Marriages, Families, and Relationships

MAKING CHOICES IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

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Mary Ann Lamanna ▲ Agnes Riedmann ▲ Susan Stewart

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MARRIAGES, FAMILIES, and RELATIONSHIPS

Making Choices in a Diverse Society

Thirteenth Edition

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Marriages, Families, and Relationships: Making Choices in a Diverse Society, **Thirteenth Edition**
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Manufacturing Planner: Judy Inouye
Production, Composition, Illustration: MPS Limited
Photo and Text Researchers: Lumina Datamatics
Copy Editor: Steven Summerlight
Text Designer: Marsha Cohen
Cover Designer: Paula Goldstein
Cover Image: Thomas Barwick/Stone/Getty Images
Design Graphics: Artville/Color Rhythms

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2016936079

Student Edition:
ISBN: 978-1-337-10966-6

Loose-leaf Edition:
ISBN: 978-1-337-11506-3

Cengage Learning
20 Channel Center Street
Boston, MA 02210
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Printed in the United States of America
Print Number: 01 Print Year: 2016

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To our families, especially

Larry, Valerie, Sam, Janice, Simon, and Christie

Bill, Beth, Natalie, Alex, and Livia

Gwendolyn, Gene, Lee, Christine, Mom

and Dad

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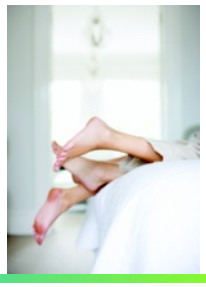

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PREFACE

As we complete our work on the thirteenth edition of this text, we look back over twelve earlier editions. Together, these represent nearly forty years spent observing and rethinking American families. Not only have families changed since we began our first edition but also has social science's interpretation of family life. It is gratifying to be a part of the enterprise dedicated to studying families and sharing this knowledge with students.

Our own perspective on families has developed and changed as well. Indeed, as marriages and families have evolved over the last three decades, so has this text. In the beginning, this text was titled *Marriages and Families*—a title that was the first to purposefully use plurals to recognize the diversity of family forms—a diversity that we noted as early as 1980. Now the text is titled *Marriages, Families, and Relationships*. We added the term *relationships* to recognize the increasing incidence of individuals forming commitments outside of legal marriage. At the same time, we continue to recognize and appreciate the fact that a large majority of Americans—now including same-sex couples—are married or will marry. Hence, we consciously persist in giving due attention to the values and issues of married couples. Of course, the concept of marriage itself has changed appreciably. No longer necessarily heterosexual, marriage is now an institution to which same-sex couples across the United States and in a growing number of other nations have legal access.

Meanwhile, the book's subtitle, *Making Choices in a Diverse Society*, continues to speak to the significant changes that have taken place since our first edition. To help accomplish our goal of encouraging students to better appreciate the diversity of today's families, we present the latest research and statistical information on varied family forms (lesbian, gay male, and transgender families) and families of diverse race and ethnicity, socioeconomic, and immigration status, among other variables.

We continue to take account not only of increasing race/ethnic diversity but also of the fluidity of the concepts *race* and *ethnicity* themselves. We pay attention to the socially constructed nature of these concepts. We integrate these materials on family diversity throughout the textbook, always with an eye toward avoiding stereotypical and simplistic generalizations and instead explaining data in sociological and sociohistorical contexts. Interested from the beginning in the various ways that gender plays out in families, we have persistently focused on areas in which gender relations have changed and continue to change, as well as on areas in which there has been relatively little change.

In addition to our attention to gender, we have studied demography and history, and we have paid increasing attention to the impact of social structure on family life. We have highlighted the family ecology perspective in keeping with the importance of social context and public policy. We cannot help but be aware of the cultural and political tensions surrounding families today. At the same time, in recent editions and in response to our reviewers, we have given heightened attention to the contributions of biology and psychology and to a social psychological understanding of family interaction and its consequences.

We continue to affirm the power of families as they influence the courses of individual lives. Meanwhile, we give considerable attention to policies needed to provide support for today's families: working parents, families in financial stress, single-parent families, families of varied racial/ethnic backgrounds, stepfamilies, same-sex couples, and other nontraditional families—as well as the classic nuclear family.

We note that, despite changes, marriage and family values continue to be salient in contemporary American life. Our students come to a marriage and family course because family life is important to them. Our aim now, as it has been from the first edition, is to help students question assumptions and reconcile conflicting ideas and values as they make choices throughout their lives. We enjoy and benefit from the contact we've had with faculty and students who have used this book. Their enthusiasm and criticism have stimulated many changes in the book's content. To know that a supportive audience is interested in our approach to the study of families has enabled us to continue our work over a long period.

THE BOOK'S THEMES

Several themes are interwoven throughout this text: People are influenced by the society around them as they make choices, social conditions change in ways that may impede or support family life, there is an interplay between individual families and the larger society, and individuals make family-related choices throughout adulthood.

Making Choices throughout Life

The process of creating and maintaining marriages, families, and relationships requires many personal choices; people continue to make family-related decisions, even "big" ones, throughout their lives.

Personal Choice and Social Life

Tension frequently exists between individuals and their social environment. Many personal troubles result from

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societal influences, values, or assumptions; inadequate societal support for family goals; and conflict between family values and individual values. By understanding some of these possible sources of tension and conflict, individuals can perceive their personal troubles more clearly and work constructively toward solutions. They may choose to form or join groups to achieve family goals. They may become involved in the political process to develop state or federal social policy that is supportive of families. The accumulated decisions of individuals and families also shape the social environment.

A Changing Society

In the past, people tended to emphasize the dutiful performance of social roles in marriage and family structure. Today, people are more apt to view committed relationships as those in which they expect to find companionship, intimacy, and emotional support. From its first edition, this book has examined the implications of this shift and placed these implications within social scientific perspective. Individualism, economic pressure, time pressures, social diversity, and an awareness of committed relationships' potential impermanence are features of the social context in which personal decision making takes place today. With each edition, we recognize again that, as fewer social guidelines remain fixed, personal decision making becomes even more challenging.

Then too, new technologies continue to create changes in family members' lives. Discussions about technological developments in communication appear throughout the book—for example, a discussion of how technology and social media impact family communication in Chapter 11, maintaining ties between college students and their parents (Chapter 9), sexting and cyberadultery (Chapter 4), Internet matchmaking (Chapter 5), reproductive technology (Chapter 8), parental surveillance of children (Chapter 9), working at home versus the office (Chapter 10), and how noncustodial parents use technology to keep in touch with their children (Chapter 14).

