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Choices in RELATIONSHIPS

David Knox
Caroline Schacht
I. Joyce Chang

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We would like to dedicate this 13th edition to Emily Schacht.

—David Knox and Caroline Schacht

To my family—the reason I became a family scholar. To my dear daughters Allison and Annika—the reasons I love being a family scholar.

—I. Joyce Chang

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Choices in RELATIONSHIPS

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PREFACE

Authors Knox and Schacht welcome I. Joyce Chang as a coauthor to the 13th edition. Dr. Chang is Professor of Child and Family Development, University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg, and has won awards in both teaching and research. She is active in one of the most prestigious professional organizations in the field, the National Council on Family Relations. In addition to her cutting-edge insights and input throughout the text, Dr. Chang wrote the new Technology sections featured in each chapter.

While technology continues to have a major impact in relationships, our primary focus remains on the choices we make in reference to relationships, marriages, and families. These choices have consequences for the happiness, health, and well-being of ourselves, our partners, our marriage, our parents, and our children. By making deliberate informed choices, everyone wins. Not to take our relationship choices seriously is to limit our ability to enjoy deep, emotionally fulfilling relationships—the only game in town.

This new edition is based on state-of-the-art research with 885 new references, new technology sections—for example, "Robots Are Here"; new Self-Assessment scales, such as "Effective Communication Scale"; new Applying Social Research boxes—for example, "The Experience of Casual Sex"; and new Family Policy inserts like "Childhood Vaccinations—Public Policy and Parental Rights," which continue the cutting-edge format for which *Choices in Relationships* is known. In addition, in the "The Future of..." section at the end of each chapter, we predict, based on trends found in the latest research studies, what the future is likely to hold for marriage, singlehood, parenting, divorce and remarriage, and other chapter topics. Other new content added to each chapter includes the following.

NEW TO THE 13TH EDITION: CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Chapter 1: Choices in Relationships: An Introduction to Marriage, Family and Diversity

Individualized marriage—new term to describe current marriages

Applying Social Research: Impact of Religion on Love, Relationships, and Sexuality

African American clergy committed to marriage preparation

Supreme Court ruling redefining marriage

Human Ecology Framework

Couple and Family Technology Framework

Transnational families

Marriage—Then and Now

Ghost marriage

Is marriage obsolete?

Generation Z

Technology and the Family: Robots

Japan's rent-a-family industry

Fictive kin

Impact of time on social media and relationship satisfaction

Impact of religiosity on staying married to a partner who cheated

Automatic acceptance of same-sex marriage by offspring of parents has not occurred.

Autoethnology

American policies separating children from their families

AI will continue in family life but most are wary of intrusiveness

Socioeconomic/minority status impact on use of technology influences careers/relationships

Mischievous responders as research caveat

How homeless youth view "family"

Chapter 2: Love Relationships

Importance of and meaning of love today

Technology and Love: The Digital Language of Love

Outcome of swinging on relationship quality

Love Directions—heteroromantic, homoromantic, aromantic

Letting love die and moving on

Referents to feeling loved include feeling loved by a pet.

Benefits and drawbacks of polyamory families

Google searchers on nonmonogamy

Primary mate ejection

Love feelings for an android?

Gaslighting

Low relationship quality is associated with higher BMI in women.

Relationship satisfaction in monogamous and consensually nonmonogamous relationships

Congruent love languages associated with less distress

How do you keep your love alive?

Young love is more idealistic than mature love which is idealistic

Second wave digisexual

Higher levels of sacrifice for the partner occur when the partner is viewed as committed

Chapter 3: Gender and Diversity

Up-to-date gender terminology—cisgender, gender binary, agender, genderfluid

Egalitarian relationship

Few individuals report willingness to date a transgender person

Only 5% of heterosexual marriages begin with proposal by woman

Good Men Project

Gambian men report on their women sexual partners who have been cut and uncut

Parenthood role as agent of socialization

Race as an agent of socialization

Technology and Gender: Shebot, Hebot, or Itbot

Family Policy: Men's Health

Genderfluid

Sexuality of men typically described as negative—no mention of sex positivity

Women with young children scale back work demands when in conflict with family

Lego no longer provides traditional gender messaging in its products

Gender role satisfaction predicts life satisfaction

Modern romance novels require the heroine to be "swept off her feet"

Men report higher general life satisfaction than women.

Women report fewer lifetime sexual partners than men.

Chapter 4: Singlehood, Cohabitation, and Living Apart Together

Life satisfaction and satisfaction with one's relationship status

Never marrieds more stigmatized than divorced singles

Sologamy

Applying Social Research: Transitioning a hookup to a committed relationship

Interviews with 20 women in a living apart together arrangement

Cohabitation relationships have negative outcome for children—more likely to end

Technology and Hooking Up: Finding Tinderella Tonight

Older adults in LAT relationships are happier than spouses.

Single women over 50 who are integrated into their families have little interest in marriage.

Ambiguous loss for never married singles

Chinese women age 27 and older are stigmatized and referred to as "left-over"

Emotional reaction to hooking up depends on motivation for hooking up

Hooking up is associated with a devaluation of marriage.

The larger the university, the higher the rate of hooking up.

Family Policy on Singlism

Cohabitation before marriage is associated with increased divorce.

Single women are particularly disadvantaged in the later retirement years.

Peer and family pressure are the major factors determining if LAT couples marry

Living together is normative in Canada and is the most likely context for first union.

Chapter 5: Selecting a Partner

Beginning a new relationship— "Just talking"

Self-Assessment: Relationship Involvement Scale

How sexual orientation influences openness to an interracial relationship

Homogamy of physical measurements in selecting a partner

Characteristics of female attracted to a dominant "bad boy"

Degree to which sociobiology operates in mate preferences today.

Technology and Mate Selection: Shopping for Mr. (Ms.) Right

DNA matching

Effect of conflictual/neglectful parents on one's own relationship

Effect of new relationship for someone on the rebound

Continuum of arranged marriage

Settling

Social anhedonia

Future of partner selection

When there are discrepancies in attraction, love, commitment

Catfishing

Ghosting

Desire for a romantic relationship sets stage for reality of involvement in a relationship

Social anhedonia—no interest in social relationships and no pleasure in social interaction

Chapter 6: Diversity in Marriage Relationships

Immigrant families

Poly families—definitions, benefits and difficulties

Self-Assessment: Satisfaction in Couple Relationship Scale

Family Policy: Ending Child Marriages

After the wedding/new marriage—12% of wives in one study reported clinical depression

Family and Technology: The Downsides of "Smart" Devices

Technoference

African American Families

Hispanic population—fastest growing minority

Asian American Families

Transnational families

Secret lives of international students while in the U.S.

Marital generosity

Up Close: My College Marriage

Forced Marriages

Applying Social Research: Happiness and Power in Relationship

Infidelity data during deployment

Sex frequency drops off significantly the second year of a relationship

Managing the emotions of one's partner and one's self for enhanced marital quality

Interracial spouses have children at a similar rate to same race couples.

Extended kin support is perceived as lacking for White mother with a minority child.

MEES (mundane extreme environmental stress) theory

Non-materialistic couples happier

Biracial children

Immigrants—about half (45%) do not want immigrants moving into their country.

Hologram marriage

Use of Love EveryDay app

A genetic variation referred to as OXTR rs53576 is associated with happy marriages.

Chapter 7: LGBTQIA Relationships

American Psychiatric Association removal of homosexuality as a mental disorder

New sexual orientation category of "mostly heterosexual" attracted to same sex partners

Technology and Sex Reassignment Surgery

Applying Social Research: Trans partner relationships: A qualitative exploration

Asexuality

Ally development model

Benefits of same sex monogamy

Positive experiences of LGBT individuals

Five stages couple goes through when there is disclosure in mixed orientation relationship

Rearing a gender variant (GV) child

Parental gender differences reaction to child's coming out

Gay fathers

Lower sexual satisfaction among non-heterosexuals than heterosexuals

Negative aspects of same-sex marriage—unrealistic expectations of family life

Parents are challenged to give up the idea of a biological grandchild from gay offspring.

Parents of lesbian and gay children seek schools which are racially diverse and gay friendly.

Class rather than the Black church may be more influential in homophobia attitudes.

Mate preferences of transgender individuals

The experience of transgender youth in middle school

"Bear" as a gay male identity

Religion may further complicate one's gay identity resulting in worse mental health.

The higher parental support for LBG youth, the lower the depression.

Sexuality in midlife

Chapter 8: Communication and Technology in Relationships

Five ways of resolving conflict

Personal Choices: Reacting to PMS—One Man's Method

Applying Social Research: Technology and Intimate Relationships

Nomophobia

Flirting behavior between spouses

TOGETHER as program for teaching communication/resolving money problems

Family and Technology: Cell Phone Etiquette/Tech Etiquette

Downside of Facebook

Revenge porn

Equilibrium model of relationship maintenance

Talking with friends and family about one's relationship issues

Recovery sabotage

Slang

Cell phone use may create feelings of being ostracized.

High Twitter use is associated with unmet social needs.

Cell phone use is associated with self-reported happiness among older rural adults.

Chapter 9: Sexuality in Relationships

What sexual behaviors are regarded as sex?

Themes in making sexual decisions

Sexual and romance avoidance

Future of single sex classes in public schools

Applying Social Research: The Experience of Casual Sex

Sexual tempo and relationship quality

Effects of pornography consumption on romantic relationship breakup

Benefits of touching

Advantages/disadvantages of friends with benefits relationship

Approach rather than avoidance reasons for sex has more positive outcomes.

Pluralistic ignorance

Outcomes of sexual competence at first heterosexual intercourse

PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)

Stealthing

Cybersex partners

Outcomes of pornography use for individuals and couples

PERSONAL CHOICES: Script for Disclosing One's STI

Effects of regret in involvement in a relationship and sexual satisfaction

Women less sexually assertive than men about sexual behaviors they want

Threesomes

Sexual Growth

Technology and the Family: The Rise of Sexual Enhancement Products

The hookup culture (casual sex) is now the top sexual value among college students.

Divorce for women is often a time of sexual empowerment in both exploration and satisfaction.

The fewer the number of lifetime sexual partners, the happier the marriage.

Feminists are more open about their sexual needs to their partners/fake orgasm less often.

Video games used to reduce STI risk behavior

Female egalitarian attitudes are associated with higher sex frequency in couple relationships.

About 40% of adults report interpersonal sex at least once a week.

Chapter 10: Violence and Abuse in Relationships

Example of male student being abused by his girlfriend

Cyber abuse

Counseling of child abuse victims breaks cycle of abuse.

Types of sexual coercion

Sexual coercion followed by incapacitated rape followed by forcible rape are most frequent

Rohypnol, GHB, Special K use in rape

Resistance to rape associated with decreased rape completion

California affirmative consent law

Spring Break at the Beach

Avoiding mixing alcohol types and using "protective behavioral strategies"

Triggers for leaving an abusive relationship

CPV—Child Parent Violence

Cyberstalking

Male rape

Cultural militarism creates context for making violence normative.

