

“Changing Family Structure in the Last 100 Years”

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OVERVIEW

SOCIETAL EFFECTS ON THE CLASSROOM

American families have undergone dramatic transformations in the past few decades and those changes affect the climate in our classrooms. The make up of family members is different. The main financial contributor is not to be taken for granted any more. Social activities for children – athletics, musical, social, religious, and their travel opportunities have expanded. Parental activities and social events have increased. More acceptance is given of single parents, same sex parents, and step-parents. Increased income, the education level of parents, computers, internet access in the home, advanced technologies in the home, have all changed the way we do things. As a result of all these changes, teacher expectations, parental expectations, and the accountability of who is to educate/socialize the child, changes in its focus.

I do not plan on teaching this subject matter as a subject, but rather include the main elements into how I manage my class, relate to my students and what expectations are reasonable and appropriate, and my accountability in the scheme of things. Also, using the content and expanding the research to include data and statistics from the US Census Bureau, I will develop lessons using this data, and how it can be used to understand change.

Another way I plan to use the information from this seminar is to make more informed decisions in how I set up my classroom. Should I put them in rows of desks, tables, or a mixture of both? What types of activities are most effective for the lesson – whole group instruction, or small group? How much time on homework can I reasonably expect them to spend, and who should all be accountable for its being completed? What types of homework assignments are most beneficial in their academic pursuits?

Looking at our society and the family and how it has evolved, does have an impact on our students and how they learn, so we as educators must adapt to the changes, or risk becoming ineffective, doing the same things in the same way.

RATIONALE

I currently teach fourth and fifth grade mathematics at the Pittsburgh Gifted Center. We get a different group of students each day of the week. I teach the same basic lesson, each morning, for a week. I have them for a two hour block of time, so I have the time to delve into a topic. Gifted students already have a strong grasp on the basics, so this unit will take them to a higher understanding of how population trends in different states have real connections to family dynamics, stimulating them to think new thoughts about how numbers can reflect trends and patterns in our history and in our current society.

We want to believe that the family is viewed as the social institution that is most resistant to change. However, it is deeply embedded in the historical process as any other institution in our country. So, in its structure, role, and conception, the American family has changed dramatically over the past three centuries.

If we look at the 1600's, the family performed many functions that have since been delegated to other institutions outside of the family. The family was seen as an integral part of the larger society and was a little commonwealth of the larger society, governed by the same principles of hierarchy and deference as the larger society. But through the years, families are much more isolated from public life and specialized in functions. Its roles for caring for the aged and educating the young have increasingly been assumed by public institutions, ranging from government agencies to insurance companies, banks, charities, hospitals, and schools. The family's main function seems to be concentrated on socializing their children and providing emotional support and affection.

Today, the American family is without a clear unitary set of ideals and values. Many Americans are seeking for a new paradigm of American family life. There is confusion over who should be responsible for what and when. Career expectations often come into conflict with traditional views of marriage. There is more of a desire for greater personal freedom and fulfillment.

Another major force for change in American family life has been our demography. Such characteristics of a population as age distribution and the proportion of the sexes exert potent influences on the size and composition of families, the marriage rate, the death rate, the birthrate, and other attributes of family life. We also saw a gradual aging of the population and a series of profound transformation in women's roles.

On the positive side, families today are far less likely than those in the past to lose children as a result of high rates of infant mortality, and children are far less likely to be orphaned while growing up. But then other changes occur simultaneously as a result.

Surprisingly, with all the available ways to be part of a community, some of today's families are more isolated than their predecessors from the world of work, kinship, and community life. Because of this isolation, the contemporary family has made it a more fragile institution. Today, family members are no longer dependent by their need for a collective family economy. Due to these smaller families and closer spacing of children, parents devote less time to the rearing of children and have more time to ponder the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the conflict of the American family is that while we attach greater psychological and ideological

significance to a happy family life than did our ancestors, our work lives, our emphasis on personal fulfillment, and our political behavior all conflict with strong, stable family ties.