THE THEMES THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE

The book's themes are introduced in Chapter 1, and they reappear throughout the text. We developed these themes by looking at the interplay between findings in the social sciences and the experiences of the people around us. Ideas for topics continue to emerge, not only from current research and reliable journalism but also from the needs and concerns that we perceive among our own family members and friends. The attitudes, behaviors, and relationships of real people have a complexity that we have tried to portray. Interwoven with these themes is the concept of the life course—the idea that adults may change by means of reevaluating and restructuring throughout their lives. This emphasis on the life course creates a comprehensive picture of marriages, families, and relationships and encourages us to continue to add topics that are new to family texts. Meanwhile, this book makes these points:

- People's personal problems and their interaction with the social environment change as they and their relationships and families grow older.
- People reexamine their relationships and their expectations for relationships as they and their marriages, relationships, and families mature.
- Because family forms are more flexible today, people may change the type or style of their relationships and families throughout their lives.

MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES—MAKING CHOICES

Making decisions about one's family life begins in early adulthood and lasts into old age. People choose whether they will adhere to traditional beliefs, values, and attitudes about gender roles or negotiate more flexible roles and relationships. They may rethink their values about sex and become more informed and comfortable with their sexual choices.

Women and men may choose to remain single, to form heterosexual or same-sex relationships outside of marriage, or to marry. They have the option today of staying single longer before marrying. Single people make choices about their lives ranging from decisions about living arrangements to those about whether to engage in sex only in marriage or committed relationships, to engage in sex for recreation, or to abstain from sex altogether. Many unmarried individuals live as cohabiting couples (often with children), an increasingly common family form.

Once individuals form couple relationships, they have to decide how they are going to structure their lives as committed partners. Will the partners be legally married? Will they become domestic partners? Will they plan periods in which one partner is employed interspersed with times in which both are wage earners? Will they have children? Will they use new reproductive technology to become parents? Will other family members live with them—siblings or parents, for example, or adult children later?

Couples will make these decisions not once, but over and over during their lifetimes. Within a committed relationship, partners also choose how they will deal with conflict. Will they try to ignore conflicts? Will they vent their anger in hostile, alienating, or physically violent ways? Or will they practice supportive ways of communicating, disagreeing, and negotiating—ways that emphasize sharing and can deepen intimacy?

How will the partners distribute power in the marriage? Will they work toward relationships in which each family member is more concerned with helping and supporting

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others than with gaining a power advantage? How will the partners allocate work responsibilities in the home? What value will they place on their sexual lives together? Throughout their experience, family members continually face decisions about how to balance each one's need for individuality with the need for togetherness.

Parents also have choices. In raising their children, they can choose the authoritative parenting style, for example, in which parents take an active role in responsibly guiding and monitoring their children, while simultaneously striving to develop supportive, mutually cooperative family relationships. However, how much guidance is too much? At what point do involved parents become *over*involved parents—that is, "helicopter parents"?

Many partners face decisions about whether to separate or divorce. They weigh the pros and cons, asking themselves which is the better alternative: living together as they are or separating? Even when a couple decides to separate or divorce, there are further decisions to make: Will they cooperate as much as possible or insist on blame and revenge? What living and economic support arrangements will work best for themselves and their children? How will they handle the legal process? The majority of divorced individuals eventually face decisions about forming relationships with new partners. In the absence of firm cultural models, they choose how they will define remarriage and stepfamily relationships.

When families encounter crises—and every family will face *some crises*—members must make additional decisions. Will they view each crisis as a challenge to be met, or will they blame one another? What resources can they use to handle the crisis? Then, too, as more and more Americans live longer, families will "age." As a result, more and more Americans will have not only living grandparents but also great grandparents. And increasingly, we will face issues concerning giving—and receiving—family elder care.

An emphasis on knowledgeable decision making does not mean that individuals can completely control their lives. People can influence but never directly determine how those around them behave or feel about them. Partners cannot control one another's changes over time, and they cannot avoid all accidents, illnesses, unemployment, separations, or deaths. Society-wide conditions may create unavoidable crises for individual families. However, families can control how they respond to such crises. Their responses will meet their own needs better when they refuse to react automatically and choose instead to act as a consequence of knowledgeable decision making.

KEY FEATURES

With its ongoing thorough updating and inclusion of current research and its emphasis on students' being able to make choices in an increasingly diverse society, this book has become a principal resource for gaining insights into today's marriages, relationships, and families. Over the past twelve editions, we have had four goals in mind for student readers: first, to help them better understand themselves and their family situations; second, to make students more conscious of the personal decisions that they will make throughout their lives and of the societal influences that affect those decisions; third, to help students better appreciate the variety and diversity among families today; and fourth, to encourage them to recognize the need for structural, social policy support for families. To these ends, this text has become recognized for its accessible writing style, up-to-date research, well-written features, and useful chapter learning aids.

Up-to-Date Research and Statistics

As users have come to expect, we have thoroughly updated the text's research base and statistics, emphasizing cutting-edge research that addresses the diversity of marriages and families, as well as all other topics. In accordance with this approach, users will notice several new tables and figures. Revised tables and figures have been updated with the latest available statistics—data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other governmental agencies, as well as survey and other research data.

Box Features

The several themes described earlier are reflected in the special features.

Former users will recognize our box features. The following sections describe our four feature box categories:

As We Make Choices We highlight the theme of making choices with a group of boxes throughout the text—for example, "Ten Rules for a Successful Relationship," "Looking for Love on the Internet" "Disengaging from Power Struggles," "Selecting a Childcare Facility—Ten Considerations," "Ten Keys to Successful Co-Parenting," and "Tips for Step-Grandparents." These feature boxes emphasize human agency and are designed to help students through crucial decisions.

A Closer Look at Diversity In addition to integrating information on cultural and ethnic diversity throughout the text proper, we have a series of features that give focused attention to instances of family diversity—for example, "African Americans and 'Jumping the Broom,'" "Diversity and Childcare," "Family Ties and Immigration," "Straight Parents and LGBT Children," and " Do You Speak Stepfamily?" among others.

Issues for Thought These features are designed to spark students' critical thinking and discussion. As an example, the Issues for Thought box in Chapter 16 explores "Filial Responsibility Laws" and encourages students to consider what might be the benefits and drawbacks of legally mandating filial responsibility. Similarly, in the Issues for Thought box "Bisexual or Just 'Bi-Curious'?"

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in Chapter 4, students are asked to think about whether there are different standards of same-sex attraction and behavior for women versus men.

Facts About Families This feature presents demographic and other factual information on focused topics such as "How Family Researchers Study Religion from Various Theoretical Perspectives" (Chapter 2), on "Six Love Styles" (Chapter 5), on "Legal Same-Sex Marriage as a Successful Social Movement" (Chapter 7), on transracial adoption (Chapter 8), and on "Foster Parenting" (Chapter 9), among others.