Some parents in Egypt arrange for their children to "marry" tourists to circumvent laws against having sex with children.

Relationship context in which abuse occurs

Teenagers whose parents are abusive are more likely to be abusive in their own relationships.

A woman who elopes or marries against the consent of the family may be killed in what is called an honor crime.

Revenge porn

Abuse of robots

Chapter 11: Planning for Parenthood

The narrative about having children has changed from "when" to "whether"

"Missing females" due to sex selection technology

Comparison of gay and heterosexual desire to have children

Co-parenting among teens

Family size and obesity of the children

Applying Social Research: Are male children still preferred?

Effect of infertility on individual and couple well-being

Experience of child born into lesbian family

Experience of children from Eastern Europe adopted by American parents

Effect on different causes of infertility on female sexual dysfunction

Why child-free by choice individuals changed their minds

Child-free viewed as least warm and most troubled

Cost of attending college in 18 years for one's child

Transnational commercial surrogacy

Acceptance of male contraceptive pill

China's one child policy

Fewer children for those who have children and for those now child-free

Regrets in having children are both circumstantial and specific to the child.

Embryo adoption

Having a child as an unmarried adult is now culturally approved of.

Chapter 12: Diversity in Parenting

The "Good Enough" Parent

Millennials as parents themselves

Safe Haven/Baby Moses Law

Personal Choices: Co-Sleeping with Ones Infant?

Family Policy: Childhood Vaccinations: Public Policy and Parental Rights

Parental empowerment

Drop in sexual satisfaction of first-time parents following birth of child

Comparison of time spouses with and without children spend together/impact on marriage

Comparison of child care work hours for egalitarian relationships

Parental warmth—trajectory across adolescents for fathers, mothers, grandparents, aunts

Trade-off for parents who teach children to think independently

American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines for screen time of children

Primary reason for adult children leaving and returning to family home

Effect of child under five on sex frequency of single parent mother

Changes in couple's relationship that are in period of empty nest

Following the rules to stay Facebook friends with your children

Texting symbols teenagers use

Fewer economic assets and fewer savings when adult children live with parents

Percent of parents monitoring teen's online activity

Quality time

Parenting foci differs

Mexican parents whose offspring emigrate to the United States do not become depressed.

Four in ten U.S. parents report enforcing punishments with teen drivers who break the law.

Both mothers and fathers' sense of well-being improves with parenthood.

Mothers with several children who have different biological fathers

High conflict with parents as teenagers is predictive of sexual intercourse by age 15.

African American mothers focus on protecting their children from racism.

Outcomes in children exposed to different parenting styles

Working mothers who take a month or more off after childbirth report less depression.

Parental burnout

Four Cs of effective parenting

Parental education is associated with lower divorce.

Peripartum depression

Co-sleeping is practiced by 70% of the parents throughout the world

College concierge parent

Reacting to teen who plays video games eight hours a day

Men high on masculinity scores are low on parenting engagement

White fathers of White-Black biracial sons

Socioeconomic status of parents impacts Internet connectivity available to their children.

Positive conflict resolution strategies between parents = positive relationship with adolescent

Chapter 13: Money, Work, and Relationships

Self-Assessment: Job Satisfaction Scale

Effect of being a police officer on one's marriage

Relative money contribution of money to marriage and financial satisfaction

Importance of parent spending time with teenager

Gig/sharing economy jobs

Gender support differences when spouse becomes involved in new business venture

Effect of economic challenges unemployment/debt on individuals and relationships

College students, both men and women, avoid STEM careers due to family inflexibility

Effect of the father's employment on children

Comparison of lottery versus non-lottery winners in regard to personal happiness, well-being

Everwork as a norm in some corporations

Flextime and telecommuting valued as way to preserve family life

Men more material focused; women more life satisfaction focused

Pregnant women getting their doctorate felt little support for their movement into family.

Behavioral and cognitive strategies combined are need to achieve work-life balance.

Women in management positions are generally less happy than men in management positions.

Having high and similar incomes in cohabitation is associated with the decision to marry.

High incomes are associated with personalities that do not lend themselves to compromise or empathy.

Having a job and a good income is an expectation potential partners have of each other.

Being employed and making a lot of money are desirable qualities of a potential partner.

Mothers who work nonstandard hours feel less engaged and less happy about their parenting.

Pregnant women forced to work in strenuous conditions resulting in miscarriages

2019 Poverty Guidelines

Work to family conflict with employed wives

Best and worst states to rear a family

Chapter 14: Stress and Crisis in Relationships

Effect of stress on individuals and relationships

Parents with multiple sclerosis—coping and managing the illness

Impact on depression in elderly of having a dog or cat

Effect of mental illness of children on parents

Reaction of adult children to parental infidelity

China's mistress dispeller

Guidelines for spousal and relationship recovery from an affair

Questioning the requirement that the affair of one's partner must end the marriage

Benefits of becoming involved in marital therapy

Perception of the degree to which marriage counseling is scientific

Positive family functioning reduces impact of PTSD stress due to combat exposure.

Women's sleep is troubled by children in the house; men's sleep is troubled by unemployment and worry about household finances.

Low marital quality, loneliness, and Internet infidelity

Opioid use

Conditions under which an affair is associated with life satisfaction

Psychosocial treatment of opioid use has not been effective.

Substance abuse as "White drug exceptionalism" whereby White women are rarely portrayed as victims of drug culture

Undergraduates identified three major ways to avoid cheating, but were largely unsuccessful in using them.

Having cheated or been cheated upon is associated with identifying more behaviors—both emotional and sexual—as cheating.

Emotional and sexual infidelity are regarded as equally unacceptable.

Suicide attempts among the mentally ill are associated with experiencing lifetime trauma.

Chapter 15: Divorce, Remarriage, and Stepfamilies

High conflict divorce

Relationship with one's romantic partner after romantic relationship terminated

Discernment counseling—spouses on the brink of divorce reconcile/remain married

Percent of separations that end up as reconciliations

Number of years after wedding most couples divorce

Applying Social Research: Romantic Breakup: Difficult Loss of Some/Not Others

Self-Assessment: Positive and Negative Ex-Relationship Thoughts Scale

Technology and Postdivorce Co-Parenting

Estrangememt

Positive aspects of divorce as identified by undergraduates

Validity of "staying married for the children"

Adult children reacting to the late-life divorce of their parents

Postdivorce relationships with former stepparents

Conscious uncoupling as new approach to divorce

Stigmatization of divorce in Saudi Arabia

Same-sex divorce

Calling off the divorce

Economic resources provided by nonresident father and time spent with children

Mistakes divorcing individuals report that they made in getting married and selecting a partner

There is no one age one should marry to avoid divorce and have high marital satisfaction.

Shared parenting by high-conflict divorcing parents results in poorer adjustment for children

The ambivalence of divorce

Unequal housework is associated with divorce

Romantic heartbreak is associated with sexual values becoming more liberal

Annulments

Chapter 16: The Later Years

Education and international travel reduce filial piety

Effect of taking care of frail elderly in one's own home

Loneliness

Elderly who have "completed life" and no longer find meaning in life

Characteristics of lifestyle of the elderly in the "blue zone"

Effect of grandchild on decision of woman to retire

Cultural reframing of "the elderly" to be more affirming

Self-Assessment: Attitudes Toward Taking Care of Elderly Parents Scale

Support groups should be sought by those taking care of the mentally ill aging parent

What if? What if your parent's marriage is worse than divorce?

Living apart together is becoming an increasingly chosen option for the elderly.

New romantic love partner for 14 divorced or widowed women, 65-84

The younger the child, the more likely grandparents are to spend time with the grandchild.

Grandsons want support and advice from grandparents; granddaughters want friendship.

Daily exercise by the elderly has benefits for marital satisfaction.

Midlife emotional connection and support for autonomy continues into later life marriages.

A content analysis of "Hot in Cleveland" revealed sex as desirable for women over 50.

Physical exercise is associated with the stabilization of depression among the elderly.

While prevalent among the advanced elderly (e.g., 84), insomnia is generally mild.

Sexuality changes in elderly women

Older Tanzanian men report the difficult expectations of sexual masculinity

Effect of chronic low back pain on individuals and their partners

Reverse retirement occurs more often for those with children under 30 and mortgage debt.

"Successful aging" often used interchangeably with "healthy aging"

Drinking patterns of elderly spouses often mirror each other.

Elderly women not integrated into extended family networks were looking for love.

Applying Social Research: The Psychosocial Sources of Sexual Interest in Older Couples

Self-neglect cases—the elderly who live alone and are a danger to themselves

Chinese rural elderly who have cell phone happier than those with no cell phone

Less sex with aging does not translate into having a diminished marriage in terms of success.

Elderly siblings have limited contact with each other after their parents die.

Men are becoming more involved in the care-giving role.

Communication technology in residential care for the elderly can decrease loneliness.

Changing norms in China regarding putting one's parents in a nursing home

Dying alone is viewed differently by survivors and the soon-to-be deceased.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE TEXT

In addition to being student friendly, *Choices in Relationships* has several unique features that are included in every chapter.

Culture and Diversity

Rather than one chapter on diversity and inclusiveness, these themes are woven throughout the respective chapters. Examples include references to national and international data as well as culture and diversity. Some chapters emphasize diversity more than others. Chapter 6 on "Diversity in Marriage Relationships" includes sections on African American families, Hispanic/Latino families, Asian American families, immigrant families, poly families, military families, interracial marriages, international marriages, age-discrepant relationships and marriages, college marriages, and forced marriages.

Technology and the Family

From how people meet, whether through apps or online, to divorce and taking down Facebook images of the happy couple or family, technology impacts relationships. Each chapter features a Technology insert relevant to the topic of the chapter—for example, Love, Gender, Sexuality, and so forth—and how these advances require choices which have positive outcomes for individuals, couples, and families. Examples of these technology sections include "The Digital Language of Love," "Shebot, Hebot or Itbot?" and "Sexual Enhancement Products."

Self-Assessment Scales

Each chapter features one or more self-assessment scales that allow students to measure a particular aspect of themselves or their relationships. These are presented after Special Topic II on page 371.

Applying Social Research

To emphasize that *Choices in Relationships* is not a self-help trade book but a researched-based college textbook, we present a research application feature in every chapter and specify how new research may be applied to one's interpersonal relationships. Examples of new Applying Social Research features in this edition include "The Impact of Religion on Love, Relationships, and Sex," "Romantic Loss: Difficult Loss of Some/Not Others," and "Trans Partner Relationships: A Qualitative Exploration."

Family Policy

Congress is concerned about enacting policies that benefit families. In each chapter we review policies relevant to marriage and the family. Examples include men's health, singlism, and child marriage.

Personal Choices

An enduring popular feature of the text is the Personal Choices—detailed discussions of personal choice dilemmas. Examples include: "Who is the Best Person for You to Marry?" "Should I Get Involved in

a Long-Distance Relationship?" and "How Much Do I Tell My Partner About My Past?"