Looking back at the transitions families have undergone in the United States, helps us to put some perspective on where we are going. In the early 1700's, the families were considered godly and performed their duties around a very religious centered view of the world. By the middle of the 18th century, specialized public institutions had begun to take on traditional familial responsibilities. To reduce the costs families spent on caring for widows, orphans, the destitute, and the mentally ill, cities began to build almshouses instead of having such people cared for in their own homes. Schools, free of cost, and common pay schools educated more and more sons of artisans and skilled laborers. However, as the family lost its earlier position as society's primary social and economic unit, it began to gain new emotional importance as a place of peace, in a heartless world.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the families of Iroquois Indians, black slaves, and Chesapeake planters had all successfully met the challenge of establishing stable families in an unsettled environment, not replicating New England families, but rather keeping their own distinctive rules and customs. It is this combination of continuity and change that stands out as the most striking characteristic of family change during the colonial period.

The roots of the change, the transformation of the American family, lay in enlightened philosophical, religious, political, and economic ideas about the rights of the individual. While democracy had loosened traditional social ties, it had strengthened the natural bonds of affection within the family, while at the same time, it contributed to less pleasant circumstances of frustration, conflict, and ultimately, unhappiness.

Looking at the Afro-American family, the family serves as a kinship system that functions as a source of mutual assistance and support. In present-day urban ghettos, networks often share resource and responsibilities, protecting individuals and family members. They offer sources of solace and support, of collective identity, and a way to pass on their culture.

At the beginning of the 20th century, conditions of the working-class family was not too promising. Death rates were high. Infant mortality, orphanhood, and early widowhood affected a distressingly high proportion of families, disrupting a high percent of American families before all the children had left home.

During the nineteenth century, a momentous transformation had taken place in the functions and expectations of the middle-class family. These families had been shorn of many traditional economic, educational, and welfare functions. These functions had been increasingly assumed by specialists and institutions outside the family. Meanwhile, these families were assigned primary responsibilities for fulfilling the emotional and psychological needs of its members. As well as providing economic security and a stable environment for children, family life was now expected to provide romance, sexual fulfillment, companionship, and emotional satisfaction. Ironically, the factors that the optimists pointed to as evidence of improvement also proved to be the sources of the family problems that pessimists criticized. The increased duration of marriage and the new emphasis attached to companionship and emotional fulfillment may have encouraged divorce as a solution to unhappy marriages that did not afford close, intimate

relations between partners. Also, the steady decline in birthrates, the extended time that young people spent in their natal homes, and the new expectations about children's needs may have combined to make greater public consciousness about the problems of adolescence. These should be viewed as challenges of American families as they adapt to changing demographic circumstances, instead of alarming signs of the family's demise.

The Great Depression left America's families many benefits including Social Security, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, federal home mortgage insurance, and insured bank deposits. However, the depression's greatest legacy was a major shift in public philosophy. It revealed the inadequacy of the traditional family means of coping with economic disaster in an increasingly complex and bureaucratic society and underscored the fact that families were no longer able to protect themselves against adversity without government aid. The government was induced to take active responsibility for alleviating the loss of earnings caused by unemployment, disability, sickness, and old age. It is this precedent for growing governmental involvement in the lives and welfare of the nation's families that is the central legacy of the New Deal in America.

The next decade and dealing with World War II, would witness a dramatic reaction to the psychological and societal stresses of wartime. Many Americans, having postponed marriage or a family during the depression and World War II, finally had an opportunity to fulfill their dreams. They married at younger ages and had more children than the generations before them. Responding to the postwar housing shortage, millions of families moved to new single-family homes in the suburbs, and there was a sharp reversal of the wartime influx of women into the labor force. They decided against acquiring a higher education and instead concentrated on rearing their children and keeping house.

The 1950's and 1960's saw the emergence of a youth culture. It reflected the evolution of new patterns of age segmentation in the American society. For longer periods of their lives, young people were spending their time in the company of their peers within specialized, youth-oriented institutions as schools, colleges, and sports facilities. Adolescents had their own movies and books, and even the young children had TV shows produced just for them.