Chapter Learning Aids

A series of chapter learning aids help students comprehend and retain the material.

- Each chapter begins with a list of **learning objectives** specifically formulated for that chapter.
- **Chapter Summaries** are presented in bulleted, point-by-point lists of the key material in the chapter.
- **Key Terms** alert students to the key concepts presented in the chapter. A full glossary is provided at the end of the text.
- **Questions for Review and Reflection** help students review the material. Thought questions encourage students to think critically and to integrate material from other chapters with that presented in the current one. In every chapter, one of these questions is a policy question. This practice is in line with our goal of moving students toward structural analyses regarding marriages, families, and relationships.

KEY CHANGES IN THIS EDITION

In addition to incorporating the latest available research and statistics—and in addition to carefully reviewing every word in the book—we note that this edition includes many key changes, some of which are outlined here. We have worked to make chapter length more uniform throughout the text.

As with previous revisions, we have given considerable attention not only to chapter-by-chapter organization, but also to *within*-chapter organization. Our ongoing intents are to streamline the material presented whenever possible and to ensure a good flow of ideas. In this edition, we continue to consolidate similar material that had previously been addressed in separate chapters. **Meanwhile, we have substantially revised each and every chapter**. Every chapter is updated with the latest research throughout. Now that same-sex marriage is legal throughout the United States, we have conscientiously rewritten all our chapters—and in some cases reorganized them—to be in line with this major change. We mention some (but not all!) specific and important changes here.

Chapter 1, Making Family Choices in a Changing Society, continues to present the choices and life course themes of the book, as well as points to the significance for the family of larger social forces. All research and statistics are updated.

Chapter 2, Exploring Relationships and Families, continues to portray the integral relationship between family theories and methods for researching families, with new examples to drive home the theoretical perspectives. For instance, we point to a study that combines family systems theory with the ecological perspective. This study examines how undocumented status for some, but not all, family members affects everyone in a mixed-status family system. Examples in the research section of this chapter include more recognition that major surveys are conducted globally, not just in the United States. The European Social Survey is one example.

Chapter 3, Gender Identities and Families, has been significantly updated with information on gender identities and expectations, including a new section on "Race/Ethnic Diversity and Gender Expectations." There is extended discussion of the fact that gender is fluid, not binary, as well as a more thorough discussion of the distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation. There is considerably more on transgender in this chapter and throughout the text.

Chapter 4, Our Sexual Selves, continues its exploration into the range of sexual attitudes and behavior that exists in American society. The statistics on sexuality have been substantially revised to reflect new surveys on sexual behavior, infidelity, HIV/AIDS, and pornography use, with special focus on gender differences in each. With changes in the political and social climate, discrimination against the LGBT community has become less overt. New in this edition is a discussion of the microaggressions this group encounters on a daily basis. The role of schools with respect to sex education has always been controversial in the United States. There is a new table in this chapter describing the Future of Sex Education Initiative's recommended sexuality education standards by grade level.

Chapter 5, Love and Choosing a Life Partner, continues to examine the changing nature of dating in the United States, not only in terms of describing new dating patterns but also with respect to understanding the factors that underlie dating behavior. In addition, a greater effort was made in this edition to include more information on cultural diversity with respect to dating and union formation. For example, there is a discussion of how the skewed sex ratio in China has affected men's ability to find a wife. There is also a discussion of the dynamics of interracial marriage in Brazil, among Asian Americans, and between between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States.

Chapter 6, Nonmarital Lifestyles: Living Alone, Cohabiting, and Other Options, discusses demographic, economic, technological, and cultural reasons for the increasing proportion of unmarrieds, with updated

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statistics on unmarried men and women in America. New to this edition is a discussion of generational differences in attitudes about the advantages and disadvantages of being single, with particular focus on how the Millennial Generation will choose from the wide array of lifestyles now available to them.

Chapter 7, Marriage: From Social Institution to Private Relationship, has been thoroughly updated in accordance with the legalization of same-sex marriage and also with new statistics and research findings. This chapter explores the changing picture regarding marriage, noting the social science debate regarding whether this changing picture represents family change or decline. We thoroughly explore the selection hypothesis versus the experience hypothesis with regard to the benefits of marriage known from research. The extended section about the status of legal same-sex marriage previously found in this chapter has been considerably shortened and reconceptualized. That material is now in a new box, "Facts About Families: Legal Same-Sex Marriage as a Successful Social Movement."

Chapter 8, Deciding about Parenthood, continues its focus on the complex process through which couples have children. For example, nearly as many children in the U.S. are the product of indecision as of decision. On the other hand, more men and women are consciously not having any children at all. Becoming a parent is less of a certainty than it's ever been.

Chapter 9, Raising Children in a Diverse Society, like all the chapters in this edition, has been thoroughly updated with the most current research. As in recent prior editions, after describing the authoritative parenting style, we note its acceptance by mainstream experts in the parenting field. We then present a critique that questions whether this parenting style is universally appropriate or simply a white, middle-class pattern that may not be so suitable to other social contexts. We also discuss challenges faced by parents who are raising religious- or ethnic-minority children in potentially discriminatory environments.

We continue to emphasize the challenges that all parents face in contemporary America. We have expanded sections on single mothers, single fathers, and nonresident fathers. We have given more attention to relations with young-adult children as more and more of them have "boomeranged" home in this difficult economy.

New to this chapter are recognition and discussions of gender fluidity as related to parenting. For instance, the section on "Gender and Parenting" now includes discussion of parenting as a lesbian, gay male, or transgender parent.

Chapter 10, Work and Family. All research and statistics are updated. An example of now incorporating same-sex families into discussions throughout the text involves a study that examined work-home spillover specifically among dual-earner lesbian and gay parents.

Chapter 11, Communication in Relationships, Marriages, and Families, continues its focus on positive communication strategies among couples and families. The mechanisms through which people communicate are rapidly changing. This chapter now includes the Issues for Thought box "Digital Communication and the Rise of Social Media," which explores the impact of new technologies on intimate relationships and families. A traditional venue for family communication has always been the evening meal. New information is presented regarding the percentage of modern families who are able to eat it together with any regularity. Maybe a family breakfast is the answer?

Chapter 12, Power and Violence in Families, maintains its ongoing emphasis on power relations within the context of growing family race/ethnic diversity. This chapter now addresses power and decision-making issues among same-sex married couples. Domestic violence among same-sex couples is now explored in this chapter rather than elsewhere in the text. A discussion of equality and equity concludes the part of the chapter on marital and partner power. In addition, analysis of power differentials between citizens and their immigrant spouses is explored at greater depth. All research and statistics have been thoroughly updated.

