



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1990 Volume IV: American Family Portraits (Section I)

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Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.04.06  
by

Instead of concentrating on the negative aspects of the African-American family, my unit focuses heavily on the influence the African heritage had on the structure and functioning of the American black family. I present the two scholarly schools of thought that have taken up this question. One school of thought thoroughly discussed in my unit is the cultural, ethnocentric approach which views the African-American family as unstable and void of African influence. E. Franklin Frazier's influence on this school of thought is explored in this unit.

The other school of thought, cultural relativity, believes that the black family is a functional entity and was greatly influenced by its African ancestry. In exploring the cultural relativity school I use the works of Robert Hill, Niara Sudarkasa, and Joanne and Elmer Martin. Hill concentrates on the five major strengths of the African-American family. Professor Sudarkasa in her work concentrates on the influence of the African heritage on the functioning and structure of the American black family. I conclude my unit by examining the Martins' work which focused on the helping tradition that originated in Africa and played a vital role in the black family up until 1930.

(Recommended for Social Studies, grades 7-8, and History, grades 9-12)

**Key Words**

*Afro-Americans Family Life*

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