Original Data

To supplement national and international data, the text provides original data from over 13,000 respondents collected by the authors and their colleagues.

Chapter Summaries

Each chapter ends with a summary, formatted as questions and answers, with each question relating back to the Learning Objectives listed at the beginning of every chapter.

Key Terms

Boldface type indicates key terms, which are defined and featured in the margin of the text as well as the glossary at the end of the text.

Web Links

The Internet is an enormous relationship resource. Internet addresses are provided at the end of each chapter. These have been checked at the time of publication to ensure that they are "live."

Special Topics

This edition features the Special Topics section on marriage and family careers and state-of-the art information about contraception and STIs.

SAGE edge™

SAGE edge for instructors

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We love the study, writing, and teaching of marriage and the family and recognize that no one has a corner on relationships. We welcome your insights, stories, and suggestions for improvement in the next edition of this text. We check our e-mail frequently and invite you to send us your thoughts. We will respond.

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1

Choices in Relationships

An Introduction to Marriage, Family, and Diversity

May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.

—Nelson Mandela

Learning Objectives

1.1. Review facts about a "choices" view of relationships and various influences on those "choices"
1.2. Describe the theoretical frameworks for studying marriage and the family
1.3. Identify the elements, benefits, and types of marriage relationships
1.4. Understand the definition and types of family
1.5. Explain the distinction between marriage and family
1.6. Summarize the research process and its caveats
1.7. Identify changes in marriage and the family in the future

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With all the swiping and talk of Tinder, "friends with benefits," and cohabitation, one wonders why a text and course about marriage and the family? Are marriage and family done for? No. All polls and surveys provide essentially the same finding—that most individuals seek a marital and family context for their adult lifestyle (James-Kangal et al., 2018).

The reason? Marriage and family are the contexts of sustained emotional connections. Thus, this text focuses on human connections and relationship choices. Few experiences are more important. It is something all of us have in common—the search for meaningful love connections which result from deliberate, thoughtful, considered choices in one's relationships. Many of these intense and sustained love relationships end up in marriage and having a family—the bedrock of society. All individuals were born into a family—however one defines this concept—and most will end up in a family of their own.

"Have a happy marriage" remains the top value reported by 13,119 undergraduates with 44% selecting this value, 32% choosing "have career I love," and 21% opting for "have financial security" (Hall & Knox, 2019). In this chapter we review the definitions, types, and frameworks for viewing marriage and the family. We begin with the principle framework for this text—choices in relationships.

CHOICES IN RELATIONSHIPS—VIEW OF THE TEXT

Whatever your relationship goal, in this text we encourage a proactive approach of taking charge of your life and making wise relationship choices. Making the right choices in your relationships, including marriage and family, is critical to your health, happiness, and sense of well-being. Your times of greatest elation and sadness will be in reference to your love relationships.

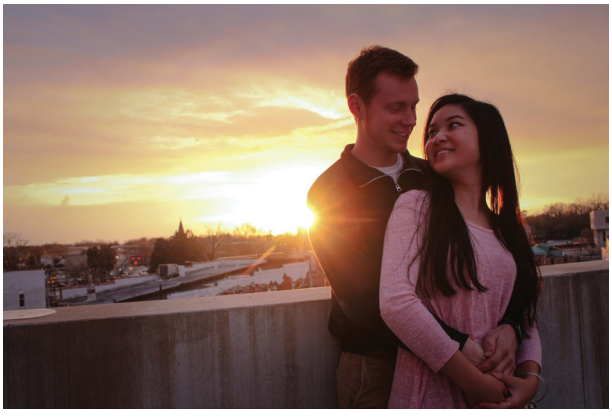
The central theme of this text is choices in relationships. Although we will make over 100 relationship decisions, among the most important are whether to marry, whom to marry, when to marry, whether to have children, whether to remain emotionally and sexually faithful to one's partner, and whether to protect oneself from sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy. Though structural and cultural influences are operative, a choices framework emphasizes that individuals have some control over their relationship destiny by making deliberate choices to initiate, nurture, or terminate intimate relationships.

Facts About Choices in Relationships

The facts to keep in mind when making relationship choices include the following:

Not to Decide Is to Decide

Not making a decision is a decision by default. If you are sexually active and decide not to use a condom, you have made a decision to increase your risk for an unwanted pregnancy and possibly contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). If you don't make a deliberate choice to end a relationship that is unfulfilling or going nowhere, you have made a choice to continue that relationship and eliminate the possibility of getting into a more positive and flourishing relationship. If you don't make a decision to be faithful to your partner, you have made a decision to be vulnerable to cheating. See the Personal Choices section for more examples of taking charge of your life by making deliberate choices.



Relationships thrive on unique experiences like sharing the sunset together.
Courtesy of Trevor Werb

If your feet don't move, you'll never get there.
Ann Marie Antenucci,
recalling the words of her immigrant grandmother

Action Must Follow a Choice

Making a decision but not acting on it is tantamount to no decision at all. You must pull the trigger. If you decide to only have safe sex, you must buy condoms, have them available, and use them.

Choices Involve Trade-Offs

By making one choice, you relinquish others. Every relationship choice you make will have a downside and an upside. If you decide to hook up with someone, you may enjoy the sexual excitement, but you may feel regretful in the morning and decide that the night will not result in a relationship. If you decide to marry, you will give up your freedom to pursue other emotional or sexual relationships or both. But, your marriage may result in a stable lifetime of shared memories.

Any partner that you select will also have characteristics that must be viewed as a trade-off. One woman noted of her partner, "he doesn't do text messaging or e-mail. . . he doesn't even know how to turn on a computer. But he knows how to build a house, plant a garden, and fix a car. . . and he loves me. . . trade-offs I'm willing to make."

Some Choices Require Correction

Some of our choices, although they seem correct at the time that we make them, turn out to be disasters. Once we realize that a choice has consistently negative consequences, it is important to stop defending it, make new choices, and move forward. Otherwise, we remain consistently locked into continued negative outcomes for a "bad" choice. The analogy is that no matter how far you have gone down the wrong road, you can always turn back.

It all depends on how we look at things, and not on how they are in themselves.
Carl G. Jung, psychoanalyst

PERSONAL CHOICES

Relationship Choices—Deliberately or by Default?

It is a myth that you can avoid making relationship decisions, because by default, not making a decision is a decision. Some examples follow:

- If you don't make a decision to pursue a relationship with a particular person, you have made a decision (by default) not to have a relationship with that person.
- If you do not decide to do the things that are necessary to improve your current relationship, you have made a decision to let the relationship slowly disintegrate.
- If you do not make a decision to be faithful to your partner, you have made a decision to be open to situations and relationships which may result in infidelity.
- If you do not make a decision to delay having intercourse, you have made a decision to have intercourse early in a relationship. Research suggests less regret with delaying the first intercourse (Farvid & Braun, 2017).
- If you are sexually active and do not make a decision to use birth control or a condom, you have made a decision to expose yourself to getting pregnant or to contracting an STI.

Throughout the text, as we discuss various relationship choices, consider that you automatically make a choice by being inactive—that not to make a choice is to make one. We encourage a proactive style whereby you make deliberate relationship choices. ●

TABLE 1.1

Five Generations in Recent History

	BORN	MAJOR LIFE EVENTS	HABITS	PERCENTAGE OF THE U.S. POPULATION
Traditionalists/Silent Generation	(1913-1945)	Years of the Great Depression, World War II veterans and civilians.	Traditional values	10%
Baby Boomers	(1946-1964)	Children of WWII Traditionalists.	Questioning of traditional values.	23%
Generation X	(1965-1979)	Generation of change, MTV, AIDS, diversity.	Children of boomers.	20%
Generation Y (Millennials)	(1980-1996)	Boomerang generation, delay marriage.	Loyalty to corporations is gone, frequent job changes.	23%
Generation Z	(1997-2012)	Grew up in context of terrorism. Skyrocketing college costs.	Also known as Plurals, App Generation, Homelanders, "Always on"	24%

Choices Include Selecting a Positive or a Negative View

As Thomas Edison progressed toward inventing the light bulb, he said, "I have not failed. I have found ten thousand ways that won't work."

In spite of an unfortunate event in your life, you can choose to see the bright side. Regardless of your circumstances, you can opt for viewing a situation in positive terms. A partner breaking up with you due to lack of love can be viewed as an opportunity to become involved in a new, mutual, love relationship. The discovery of your partner cheating on you can be viewed as an opportunity to open up communication channels with your partner and to develop a stronger connection. Discovering that you have a sexually transmitted infection can be viewed as a challenge to face adversity with your partner. It is not the event but your view of it that determines its effect on you.

Most Choices Are Revocable; Some Are Not

Most choices can be changed. For example, a person who has chosen to be sexually active with multiple partners can decide to be monogamous or to abstain from sexual relations in new relationships. People who have been unfaithful in the past can elect to be emotionally and sexually committed to a new partner.

Other choices are less revocable. For example, backing out of the role of parent is very difficult. Social pressure keeps most parents engaged, but the law, such as forced child support, is the backup legal incentive. Hence, the decision to have a child is usually irrevocable. Choosing to have unprotected sex may also result in a lifetime of coping with a sexually transmitted infection like herpes.

Choices of Generation Y

Generations vary and social scientists study and compare these cohorts, focusing on their habits and how they differ from previous generations (see Table 1.1). Much attention has been given to **Generation Y**, more commonly known as **millennials**, and their choices. Numbering about 80 million, they represent 23% of the U.S. population. The choices of this generation reveal a focus on enjoyment and flexibility. Rather than fixating on marriage, they "hang out," "hook up," and live together. Research shows that they aren't in a hurry to find "the one," to marry, or to begin a family (Klinenberg, 2012). Instead, many enjoy living alone. Their focus is on their educations and careers, and enjoying their freedom in the meantime. These changes are notable from previous generations, where marriage and childbearing were considered obligatory. Such trends may contribute to the negative stereotype that millennials are self-absorbed individuals. Another notable change in this generation stems from technology. Generation Y has been greatly influenced by technology, and the following generation, Generation Z, is the "always on" technology generation (Dimock, 2019). We will discuss how technology affects their choices in subsequent chapters.

Choices About the Use of Technology

Since the use of technology may have positive or negative consequences depending how it is used, individuals may be deliberate in their choices to maximize desired outcomes. For example, those in

Millennials: persons born between 1980 and 1996.

a new relationship make the choice whether to continue texting their previous partner, spouses make the choice to send a text message thanking each other for a previous behavior or lash out at a perceived miscue, and parents decide how much screen time for their children. Heterosexual spouses view interactive technology, such as cell phones, the Internet, and social networking sites, as both facilitating distraction as well as providing a mechanism for connection (Vaterlaus & Tulane, 2019). Individuals on the job market also make choices to "clean up their social media" from embarrassing photos. Individuals must also deal with issues of cell phone or game addiction or both, stalking, and ghosting.