Chapter 13, Family Stress, Crisis, and Resilience, continues to emphasize and expand discussion of the growing body of research on resilience in relation to family stress and crises and has been updated with many new examples. As one instance, the chapter recognizes family stress related to discrimination against race or ethnic groups such as African or Muslim Americans.

Chapter 14, Divorce and Relationship Dissolution, includes updated statistics on divorce rates, which have remained unchanged since the Great Recession. This chapter continues to highlight the effects of divorce on children and factors that can lessen the negative effects, such as cooperative co-parenting, as well as race, class, and gender differences in the consequences of divorce. The implications of different custody arrangements for children and families are also examined.

Chapter 15, Remarriages and Stepfamilies, continues to stress diversity within stepfamilies, reflecting continued growth of nonmarital childbearing, cohabitation, father custody, racial/ethnic diversity, and same sex couples with stepchildren. We continue to pay attention to microlevel stepfamily dynamics such as dating with children, the process through which people become stepparents, and the challenges of day-to-day living in stepfamilies, including the complex legal and financial issues they face. We continue to add new research findings to our discussion of the short- and long-term financial, social, and emotional well-being of stepfamily members, especially children.

Chapter 16, Aging and Multigenerational Families, continues to place a thematic emphasis on multigenerational families, ties, and obligations in a cultural content of individualism and includes a discussion of caregiver ambivalence coupled with multigenerational families as safety nets for all generations. Like all the others, this chapter

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benefits from the most current statistics and research. Among others, new topics include the facts that more people over age sixty-five are employed than in the past and that they are more likely than in past decades to be involved in nonmarital romantic relationships—dating, cohabiting, or living alone together (LAT).

MindTap for *Marriages, Families, and Relationships,* Thirteenth Edition

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- Delivery tests from their LMS, classroom, or wherever they want

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is a result of a joint effort on our part; we could not have conceptualized or written it alone. We want to thank some of the many people who helped us. Looking back on the long life of this book, we acknowledge Steve Rutter for his original vision of the project and his faith in us. We also want to thank Sheryl Fullerton and Serina Beauparlant, who saw us through early editions as editors and friends and who had significant importance in shaping the text that you see today.

As has been true of our past editions, the people at Cengage Learning have been professionally competent and a pleasure to work with. Huge thanks go to Elesha Hyde, who provided the constant consultation, encouragement, and feedback to the authors that enabled this edition to come to completion on schedule. We are also grateful to Libby Beiting-Lipps, Product Manager, who guided this edition, and to Content Developer John Chell, who lent his hand to the development of the MindTap product that accompanies this text. Deanna Ettinger, Intellectual Property Analyst, made sure we were accountable to other authors and publishers when we used their work.

Jill Traut, Project Manager for MPS Limited, led a production team whose specialized competence and coordinated efforts have made the book a reality. She was excellent to work with, always available and responsive to our questions, flexible, and ever helpful. She managed a complex production process smoothly and effectively to ensure a timely completion of the project and a book whose look and presentation of content are very pleasing to us—and, we hope, to the reader.

The internal production efforts were managed by Cheri Palmer, Content Project Manager. Copy Editor S. M. Summerlight did an outstanding job of bringing our draft manuscript into conformity with style guidelines. Abdul Khader, Photo Researcher (Lumina Datamatics), worked with us to find photos that captured the ideas we presented in words.

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Marsha Cohen developed the overall design of the book, one we are very pleased with. Vernon Boes, Art Director, oversaw the design of new edition. Tua Mondal proofread the book pages, and Marilyn Anderson compiled the index. Once it is completed, our textbook needs to find the faculty and students who will use it. Jennifer Levanduski, Marketing Director, captured the essence of our book in the various marketing materials that present our book to its prospective audience.

Closer to home, Agnes Riedmann wishes to acknowledge her late mother, Ann Langley Czerwinski, PhD, who helped her significantly with past editions. Agnes would also like to acknowledge family, friends, and professional colleagues who have supported her throughout the thirty-five years that she has worked on this book. Dear friends have helped as well. Agnes would like to specifically recognize Victor Herbert, who so often has sent her pertinent articles and engaged her in relevant and stimulating discussions.

Sam Walker has contributed to previous editions of this book through his enthusiasm and encouragement for Mary Ann Lamanna's work on the project. Larry and Valerie Lamanna and other family members have enlarged their mother's perspective on the family by bringing her into personal contact with other family worlds—those beyond the everyday experience of family life among the social scientists!

Mary Ann Lamanna and Agnes Riedmann continue to acknowledge one another as coauthors for forty years. Each of us has brought somewhat different strengths to this process. We are not alike—a fact that has continuously made for a better book, in our opinion. At times, we have lengthy e-mail conversations back and forth over the inclusion of one phrase. Many times, we have disagreed over the course of the past thirty years—over how long to make a section, how much emphasis to give a particular topic, whether a certain citation is the best one to use, occasionally over the tone of an anxious or frustrated e-mail. But we have always agreed on the basic vision and character of this textbook. And we continue to grow in our mutual respect for one another as scholars, writers, and authors. We have now been joined by Susan Stewart as coauthor. She brings a fresh perspective to the book as well as a comprehensive knowledge of research in the field. Her expertise has especially contributed to this revision.

Susan Stewart would like to acknowledge Agnes Riedmann and Mary Ann Lamanna for their unwavering support, mentoring, and enormous patience as she learned the art and science of textbook writing. She would also like to acknowledge her daughter, Gwendolyn, who provided rich experiences that contributed to her insight about parent-child relationships, relationships with her own parents and sisters, and relationships with her ex-spouse and in-laws, as well as her new husband, Gene, and stepson, Cameron, who forced her to acknowledge that no amount of reading can replace lived experience.

Reviewers gave us many helpful suggestions for revising the book. Although we may not have incorporated all suggestions from reviewers, we have considered them all carefully and used many. The review process makes a substantial, and indeed essential, contribution to each revision of the book.

Thirteenth Edition Reviewers

Cari Beecham-Bautista, Columbia College Chicago; Chris Caldeira, University of California, Davis; Lynda Dickson, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs; Rebecca S. Fahrlander, University of Nebraska at Omaha; Loyd R. Ganey, Jr., College of Southern Nevada; Jamie L. Gusrang, Community College of Philadelphia; Faye Jones, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College JC Campus; Nancy Reeves, Gloucester County College; Jewrell Rivers, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College; Chad W. Sexton, State University of New York at Fredonia; and Sharon Wiederstein, Blinn College.