Dramatic social changes taking place in sexual values and in women's and young people's lives would undermine the patterns of early marriage, large families, and stable divorce rates characteristic of the postwar era. All these factors, also affected educational institutions and the way children responded.

The 1970's and 1980's witnessed significant changes in the experience of childhood and adolescence. Since 1960 the proportion of children growing up in "traditional families" in which the father is the breadwinner and the mother is a full-time homemaker has fallen dramatically while the number growing up in single-parent, female-headed households or in two-worker, two-parent households has risen sharply. Before 1960 divorce was an occurrence experienced by a few children. In the 1970's, this occurrence increased significantly. To a growing number of Americans, parenthood has become an increasingly frightening prospect, one that requires specialized skills and outside help.

However, the family structure thrives, supporting their own and offering support in many different ways. The family may look different, but people still strive to be part of one, and to be connected to a larger whole.

OBJECTIVES

Having students think beyond the obvious while using their basic math skills, is the main goal of this unit. Through interactive, engaging, and sequential activities, the student will develop a basic understanding of our current family structures and how they evolved. To expand their thinking, plant a seed of thought, and possibly to ignite a thought to ponder for further study at a later time are also objectives of presenting this unit. As they proceed through this unit they will:

- Critique mathematical ideas
- Use strategies to understand and solve non-routine problems
- Use appropriate mathematical terms to explain and justify logical solutions to problems
- Collect, organize, and display data
- Interpret data from graphs
- Predict and determine why some outcomes are certain, more likely, most likely, equally likely, or impossible
- Recognize, describe, extend, create, and replicate a variety of patterns, including attribute, activity, number, and patterns
- Form rules to describe a specific pattern
- Use coordinates to identify points on a coordinate grid

STRATEGIES

After a class discussion on what families mean to my students, and who is in their families, we will make up a list of common characteristics of a family. From there, we will discuss TV families, similarities/differences. We will then have them relate what they know of their parents' and grandparents' family structures, and have a discussion of how they were the same and how they have changed, outlining basic ideas.

Through the past three centuries, families have undergone major changes in the United States. Beginning with the Pilgrims and the Native Americans who were already living here, change was inevitable. From the basic need to survive, to understanding and dealing with all the newest technological advances, the family has had to take on different responsibilities, to deal with their surroundings. Morally, socially,

economically, and psychologically, families have had to monitor and adjust. What was once a given, is now an option. New advances in medicine, technology, and what is socially acceptable have altered family roles and responsibilities.

What is the ideal family? When was the ideal time for family life? How have these changes affected the education of our youth? How has each region of our country dealt with these changes?

To answer some of these questions, I will have the students work in groups to become an “expert” on a state of their choice, within a given region. Our country is divided into seven regions – New England States, Middle Atlantic States, Southern States, Midwestern States, Southwestern States, Rocky Mountain States, and the Pacific Coast States. By having a state represented from each region, the students will have a sampling of information from across the country.

They will be given an outline of information they are to research and then to do a report/presentation. They will need to find out why people and families migrated to their state. What economic opportunities were available? What was the climate? What social activities/opportunities attracted them? What challenges did they face? What nationalities of people migrated to their states?

{Appendix #1}

Using resource books on the fifty states and a series of books on the cultural history of the United States through each decade, encyclopedias, US Census Data, and other pre-selected internet sites, the student will choose a state and then find the following information:

- A brief history of how the state originated
- Where it got its name
- What the population was in each decade from 1880 – 2000
- What is the area of the state
- What is the average temperature in the summer and winter
- What is the average precipitation
- Its population and its ranking among the other 50 states

{Appendix #2}

Using the population data from the years 1880-2000, the student will be required to graph the information for their state, using graph paper. As they finish their graphs, they will be asked to see if any decades in particular show that the population increased or declined significantly. If they do see such a trend, they will then need to research further to explain why there was an increase or decrease, looking further into the history of that state. What was happening at that time? What economic, social, or environmental factors contributed to the sudden change? How were individual families and children affected? What were the roles of family members at that time? What was the infant mortality rate and the life expectancy for men and women? What did families look like at that time – average number of children, extended family members, responsibilities?

