The Family -

* Is the primary institution and small group arrangement which mediates between the individual and society.
* It is highly variable.
* It ensures the next generation.
What is the family?

- Textbook defines as a group of individuals who are related, who live together, engage in sex, rear children & function as an economic unit.
- Levi-Strauss defines as a unit of husband, wife, children born in wedlock, united by moral, legal, economic, religious and social rights and obligations. This includes sexual rights and prohibitions and socially patterned feelings like love and attraction.
Family is

- Family is a unit to whom a person feels ties of obligation and includes kin—blood or fictive.
- Family of orientation is one in which you are born.
- Family of procreation is the one which you create.
- Usually pre-requisites or customs for marriage which include property, romantic love, courtship traditions, propinquity (proximity), ethnicity/race, religion/values
Family Patterns/Structure

- Number of partners
- Partner preferences
- Residence Pattern
- Authority Relations/Power
- Descent/Inheritance
- Family Form
U.S. Family Forms

- Serial monogamy
- Single-parent
- Gay male and lesbian
- Cohabitation
- Independent/single
Ethnicity & Family

- WASP family type
- African-American family
- Mexican-American family
Theories of family

Functionalist

- Talcott Parsons role complementarities—husband as instrumental, wife as expressive
- Family is functional to society because it regulates sexual behavior, replaces family members, socializes new members, cares and protects, gives emotional support, gives social status
Symbolic Interaction theory

Internal family dynamics
Jessie Bernard’s ”his” marriage vs. “her” marriage
Examples—who does housework? How is conflict mediated?
Conflict Theory

Engels—first class antagonism between women and men struggle over resources, power, work

Feminist

Resource theory of marital power

Examples—divorce, family violence
Social change

- Social change has occurred because of industrialization and urbanizations. Traditional family affected by industrialization and urbanization which has created modern, nuclear family with weakened kin ties and individualism.
Future of the family

Political viewpoints—conservative vs. liberal
Here to Stay? Vs. doomed forever.
Blumstein & Schwartz, American Couples study.