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Of Special Importance

Students and faculty members who tell us of their interest in the book are a special inspiration. To all of the people who gave their time and gave of themselves—interviewees, students, our families and friends—many thanks. We see the fact that this book is going into a thirteenth edition as a result of a truly interactive process between ourselves and students who share their experiences and insights in our classrooms; reviewers who consistently give us good advice; editors and production experts whose input is invaluable; and our family, friends, and colleagues whose support is invaluable.

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1

MAKING FAMILY CHOICES IN A CHANGING SOCIETY

DEFINING FAMILY

Family Functions
Structural Family Definitions
Postmodern: There Is No Typical Family

Facts about Families: American Families Today

Adapting Family Definitions to the Postmodern Family
Relaxed Institutional Control over Relationship Choices: "Family Decline" or "Family Change"?

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A SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION: PERSONAL TROUBLES AND SOME SOCIAL CONDITIONS THAT IMPACT FAMILIES

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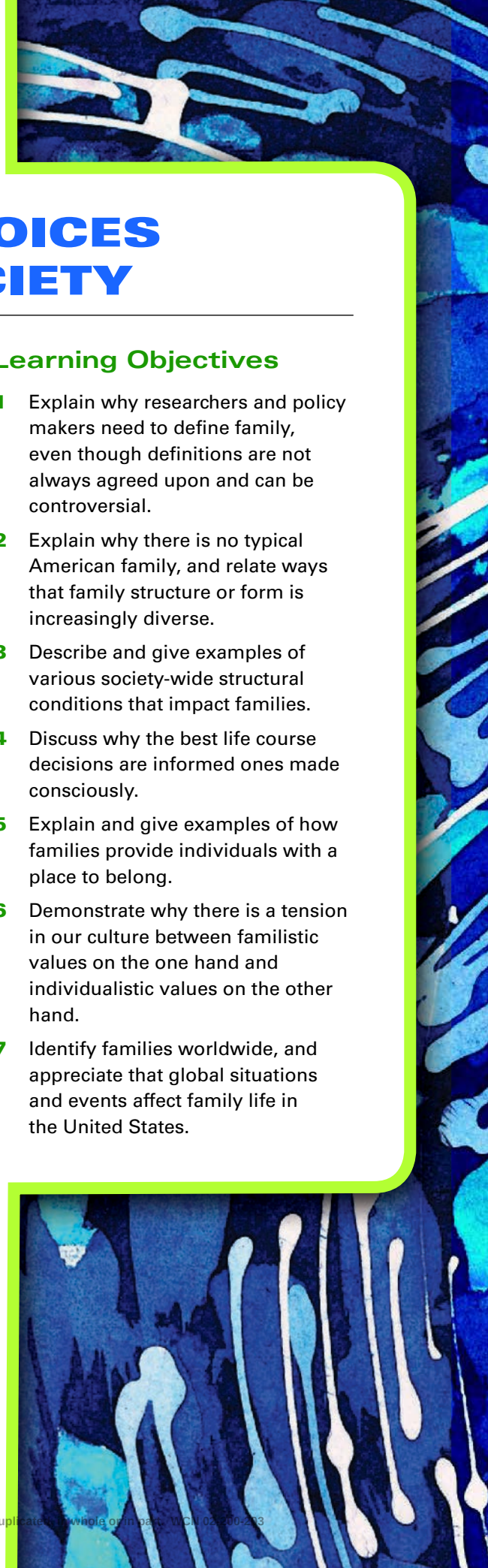
Families as a Place to Belong
Familistic (Communal) Values and Individualistic (Self-Fulfillment) Values
People as Individuals and Family Members

MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES: FOUR THEMES

Learning Objectives

1. Explain why researchers and policy makers need to define family, even though definitions are not always agreed upon and can be controversial.
2. Explain why there is no typical American family, and relate ways that family structure or form is increasingly diverse.
3. Describe and give examples of various society-wide structural conditions that impact families.
4. Discuss why the best life course decisions are informed ones made consciously.
5. Explain and give examples of how families provide individuals with a place to belong.
6. Demonstrate why there is a tension in our culture between familistic values on the one hand and individualistic values on the other hand.
7. Identify families worldwide, and appreciate that global situations and events affect family life in the United States.



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This text is different from some others you may read. It isn't necessarily intended to prepare you for a specific occupation. Although it could help you in a future career, this text has four other goals as well—to help you: (1) appreciate the variety and diversity among families today, (2) become more sensitive to family issues both in the United States and worldwide, (3) understand your past and present family situations and anticipate future possibilities, and (4) be more conscious of the personal decisions you make throughout your life and of the societal influences that affect those decisions.

Twenty-five years ago, stating that "the family constitutes the basic unit of society and therefore warrants special attention," the United Nations designated 1994 as the International Year of the Family. Later, the U.N. proclaimed every May 15 to be the International Day of Families ("International Day of the Family," n.d.). Across the world, families are central to both society and people's everyday lives.

Families in the United States and around the world undertake the pivotal tasks of raising children and providing family members with support, companionship, affection, and intimacy. Meanwhile, what many of us think of as family has changed dramatically in recent decades. This chapter explores *family* definitions while noting the many and varied structures or forms that families take today. This chapter also describes some society-wide conditions that impact families: ever-new biological and communication technologies, economic conditions, historical periods of events, and demographic characteristics such as age, religion, race, and ethnicity.

Later in this chapter, we'll note that when maintaining committed relationships and families, people need to make informed decisions. This chapter introduces concepts to be explored more fully throughout this textbook. The theme of knowledge plus commitment is integral to this book. Finally, we end this chapter with a discussion of four themes that characterize this text. You'll see that these four themes comprise the text's four learning goals, which are listed in the Preface. We begin with a working definition of family—one that we can keep in mind throughout the course.

DEFINING FAMILY

As shown in Figure 1.1, people make a variety of assumptions about what families are and are not. We've noticed when teaching this course that many students, when asked to list their family members, include their pets. Are dogs, cats, or hamsters family members? On a different note, some individuals who were conceived by artificial insemination with donor sperm are tracking down their "donor siblings"—half brothers and sisters who were conceived using the same man's sperm. They may define their "donor relatives" as family members

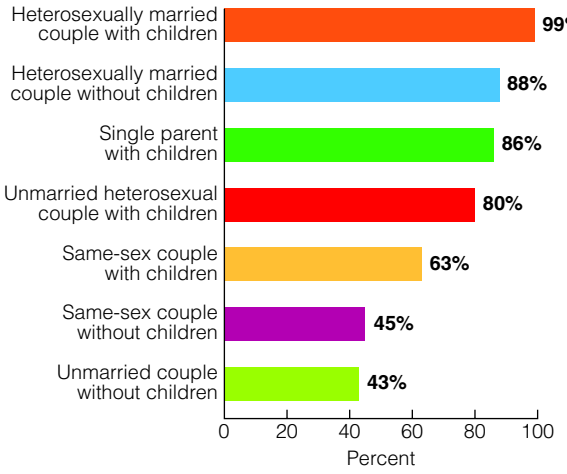

FIGURE 1.1 What is a family? Percent saying each of these is a family, 2010. Note that these data were collected before June 2015 when the U.S. Supreme Court declared same-sex marriage to be nationally legal. Think about how attitudes about what a family is may have changed since then, if at all.