Parents also decide about vlogging—the frequent recording and uploading of personal videos. *Family Fun Pack* is created by two teachers, Kristine and Matt. They have six kids and their Family Fun Pack video has 5.2 million subscribers and 9.4 billion views. While a substantial income can be gained from such uploading, the degree to which one should submit his or her children to growing up in public is an issue some families wrestle with (Luscombe, 2017).

Choices Are Influenced by the Stage in the Family Life Cycle

The choices a person makes tend to be individualistic or familistic, depending on the stage of the family life cycle—formally a series of stages individuals progress through, such as married couple, childbearing, and preschool age. The concept, though, doesn't apply to everyone since some never marry, don't have children, and so forth.

However, for the young, single person, individualism characterizes his or her thinking and choices. These individuals are concerned only with their own needs. Should they marry and have children, familistic values ensue as the needs of a spouse and children begin to influence behavioral choices. For example, evidence of familistic values and choices is reflected in the fact that spouses with children are less likely to divorce than spouses without children.

Global, Structural, Cultural, and Social Media Influences on Choices

Choices in relationships are influenced by global, structural, cultural, and media factors. This section reviews the ways in which globalization, social structure, and culture impact choices in relationships. Although a major theme of this book is the importance of taking active control of your life in making relationship choices, it is important to be aware that the social world in which you live restricts and channels such choices. For example, social disapproval for marrying someone of another race is part of the reason that over 85% of adults in the United States are married to someone of the same race. Behler (2017) also found that high status males in high school have a greater opportunity to attract the partner of their choice; conversely, lower status males are more limited in their partner alternatives. The point is that social factors operate independent of individual factors of desire. Finally, the gender composition of a high school impacts the willingness of one to become involved in a romantic relationship. For example, Harknett and Cranney (2017) analyzed the behavior of 12,617 high school students and noted that when female classmates were more numerous than male classmates—thus giving the males the upper hand from a bargaining standpoint—the males were less likely to express desire for a romantic relationship, and hence, less commitment. Hence, love is impacted just by the numbers of specific genders in one's social world. Of course, social media allows individuals to interact and connect with a much broader pool of potential partners, so the disadvantage of gender ratios in high school may become irrelevant.

Globalization

Families exist in the context of globalization. Economic, political, and religious happenings throughout the world affect what happens in your marriage and family in the United States. When the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union (Brexit), the stock market in the United States dropped 900 points in two days. Negative economic conditions are associated with reduced interest in social approval for getting married—the thinking is that stable economic conditions (e.g., a job) provide a more positive context for the marriage to flourish (Gassman-Pines et al., 2017). Schneider (2017) noted that marriage and family choices impacted by the recession in 2008 included a lower fertility rate, less relationship happiness, and fewer divorces.

The country in which you live also affects your happiness and well-being. For example, in the World Happiness Report, citizens in 150 countries were asked to indicate their level of life satisfaction on a scale from 1 (worst possible life for you) to 10 (best possible life for you). Citizens in Denmark, Switzerland, and Iceland averaged 7.5; those in Syria averaged 3.0; and those in the United States averaged 7.1 (Helliwell et al., 2016). The Internet, social media, and various news outlets provide global awareness so that families are no longer isolated units.

Social Structure

The social structure of a society consists of institutions, social groups, statuses, and roles.

1. **Institutions.** The largest elements of society are social **institutions**, which may be defined as established and enduring patterns of social relationships. The institution of the family in the United States is held as a strong value, as reflected by tax deductions for parents, family-friendly work policies, and government benefits for young mothers and their children (e.g., the WIC—Women, Infants and Children—program).

In addition to the family, major institutions of society include the economy, education, religion, and government. Institutions affect individual decision-making. For example, you live in a capitalist society where economic security is important. In effect, the more time you spend focused on obtaining money, the less time you have for relationships. You are now involved in the educational institution that will impact your choice of a mate—for example, college-educated people tend to select and marry one another. Religion also affects relationship choices: Devout members select each other as a life partner. Spouses who "believe in the institution of the family" are less likely to divorce.

2. **Social groups.** Institutions are made up of social groups, defined as two or more people who share a common identity, interact, and form a social relationship. Most individuals spend their days going between social groups. You may awaken in the context of a social group of a roommate, partner, parents, siblings or spouse. From there you go to class with other students, lunch with friends, and work with other employees. These social groups have various influences on your choices. Your roommate influences what other people you can have in your room for how long, your friends may want to eat at a particular place, your fellow workers will ignore you or interact with you, and your parents may want you to run an errand if you live at home or want you to come home for the weekend if you live at school.

Students sometimes argue that they—as individuals—make choices. In reality, the choices they make are only the ones the social context permits. For example, a Mormon woman married to a Mormon man in the Mormon Church has almost no choice to be "child-free." Change her context so that she is no longer a member of the Mormon Church and is married to a non-Mormon who wants to be child-free. She is now able to be child-free but only because her context has changed. Individuals are not important—their context is (Zusman, 2019).

Institution: established and enduring pattern of social relationships (e.g., the family).

While on campus, your interpersonal choices are influenced mostly by your partner and peers. Thus, selecting a partner and peers is important.

For example, partner selection among heterosexual individuals is often influenced by the mating gradient. The **mating gradient** is a norm that gives social approval to men who seek out younger, less educated, and less financially secure female partners and to women who seek out male partners that are older, more educated, and more financially secure. High-status men benefit the most from the mating gradient, while high-status women and low-status men may be penalized. These dynamics often play out on college campuses, where first-year female students seem to have more viable options than those that are available to fourth-year female students. Based on women's tendency to date older men and vice versa, the pool of eligible partners each year appears to decrease for women and increase for men. Their choices are affected by social structure and class rank.

Social groups may be categorized as primary or secondary. **Primary groups**, which tend to involve small numbers of individuals, are characterized by interaction that is intimate and informal. A family is an example of a primary group. Persons in our primary groups are those who love us and have lifetime relationships with us. In contrast to primary groups, **secondary groups,** which may be small or large, are characterized by interaction that is impersonal and formal. Your classmates, teachers, and coworkers are examples of individuals in your secondary groups. Unlike your parents, siblings, and spouse, members of your secondary groups do not have an enduring emotional connection with you and are more transient.

3. **Statuses.** Just as institutions consist of social groups, social groups consist of statuses. A status is a position a person occupies within a social group. The statuses we occupy largely define our social identity. The statuses in a family may consist of mother, father, child, sibling, and stepparent. In discussing family issues, we refer to statuses such as teenager, partner, and spouse. Statuses are relevant to choices in that many choices can significantly

Mating gradient: norm which gives social approval to men who seek out younger, less educated, less financially secure women and vice versa.

Primary groups: small numbers of individuals among whom interaction is intimate and informal.

Secondary groups: groups in which the interaction is impersonal and formal.

change one's status. Making decisions that change one's status from single person to spouse to divorced person can influence how people feel about themselves and how others treat them.

4. **Roles.** Every status is associated with many roles, or sets of rights, obligations, and expectations. Our social statuses identify who we are; our roles identify what we are expected to do. Roles guide our behavior and allow us to predict the behavior of others. Spouses adopt a set of obligations and expectations associated with their status. By doing so, they are better able to influence and predict each other's behavior.

Because individuals occupy a number of statuses and roles simultaneously, they may experience role conflict. For example, the role of the parent may conflict with the role of the spouse, employee, or student. If your child needs to be driven to the math tutor, your spouse needs to be picked up at the airport, your employer wants you to work late, and you have a final exam all at the same time, you are experiencing role conflict.

5. **Socioeconomic status and minority status.** Ball et al. (2019) noted differential use of technology in reference to socioeconomic status and minority status and emphasized the concept of emotional cost. Some individuals, such as those with lower socioeconomic and minority status, are anxious and stressed when presented with digital technology, which results in lower use. This lower use not only impacts career paths with fewer STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) career options but, by extension, may also impact relationships since the person is not "plugged" into the technological system of communicating with others, such as, text messaging.

Culture

Just as social structure refers to the parts of society, culture refers to the meanings and ways of living that characterize people in a society. Two central elements of culture are beliefs and values.

1. **Beliefs.** Beliefs refer to definitions and explanations about what is true. The beliefs of an individual or couple influence the choices they make. For example, unmarried emerging adults who have less confidence and think divorce is likely are slower to get married (Arocho, 2019). Couples who believe that young children flourish best with a full-time parent in the home will make greater adjustments in their work life to accommodate having a parent in the home than those who feel that day care offers opportunities for enrichment.

2. **Values.** Values are standards regarding what is good and bad, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable. Values influence choices. Valuing **individualism** leads to making decisions that serve the individual's interests rather than the family's interests (**familism**). Forty-four percent of 13,111 undergraduates agreed that "I would divorce my spouse if I fell out of love" (Hall & Knox, 2019). Allowing one's personal love feelings to dictate the stability of a marriage is a highly individualistic value. "What makes me happy?" is the focus of the individualist, not "What makes my family happy?" (familism). Different questions from different cultural contexts result in different answers and different outcomes. Routledge (2019) suggested that there is a connection between our increasingly individualistic society and social media use: "The more socially disconnected or alienated people feel as a result of the individualistic worldview that privileges personal freedom and independence over social duty and interdependence, the more they may look to social media to meet their basic social needs, even if online connections are poor substitutes for deeper in-person relationships."

Related to familism is **collectivism,** which emphasizes doing what is best for the group, not specific to the family group; collectivism is characteristic of traditional Asian, South American, and African families. Park et al. (2017) also emphasized that individualism and personal fulfillment were influential in decreasing the percent, now at 57%, of South Koreans who stated that marriage was desirable. Those who live together, who seek a child-free lifestyle, and who divorce are more likely to be operating from an individualistic perspective than those who do not live together before marriage, rear children, and stay married, a familistic value. Because families are so important in collectivist societies, the selection of marriage partners is a crucial event for both the partners and their families. Collectivistic values are

Individualism: making decisions that serve the individual's interests rather than the family's.

Familism: value that decisions are made in reference to what is best for the family.

Collectivism: pattern in which one regards group values and goals as more important than one's own values and goals.

at play when a partner ends the relationship because his or her partner goes against the families' wishes.

These elements of social structure and culture play a central role in making interpersonal choices and decisions. One of the goals of this text is to emphasize the influence of social structure and culture on your interpersonal decisions. Sociologists refer to this awareness as the **sociological imagination** or sociological mindfulness. For example, though most people in the United States assume that they are free to select their own sex partner, this choice—or lack of it—is heavily influenced by structural and cultural factors. Most people hang out with, date, have sex with, and marry a person of the same racial background. Structural forces influencing race relations include segregation in housing, religion, and education. The fact that African Americans and White Americans live in different neighborhoods, worship in different churches, and often attend different schools makes meeting a person of a different race unlikely. When such encounters occur, prejudices and bias may influence these interactions to the point that individuals are hardly "free" to act as they choose. Hence, cultural values transmitted by parents and peers may not support or promote mixed racial interaction, relationship formation, or marriage. Consider the last three relationships in which you were involved, the racial similarity, and the structural and cultural influences on your choices.

