

## *The Changing Nature of the Family*

### GETTING STARTED

Discuss the following questions with your classmates.

- ▶ How many people are there in your family? Is this a good number? Why or why not?
- ▶ What is the average family size in your country? Is there a trend toward having larger or smaller families?
- ▶ What are the advantages and disadvantages of larger and smaller families?

### TARGET WORDS—Assessing Your Vocabulary Knowledge

Look at each of the target words in the box. Use the scale to give yourself a score for each word. After you finish the chapter, score yourself again to check your improvement.

- 1 I don't know this word.
- 2 I have seen this word before, but I am not sure of the meaning.
- 3 I understand the word when I see it or hear it in a sentence, but I don't know how to use it in my own speaking and writing.
- 4 I know this word and can use it in my own speaking and writing.

#### TARGET WORDS

___ assistance	___ cooperate	___ maintain	___ purchase
___ available	___ domestic	___ minority	___ rely
___ consist	___ function	___ negative	___ resource
___ consume	___ isolation	___ network	___ structure
___ contribute	___ labor	___ nuclear	___ transition
___ conversely	___ locate	___ promote	___ trend

The following passage is adapted from an introductory textbook on sociology. The passage focuses on a typical model of the family and how it is changing. As you read, pay special attention to the target vocabulary words in **bold**.

## FAMILY STRUCTURE

1 Although the **function**, or purpose, of families around the world is similar, family **structure** differs significantly from society to society and even from group to group. Because family **structure** is such an important aspect of pre-modern and modern societies, it has always been a special focus in the social sciences.

### KINSHIP VS. FAMILY

2 Sociologists and anthropologists make an important distinction between the family and the kinship group, although both are commonly called “families” in English. *Kinship* refers to a social **network** of people who are related by common ancestry or origin, by marriage, or by adoption. Kin can include close relatives such as parents, and distant relatives such as third cousins. Kin do not always live together or **function** as a group but they may recognize certain rights, responsibilities, and obligations to one another. For example, in American society, kin may come together for Thanksgiving or a family reunion.

3 In contrast, a *family* is a relatively small **domestic** group that *does function* as a **cooperative** unit. In the United States, the family is usually a group **consisting** of parents and their children. In many societies, though, the family includes relatives from three or more



A nuclear family

generations. For example, a group of brothers and their wives, their sons and their unmarried daughters, and their sons’ wives and children may live together or near one another, **cooperating** to raise food, **maintain** the home, and care for children and the elderly. If the individuals **function** as a single unit, sociologists consider them to be a family. If, however, they simply live next door to one another and do not pool their **resources**, they are viewed as separate families even though they may be related.

4 During their lifetimes, most people are members of two different types of family groups: the family into which they were born and the family that they create when they marry and have children. Societies differ in the cultural emphasis they place on these two groups. Among the Pueblo Indians, for example, the family a person is born into is given a special significance, whereas the family a person marries into is treated more casually. When a Pueblo Indian couple marry, the woman stays in her mother’s household, and her husband moves in. If the couple do not get along and divorce, the husband moves back to his mother’s household with little fuss.

### NUCLEAR AND EXTENDED FAMILIES

5 Although the culturally ideal Western family is the **nuclear** family—a two-generation family group that **consists** of a father and mother and their children, usually living apart from other relatives—variations on this pattern are common. Death and divorce can leave households with only one parent. An elderly grandparent may join the household. Economic problems may force a married child to bring his or her spouse and children to live with the family. When a family is a group that **consists** of three or more generations, it is called an *extended family*.

6 The two-parent **nuclear** family is most typical of the middle and upper classes, and while the single-parent family is found in all social classes, it is more common among the lower classes.

Single-parent families are generally the result of divorce and separation, out-of-wedlock birth, and male unemployment. The extended family is also more common among the lower classes, mainly because of economic conditions.

7 Most middle-class **nuclear** families can afford to hire someone to babysit for their children, to help them move to a new house, or to care for the sick. They are able to borrow money from the bank when they need it for emergencies or for luxury items, such as a new car. Thus there are few economic reasons for a middle-class family to be extended.

8 The **purchase** of certain products and services is a luxury that poorer families often cannot afford. Such families generally must **rely** on family members and relatives to provide the goods and services they cannot afford to buy. A cousin will babysit. A brother will lend money to his sister until the next payday. A grandmother will take the children to a doctor if necessary. Without this **network** of shared **assistance**, families with low incomes would not be able to provide for their needs or handle many types of emergencies. The more family members who are **available**, the more likely each one is to get **assistance**. Thus, large extended families with strong ties can be a real advantage—indeed, a necessity—for lower-income families.

#### THE GLOBAL TREND TOWARD NUCLEAR FAMILIES

9 Family **structure** around the world has been gradually changing in the direction of the **nuclear** family. This **transition** is thought to have begun in pre-industrial rural England; at that time and place, families of three or more generations were already a distinct **minority**.