Source: Pew Research Center 2010a, p. 40.

(Shapiro 2009), although others born under similar circumstances may not. Indeed, there are many definitions given for the family, not only among laypeople but also among family scientists themselves (Weigel 2008).

We, your authors, have chosen to define **family** as follows: A family is any sexually expressive, parent-child, or other kin relationship in which people—usually related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption—(1) form an economic or otherwise practical unit and care for any children or other dependents, (2) consider their identity to be significantly attached to the group, and (3) commit to maintaining that group over time.

How did we come to this definition? First, caring for children or other dependents suggests a function that the family is expected to perform. Definitions of many things have both functional and structural components. Functional definitions point to the purpose(s) for which a thing exists—that is, what it does. For example, a functional definition of a smartphone would emphasize that it allows you to make and receive calls, take pictures, connect to the Internet, and access media. Structural definitions emphasize the *form* that a thing takes—what it actually is. To define a smartphone structurally, we might say that it is an electronic device, small enough to be handheld, with a multimedia screen and components that allow sophisticated satellite communication. Concepts of the family comprise both functional and structural aspects. We'll look now at how the family can be recognized by its functions, and then we'll discuss structural definitions of the family.

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Family Functions

Social scientists usually list three major functions filled by today's families: raising children responsibly, providing members with economic and other practical support, and offering emotional security.

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We can define families by their functions—raising children, providing economic support for dependents, and offering emotional support for all family members. These three look as if they're doing all of that. But functional definitions of family aren't enough. We also need to consider the group's structure. This family consists of a heterosexual couple and their child. They may be married or cohabiting.

Family Function 1: Raising Children Responsibly If a society is to persist beyond one generation, adults have to not only bear children but also feed, clothe, and shelter them during their long years of dependency. Furthermore, a society needs new members who are properly trained in the ways of the economy and culture and who will be dependable members of the group. These goals require children to be responsibly raised. Virtually every society assigns this essential task to families.

A related family function has traditionally been to control its members' sexual activity, primarily to help guarantee the responsible care and socialization of children. "Throughout history, marriage has first and foremost been an institution for procreation and raising children. It has provided the cultural tie that seeks to connect the father to his children by binding him to the mother of his children" (Wilcox Marquardt, Popenoe, and Whitehead 2011). Nevertheless, in the United States and other industrialized societies the child-raising function is more and more often performed by divorced, separated, never-married, or cohabiting parents, and sometimes by grandparents or other relatives. Researchers now talk about "the decoupling of marriage and parenthood" (Hayford, Guzzo, and Smock 2014). Nevertheless, the majority of U.S. births today (about 60 percent) take place within marriage (Martin et al. 2015, p. 6).

Family Function 2: Providing Economic and Other Practical Support A second family function involves providing economic support. Throughout much of our history, the family was primarily a practical economic unit rather than an emotional one (Shorter 1975; Stone 1980). Although the modern family is no longer a self-sufficient economic unit, virtually every family engages in activities aimed at providing for such practical needs as food, clothing, and shelter. Throughout this text, we'll see the varied ways that this function plays out.

Family economic functions now consist of earning a living outside the home, pooling resources, and making consumption decisions together. In assisting one another economically, family members create some sense of material security. For example, family members offer one another a kind of unemployment insurance. If one family member is laid off or can't find work, others may be counted on for help. Family members care for each other in additional practical ways too, such as nursing and transportation during an illness or lending an ear when someone needs to talk.

Family Function 3: Offering Emotional Security Although historically the family was a pragmatic institution involving material maintenance, in today's world the family has grown increasingly important as a source of emotional security (Ariès 1962; Cherlin 2008; Coontz 2005b; Fincham and Beach 2010a). Thinking of families globally, the United Nations has described the family as a place where "one finds warmth, caring, security, togetherness, tolerance and acceptance" ("International Day of the Family," n.d.).

Not just partners or parents but also children, siblings, and extended kin can be important sources of emotional support (Henig 2014; Waite et al. 2011). This is not to say that families can solve all our longings for affection, companionship, and intimacy. Sometimes, in fact, the family situation itself is a source of stress as in the case of parental conflict, alcoholism, drug abuse, or domestic violence.

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But families and committed relationships are expected to offer important emotional support to adults and children. *Family* may mean having a place where you can be yourself, even sometimes your worst self, and still belong.

Defining a family by its functions is informative and can be insightful. For example, in her book of stories about people who took in survivors of Hurricane Katrina, Laura Dawn describes "how strangers became family" (Dawn 2006). But defining a family only by its functions would be too vague and misleading. For instance, neighbors or roommates might help with childcare, provide for economic and other practical needs, or offer emotional support. But we still might not think of them as family. An effective definition of family needs to incorporate structural elements as well.

Structural Family Definitions

Traditionally, both legal and social sciences have specified that the family consists of people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. In their classic work *The Family: From Institution to Companionship*, Ernest Burgess and Harvey Locke (1953 [1945]) specified that family members must "constitute a household," or reside together. Some definitions of the family have gone even further to include economic interdependency and sexual–reproductive relations (Murdock 1949).

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption and residing together in a household (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a, p. 6; http://www.census.gov). It is important to note here that the Census Bureau uses the term **household** for any group of people residing together. Not all households are families by the Census Bureau definition—that is, to be considered a *family household* persons sharing a household must also be related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Now that the federal government recognizes same-sex marriages as legal nationwide, married same-sex couples living together will be counted as family households. Before the June 26, 2015, U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage, lesbian and gay male couples living together were counted as nonfamily households. Cohabiting couples, whether heterosexual or same-sex, continue to be counted as nonfamily households (Loquist 2011; Schwarz 2014).

Family structure, or the form a family takes, varies according to the social environment in which it is embedded. In preindustrial or traditional societies, the family structure involved whole kinship groups. The **extended family** of parents, children, grandparents, and other relatives performed most societal functions, including economic production (e.g., the family farm), protecting family members, providing vocational training, and maintaining social order. In industrial or modern societies, the typical family structure often became the **nuclear family** (husband, wife, children), which was better suited to city life. Until about sixty years ago, social attitudes, religious beliefs, and law converged into a fairly common expectation about what form the American family should take: breadwinner husband, homemaker wife, and children living together in an independent household—the *nuclear-family ideal*.

