

# Family resiliency essay

[Economics](#), [Budget](#)



IntroductionThe family has been a popular topic of discussion all throughout man's history. Analysis of the family and its` implications on social, economic, political, and moral life has preoccupied social philosophers, reformers, religious and secular leaders, scholars and other learned men since the earliest times. Today, the family is still a favorite topic among both professionals and ordinary people. Daily conversation at at home, in places of work, or on the streets often centers on the family – one's parents, husband or wife, brothers and sisters, children, cousins, and so on. Indeed, family experience is a daily part of our lives and is a main concern of everyone. Since we were all brought up in families and are enmeshed daily in a network of family interaction, we have developed a good deal of personal knowledge about family life.

Many beliefs, notions, and ideas about family behavior and relationships have sprung from daily experiences and observations. The family is so close and familiar to us that we feel we already know everything about it. The concept of “ family” is difficult to define precisely. One classical definition is that a family “ is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction; it includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, owned or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults” (Murdock, 1989). This definition is limited since the reality is that, the incidence of nontraditional family forms has risen fast since the decade of the nineties especially in the Western societies. Changing family patterns have commanded the attention of scholars and provoked intense public debate. Some people now object to defining as “ families” only married

couples and children because it implies that everyone should embrace a single standard of moral conduct.

Moreover, many government programs designate benefits only for members of “families” as conventionally defined, so that committed partners – whether heterosexual or homosexual – are excluded. A new and less rigid perspective is followed by contemporary social scientists today. For instance, according to Lamanna and Riedman (1994) family members need not be bound by legal marriage or by blood or adoption. One new definition is that a family consists of “two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have a commitment to each other over time.

The functions attributed to families are economic consumption, socialization of the young and affective dimensions” (Davidson and Moore, 1992). This definition can include a variety of family forms, with emphasis on sharing, commitment and affection without any mention of sexual relations. What does or does not constitute a family, then, is a matter of personal morality and lies at the center of the contemporary “family values” debate (Dedrick, 1990). The Census Bureau also plays a role in this discussion; it defines family units as noted above, and sociologists who wish to use census bureau “families” must, therefore, use this definition. The trend in public opinion, as well as in legal terms, however, favors a wider and more inclusive definition of the “family unit”. The American belief in the family, demonstrated by the widespread concern for its welfare, as well as for other

characteristics of the family – including its problems – is a major concern nowadays.

To know how the family unit still fulfills basic survival needs for the young, although it has changed from a total institution to a system that focuses primarily on the needs of companion, love, and intimacy. In a comprehensive review of family of family life in the United States today, a former director of the National Institute of Mental Health said: The family gives each newborn its primary nurturing environment, and as time passes, is each child's primary socializing agent, shaping its capacity for personal relations, interpreting and mediating the vast and complex outside world. Beyond these recognized functions we largely take for granted, the family exerts other powerful influences.

It can provide us with a continuity of identity throughout our lives – a present network of relatedness, roots into the past, and branches to the future. It is a platform for each member's stages of growth and the intimate arena for learning to recognize and adjust to these stages in others. It has an internal dynamic quality, its functions changing over time according to its members' needs and enduring long after its members have dispersed. Externally the family affects other people and institutions, both as the family unit collectively engages with the world and as its members sally forth, imprinted by their family ways. And the idea of family itself has been extended, providing a unifying function for new combinations of people who choose to call themselves a family. (Pardes, 1989). A cross-section of Americans was

asked recently with whom they would spend their time if they had only six months to live.

Although the question poses a gloomy thought, the answer gives a vote of confidence to the family: an overwhelming majority chose members of their families (Research and Forecasts, Inc. 1991). Such support for the importance of the American family may cause us to wonder about the rumors that the family is in deep trouble, if not dying altogether. For nearly three decades, the press and much of the general public have sounded a pessimistic note about the condition of the American family.

Symptoms signifying terminal illness such as the high divorce rate, violence, intergenerational alienation, sexual freedom outside marriage, have been used by social critics as evidence that an institution with so many problems is doomed (Duberman, 1987). The variety of forms the family currently takes – single-parent families, step-families, dual-paycheck families, communal families, cohabiting families – has been heavily criticized and has been cited as evidence of the breakdown of the American family system. That same varieties are present (and may always have been present) in other societies has been ignored by alarmists or has been cited by them as evidence of the inferiority of those societies (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). Most serious students of the family believe that the grave concern about the institution of the family arises from the disparity between our idealized notions of the traditional family and the realities of modern life.

Today we find multiple family styles in which individual members must attempt to chart their ways in unfamiliar territory. The old rules do not often

suit the new lifestyles, but there are no new, uniformly accepted models to guide us toward warmth and intimacy while still allowing us to retain individuality. There are currently a great many types of families in the world that seem to function at least somewhat satisfactorily. This is apparently has always been true. The standards against which so many critics of current family life measures the family's deterioration seem to be derived from unrealistic ideals rather than from careful observations of historical social reality (Bane, 1986). I would rather believe that what has been occurring is not the death of the family but rather a powerful struggle by family units to adapt to societal conditions and to the needs of the individual family members. The adaptability of the family keeps it alive and is the reason that, no matter what the odds, the family has endured over time and across cultures.

This is what we call as family resiliency. Family resiliency is defined by Shepard (2005) as the ability of a family to develop strengths that will be used to face the challenges of family life. According to the National Network for Family Resiliency (1995), this allows the family to continue to function following a challenge or a crisis. Family resiliency is present in a family when family members show confidence, hard work, cooperation and forgiveness.