Other Influences on Relationship Choices

Aside from structural and cultural influences on relationship choices, other influences include one's family of origin, the family in which you were reared, and one's family of procreation, individual personality, previous choices, and hormones. We discuss these first two below.

> *The cascade of hormones that rains down on humans when they first fall in love can sometimes blind them to their poor choices.*
>
> Belinda Luscombe, journalist/novelist

Family of Origin (FOO)

Your family of origin is a major influence on your relationship choices. Coming from a family whose parents are married and who love each other predicts not only the positive meanings you attach to marriage (Barr & Simons, 2018) but the happiness for your own relationships with both your spouse and

Sociological imagination: the influence of social structure and culture on interpersonal decisions.

Religion has an enormous influence on relationship choices.

children. Experiences in one's family of orientation have also been instrumental in influencing adolescents to make wise choices and stay out of trouble (Animosa et al., 2018). For example, adolescents whose parents divorce have a temporary increase in delinquent behavior (Boccio & Beaver, 2019).

One's siblings in the family of origin are also influential in one's relationship choices. Killoren et al. (2019) examined the messages about dating and sexuality shared by 62 sister dyads which confirm the importance of sisters in the socialization of each other. For example, a 19-year-old told her younger sister about the importance of similar values in a partner:

> *Find someone who's like you. I think it comes down to your values being the same. If we didn't agree about religious or political things...I couldn't do that. I'm pretty outspoken about that kind of stuff and so if you can't take me being outspoken about it and be out-spoken with me, we have an issue.*

APPLYING SOCIAL RESEARCH

The Impact of Religion on Love, Relationships, and Sex

Religion is considered one of the most influential social institutions that impact the daily lives of individuals. Scholars have argued that secularization among emerging adults is rapidly occurring within our society. However, findings from this study indicate that religion still impacts beliefs and values within young adults that translate into life's choices.

Data

Analysis of data on 6,068 undergraduates who completed an Internet survey revealed how religiosity was associated with choices about love, relationships, and sexuality. The sample was 82% White, 55% female, and heterosexual (22%). The average age of the respondents was 19.91 years (Hall & Knox, 2019).

Findings

Respondents identified their religiosity along a continuum including very religious (5), moderately religious (4), about midway (3), moderately not religious (2) and not religious at all (1). Those significantly more likely to report being "very" or "moderately" religious were Black and heterosexual. There were no significant differences between women and men.

Higher religiosity was also significantly associated with certain beliefs. For example, agreeing with the statement "I believe that there is only one true love that never comes again" corresponded with being more religious. Religion encourages the idea that love is destined and that one may be destined to have only one true love in a lifetime. Praying for one's soul mate reflects a belief that there is one soul mate per person.

Being religious was significantly related to unwillingness to divorce if one fell out of love, revealing a strong connection between the level of self-identified religiosity and commitment to marriage. Religion encourages lifetime commitment ("until death do us part")—just because one may have fallen out of love was not viewed as an acceptable reason for divorce.

Being religious was also significantly related to less willingness to end a relationship with a cheating partner, perhaps revealing the value for forgiveness. A willingness to live with a nonmarital partner was also lower for religious respondents since religion encourages individuals to avoid premarital sex or cohabitation or both before marriage. Previously, persons who lived together before marriage were referred to as "living in sin."

Respondents who were religious were also significantly less likely to have looked for a partner on the Internet. Religion encourages individuals to look to divine sources for one's partner (e.g., "I have prayed to God to send me someone") rather than to rely on technology which suggests one's life partner is not "heaven sent" or "divinely selected." ●

Source: Adapted and abridged from K. Fox, D. Knox, S. S. Hall, and Douglas Kuck. 2019. RELIGIOSITY: Impact on love, relationships and sexual values/behaviors. Poster, Southern Sociological Society, Annual meeting, Atlanta, April.

Personality

One's personality—whether introverted, extroverted, passive, or assertive—also influences choices. For example, people who are assertive are more likely than those who are passive to initiate conversations with someone they are attracted to at a party. People who are very quiet and withdrawn may never choose to initiate a conversation even though they are attracted to someone. Similarly, certain personality traits can affect the quality of one's relationship. Having a partner who is lazy or dishonest may lead individuals to be unhappy and end their relationship.

Social Media

Involvement on social media has an impact on relationship choices. Abbasi and Alghamdi (2018) noted how spending a lot of time on social media is related to lower relationship satisfaction and openness to infidelity. Not only is time spent on social media time not spent with one's partner, it is time that individuals may spin up alternative relationships via interacting with persons they meet on social media.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR VIEWING MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Although we emphasize choices in relationships as the framework for viewing marriage and the family, other conceptual theoretical frameworks are helpful in

understanding the context of relationship decisions. All **theoretical frameworks** are the same in that they provide a set of interrelated principles designed to explain a particular phenomenon and provide a point of view. In essence, theories are explanations.

Social Exchange Framework

The **social exchange framework** is one of the most commonly used theoretical perspectives in marriage and the family. The framework views interaction and choices in terms of cost and profit.

The social exchange framework also operates from a premise of **utilitarianism**—the theory that individuals rationally weigh the rewards and costs associated with behavioral choices. A social exchange view of marital roles emphasizes that spouses negotiate the division of labor on the basis of exchange. For example, one partner may spend more time on child care in exchange for the other earning an income.

Family Life Course Development Framework

The **family life course development** framework emphasizes the important role transitions of individuals that occur in different periods of life and in different social contexts. For example, a young unmarried couple may become cohabitants, then parents, grandparents, retirees, and widows. While the family life course development framework identifies traditional stages through which most individuals pass, not all do so.

The family life course developmental framework has its basis in sociology—for example, role transitions—whereas the **family life cycle** has its basis in psychology, which emphasizes the various developmental tasks family members face across time, such as marriage, childbearing, preschool, school-age children, teenagers, and so on. If developmental tasks at one stage are not accomplished, functioning in subsequent stages will be impaired. For example, one of the developmental tasks of early American marriage is to emotionally and financially separate from one's family of origin. If such separation from parents does not take place, independence as individuals and as a couple may be impaired.

Theoretical frameworks: a set of interrelated principles designed to explain a particular phenomenon.

Social exchange framework: views interaction and choices in terms of profit and loss.

Utilitarianism: individuals rationally weigh the rewards and costs associated with behavioral choices.

Family life course development: the stages and process of how families change over time.

Family life cycle: stages that identify the various developmental tasks family members face across time.

Structure-Function Framework

The **structure-function framework** emphasizes how marriage and family contribute to society. Just as the human body is made up of different parts that work together for the good of the individual, society is made up of different institutions—family, religion, education, economics— that work together for the good of society. Functionalists view the family as an institution with values, norms, and activities meant to provide stability for the larger society. Such stability depends on families performing various functions for society.

First, families serve to replenish society with socialized members. Because our society cannot continue to exist without new members, we must have some way of ensuring a continuing supply. However, just having new members is not enough. We need socialized members—those who can speak our language and know the norms and roles of our society.

The case of Genie Wiley is a classic example of why socialization is important in our society. Genie is a young girl who was discovered in the 1970s; she had been kept in isolation in one room in her California home for 12 years by her abusive father. She could barely walk and could not talk. Although provided intensive therapy at UCLA and the recipient of thousands of dollars of funded research, Genie progressed only slightly. Today, she is in her late 50s, institutionalized, and speechless. Her story illustrates the need for socialization; the role of institutions like parenthood and the obligation to nurture

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

Aware that the family, which consists of a woman and a child, is the primary source of new members for an expanding group, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls at the Government Secondary School Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria, in 2014 in an act of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women. Boko Haram construes women as the bearers of their future despite its brutality toward them—mass rape of women, consequent impregnation and kidnapping the offspring (Oriola, 2017). Hence the goal of Boko Haram was to replace the family and bring up the girls to believe in their values and norms. Due to some of the girls escaping and others being exchanged by the Nigerian government for the release of five Boko Haram commanders, about half have been returned. With the presidential bid of Obiageli Ezekwesili, who began the Bring Back Our Girls campaign, there is hope to find and return the missing girls to their "real" family contexts (Nugent, 2018).

Structure-function framework: emphasizes how marriage and family contribute to society.

and socialize offspring ensure that this socialization will occur.

Second, marriage and the family promote the emotional stability of the respective spouses. Marriage ideally provides a context for people to share their lives and experiences and help each other cope during difficult times. While a partner is not a stand-in for a therapist, he or she can provide emotional support.

Children also need people to love them and to give them a sense of belonging. This need can be fulfilled in a variety of family contexts, including two-parent families, single-parent families, and extended families. The affective function of the family is one of its major benefits. No other institution focuses so completely on meeting the emotional needs of its members as marriage and the family.

Third, families provide economic support for their members. Although modern families are no longer self-sufficient economic units, they provide food, shelter, and clothing for their members. One need only consider the homeless in our society to be reminded of this important function of the family.

In addition to the primary functions of replacement, emotional stability, and economic support, other functions of the family include the following:

- **Physical care**—Families provide the primary care for the adults, their infants, children, and aging parents.
- **Regulation of sexual behavior**—Spouses in many societies are expected to confine their sexual behavior to each other, which reduces the risk of having children who do not have socially and legally bonded parents.

Parents are on the front line providing basic physical care.

- **Status placement**—Being born into a family provides social placement of the individual in society. One's family of origin largely determines one's social class, religious affiliation, and future occupation. The Kennedy family provides an example of multiple children being born into high status families, many of whom became politicians.
- **Social control**—Spouses in high-quality, durable marriages provide social control for each other that results in less criminal behavior. Parole boards often note that the best guarantee against recidivism is a nonconvicted spouse who expects the partner to get a job and avoid criminal behavior and who reinforces these behaviors (Andersen et al., 2015).

Conflict Framework

Conflict framework views individuals in relationships as competing for valuable resources like time, money, and power. Conflict theorists recognize that family members have different goals and values that create conflict. Adolescents want freedom, while parents want their child to get a good night's sleep, stay out of trouble, and excel academically.

Conflict theorists also view conflict not as good or bad but as a natural and normal part of relationships. They regard conflict as necessary for the change and growth of individuals, marriages, and families. Cohabitation relationships, marriages, and families all have the potential for conflict. Cohabitants are in conflict about commitment to marry, spouses are in conflict about the division of labor, and parents are in conflict with their children over rules such as curfew, chores, and their choice of friends.

Conflict theory is also helpful in understanding choices in relationships with regard to mate selection and jealousy. Singles are in competition with other singles for a desirable mate. Such conflict is particularly evident in the case of older, often widowed women in competition for the few elderly men.

Symbolic Interaction Framework

The **symbolic interaction framework** views marriages and families as symbolic worlds in which the various members give meaning to one another's behavior. Human behavior can be understood only by the meaning attributed to behavior. The term *symbolic interaction* refers to the process of

Conflict framework: the view that individuals in relationships compete for valuable resources.

Symbolic interaction framework: views marriages and families as symbolic worlds in which the various members give meaning to each other's behavior.

interpersonal interaction and involves the concepts of the definition of the situation, the looking-glass self, the self-fulfilling prophecy, and taking the role of the other.