Nevertheless, the extended family—including adult siblings, a family research topic very often neglected—continues to play an important role in many cases, especially among recent immigrants and race/ethnic minorities. Furthermore, to cope with hardships associated with the current economic recession, more families of all races/ethnicities are doubling up—that is, relatives are moving in together to create more multigenerational or otherwise extended-family households. About 15.5 million, or 13 percent of, American households are occupied by extended or multifamily groups—an increase of 12 percent or more since the onset of the recession in late 2007 (Mykyta and Macartney 2012, p. 2 and Table A-1). "Accordion" family households that expand or contract around more or fewer family members depending on family need perform

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The extended family—grandparents, aunts, and uncles—can provide occasion for good times as well as an important source of security, its members helping each other, especially during crises.

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important economic and often emotional social functions (Newman 2012).

Meanwhile, today's families are not necessarily bound to one another by legal marriage, blood, or adoption. The term *family* can identify relationships in addition to spouses, parents, children, and extended kin. Individuals fashion and experience intimate relationships and families in many forms. As social scientists take into account this structural variability, it is not uncommon to find them referring to the family as *postmodern* (Stacey 1990).

Postmodern: There Is No Typical Family

Barely half of U.S. adults are married—a record low (Taylor et al. 2011). Only about 5 percent of families now resemble the 1950s nuclear family of married couple and children, with a husband-breadwinner and wife-homemaker (Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider 2013, Tables 4, 5). Prompting social scientists to remark on today's "revolution in intimate life relationships," the past several decades have witnessed a proliferation of relationship and family forms: single-parent families, stepfamilies, families with children of more than one father, two-earner couples, stay-at-home fathers, cohabitating heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian marriages and families, three-generation families, and communal households, among others (Coontz 2015). Individuals can construct a myriad of social forms in order to address family functions. Social scientists have typically thought of the nuclear family as the "modern" family form. The term **postmodern family** came into use to acknowledge the fact that families today exhibit a multiplicity of forms and that new or altered family forms continue to emerge and develop.

Figure 1.2 displays the types of households in which Americans live. Just 19.6 percent of households are nuclear families of husband, wife, and children, as compared with 31 percent in 1980 and with 44 percent in 1960 (Casper and Bianchi 2002, p. 8; U.S. Census Bureau 2015a). The most common household type today is that of married couples without children: Either the children have grown up and left or the couple has not yet had children or doesn't plan to.

More households today (27.5 percent) are maintained by individuals living alone than by married couples with children. There are also female-headed (7.6 percent) and male-headed (1.9 percent) single-parent households, unmarried-couple households (about 5 percent), and family households containing relatives other than spouses or children—grandparent families or siblings, for instance (7.7 percent). "Facts about Families: American Families Today" presents additional information about families. Today we see historically unprecedented diversity in family composition, or form.

As one result of this diversity, law, government agencies, and private corporations such as insurance companies must now make decisions about what they

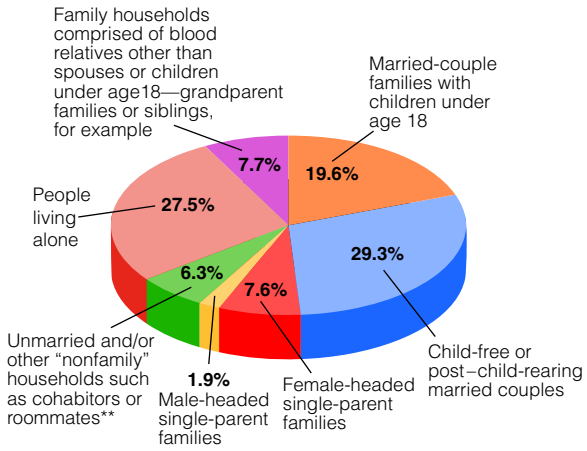

FIGURE 1.2 The many kinds of American households, 2014. A household is one or more persons who occupy a dwelling unit. This figure displays both family and nonfamily households.*

*The Census Bureau defines households as people living together in the same domicile; family households are domiciles housing persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Figures differ, depending on whether household or family is the unit of analysis. For example, married-couple family households are 50 percent of all households, but married couple families are 74 percent of all families (Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider 2013).

** The Census Bureau classifies unmarried-couple households as nonfamily households. Although some same-sex couples are married, unmarried-couple households may be composed of same-sex (about 11 percent) or heterosexual couples (about 89 percent) (calculated from Lofquist et al. 2012, Table 3).

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2012a, Tables 59, 63; U.S. Census Bureau 2015a; Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider 2013, Figure 1.

once could take for granted—that is, what a family is. If rent policies, employee-benefit packages, and insurance policies cover families, decisions need to be made about what relationships or groups of people are to be defined as a family. The September 11th Victim Compensation Fund of 2001 struggled with this issue in allocating compensation to victims' survivors. New York state law was amended to allow awards to unmarried gay and heterosexual partners (Gross 2002).

In the news more recently has been the U.S. government's struggle with how to define *marriage*. On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage is a nationwide right to be respected and enforced by all fifty states (Liptak 2015).

Adapting Family Definitions to the Postmodern Family

As family forms have grown increasingly variable, social scientists have proposed—and often struggled with—new, more flexible definitions for the family. Sociologist David Popenoe (1993) defined today's family as "a group of people in which people typically live together in a household

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Facts About Families

American Families Today

What do U.S. families look like today? Statistics can't tell the whole story, but they are an important beginning. As you read these ten facts, remember that the data presented here are generalizations and do not consider differences among various sectors of society. We explore social diversity throughout this textbook, but for now let's look at some overall statistics.

