes dysfunctional.
  - b. Interactions are important in family systems theory.
  - c. Family systems therapists and researchers believe: (1) interactions must be studied in the context of the family system; (2) the family has a structure only visible in its interactions; (3) the family is a purposeful system that seeks homeostasis; and (4) despite resistance to change, each family system is transformed over time.
  - d. Many of the basic concepts of family systems theory are still in dispute and its applications are more relevant to dysfunctional rather than healthy families.
6. Applying theories to long-distance relationships
- a. Each of the theoretical perspectives discussed above can be applied to long-distance relationships.

#### VIII. CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON FAMILIES

1. In gathering their data, researchers use a variety of techniques.
  - a. **Quantitative research** involves asking the same questions to a great number of persons using representative sampling.
  - b. **Qualitative research** involves studying smaller groups or individuals in a more in-depth fashion using intensive interviews, case studies, or various documents.
  - c. **Secondary data analysis** involves reanalyzing data originally collected for another purpose.
2. Family researchers conduct their investigations using ethical guidelines agreed upon by professional researchers: These guidelines protect the privacy and safety of research participants and assure the trustworthiness of their research reports.
3. **Survey research** (using questionnaires or interviews) is the most popular data-gathering technique in marriage and family studies.
  - a. Survey research is designed to gather information from a small, representative group and to infer conclusions that are valid for a larger population.
  - b. **Questionnaires** offer anonymity, may be quick to complete, and are relatively inexpensive; however, they do not allow for an in-depth response.
  - c. **Interviews** have more depth, but are open to subjective interpretation.
  - d. Surveys have inherent problems:

- e. They must have a representative sample in order to generalize findings onto a larger population.
  - f. The subjects may not really understand their own behavior.
  - g. People tend to under-report undesirable behavior.
  - h. **Secondary data analysis** can decrease the cost of conducting research but the material collected in the original survey may come close to but not be exactly what the researcher wanted to examine.
4. **Clinical research** involves in-depth examinations of persons or small groups who go to psychiatrists, psychologists or social workers with psychological or relationship problems.
- a. The case-study method, consisting of a series of individual interviews, is the most traditional approach to clinical research.
  - b. Clinical studies offer long-term, in-depth study of various aspects of marriage and family; however, such individuals may not represent the general population.
  - c. Clinical research has been fruitful in developing insights into family processes.
  - d. The primary disadvantage of clinical research is that we cannot necessarily make inferences about the general population from them.
5. In **observational research**, scholars attempt to study behavior systematically through direct observation while remaining as unobtrusive as possible.
- a. An obvious disadvantage of using this method is that people may hide unacceptable ways of dealing with decisions while an observer is present.
  - b. Another problem with observational studies is that a low correlation often exists between what observers see and what the people observed report about themselves.
  - c. A third problem that observational researchers encounter involves the essentially private nature of most family relationships and experiences that go on “behind closed doors” where researchers typically do not have access.
6. In **experimental research**, researchers isolate a single factor under controlled circumstances to determine its influence.
- a. Researchers control experiments by using variables.
  - b. **Correlational studies** (clinical studies, surveys, and observational research) measure two or more naturally occurring variables to determine their relationship to each other without establishing cause.
  - c. Experimental findings can be very powerful because such research gives investigators control over many factors and enables them to isolate variables.
  - d. Experimental findings can be powerful in isolating causal relationship but hard to transfer to real life experience.
7. Applied research focuses on gathering data in order to solve problems, evaluate policies or programs and is of less interest to academic family researchers than to policymakers, program directors or heads of agencies.

#### IX. HOW TO THINK ABOUT RESEARCH

- 1. Different theories and methods lead to varying views of family.
- 2. But each view can be valid and reminds us that research is ongoing; it involves searching repeatedly for answers.