As they find this information, they will begin to see a bigger picture of what life was like at that time, the good and the bad, and be able to compare it to their lifestyles today. Was it better or worse? What were some good points and some negative points? They will be able to support their comments and thoughts based on their research.

{Appendix #3}

As a culminating project, they will present their findings to the rest of the class. They will have a choice as to their project to convey their research. They can create a poster displaying their charts, graphs, pictures, and written research. They can do a Power Point Presentation, inserting their charts, graphs, pictures, and research data. They can design a brochure, outlining and highlighting the data about their state. They can simply collect all their research, and turn it in, in report form, and be prepared to give a summary to the class in a newscast format.

The projects will be evaluated by a checklist/rubric that will be given to the students ahead of time so that they know beforehand what to focus on and to include in their presentations.

{Appendix #4}

To pull all of their research together, we will create a class graph of the population trends for each state from 1880-2000 in increments of 20 years, using overhead transparencies. They will have to each create a graph on MICROSOFT EXCEL all using the same format and then I will make transparencies from them, so that the transparencies can be overlapped. From there, we can compare population trends and have them explain the reason for the changes, giving facts from their findings, explaining similarities and differences. From all this combined information, we will be able to hold an informative discussion as to the impact these changes have on them, their country, and ultimately their family, and their education/socialization.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Lesson #1 - Classroom discussion on the family

Objective: The student will brainstorm a list of common characteristics that any kind of family shares.

Materials: Large white poster paper, markers

Procedure:

1. Hold a class discussion of what a family means to each of them.
2. Discuss the make-up of various popular TV families.
3. Discuss their parents' and grandparents families and their make-up.
4. As you go through these discussions, list common factors that keep coming up. (The list should include someone who provides financial support, emotional support, hierarchy of members, connections between members, and distribution of labor in the household.)
5. Using a graphic aid, show the likes and differences of the families discussed.

Evaluation:

Take anecdotal notes on students, on the number and depth of their thoughts and insights.

Lesson #2 - Research a State

Objective: The student will become knowledgeable about a particular state in order to relate facts and data as to why and when its population grew the most.

Materials: Resource books, (see bibliography), worksheet (Appendix #1)

Procedure:

1. Have students work independently or with a partner to choose a state. Make sure a State from each region is picked to research.
2. Provide students with various resource books on the 50 States.
3. Have them fill out the worksheet, "Investigating a State of the United States of America", finding statistical data and interesting facts.
4. Inform them to be prepared to report on their State and trends they observed.

Evaluation:

Check their work for completion of information.

Lesson #3 – Charts and Graphs

Objective: Using the numerical data they collected, have the students put it in graph form.

Materials: Worksheet (Appendix #2), colored pencils, their research

Procedure:

1. Briefly discuss what a line, bar, and pie graph are and why they are used.
2. Guide them to the conclusion that a line graph would be the best choice to use to show population trends.
3. Using data from their research and the US Census website, have them create a line graph.
4. Between each decade, have them estimate and record the growth in population. Make notes on the decade(s) that showed the most growth.

Evaluation:

Grade the accuracy and readability of their graphs.

Lesson #4 -Presentations

Objective: The student will apply the numerical data they collected to the history of their States.

Materials: Their notes, resource books (Lucent Book Series – see bibliography), poster board, note paper, colored paper for brochures, computer access

Procedure:

1. Using the notes they took on the population growth of their States, have them further research the reasons why their State had a large population growth spurt at that time, citing specific dates and events.
2. Provide them with the research books from the Lucent Book Series. These provide specific events from each decade of US History.
3. Have each group create a finished product to reflect their research – a poster, report, brochure, or short Power Point show, citing economic, social, political, and/or environmental factors that contributed to that growth.