Definition of the Situation

Two people who have just spotted each other at a party are constantly defining the situation and responding to those definitions. Is the glance from the other person (1) an invitation to approach, (2) an approach, or (3) a misinterpretation—was he or she looking at someone else? The definition each partner has will affect their interaction.

Looking-Glass Self

The image people have of themselves is a reflection of what other people tell them about themselves. People develop an idea of who they are by the way others act toward them. If no one looks at or speaks to them, they will begin to feel unsettled. Similarly, family members constantly hold up social mirrors for one another into which the respective members look for definitions of self. Parents are particularly intent on holding up positive social mirrors for their children when they say, "You are a good student and we are proud of you."

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Once people define situations and the behaviors in which they are expected to engage, they are able to behave toward one another in predictable ways. Such predictability of behavior affects subsequent behavior. If you feel that your partner expects you to be faithful, your behavior is likely to conform to these expectations. The expectations thus create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Taking the Role of the Other

"The ability to put oneself in the role of the other. . .to be empathic about what another is experiencing. . . is related not only to one's ability to cope with difficulties but enhances one's relationship satisfaction" (Levesque et al., 2014). Hence, having the ability of understand emotionally what another is experiencing has both individual and relationship payoffs.

Family Systems Framework

The **family systems framework** views each member of the family as part of a system and the family as a unit that develops norms of interacting, which may be explicit. For example, parents specify when their children must stop texting for the evening and complete homework. Or the family norms may be implicit: spouses expect fidelity from each other. These rules serve various functions, such as the allocation of keeping the education of offspring on track and solidifying the emotional bond of the spouses.

Rules are most efficient if they are flexible. For instance, they should be adjusted over time in response to a child's growing competence. A rule about not leaving the yard is appropriate for a 4-year-old but inappropriate for a 16-year-old.

Family members also develop boundaries that define the individual and the group and separate one system or subsystem from another. A boundary may be physical, such as a closed bedroom door, or social, such as expectations that family problems will not be aired in public. Boundaries may also be emotional, such as communication, which maintains closeness or distance in a relationship. Some family systems are cold and indifferent; others are warm and nurturing.

Family systems may be open, in that they are receptive to information and interaction with the outside world, or closed, in that they feel such contact is harmful. The Amish have a closed family system and, in the past, have had minimal contact with the outside world. More recently the Amish have begun to use cell phones and watch reality TV.

Human Ecology Framework

The **human ecology framework**, also known as the ecological perspective, looks at family as an ecosystem which interacts with the environment. The well-being of individuals and families cannot be considered apart from the well-being of the environment. For example, nutrition and housing are important to the functioning of families. If a family does not have enough to eat or adequate housing, it will not be able to function at an optimal level. The human ecology framework also includes how individuals and couples interact in the various environments of the home, school and workplace.

Feminist Framework

Although a **feminist framework** views marriage and family as contexts of inequality and oppression for women, today some feminists seek equality in their relationships with their partners. There are many different feminist perspectives, including lesbian feminism, emphasizing oppressive heterosexuality;

Family systems framework: views each member of the family as part of a system and the family as a unit that develops norms of interaction.

Human ecology framework: views the family and the environment as an ecosystem.

Feminist framework: views marriage and family as contexts of inequality and oppression for women.

psychoanalytic feminism, focusing on cultural domination of men's phallic-oriented ideas and repressed emotions; and standpoint feminism, stressing the neglect of women's perspective and experiences in the production of knowledge (Lorber, 1998). Regardless of which feminist framework is being discussed, all feminist frameworks have the themes of inequality and oppression. In addition, this framework has been adapted to examine other inequalities and oppressions such as sexism, lookism, and heterosexism.

Couple and Family Technology Framework

In response to the explosion of technology, the couple and family technology framework (CTF) focuses on the roles, rules, and boundaries in the respective contexts (Cravens, 2015; Hertlein & Blumer, 2013). This theory suggests that technology impacts the structure and process of couples and families. For example, what roles are partners and spouses to play in regard to each others' texts, emails, blogs, Internet surfing, and Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat accounts?

What are the rules about the use of technology in regard to adult sites? And what are the boundaries in regard to interacting with others? Earlier we noted how social media can leave a "social trail" that may need to be "cleaned" from being visible to potential employers who can use technology to screen applicants. The CFT framework emerged since the existing frameworks did not address the new issues brought on by new technology in communication. As the title of this text and the technology features in every chapter suggest, the CFT framework will be evident throughout.

The major theoretical frameworks for viewing marriage and the family are summarized in Table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2

Theoretical Frameworks for Marriage and the Family

THEORY	DESCRIPTION	CONCEPTS	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Social Exchange	In their relationships, individuals seek to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs.	Benefits Costs Profit Loss	Individual Couple Family	Provides explanations of human behavior based on evaluation of outcome.	Assumes that people act rationally and all behavior is calculated.
Family Life Course Development	Families pass through stages.	Stages Transitions Timing	Institution Individual Couple Family	Families are seen as dynamic rather than static. Useful in working with families who are facing transitions in their life course.	Difficult to adequately test the theory through research.
Structure Function	The family has several important functions for society.	Structure Function	Institution	Emphasizes the relation of family to society, how families affect and are affected by the larger society.	Families with nontraditional structures (single-parent, same-sex couples) are not accounted for.
Conflict	Conflict in relationships is inevitable, due to competition over resources and power.	Conflict Resources Power	Institution Individuals	Views conflict as a normal part of relationships and as necessary for change and growth.	Sees all relationships as conflictual, and does not acknowledge cooperation.
Symbolic Interaction	People communicate through symbols and give meaning to the behavior or others.	Definition of the situation Looking-glass self Self-fulfilling prophecy	Individual Couple	Emphasizes the perceptions of individuals, not just objective reality.	Ignores the larger social interaction context and minimizes the influence of external forces.

(*Continued*)

TABLE 1.2 (Continued)

Family Systems	The family is a system of interrelated parts that function together to maintain the unit.	Subsystem Roles Rules Boundaries Open system Closed system	Couple Family	Very useful in working with families who are having serious problems (violence, alcoholism). Describes the effect family members have on each other.	Based on work with systems, troubled families, and may not apply to nonproblem families.
Feminism	Women's experience is central and different from man's experience of social reality.	Inequality Power Oppression	Institution Individual Couple Family	Exposes inequality and oppression as explanations for frustrations in women's experience.	Multiple branches of feminism may inhibit central accomplishment of increased equality.
Human Ecology	Family as ecosystem which interacts with the environment.	Ecosystem Interaction	Individual Couple Environment	Emphasizes interaction of humans and environment	Linkages sometimes seem contrived
Couple and Family Technology	Impact of use of technology on relationships	Roles Rules Boundaries	Individual Couple Family	Emphasizes need for communication related to technology use	Limited research to suggest optimum guidelines

MARRIAGE

While young adults think of marriage in terms of love and a committed life together, the federal government regards marriage as a legal relationship that two individuals of either sex work together for the reproduction, physical care, and socialization of children. Beginning in 2015, this legal definition changed from one man and one woman to include same-sex partners marrying each other. Each society works out its own details of what marriage is.

In the United States, **marriage** is a legal contract between two people of any sexual orientation and the state in which they reside. That contract specifies the economic relationship between the couple: they become joint owners of their income and debt.

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that state laws prohibiting same-sex marriage were unconstitutional, thus legalizing marriage for sexual and gender minorities (SGM). Persons of all sexual orientations now have access to legal marriage and are included in the definitions of marriage and the family.

The frequency of marriage is changing in the United States. Of all adults in the United States, 50% are married. This percent is down from 72% in 1960. But most of those not currently married will eventually marry. Women are delaying marriage until age 28; men, 30 (Geiger & Livingston, 2019). However, marriage is still quite common. About 2.25 million marriages occur every year in the United States. (National Center for Health Statistics, Marriage and Divorce, 2018). Of adult women and men in the United States over the age of 65, 96% have married at least once (Wang, 2018). The decision to marry is generally not taken lightly as it's viewed as a lifelong commitment. To assess your own views of marriage, refer to the Self-Assessment: Attitudes Toward Marriage Scale on page 371. Various elements implicit in the marriage relationship in the United States are discussed in the following section.

Marriage: a legal relationship that binds a couple together for the reproduction, physical care, and socialization of children.

Elements of Marriage

No one definition of marriage can adequately capture its meaning. Rather, marriage might best be understood in terms of its various elements. Some of these include the following:

Legal Contract

Marriage in our society is a legal contract into which two people of different or the same sex and legal age may enter when they are not already married to someone else. The age required to marry varies by state and is usually from 16 to 18, although most states set 17 or 18 as the requirement.

In some states (e.g., Alabama) individuals can marry at age 14 with parental or judicial consent. In California, individuals can marry at any age with parental consent. The marriage license certifies that a legally empowered representative of the state performs the ceremony, often with two witnesses present. The marriage contract gives power to the state

over the couple—should they decide to divorce, the state can dictate the terms—who gets custody of the children, division of property, and child support. One of the reasons some individuals cite for not marrying is to "keep the government out of my business."

Under the laws of the state, the license means that spouses will jointly own all future property acquired and that each will share in the estate of the other. In most states, whatever the deceased spouse owns is legally transferred to the surviving spouse at the time of death. In the event of divorce and unless the couple has a prenuptial agreement, the property is usually divided equally regardless of the contribution of each partner. The license also implies the expectation of sexual fidelity in the marriage. Though less frequent because of no-fault divorce, infidelity is a legal ground for both divorce and alimony in some states.

The marriage license is also an economic authorization that entitles a spouse to receive payment from a health insurance company for medical bills if the partner is insured, to collect Social Security benefits at the death of one's spouse, and to inherit from the estate of the deceased. Spouses are also responsible for each other's debts. One mother warned her son, "If you marry her, you are taking on her $50,000 in student loan debt."

Though the courts are reconsidering the definition of what constitutes a "family," the law is currently designed to protect spouses, not lovers or cohabitants. An exception is **common-law marriage**, in which a heterosexual couple who cohabits and presents themselves as married will be regarded as legally married in those states that recognize such marriages. Common-law marriages exist in fourteen states (Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Texas) and the District of Columbia. Even in these states, not all persons can marry by common-law—they must be of sound mind, be unmarried, and must have lived together for a certain period of time, such as three years. Persons married by common law who move to a non-common-law state are recognized as being married in the state to which they move.

Emotional Relationship

Ninety-three percent of married adults in the United States point to love as their top reason for getting married. Other reasons include making a lifelong commitment (87%), having companionship (81%), and having children (59%) (Cohn, 2013). American emphasis on love as a reason to marry is not shared throughout the world. Individuals in other cultures, such as India, do not require feelings of love

Common-law marriage: a heterosexual cohabiting couple presenting themselves as married.

Kissing is one way of expressing emotional intimacy.
Courtesy of Stacy Huff

to marry—love is expected to follow, not precede marriage. In these countries, parental approval and similarity of religion, culture, education, and family background are considered more important criteria for marriage than love. While love is an important motivation for marriage, it is companionship in the United States which promotes a couple in courtship to remain committed and move toward marriage (Ogolsky et al., 2016).

