

## Baby Boomer Family Life<sup>1</sup>

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The first of the baby boomers are getting a lot of press lately as they begin turning 60, and researchers have been exploring how this large generation impacts not only our political and cultural climate, but our families as well.

First, boomers have paved the way to more diverse family lives. They have “delayed marriage to a degree never recorded in the United States” (Hughes & O’Rand, 2004) and, as young adults, were more likely than

any other generation to leave home and set up their own households before marriage. They are also more likely to “live together” outside of marriage. So many boomer couples have done this that we tend to forget how rare and frowned-upon this once was.

Second, boomers have looked for marriage based on a strong emotional bond and room for each person to develop as an individual. These demands on married life can make it unstable. Boomers’ high rates of divorce and common remarriage have reinforced a family pattern of “serial monogamy.”

Third, boomers have transformed family roles and relationships: “Boomer women have redefined the role of mother to ‘working mother’ by combining motherhood with work outside the home” (Hughes & O’Rand, 2004). Fathers have also become more involved in family life, spending more time with their children and in sharing the housework.

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Because these arrangements and roles are new, boomers have had to develop their own ways of doing things and, some suggest, “have often been confused by their own lives” (Hughes & O’Rand, 2004). But boomers really are paving the way for new ways of family life in the larger U.S. society.

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## Reference

Hughes, M. E., & O’Rand, A. M. (2004). *The lives and times of the baby boomers*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation and Population Reference Bureau.