10 Today, the **trend** toward the **nuclear** family seems to be closely associated with the urbanization, industrialization, and modernization of societies. As industry replaces agriculture as the main form of work, younger family members typically leave the farms and rural villages and move to the cities where jobs are **located**, often weakening ties with those left behind. Once in the cities, families continue to move for employment and other reasons (such as better housing conditions, retirement, and more comfortable weather). The agricultural family is likely to be extended and tied to a piece of land, while the industrial family is **nuclear** and much more mobile.



An extended family

11 The decline of the extended family is thus **promoted** by the changing nature of work. In rural societies, as among the poor in industrial societies, the extended family offers an economic advantage. Each member of the family does some productive work. Less able-bodied family members, such as children, the elderly, or members with a disability, can each **contribute** in some way to the economic interests of the family unit. In industrial societies, **conversely**, these family members are treated as less essential economically and are employed only under certain conditions (for example, when there is a **labor** shortage). They therefore produce little for the family unit, yet they **consume** at about the same rate as do producers. The extended family can therefore be a disadvantage in industrial societies.

12 The **transition** from the extended to the **nuclear** family has brought with it much greater freedom and personal mobility for the individual. In the extended family, an individual's needs are generally of lesser importance compared to the demands of the larger group. Privacy, for example, is hard to find. However, there are **negative** features to the **nuclear** family, too. Although individuals are freed from a wide variety of responsibilities and obligations, other family members are no longer as responsible for them. Because the family is now a smaller unit, emotional and economic support may be more limited as each family member has fewer people **available** to turn to for companionship or **assistance**. The result may be the increased social **isolation** of individuals.

Adapted from Popenoe, D. (1995). *Sociology*, 10th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, pp. 310–313.

## UNDERSTANDING THE READING

Respond to the following in writing. Base your responses on the reading and your own personal experiences.

1. What is the difference between a family and a kinship group?
2. In what ways do economic factors, such as income level and employment, affect family structure?
3. This reading was published in 1995. What new trends in family structure have you observed in the twenty-first century? Describe how the family is changing.

## FOCUSING ON VOCABULARY

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### WORD MEANING

When you encounter an unfamiliar word, remember to look for context clues to determine the word's meaning. Look at the example. Suppose that you came across the word **isolation** in the following sentences, but did not know the exact meaning of the word.

*People living in **isolation** are often lonely.*

(You know that lonely people are often by themselves, or apart from other people.)

*People with dangerous diseases are often held in **isolation** areas in hospitals so that other people do not catch their disease.*

(You know that people with dangerous diseases must often be kept away from other people so that their disease will not spread.)

From the context of each sentence, you can determine that **isolation** means “the state or act of being apart from others.”

Read the sentences below and circle the letter of the word or phrase that best matches the meaning of the target word in **bold**. Use context clues in the sentences to determine the correct meaning. Check your dictionary if you are not sure of the answer. The first one has been done for you.

1. Jobs requiring unskilled **labor** are often more physical than those requiring skilled **labor**, as can be seen when comparing the job of a farmhand with that of a computer operator.
  - a. process
  - b. employment
  - c. workers
2. Exercise and sensible eating are necessary to **maintain** a healthy body.
  - a. increase
  - b. destroy
  - c. keep up
3. Italians are a small ethnic **minority** in Canada.
  - a. larger part of a big group
  - b. a small part of a larger group
  - c. exactly 50 percent of a group

4. Anger and hate are **negative** emotions.
  - a. bad or harmful
  - b. good or helpful
  - c. somewhat good or helpful
5. Some supporters of democracy have tried to **promote** its development worldwide.
  - a. encourage
  - b. advertise
  - c. diminish
6. Gold and diamonds are two of South Africa's most valuable natural **resources**.
  - a. possessions with little value
  - b. possessions with no value
  - c. useful possessions
7. The **structure** of an English sentence includes a subject, verb, and object, or complement.
  - a. element
  - b. arrangement or organization
  - c. process
8. The **transition** between high school and college can be difficult, which is why many students drop out.
  - a. skill or ability
  - b. confusion
  - c. act or process of changing
9. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, most stock markets were in a downward **trend**.
  - a. situation without change
  - b. confused situation
  - c. general way things are changing
10. Some Pueblo cliff dwellings are **located** in Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado.
  - a. in a particular place
  - b. convenient
  - c. established
11. Janet is Steve's wife. **Conversely**, Steve is Janet's husband.
  - a. in speaking of this
  - b. because of this
  - c. in an opposite way

Read the sentences below and use context to figure out the meaning of the target words in **bold**. Look for a core meaning that provides a general understanding of each target word. Write the meaning in your own words. The first one has been done for you.

1. a. People often **assist** the police by describing what happened during a crime.  
b. The rescue service provided **assistance** to the ship in trouble.