## Key Terms

adaptation 17  
ambiguous loss 38  
anonymity 50  
applied research 56  
bias 34  
case-study method 53  
clinical research 53  
concepts 36  
conceptualization 36  
confidentiality 50  
conflict theory 40  
deductive research 36  
dependent variable 36  
egocentric fallacy 35  
environment 37  
environmental influences 37  
equity 46  
ethical guidelines 50  
ethnocentric fallacy 35  
exosystem 39  
experimental research 54  
fallacies 35  
family development theory 47  
family ecology theory 37  
family systems theory 48  
feminist perspectives 37  
gender 42  
grounded theory 37  
homeostasis 48  
hypotheses 36  
independent variable 36  
inductive research 37  
interaction 43  
intervening variable 36  
liberal feminism 43  
macro-level theories 37  
macrosystem 39  
Marxist feminism 42  
mesosystem 39  
micro-level theories 43  
microsystem 39  
normative age-graded influences 47

normative history-graded influences 47  
objective statements 34  
objectivity 34  
observational research 53  
operationalization 36  
opinion 34  
qualitative research 49  
quantitative research 49  
radical feminism 42  
scientific method 35  
secondary data analysis 49  
social exchange theory 45  
social institution 37  
social roles 44  
socialist feminism 42  
stereotype 34  
structural functionalism theory 39  
subsystems 40  
survey research 51  
symbolic interaction theory 43  
theories 36  
triangulation 54  
value judgment 34  
variables 36

## IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

- a. **Reflections:** Have students write about studying marriage and family in their “Reflection’s Journals.”
- b. **Differences of Opinion:** Have students complete Handout 2:1 *Differences of Opinion* and discuss their opinions with the class. You may want to remind students of the importance of sharing openly while respecting the opinions of others.
- c. **Perspective Taking:** These activities are designed to help students recognize the diversity of opinions related to marriage and family issues and take the perspective of others. Have students complete Handout 2:2 *Perspective Taking*. Ask the groups that disagree with a statement to give reasons why someone might agree with the statement. Ask students that actually hold the opinion under consideration to discuss their reaction to the reasons given. For example, did it really capture their reasons for holding their opinion? Process with the students what it was like to take the perspective opposite from their own.
- d. You can also use Handout 2:2 *Perspective Taking* by reading several of the statements about family life found on the handout to the class. After each statement, ask students to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. Designate corners of the room for each position. You may want to make signs to place in each corner. Instruct students to physically move to the corner of the room that agrees with their position. Students must be ready to defend why they are standing in a certain corner of the room.
- e. **Advice Columns:** One of the most well-known advice columns is Dear Abby. Start a collection of “Abby” clippings related to issues addressed in the text. Divide the class into equal groups of 4-6 people. Have each group read a different Abby article and give their reactions to the advice given by Abby using Handout 2:3 *Dear Abby*. Each group then appoints a speaker to read their article aloud and summarize their group’s discussion for the class. After each presenting group, have members of the other groups also express their opinions regarding the article being presented.
- f. An alternative activity to the above activity would be to have each group read the same letter (do not give them Abby’s response) and then have each group come to a consensus as to how they think Abby would respond to the letter. Each group appoints a secretary and a spokesperson. When each group has come to a consensus regarding the article, the spokesperson reads their group’s responses to the letter to the class. After all the groups have shared their responses, the instructor reads Abby’s real response to the class. Process the activity by asking students to share their opinions related to Abby’s response, the activity itself, and advice columns in general.

- g. Possible discussion questions for both of the above activities include:
- (1) How difficult was it to complete the activity? Why?
  - (2) How did your family upbringing influence your answer?
  - (3) How did your life experiences and opinions influence your answer?
  - (4) Do you think advice columns like Dear Abby are a good source of information?
- h. **Survey:** Review with the students information found in the text regarding the survey method of research. Have the students complete “The Marriage and Family Life Attitude Survey” (see *Understanding Yourself*, pp. 58-59 in text). When students have completed their surveys, tally the results using a show of hands, displaying the results using a chalkboard or overhead projector. (Due to the length of the questionnaire, you may wish to choose, or have students choose, certain questions.) Processing of this activity should include the idea that this is not scientific information because of the methodology used and the fact that it is based on opinion rather than objective statements.
- i. **Role Play/Direct Observation:** Prior to class, write the following scenarios on separate pieces of paper or index cards:

Card 1: “You and your wife both work full-time and have two small children. Your job has been extremely hectic during the past two months and has required a fair amount of overtime. While you realize that you are not living up to the 50-50 agreement you and your wife have regarding family work, you also believe that your efforts to contribute to family, especially income-wise, have been overlooked. In addition, you do not believe that your wife really understands how much pressure you have been under during this time. This morning when you left for work she complained about having to do all the family work and requested that the two of you talk about sharing the family work more equally. It is now evening and you are tired after a hard day at work, yet you feel it is important to resolve this issue. Your partner initiates a conversation regarding this issue.”