1. *Marriage is important to Americans—but not to the extent that it was sixty years ago during the "Golden Age of Marriage."* Today about 60 percent of never-married adults say they want to marry. Another 25 percent is not sure. Meanwhile, about 40 percent of us (44 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds and 32 percent of Americans age 65 and older) see marriage as becoming obsolete (Taylor et al. 2011).
2. *A smaller proportion of people is married today.* Just about half (50 percent) of Americans age 18 and older were married in 2014, compared to about three-quarters (72 percent) in 1960. About 30 percent of Americans today have never married; 10 percent are divorced, and 6 percent widowed (Cohn et al. 2011; U.S. Census Bureau 2015a, Table A1).
3. *Young people are postponing marriage.* In 2014, the median age at first marriage was 27.0 for women and 29.3—nearly 30—for men, as compared with about 21 for women and 24 for men in 1970. Today's average age at marriage is the highest recorded since the 1890 census (U.S. Census Bureau 2015b, Table MS-2).
4. *With some usually religion-based exceptions, cohabitation has become an acceptable family form (as well as a transitional lifestyle choice).* The number of opposite-sex cohabitating adults has increased more than tenfold since 1970—and by 40 percent just since 2000. Nearly 40 percent of cohabiting couples lived with children under 18 in 2014—either their own or those from a previous relationship or marriage. Unmarried-couple families are only about 6 percent of all households at any one time, but more than 50 percent of first marriages are preceded by cohabitation (Lofquist et al. 2012; U.S. Census Bureau 2015b, Table UC-1).
5. *Fertility has declined.* At 1.85 in 2013, the total fertility rate (TFR)—the average number of births that a woman will have during her lifetime—had dropped by nearly 4 percent since 2009 (Martin et al. 2015; Mather 2012). After a high of 3.6 in 1957, the TFR has been at or just under 2 over the past twenty-five years (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a, Table 83). A society requires a TFR of at least 2.1 in order for the population numerically to replace itself, so the current TFR is below replacement level.
6. *Particularly among college-educated women, parenthood is often postponed.*

and function as a cooperative unit, particularly through the sharing of economic resources, in the pursuit of domestic activities" (1993, p. 528). Sociologist Frank Furstenberg writes as follows: "My definition of 'family' includes membership related by blood, legal ties, adoption, and informal ties including *fictive* or socially agreed upon kinship" (2005, p. 810, italics in original; and see Nelson 2013). The concept "fictive kin" is discussed in Chapters 13 and 16.

Legal definitions of family have become more flexible as well. The 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalizes all same-sex marriages in this country comes to mind. As another example, a few state legislatures have provided that legal status and rights can be enjoyed by more than two—that is, by three or four—parents in one family. What would be an example of a family like this? Here's one: Two children spend three nights a week with their partnered gay fathers. The other nights they stay with their lesbian mothers, who live nearby (Lovett 2012).

Many employers have redefined family with respect to employee-benefit packages. Just more than half of the Fortune 500 companies, as well as many state and local governments, offer domestic partner benefits to persons in an unmarried couple who have registered their relationship with a civil authority (Appleby 2012). President Barack Obama signed an executive order granting federal employees and their domestic partners some of the rights (but neither health insurance nor retirement benefits) enjoyed by married couples (Miles 2010). If passed in the future, currently proposed federal legislation would extend domestic partner benefits to all federal civilian employees ("Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act" 2015). Meanwhile, federal practices permit low-income unmarried couples to qualify as families and live in public housing.

We, your authors, began this section with our definition of family. Our definition recognizes the diversity of postmodern families while paying heed to the essential functions that families are expected to fill. Our definition combines some structural criteria with a more social–psychological sense of family identity. We include

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The average age for a woman's first birth increased by about 2 years between 1970 and 2010—from age 21 to about 23. But the statistics differ according to education. For instance, nearly 60 percent of women who had not finished high school had a first birth by age 20, compared with 4 percent of women with a bachelor's degree or higher (Martinez, Daniels, and Chandra 2012, Figure 3). Married women today wait longer after their wedding to conceive than in the past (Hayford, Guzzo, and Smock 2014).

7. *Compared to 4 percent in 1950, the nonmarital birthrate is high* with 44.3 percent of all U.S. births today being to unmarried mothers. Unlike 1950, however, between one-quarter and one-half of nonmarital births today occur to cohabitating couples (Carter 2009; Martin et al. 2015, p. 6). Along with overall fertility, the unmarried-mother birthrate fell slightly between 2009 and 2014. We don't know whether this situation marks the beginning of a new trend or simply reflects a temporary response to the Great Recession (Martin et al. 2015).
8. *Same-sex-couple households increased* by 80 percent between 2000 and 2010 (Homan and Bass 2012). Partly because an unknown number remain "closeted," it is difficult to know how many same-sex-couple households really exist in the United States (Hoffman 2014). According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, there were approximately 783,100 same-sex households in 2014. Of these, one-quarter or more are married couples, although married-couple same-sex couples comprise less than one-half of one percent of all U.S. married couples (Cohn 2014; Schwarz 2014). We note that this situation may change rapidly (or not) now that same-sex marriage is legal nationwide. It is estimated that about 17 percent of same-sex households (10.0 percent of male and 23.7 percent of female) include children (U.S. Census Bureau 2014b, Table 1).).
9. *The divorce rate is high.* The divorce rate doubled from 1965 to 1980. Then it dropped and has fallen more than 30 percent since 1980 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a, Table 78). Still, it is estimated that only about half of recent first marriages will last twenty years, although it's important to note that the likelihood of divorce declines significantly with income and with more years of education (Copen et al. 2012, Tables 5 and 6).
10. *The remarriage rate has declined in recent decades but remains significant.* About 60 percent of recent marriages are first-time marriages for both spouses. About 4 percent of all married women and of married men have wed three or more times. This figure rises to about 7 percent for brides and grooms in their fifties and sixties (Lewis and Kreider 2015).

Critical Thinking

What do these statistics tell you about the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary American family and about family change?

the commitment to maintaining a relationship or group over time as a component of our definition because we believe that such a commitment is necessary in fulfilling basic family functions. It also helps to differentiate the family from casual relationships, such as roommates, or groups that easily come and go.

We have worked to balance an appreciation for flexibility and diversity in family structure and relations with the concern that many policy makers and social scientists express about how well today's families perform their functional obligations. Ultimately, there is no one correct answer to the question, "What is a family?"

Relaxed Institutional Control over Relationship Choices: "Family Decline" or "Family Change"?

A 2010 Pew Research Center survey found that 34 percent of Americans saw the growing variety of family types as a good thing, while 29 percent thought it was a bad thing. The remainder either didn't answer or saw the changes as creating no difference (Pew Research Center 2010a, p. 3). Public opinion polls show that overall about 30 percent of Americans reject today's trend toward the postmodern family while about the same proportion accept new family forms. Another 37 percent accept some aspects of family change but are concerned about others (Morin 2011).

In 2012, 59 percent of Americans saw unmarried heterosexual sex as morally acceptable, but 38 percent saw it as morally wrong. Those numbers had changed from 53 percent and 42 percent in 2001. Sixty-seven percent of Americans today see divorce as morally acceptable, whereas in 2001 that figure was 59 percent. Nevertheless, a significant minority (25 percent) continue to see divorce as morally wrong. Americans are somewhat more evenly split regarding having a baby outside marriage: 54 percent say doing so is morally acceptable today, compared with 45 percent in 2002. Forty-two percent of us think that having a baby outside marriage is morally wrong; 50 percent thought so in 2002 ("Marriage" 2012).

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