Evaluation:

Use “Checklist for State Project’ (Appendix #3), to assess their presentations.

Lesson #5 Make a class graph on the population trends

Objective: Students will learn how to create a graph on the computer using EXCEL. Students will be able to use numerical data to reflect on historical events and the impact on families.

Procedure:

1. Go over the directions on how to access Microsoft EXCEL on the computers. Have them use the direction sheet for using EXCEL (Appendix #4). Help them when needed, to understand the directions.
2. After they have finished entering their State data and have created a line graph, have them print a copy of it. Using these copies, make transparencies from some of them.
3. On the overhead, present their graphs, overlaying the different states.
4. Have students pick out population trends that are similar and different, leading into a discussion of what was happening in the various regions of our country at different times.
5. Guide students to see how numbers reflect real life events and help us to understand trends of our past, and to make future predictions of population growths, in order to be prepared.

Evaluation:

Check their graphs for accuracy.
Use anecdotal records to make observations about their comments and discoveries.

Lesson #6 - Summation

Objective: The students will be able to pull together their thoughts, based on their research, class presentations, and numerical data.

Procedure:

1. Have a classroom discussion, pulling ideas, data, and trends.
2. Relate its impact as to why families have changed, how it affects them personally, their education, and how they predict it will be in the next decade of their life, in 5 decades.
3. Have them reflect, on a one page essay, what they learned from doing this project. Have them include data to support their thoughts.

Evaluation:

Check the students essays for how well they were able to relate data to personal experiences.

APPENDICES

#1 Questions they need to answer about their state

#2 Graph of their states' population trend from the years 1880 – 2000

#3 Rubric/Checklist for their presentation

#4 Class population graph of the states they researched

{Appendix #1}

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

INVESTIGATING A STATE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

U.S. State:

Region: _____

Area (in square miles) : _____

Average Summer Temperature: _____

Average Winter Temperature: _____

Average yearly precipitation: _____



Population in:

Year	population
1880	
1890	
1900	
1910	
1920	
1930	
1940	
1950	
1960	
1970	
1980	
1990	
2000	

*** WHAT OTHER STATISTICAL FACTS DID YOU FIND ABOUT YOUR STATE?**

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> -

{Appendix #2}

POINTS:		CRITERIA:
20 pts.	1.	Your project includes all the specified information about your state
15 pts.	2.	Your graph is correctly labeled , accurate, and readable
15 pts.	3.	Your research covers the history of your state
10 pts.	4.	Your research data supports the population increases/decreases for your state
5 pts.	5.	You are able to make future predictions about the population growth of your state
10 pts.	6.	Your finished project is readable, well labeled, and attractive
5 pts.	7.	Bibliography and sources of information are included
20 pts.	8.	Presentation Clearly spoken; articulate, good eye contact Readable; colorful; attractive
Total:	/100	

K. McHugh, Spring 2007

{Appendix #4}

Directions to use EXCEL:

Click on the **START** button.

Go to **Programs**.

Go to **MICROSOFT EXCEL** (It is a green icon.)

Once in EXCEL,

Type **YEAR** in the A-1 cell.

Type **POPULATION** in the B-1 cell.

Type the **years** in the A column. **Insert yr space – before each year –yr 1880**

Type the **population** in the B column.

To create a line graph to show the population trends:

Highlight only the data you entered.

Click on the **CHART WIZARD icon** on the toolbar.
(It is to the left of the question mark icon.)

Go to LINE graph. Pick one of the first 6 line graphs.

Click on NEXT.

On chart titles:

Population of ----- (your state's name)

X axis - *Year*

Y axis - *Population*

Click next.

Click finish.

To insert your name:

Click on INSERT on the toolbar.

Point to Picture, then to WORD ART.

Change the font size to less than 20

Change the font to whatever you want.

Move your name to an empty spot on your graph.

K. McHugh, Spring 2007

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