Card 2: “You and your husband both work full-time and have two small children. During the past two months, your husband has been busy at work and has been required to work a fair amount of overtime. While you recognize that your husband has not had as much time as usual for the family, it seems to you that you are strapped with much more family work than your husband, when you had agreed to a 50-50 split of family work. You feel that your husband overlooks the fact that you also work full-time. This morning, before you left for work, you voiced your discontent with the family work situation to your husband and told him that things needed to be different in terms of family work. It is now evening and you intend to bring up the topic again because it is important to resolve this issue. You are the first speaker in the discussion.”

# Full file at <https://fratstock.eu>

Ask for a male and female volunteer to role-play a couple in the decision-making process. Give each partner their respective cards and allow them a few minutes to get into their role. Do not share the scenarios with the rest of the class or the other volunteer. Instruct the class that they will be observing a role play regarding decision-making and family work. The female begins the five-minute role play while the rest of the class observes and takes notes. After the role-play, process the activity by having each participant read their scenario; and then give their reaction to being involved in the role-play. The instructor then asks for the class's reaction to the role-play. Have the class analyze the role-play according to tenants of social exchange theory, symbolic interaction theory, conflict theory, and the feminist perspective. (You may wish to videotape the role-play, if the volunteers are willing to be videotaped.)

## **Student Handout 2:1 *Differences of Opinion***

Whether a phenomenon is viewed as a problem or a solution may not be objective reality at all but may be determined by the observer's values. Record three differences of opinion you've had with important people in your life and describe whether these differences were due to social, gender, occupational, or cultural factors.

1. Difference of Opinion:

Factors influencing opinion:

2. Difference of Opinion:

Factors influencing opinion:

3. Difference of Opinion:

Factors influencing opinion:

## Student Handout 2:2 *Perspective Taking = Agree or Disagree*

1. A married woman's most important task in life should be taking care of her husband and children.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. If a mother of young children works, it should be only while the family needs the money.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. There should be more day care centers and nursery schools so that more mothers can work.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. If a child gets sick and the wife works, the husband should be just as willing to stay home from work and take care of the child.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. If the wife works, the husband should share equally in household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Homosexual couples should be permitted to adopt children as long as they meet the same criteria set for heterosexual couples.

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Living together is a good way to find out if the relationship is suited to marriage.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. The healthiest families are those that never disagree with each other.

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Love between husband and wife does not change over time.

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Student Handout 2:3 *Dear Abby***

Advice columns like “Dear Abby” are popular sources of information for the general public. After reading your group’s column, please complete each of the following questions on your own. When all group members have completed their handouts independently, compare your answers with the rest of the group’s answers. Work together as a group to summarize your answers and appoint a group speaker to present your summary to the rest of the class.

1. What is the basic problem addressed in the letter?
2. What is your reaction to the letter?
3. Do you agree with the advice given by Abby? Why or why not?
4. What might be some alternative answers?
5. Would you follow the advice given by Abby if you were in the letter writer’s position?
6. Would you ever write a letter to Dear Abby? Why or why not?

## VIDEOS

- a. Have students view an episode of one of the following television shows: *Leave It To Beaver*, *I Love Lucy*, *The Honeymooners*, or *Father Knows Best* (available at video retailers or Amazon.com).
  1. Can you distinguish between instrumental and expressive roles of the members of this family?
  2. What functions of the family are being addressed in this episode?
  3. Who socializes the children in this family? How does this socialization occur? What are some of the rules or behaviors that the children are being taught?
- b. *The Color Purple* (popular movie available in movie rental stores) can be shown to illustrate feminist theory. This movie explores the struggle for black women to gain power and individuality in African and American culture.
  1. Describe how this movie speaks to issues feminist theory.
  2. In what ways are the women in this film being taken advantage of?
  3. How do the circumstances of life impact these women?