Sexual Monogamy

Marital partners generally expect sexual fidelity. Over two thirds (68%) of 13,111 undergraduates agreed with the statement, "I would divorce a spouse who had an affair" (Hall & Knox, 2019). There is also a stigma associated with couples who are nonmonogamous (Cohen, 2016).

Legal Responsibility for Children

Although individuals marry for love and companionship, one of the most important reasons for the existence of marriage from the viewpoint of society is to legally bind a male and a female for the nurture and support of any children they may have. In our society, child rearing is the primary responsibility of the family, not the state.

Marriage is a relatively stable relationship that helps to ensure that children will have adequate care and protection, will be socialized for productive roles in society, and will not become the burden of those who did not conceive them. Even at divorce, the legal obligation of the noncustodial parent to the child is maintained through child-support payments.

Public Announcement

The legal binding of a couple in a public ceremony is often preceded by an engagement announcement. Following the ceremony there is a wedding

announcement in the newspaper. Public knowledge of the event helps to solidify the commitment of the partners to each other and helps to marshal social and economic support to launch the couple into married life.

Types of Marriage

There are different types of marriage. Monogamy is the legal form in our country. With high marriage, divorce, and remarriage rates, some scholars may perceive our system as serial monogamy. Although we think of marriage in the United States as involving one man and one woman, other societies view marriage differently. **Polygamy** is a generic term for marriage involving more than two spouses. Polygamy occurs "throughout the world . . . and is found on all continents and among adherents of all world religions" (Zeitzen, 2008). Polygamy is against the law in America and Canada—individuals are prosecuted who have multiple legal wives. Polygamists often evade the law by have only one legal wife, the rest being social wives. There are three forms of polygamy: polygyny, polyandry, and pantagamy.

Polygyny in the United States

Polygyny involves one husband and two or more wives and is practiced illegally in the United States by some religious fundamentalist groups. These groups are primarily in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah as well as Canada and have splintered off from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly known as the Mormon Church. To be clear, the Mormon Church does not practice or condone polygyny; the church outlawed it in 1890. Those that split off from the Mormon Church represent only about 5% of Mormons in Utah. The largest offshoot is called the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (FLDS). Members of the group feel that the practice of polygyny is God's will. Joe Jessop, an elder of the FLDS had five wives, 46 children, and 239 grandchildren. Although the practice is illegal, polygynous individuals are rarely prosecuted because a husband will have only one legal wife while the others will be married in a civil ceremony. Women are socialized to bear as many children as possible to build up the "celestial family" that will remain together for eternity.

It is often assumed that polygyny in FLDS marriages exists to satisfy the sexual desires of the man, that the women are treated like slaves, and that jealousy among the wives is common. In most polygynous societies, however, polygyny has a political and economic rather than a sexual function. Polygyny, for members of the FLDS, is a means of having many children to produce a celestial family. In other societies, a man with many wives can produce a greater number of children for domestic or farm labor. Wives are not treated like slaves, although women have less status than men in general; all household work is evenly distributed, and each wife is given her own house or private sleeping quarters. In FLDs households, jealousy is minimal because the female is socialized to accept that her husband is not hers alone but is to be shared with other wives "according to God's plan." The spouses work out a rotational system for conjugal visits, which ensures that each wife has equal access to sexual encounters, while the other wives take care of the children.

Independent of polygynous marriage, some couples want a three-way marriage. Examples have existed in Brazil and the Netherlands whereby one male was "married" to two females. While these are not legal marriages, they reflect the diversity of lifestyle preferences and patterns. Theoretically, the arrangement could be of any sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The example in the Netherlands was of a heterosexual man "married" to two bisexual women.

Polyandry

Tibetan Buddhists foster yet another brand of polygamy, referred to as **polyandry**, in which one wife has two or more (up to five) husbands. These husbands, who may be brothers, pool their resources to support one wife. Polyandry is a much less common form of polygamy than polygyny. The major reason for polyandry is economic. A family that cannot afford wives or marriages for each of its sons may find a wife for the eldest son only. Polyandry allows the younger brothers to also have sexual access to the one wife that the family is able to afford.

Pantagamy

Pantagamy is a formal arrangement that was practiced in communes, such as the one in Oneida, New York, in the 19th and 20th centuries which involves a group marriage in which each member of the group is "married" to the others. Pantagamy is, of course, illegal in the United States. Some polyamorous individuals see themselves in a group marriage.

Our culture emphasizes monogamous marriage and values individuals staying together to care for each other and their children. One cultural

Polygamy: a generic term for marriage involving more than two spouses.

Polygyny: type of marriage involving one husband and two or more wives.

Polyandry: type of marriage in which one wife has two or more husbands.

Pantagamy: a group marriage in which each member of the group is "married" to the others.

expression of this value is the existence of family policies—not to be confused with social policies—in the form of laws, policies, and services designed to support the family (Cherlin, 2019).

Benefits of Marriage

Most adults in America eventually marry. Doing so has enormous benefits. Researchers Knopfli et al. (2016) noted that spouses report greater health than those who are single or divorced. Superior health is only one of several advantages for being married (see Table 1.3 for a comparison of the never married with the married). The advantages of marriage over singlehood have been referred to as the **marriage benefit** and are true for first as well as subsequent marriages.

Explanations for the marriage benefit include economic resources, such as higher income, wealth, and the ability to afford health care; and social

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

An example of the degree to which marriage is regarded as critical to one's life, even after death, is the concept of **ghost marriage 冥婚**—marriage of the dead. The ghost marriage has been documented throughout Chinese history and is still practiced in certain regions. Parents who had children who never married and who died may arrange a ghost marriage for their deceased children. The marital union is believed to bring peace to their deceased children in the afterlife (Wang, 2016). The wedding ceremony for the ghost marriage can be arranged for two deceased people or between a living person and a dead person. The living person of the ghost marriage usually chooses to get married in real life. Chinese ghost marriage is a folk tradition without legal bond.

TABLE 1.3

Benefits of Marriage and the Liabilities of Singlehood

	BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE	LIABILITIES OF SINGLEHOOD
Health	Spouses have fewer hospital admissions, see a physician more regularly, and are sick less often. They recover from illness and surgery more quickly.	Single people are hospitalized more often, have fewer medical checkups, and are sick more often.
Longevity	Spouses live longer than single people.	Single people die sooner than married people.
Happiness	Spouses report being happier than single people.	Single people report less happiness than married people.
Sexual satisfaction	Spouses report being more satisfied with their sex lives, both physically and emotionally.	Single people report being less satisfied with their sex lives, both physically and emotionally.
Money	Spouses have more economic resources than single people.	Single people have fewer economic resources than married people.
Lower expenses	Two can live more cheaply together than separately.	Cost is greater for two singles than one couple.
Drug use	Spouses have lower rates of drug use and abuse.	Single people have higher rates of drug use and abuse.
Connected	Spouses are connected to more individuals who provide a support system—partner, in-laws, and so forth.	Single people have fewer individuals upon whom they can rely for help.
Children	Rates of high school dropouts, teen pregnancies, and poverty are lower among children reared in two-parent homes.	Rates of high school dropouts, teen pregnancies, and poverty are higher among children reared by single parents.
History	Spouses develop a shared history across time with significant others.	Single people may lack continuity and commitment across time with significant others.
Crime	Spouses are less likely to be involved in crime.	Single people are more likely to be involved in crime.
Loneliness	Spouses are less likely to report loneliness.	Single people are more likely to report being lonely.

Marriage benefit: the advantages of marriage over singlehood, including married persons being healthier and happier.

Ghost marriage: A marriage between two deceased parties or one deceased party with a living person. The Chinese ghost marriage is a folk tradition which does not involve a legal bond between the parties.

control with spouses—for example, ensuring partners moderate their alcohol or drug consumption or both, and don't ride motorcycles. The marriage benefit also involves spouses providing social, emotional, and psychosocial support as an in-resident counsellor and loving and caring partner (Rauer, 2013; Tumin & Zheng, 2018).

However, being married is not beneficial to all individuals in that marriage is associated with obesity (Rauer, 2013). In addition, people in self-assessed poor marriages are miserable and much less happy than unmarried people (Chapman & Guven, 2016).

Marriage—Then and Now

In her landmark book, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, Stephanie Coontz (2016) explained the myths we perpetuate about marriages and families which disappear under factual scrutiny. She also discussed her

FAMILY POLICY

Couple Preparation and Relationship Education

Whether couple preparation is known as marriage preparation, premarital counselling, or marriage education, the federal government has a vested interest in couple relationship or couple education programs. The estimated societal costs of divorce and family instability on communities, states, and the nation are a minimum of $33 billion; the economic cost for the couple getting divorced is between $15,000 and $20,000 (Clyde & Hawkins, 2019). The philosophy behind marriage preparation education is that building a fence at the top of a cliff is preferable to putting an ambulance at the bottom. To the degree that people select a mate wisely and have the skills to manage conflict, communicate, and stay married, there is greater economic stability for the family and less drain on social services in the United States for single-parent mothers and the needs of their children.

African American clergy have been particularly involved in marriage preparation. In a study comparing 141 members of seven primarily African American denominations with 793 clergy from the 15 largest, predominantly White, congregations. African American clergy were significantly more likely than clergy in the comparison group to address premarital content, to use a skills-based approach, to require a longer waiting period, more sessions, and more homework assignments, and to consider marriage preparation an important part of their ministry (Wilmoth & Blaney, 2016).

Kanter and Schramm (2018) emphasized the efficacy of "brief interventions" for marriage education and found 12 such programs amid large databases. These interventions included issues such as self-esteem, distress related to conflict, and gratitude that promoted healthy relationship functioning. The researchers concluded that such brief interventions can be helpful for promoting healthy relationships. McGinnis and Burr (2018) also found a correlation between couple relationship education and relationship satisfaction.

Over 2,000 public schools nationwide offer a marriage preparation course. In Florida, all public high school seniors are required to take a marriage and relationship skills course. Persons who have done so get a $32.00 discount on their marriage license and may skip the three-day waiting period. Persons seeking a marriage license in Florida may also take a premarital course online which provides 21 chapters to choose from. Individuals can choose any of the chapters if they meet a four-hour minimum requirement. Ten states—Florida, Oklahoma, Maryland, Minnesota, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, and Utah—promote marriage education of their residents by, for example, offering a discount on the marriage license, which results in about 15,000 fewer divorces annually (Clyde & Hawkins, 2019).

Significant positive increases in attitudes, knowledge, communication and conflict management skills result when adolescents, undergraduates, and emerging adults experience these programs (McElwain et al., 2016; Duncan et al., 2016; Cottle et al., 2015; Cottle et al., 2014). Job et al. (2017) assessed the value of a CRE (Couple Relationship Education) program for 234 couples and found a reduction in conflict for those that had the lowest pretest satisfactions. However, for couples with higher satisfaction ratings, there was no change or deterioration.