These behaviors contribute to the effectiveness of Family Resiliency factors, which are the factors that help families withstand crises. When a family is confronted with a crisis, Family Resiliency factors is necessary. Events in which family resiliency factors may be especially needed include time of

sickness, death, natural disaster, and perhaps the loss of a primary job.

Family resiliency factors that would aid recovery include the availability of family and community support, participation in recreational activities, optimism about the situation and shared family experiences. Now, to determine what characterizes resilient families, Shepard enumerated the following: Commitment. The resilient families provided evidence of strong family feeling and high family commitment. Since the family is a small group, small group research can be used to explain the cohesiveness of strong families. This cohesiveness derives from the belief of members that some of their important needs (being liked and appreciated, for example) are met by belonging and that the group they belong to is a winning team.

The presence of these factors induces members to invest time and energy in the family. Cohesiveness. Because family members enjoyed each other, they arranged their personal schedule so that they have time together as a family. Each of the resilient families regularly spent time together as a family, although what they did together was by no means routine. They also spent time together spontaneously. Most family members' lead busy lives and each person makes a positive effort to find family time. Communication.

Resilient families are characterized by positive communication patterns. Positive communication involves openness, genuineness, active listening, respect, interest, and the airing of differences. The important thing is not the quantity of communication – provided there is adequate coverage of concerns and interests – but rather that family members share meaning and agree on the quality of the communication. Spirituality.

Members of resilient families felt a sense of a power and purpose greater than themselves – a spiritual orientation. This is not to say that they were necessarily religious or churchgoing people. However, they defined themselves as having values that are generally associated with religion. Adaptability. Resilient families are able to face their problems and to deal positively with crises. They were striking in their adaptive abilities and in the nourishment and care they provided for family members during times of trouble. Appreciation.

Most importantly, the members` appreciation for one another. Students of social psychology will recognize at once the important findings of research on affiliation and liking: we like people most who like us; we want to be with those who make us feel good about ourselves and who support rather than criticize us. Family members who openly appreciate each other enjoy being together. Thus, many family-life specialists believe that a family is a resilient institution; it adapts to changing economic conditions and changing values. But the strength of the family as an institution does not mean the divorce rate will decrease rapidly or families that experience severe stress due to unemployment, ill health, and the like will have an easier time remaining intact.

Thus social scientists who do research on the family will continue to find that there is still a need for more information about family and its resiliency. In addition, many family-life specialists – and we are among them – believe that the family is thriving. We do not deny that there are serious problems, but we have confidence in the resiliency of contemporary families.



Research leaves little question that Americans believe in, support, and depend on the family to fulfill a variety of important needs that society does not meet in any other way (Moroney, 1997). Yes, the American family is in a state of change. No one denies this; families have always attempted to adapt to and to maintain continuity in a social world that is constantly changing. There are always pessimists who view any change only from the perspective of loss of something good. What they view as good often is an idealized version of what has been functional in the past. Frequently emphasis is placed on the sacrifices that must be made when change occurs (Goode, 1983). Paradoxically, the capability of families to be flexible, one of their strongest potentials, has been denounced by some as a threat to the family's survival.

Such critics view social change and the adaptability of social institutions to change as signs of disintegration rather than of strength. They tend to criticize the innovative methods families use to cope with reality rather than applaud their creativity. Although pessimists see careers for women as destructive to family life, for example, optimists may applaud the ability of families with working mothers to have better lives than at any time in previous history. Most American family has been feeling the strain for years. We need a coherent national policy that considers our home and work lives. Compared with 30, 20, or even 10 years ago, U. S.

families work more, spend less time at home, and are a more diverse mix of two-parent and single-parent families, unmarried and elder couples, rich and poor. So far, the federal government shows no signs of offering serious

national family policies to promote family resiliency. Labor legislation provides the foundations of U. S. family policy. During the 1930s, Congress and President Franklin Roosevelt enacted the Social Security Act establishing old age insurance as well as unemployment and workers` compensation benefits. Congress also passed the National Labor Relations Act during the New Deal period.

In the 1940s standard deductions and exemptions were added to the national income tax law. Presently, government dramatically stated its role in assuring a decent life for workers and their families. But even in the 1930s, it did not respond to the diversity existing among families. As labor policies, the laws never guaranteed an adequate standard of living for all working Americans and their families. The laws accepted and perpetuated the myth that every family had or should have had a Dad working, a Mom cooking and cleaning, and the kids doing their homework after school.

But poor people- whites, blacks, and new immigrants – have always needed more than one income to support their families. But laws and employee benefits have not kept up with these changes. The New Deal legislation, even in its updated versions, still assumes that “ enough” families have one breadwinner with a long-term, full-time job that provides health insurance and pension coverage. But family policies are not inadequate for lack of effort by progressive groups. Organizations like the Children’s Defense Fund and the Center on Budget and Policy priorities work to educate Congress.

Think tanks such as the Institute for Women's Policy Research and the Institute for Policy Studies issue reports and hold conferences to influence public opinion. Still other organizations hold demonstrations and rallies to sway lawmakers and voters. Developing a national public policy that considers family resiliency will require pursuing more policies like a six-hour work day on every level of government. And it will take a lot of pushing from progressives – publishing articles, reports, and columns, marching and rallying, and banging our heads against the walls of Congress. Many will argue that these programs are too expensive. But the price of not investing in the future of families, however, is much higher than the cost of providing for them today. References Burgess, E.

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