**assist to help or support**

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2. a. Before you write a check, you must be sure that you have enough money **available** in the bank to cover the amount.  
 b. The government wished to increase the **availability** of affordable health care to poorer people.  
**available** \_\_\_\_\_
3. a. A month **consists** of 28–31 days.  
 b. A square is a shape **consisting** of four equal sides and four 90-degree angles.  
**consist** \_\_\_\_\_
4. a. Doctors recommend that people **consume** two liters of water (about eight glasses) daily.  
 b. Car manufacturers are now able to lower fuel **consumption** because technological advances have made engines more efficient.  
**consume** \_\_\_\_\_
5. a. **Cooperation** between teachers and parents can do much to improve a child's education.  
 b. Conversation analysts have found that women tend to be **cooperative** in conversations, while men tend to be competitive.  
**cooperate** \_\_\_\_\_
6. a. Those who are unable to **contribute** money to the school building fund may help by giving their time.  
 b. Employees may **contribute** a percentage of their monthly salary to a pension fund, which will be paid back to them after age sixty-five or at the time of retirement.  
**contribute** \_\_\_\_\_
7. a. The police were called to the family's home to settle a **domestic** argument.  
 b. The artist painted a scene of happy **domesticity**—a large family sitting around the table eating a festive meal.  
**domestic** \_\_\_\_\_
8. a. The **function** of the telephone is to provide easy, convenient communication.  
 b. Even though the factory was a century old, all of the equipment was still **functional** and worked perfectly.  
**function** \_\_\_\_\_
9. a. The Paris Metro—one of the best subway systems in the world—consists of a vast **network** of interconnected train lines.  
 b. The inter-library loan **network** enables students and staff to borrow library books from other universities in the state.  
**network** \_\_\_\_\_
10. a. Many students prefer to rent formal clothing for dances and balls, because the cost of **purchasing** such items is so high.  
 b. The family used most of its money for the **purchase** of food and clothing.  
**purchase** \_\_\_\_\_
11. a. These days, many families **rely** on both the husband and wife working in order to earn enough money for daily living.  
 b. Bus use in the city is low because most commuters feel they cannot **rely** on a service that is regularly late.  
**rely** \_\_\_\_\_



7. Fifteen percent of the world's people **consuming** sixty-eight percent of the world's energy. \_\_\_\_\_
8. One objective of education in any country is the **promotion** of that country's cultural values. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Like the family, the workplace can only operate if there is a clear **structurally**. \_\_\_\_\_
10. An individual's daily **contributor** to the world's pollution problems may seem small, but when added together over years, it is significant. \_\_\_\_\_

## COLLOCATION

Fluent users of a language have become used to the natural patterns in which words appear. As a language learner, it will be easier for others to understand you if you use these same natural patterns. A number of the words in this unit form word partnerships, or collocations. This means that when one word occurs in the pair, it naturally suggests the word or words around it. Remember that collocations often fall into the following simple patterns.

noun + verb          verb + noun          noun + noun  
 adjective + noun      verb + adverb

Match each target word in the box with the group of words that regularly occur with it. If the (~) symbol appears before a word in a list (e.g., ~*shortage*), the target word comes before the word in the list (e.g., **labor** *shortage*). In all other cases, the target word comes after the word in the list, as in *unskilled labor*. The first one has been done for you.

consist	labor	minority	resources
consumer	location	network	trend

- |                 |              |                 |             |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. <u>labor</u> | 2. _____     | 3. _____        | 4. _____    |
| ~shortage       | sizeable     | ~primarily of   | decide on a |
| ~saving         | ethnic       | ~exclusively of | ideal       |
| ~market         | ~groups      | ~largely of     | pinpoint a  |
| unskilled       | ~communities | ~essentially of | perfect     |
| 5. _____        | 6. _____     | 7. _____        | 8. _____    |
| ~rights         | reverse a    | allocate        | old boy     |
| ~confidence     | downward     | build up        | extensive   |
| ~goods          | follow a     | waste           | computer    |
| ~protection     | observe a    | exhaust         | nationwide  |

## EXPANSION

Read the statements about family life in the following chart. Evaluate each statement. Is it an advantage of living in a **nuclear** family or an extended family? Place a checkmark (✓) in the appropriate box. If the factor is equally advantageous for both types of family structure, check the “equal advantage” box. Then discuss your opinions with a partner.

	Advantage of living in a <b>nuclear</b> family	Advantage of living in an extended family	Equal advantage for both family types
1. There are more people working, helping to <b>maintain</b> a steady income during economic slowdowns.			
2. Parents <b>rely</b> on their children to help with housework.			
3. There are fewer people who will ask for your <b>assistance</b> .			
4. There are more people around, so there is less chance of feeling lonely and <b>isolated</b> .			
5. Family members that <b>cooperate</b> with one another can do things that they could not do by themselves.			
6. <b>Domestic</b> decision making requires less discussion.			
7. Working family members contribute to the family's <b>purchasing</b> power.			
8. Expectations of relatives can have a <b>negative</b> impact on a couple's freedom.			



Write an essay about one of the topics below. Be sure to support your ideas with clear examples.

- How has family size changed in your home country since you were a child? Explain why these changes have occurred.
- What effects do changes in family size have on women? Explain. What effects do changes in family size have on children? Explain.