In spite of the benefits, there is opposition to marriage preparation education in the public school system. Opponents question using school time for relationship courses. Teachers are viewed as overworked, and an additional course on marriage seems to press the system to the breaking point. In addition, some teachers lack the training to provide relationship courses. However, many schools already have programs in family and consumer sciences, and teachers in these programs are trained in teaching about marriage and the family. A related concern with teaching about marriage and the family in high school is the fear on the part of some parents that the course content may be too liberal. Some parents who oppose teaching sex education in the public schools fear that such courses lead to increased sexual activity (in Chapter 9 we address sex education policies). ●

historical review of family life on the past, present, and future of marriage (Leviton, 2016). For example, there is the idea that family values, defined as the most important focus in one's life, was the primary value during colonial times. But that was never the case. "Early Americans believed you had responsibilities to the larger community. They did not talk about 'The Christian Family,' because it was too narrow and too exclusive" (Leviton, 2016, p. 5). Indeed, there was no state sponsorship of one religion but all religions including Jews, Hindus, and Muslims. "The highest value was to make yourself available to the public" (p. 5).

Another myth about marriage in American history is the idea of the male breadwinner— that he would bring home the bacon to the wife at home. In reality, men and women both worked on the farm, rearing and slaughtering hogs together. "In the American colonies, if a couple ran an inn together, and the wife died, the authorities would revoke the man's business license until he remarried" on the premise that he could not run a business without help (p. 6).

Is Marriage Obsolete?

As noted earlier, marriage remains the dominant goal for most individuals. While there has been a decline in the percentage of individuals choosing to marry, Schneider et al. (2018) identified, among other factors, the reduced economic prospects of men and the increased wage opportunities of women as explanations. The researchers also noticed the influence of the waning normative imperative to marry and the acceptability of alternative family forms. It should also be kept in mind that lower marriage rates are primarily in reference to those without college degrees. As income and education increase, so do marriage rates.

Rather than being obsolete, the meaning of marriage has changed. **Individualized marriage** is the term which describes the blending of two cultural forces in America—the individualistic need to be autonomous and the need to be grounded in traditional family structure such as marriage. Lindemann (2017) observed this phenomenon in her study of commuter marriages whereby spouses chose to be married although they were separated in much of their work lives. They were adamant that they were "together" even though they were physically separated. They used digital technology to keep them "virtually together."

Individualized marriage: blending of two cultural forces in America; the individualistic need to be autonomous and the need to be grounded in traditional family structure such as the marriage.

FAMILY

Starting a family is often viewed as synonymous with having children. While children may precede marriage, most individuals both want and have children (Chang et al., 2018). However, the definition of what constitutes a family is sometimes unclear. This section examines how families are defined, their numerous types, and how marriages and families have changed in the past fifty years.

Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.
Jane Howard, the late English novelist

Definitions of Family

The answer to the question "Who is family?" is important because access to resources such as health care, Social Security, and retirement benefits is involved. The U.S. Census Bureau defines family as a group of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. This definition has been challenged because it does not include foster families or long-term couples who live together. Unless cohabitants are recognized by the state in which they reside as in a "domestic partnership," cohabitants are typically not viewed as "family" and are not accorded health benefits, Social Security, or retirement benefits of the partner. Indeed, the "live-in partner" may not be allowed to see the beloved in the hospital, which may limit visitation to "family only." Being the same sex and being excluded from being with one's hospitalized partner was another motivating factor for legal approval of same-sex relationships.

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

Dragojlovic (2016) interviewed 24 women from Europe, Australia, and the United States who had vacationed in Bali, fallen in love with a Balinese man, and had one or more children. Although there were variations in the various patterns of commitment and relationships, a common theme was that these women were "playing family" by living and rearing their children in their native land while maintaining a relationship with the father of the children. Even though he was often married and had other children with a Balinese woman, the woman would visit annually to maintain the relationship with the partner and father of the child. These non-conventional **transnational families** challenge the nuclear family norm.

Transnational family: family in which the mother and child live in another country from the father.

The definition of who counts as family is being challenged. In some cases, families are being defined by function rather than by structure—for example, what is the level of emotional and financial commitment and interdependence between the partners? How long have they lived together? Do the partners view themselves as a family? Are single parent families a "real family" or only those with two parents in one residence?

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

Hawaii has a cultural tradition of "hanai adoptions" which allows a child to be "hanai'd out"—the child may be adopted by someone in the extended family or by a childless couple. Typically, no papers are signed, but the new adoptive parents love, nurture, rear, and educate the child as though he or she were a biological child. In addition, the relationship between the child and the birth parents is not only permitted but encouraged.

Sociologically, a **family** is defined as a kinship system of all relatives living together or recognized as a social unit, including adopted individuals. This definition includes same sex couples with or without children as well as single parents. The family is regarded as the basic social institution of society because of its important functions of procreation and socialization; the family is found in some form in all societies. **Fictive kin**, also called families of choice, voluntary kin, discretionary kin, and nonconventional kin, refers to nonbiological and nonlegal relationships that are close, meaningful, and supportive. In the Netherlands, 35% of those aged 61-79 years old are more likely to include fictive kin in their networks (Voorpostel, 2018). Parker and Mayock (2019) surveyed homeless youth in terms of how they viewed "family." Four themes emerged, including "family as reliable and supportive; family as interrupted and 'broken'; family as fragile and elusive; and family as fluid and ambiguous—revealing the unfolding nature of young people's constructions of family and family relationships" (p.540).

Before same-sex marriage couples, some same-sex couples sought a **civil union** which was to provide some benefits to the couple. In reality, recognition of a civil union provided few benefits and only at the state level. Even less was provided at the federal level: The federal tax rates and Social Security and medical benefits were not available to those in civil unions.

This couple drove with these three dogs from Chicago to Florida for the winter and back again in the Spring. They "won't leave home without them."

While less important since same-sex marriage became a legal option, **domestic partnerships** are relationships in which cohabitating individuals are given some kind of official recognition by a city or corporation so as to receive partner benefits, such as health insurance. Domestic partnerships do not confer any federal recognition or benefits.

Friends

Friends sometimes become family. Due to mobility, spouses may live several states away from their respective families. Although they may visit their families for holidays, they often develop close friendships with others on whom they rely locally for emotional and physical support. Persons in the military who are separated from their parents and siblings or deployed spouse often form close "family" relationships with other military individuals, couples, and families.

Pets

Ninety-five percent of 1,010 adult responses to Purina's Dog Survey (2018) viewed their dog as part of the family (Grandstaff, 2016, 4b). Examples of treating pets like children include owners requiring a fenced-in backyard for where they rent or buy an apartment or house, staying only in pet friendly motels, or feeding the pet a special diet, hanging a stocking or buying presents for the pet at Christmas or both (Smith & Bravo, 2016). Other owners buy "clothes" for the pet and leave money in one's will for the care of one's pet. Some cohabitants get a puppy which symbolizes their commitment to "family." Some pet owners buy accident insurance for their pets. In divorce, custody is assigned, parental responsibility to pay for

Family: a group of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption.

Fictive kin: nonbiological and nonlegal relationships that are close, meaningful and supportive.

Civil union: a pair-bonded relationship given legal significance in terms of rights and privileges.

Domestic partnerships: relationships in which cohabitating individuals are given some kind of official recognition by a city or corporation so as to receive partner benefits.

upkeep and medical care is identified and custody is given on the best interests of the pet.

Hodges (2019) revealed that dogs function as protection, such as a guard dog, as a companion, or as a status symbol depending upon one's socioeconomic status. The higher one's socioeconomic status, the more likely the owner viewed his or her dog as a sort of status symbol, and the lower one's socioeconomic status, the more likely the owner viewed his or her dog as an object fulfilling a specific purpose such as protection. Owners of dogs and cats are likely to experience greater symptoms of depression and anxiety as well as poorer quality of life when their pet has a chronic or terminal disease (Spitznagel et al., 2017).

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

The age at which a citizen is allowed to marry varies by country. Most countries identify 18—China is the exception with marriage allowed at 21— as the minimum age to marry though some permit marriage earlier—13 in Columbia—with parental consent. Being able to "rent" a family member is available in Japan. Japan's rent-a-family industry involves one's ability to rent a wife, husband, child, sibling, you name it. Indeed, a Japanese woman who wants a traditional wedding but who has no man in her life can rent a stand-in groom, bridesmaids, ushers, and so forth. She need only show up with her parents to have the event of her lifetime—the cost is $47,000. Grieving widows and widowers can also rent a spouse, parents who are estranged from their children can rent engaged children, and the elderly can rent grandchildren. One such company is called Family Romance, founded by Yuichi Ishii who has 1,200 freelance actors from which to choose. Ishii has played the husband to 100 women. These are social, not sexual, relationships (Batuman, 2018).

Types of Families

There are various types of families.

Family of Origin

Also referred to as the **family of orientation**, this is the family into which you were born or the family in which you were reared. It involves you, your parents, and your siblings. When you go to your parents' home for the holidays, you return to your **family of origin**. Siblings in one's family of origin also provide a profound influence on one another's behavior, emotional development, adjustment, and happiness (Incerti et al., 2015). The relationship with one's siblings, particularly the sister-sister relationship, represents the most enduring relationship in a person's lifetime.

Edwards and Martinez (2018) emphasized gathering data from one's entire family history via autoethnography to better understand various choices and histories as they interact with intersectional positions. Persons of color may particularly benefit from an awareness of how racial issues have been treated in their past family history. To find out about one's personal genetic ancestry breakdown, over five million individuals have turned to "23andMe," a genomics and biotechnology company based in Mountain View, California. The company is named for the 23 pairs of chromosomes in a normal human cell. Individuals send off for a kit, provide a saliva sample, and are sent a report in six weeks about their DNA history.

Family of Procreation

The **family of procreation** represents the family that you will begin should you marry and have children. Of U.S. citizens living in the United States 65 years old and over, 96% have married with most establishing their own family of procreation (Wang, 2018). Across the life cycle, individuals move from the family of orientation to the family of procreation.

Nuclear Family

The **nuclear family** refers to either a family of origin or a family of procreation. In practice, this means that your nuclear family consists either of you, your parents, and your siblings or of you, your spouse, and your children. Generally, one-parent households are not referred to as nuclear families. They are binuclear families if both parents are involved in the child's life, or single-parent families if only one parent is involved in the child's life.

Sociologist George Peter Murdock (1949) emphasized that the nuclear family is a "universal social grouping" that is found in all of the 250 societies he investigated. The nuclear family converts and channels the sexual energy between two lovers so as to reproduce, care for, and socialize children to be productive members of society.

Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern Family

There are three central concepts of the family. The **traditional family** is the two-parent nuclear family,

Family of orientation: also known as the family of origin, the family into which a person is born.

Family of procreation: the family a person begins typically by getting married and having children.

Nuclear family: consists of you, your parents, and your siblings or you, your spouse, and your children

Traditional family: the two-parent nuclear family, with the husband as breadwinner and the wife as homemaker.