

A rustic wooden sign with the word 'WELCOME' in white, block letters is mounted on a teal-painted wooden wall. The sign is made of a single piece of weathered wood with rough, splintered edges. It is held in place by two small wooden pegs. Above the sign, a piece of light-colored twine is strung across the wall, forming a triangular shape. A vibrant red rose with green leaves is tucked behind the right side of the sign. The teal background is made of vertical wooden planks with visible grain and some wear.

WELCOME

# American Culture 1

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# UNIT 6: The American Family



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# PART 01



# Family Structures

# Family Structures- Types of American Family

Immediate family = wife/ husband + kids

Extended family = Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, grandparents

Nuclear family - Traditional “family unit” = Husband, wife, children  
in a house/apartment

Traditionally:

Father = Breadwinner (earns money)

Mother = Homemaker (takes care of family)

Usually two children



# Family Structures- Types of American Family

Today “Family” is very different

A very small percentage of American households is traditional

Less than a quarter (25%) of American families are nuclear family with most mothers work outside of the home.

Mostly:

Married couples without children

Single parents

Unrelated people living together

27% live alone

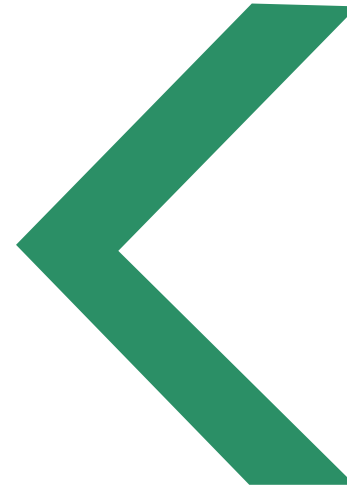
# Family Structures- What happened?

1. Baby boomers after WW II- people born in the years following WW II,

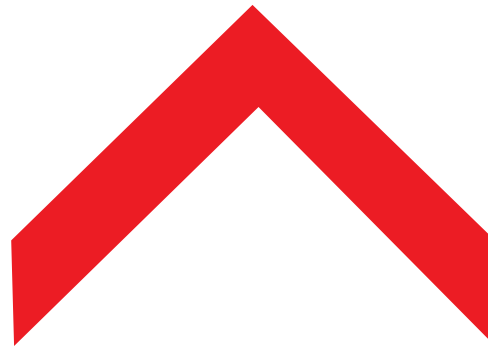


Changes in traditional American Family

2. People having kids at older age or no kids



3. People live longer



4. High divorce rate



## PART 02



**The emphasis on  
Individual Freedom**



- A family group exists to make the individual members happier and serve the needs of its individual family members.
- Thus, the needs of the individual are the most important things and take priority in the life of the family.
- Not concerned with advancement of the “group” in social or economic ways
- America is non-aristocratic



- “Family name” / honor are less important (equality of opportunity)
- Not an “economic” unit – very few families run businesses that last for more than one generation
- Americans don’t like to be controlled by other family members
- Like to make independent decisions
- Children are encouraged to decide on their own career

# PART 03



# Marriage and Divorce



- People find their own spouse
- Parents have little control over who their children marry
- “Believe” that happiness in marriage is important – does not always happen but it remains the traditional ideal.
- Happiness is based on companionship – considered as the most important thing

If the couple is not happy, the individuals may choose to get divorce



- Most states have “no-fault” divorce
- The divorce rate rose rapidly from 1960s to 1980s then leveled off.
- One out of two (50%) of marriages end in divorce
- Many do not want to sacrifice individual happiness for children

Divorce is easy

# PART 04



# The Role of the Child



Emphasis on the individual means that some children get more attention than they should – Children don't learn their social and familial responsibilities

However, working parents are often unable to spend time with their kids – so may spoil them in other ways

# PART 05



# Equality in the Family



- Equality in the family destroys the father's status as "ruler and master"
- Reduces the emotional distance
- Some fear this decline in parental authority, especially among teenagers
- Young people have a lot of freedom – to learn self-reliance
- Most children leave home ~18 years
- "Boomerang kids" – come back

## PART 06

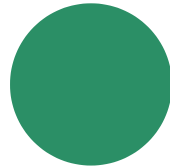


## Four Stages of Marriage Relationships



## **Stage I: Wife as Servant to Husband**

- 19th Century – wives completely obedient
- Wife beating still legal until 1850's
- Wife had no power or possessions



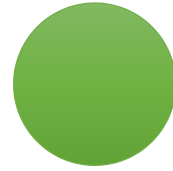
## **Stage II: Husband-Head, Wife-Helper**

- Late 19th Century, Early 20th Century
- Opportunities for women to work outside
- Wives able to support themselves
- Wives gained more power in the home
- Husband still head – decisions final



### **Stage III: Husband Senior, Wife Junior**

- In 20th century, more women took jobs
- By 2000, 60% had jobs
- Wife's income becomes important to the family
- Husband's job provides most of the income



### **Stage IV: Husband-Wife Equal Partners**

- In 2000s, most women believe they should be equal partners in their marriages
- Husband have equal responsibility in home
- Power is shared equally

## PART 07



# The Role of Family in Society





- There is more individual freedom within American families
- Needs of the individual are most important
- However, American families may be less stable
- “family” is the best life-style
- Most who divorce will marry again
- Step-families – complicated relationships
- Single parents – mostly mothers
- Gay couples – broad definition of family

## PART 08



# Challenges to the American Family

# Family Values Traditional Respecting one's parents

- Being responsible for one's actions
- Having faith in god
- Respecting authority
- Remaining married to the same person for life
- Leaving the world in better shape

# Family Values- Modern Values

- Giving emotional support to other members of the family
- Respecting people for themselves
- Developing greater skill in communicating one's feelings
- Respecting one's children
- Living up to one's potential as an individual

Thank  
You