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

- a. **The Family According to Popular Magazines:** Visit the checkout line at the grocery store or the magazine section of your favorite bookstore. Take a notebook and document major headlines on the cover of *People Magazine*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, and other popular magazines. Analyze the headlines for themes. What topics or stories dominate the cover of these magazines. To what extent are these related to marriage and family? Are there more messages about family function or dysfunction?
- b. **Survey Item Composition:** Choose a topic of interest in the area of marriage and family. Now, try to write five survey questions about the topics to which subjects can only respond with a “yes” or “no.” Ask several people these questions. How much depth of understanding can be gathered from these questions? What kinds of follow-up questions or probes would you ask if you were allowed to interview your respondents? What does this tell you about the kind of information gathered through survey items with limited response sets?
- c. **Quantitative or Qualitative?** Visit your college library and go to the periodical section. Find a journal article that includes quantitative data and one that includes qualitative data. Quantitative data will be given as statistical information such as correlation coefficients and other measures. Qualitative data will be given as descriptive or narrative. Compare the section headings and writing styles of these two articles. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- d. **List the variables:** Find a copy of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* either in your library’s stacks or through your college library’s databases. Review the articles in one of the volumes and make a list of independent, dependent, and intervening variables.

- e. **Your Social Currency:** Imagine that you are about to enter the ‘marriage market’ and need to check your resources to find a mate. Make a list of “assets” or qualities that would make you a desirable mate and “liabilities” or qualities that would make you a less desirable mate to others. Chances are you will try to find someone who has a similar number of assets and liabilities rather than look for someone who is much better than you. This exercise will give you a sense of social exchange theory in mate selection.

## INTERNET SITES AND ACTIVITIES

Encourage students to utilize some of these Internet sites for their research papers or other individual, group, or class projects and requirements.

For group interactivity and discussion set up a requirement for each student to come to class with three Internet sites pertaining to the chapter or a topic within the chapter. Each student will select one of the three to share in class and discuss the site's value and relevance to the chapter. Some interesting websites are listed below.

**Family.com** <http://family.go.com/> Human Development and Family Studies Resources on the Internet. Helpful guidance here for raising children

**Coalition for Marriage** <http://www.smartmarriages.com> Family and Couples Education. Register for FREE newsletter at this site. Advice Articles and current news are the main focus in the newsletter. Newsletter archives can be reviewed.

**Life Innovations, Inc.** <http://www.prepare-enrich.com/> Articles, Couple Studies, Family Studies, Overview of Family inventories, and more...A sample quiz is also included at this web site.

**Circumplex Model of Marital & Family Systems** <http://www.prepare-enrich.com/research.cfm?id=40>

The Circumplex Model focuses on the three central dimensions of marital and family systems: cohesion, flexibility and communication. The major hypothesis of the Circumplex Model is that Balanced couple and family systems tended to be more functional compared to Unbalanced systems. In over 250 studies using FACES as a linear measure, strong support has been found for this hypothesis. In several studies using the Clinical Rating Scale, a curvilinear measure, the hypothesis is also supported. These two assessment tools are designed for research, for clinical assessment and treatment planning with couples and families.

**FamilyTrack:** <http://www.familytrack.com/> links to top family education sites, which are broken into such categories as “Family Interaction” and “Family and Society.”

**Wadsworth's Marriage & Family Resource Center**  
[http://www.wadsworth.com/sociology\\_d/special\\_features/ext/mf\\_site/](http://www.wadsworth.com/sociology_d/special_features/ext/mf_site/)

Full file at <https://fratstock.eu>

**American Psychological Association Topics and Reports**

<http://www.apa.org/topics/topicdivorce.html>

Ask students to look under topics and find one topic (race, gender, depression, suicide, ADHD, etc.) and explore all of the ways that families are involved in or affected by the problem. (For example, explore autism and the role it plays in mothers' stress levels.) This exercise can help students understand the family systems model and clinical research. At this website, scholarly family research is reported in an easy to read, engaging format for students.