

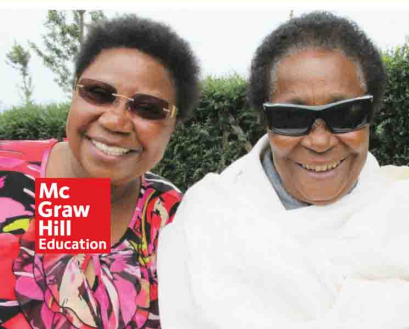


Marriages and Families

INTIMACY, DIVERSITY, AND STRENGTHS

David H. Olson | John DeFrain | Linda Skogrand

Ninth Edition



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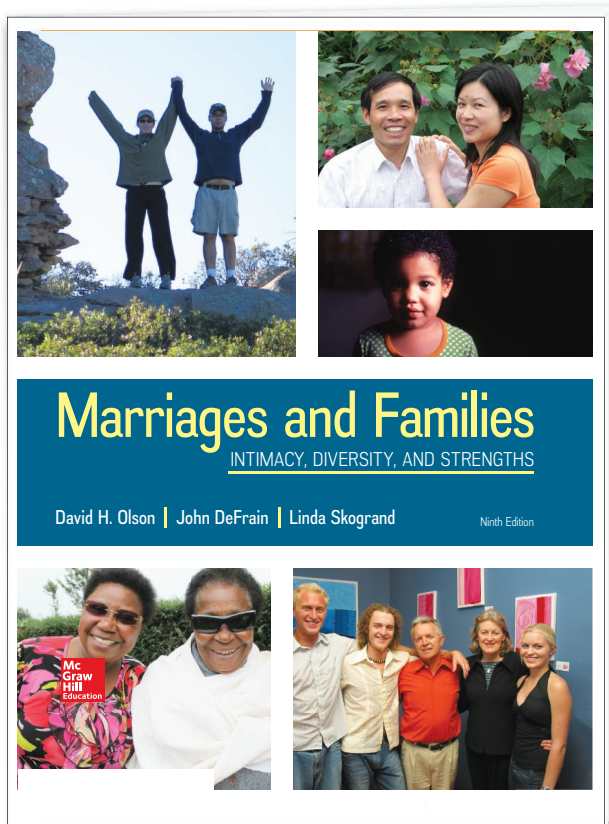
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Marriages & *Families*

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and Strengths

Ninth Edition

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Dedication

This book about marriages and families is dedicated to our marriages and families.

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Brief Contents

Preface xxiii

PART I

The Social Context of Intimate Relationships 1

- Chapter 1** Perspectives on Intimate Relationships 1
Chapter 2 Cultural Diversity and Diversity in Family Structure: Family Strengths and Challenges 37
Chapter 3 Understanding Marriage and Family Dynamics 70

PART II

Dynamics of Intimate Relationships 106

- Chapter 4** Communication and Intimacy 106
Chapter 5 Conflict and Conflict Resolution 129
Chapter 6 Sexual Intimacy 149
Chapter 7 Gender Roles and Power in the Family 185
Chapter 8 Managing Economic Resources 210

PART III

Stages of Intimate Relationships 234

- Chapter 9** Friendship, Love, Intimacy, and Singlehood 234
Chapter 10 Dating, Mate Selection, and Living Together 264
Chapter 11 Marriage: Building a Strong Foundation 289
Chapter 12 Parenthood: Joys and Challenges 312
Chapter 13 Midlife and Older Couples 350

PART IV

Challenges and Opportunities 381

- Chapter 14** Stress, Abuse, and Family Problems 381
Chapter 15 Divorce, Single-Parent Families, and Stepfamilies 433
Chapter 16 Strengthening Marriages and Families Worldwide 463

APPENDICES

- Appendix A** Couple and Family Scales A-1
Appendix B Family Science and Family Research Methods A-7
Appendix C Contraception and Abortion Options (available online)
Appendix D Pregnancy and Childbirth (available online)

Glossary G-1
References R-1
Name Index I-1
Subject Index I-11

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Contents

Preface xxiii

PART I

The Social Context of Intimate Relationships 1

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1 *Perspectives on Intimate Relationships 1*

Three Themes of Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity 2

Defining Marriage and Family 3

What Is Marriage? 3

What Is a Family? 4

Trends in Marriage and the Family: Change and Continuity 6

Trends in Marriage and Cohabitation 8

Trends in Divorce and Remarriage 9

Trends in Family Structure 11

Continuity in Marriage and the Family 14

Focus on Marital and Family Strengths 14

BOX 1.1 Putting It Together: *Learning to Focus on Strengths* 15

Advantages of Marriage 15

Impact of the Social Environment on Relationships 18

Stress, Change, and Materialism 19

Lack of Time for Oneself and Significant Others 20

Increasing Use of Child Care Outside the Family 21

Instability of Couple and Family Relationships 22

Violence, Criminal Victimization, and Fear 22

Use of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs 25

The Internet and Human Relationships 27

Changing Gender Roles and the Balance of Power 29

Urban Migration and Overcrowding 30

Financial Problems and the

Global Economy 30

Family and the Environment 31

Changing the Social Environment 33

Positive Responses to the Social Environment 34

Summary 35

Key Terms 35

Activities 35

Suggested Readings 35

2

Cultural Diversity and Diversity in Family Structure: Family Strengths and Challenges 37



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Diversity and Strengths in Family Structure and Cultural Context 38

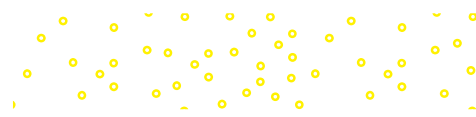
Why Culture Matters 38

Intimacy and Diversity 39

The Concepts of Race, Culture, and Ethnicity 39

BOX 2.1 Diversity in Families: *Race Has No Place* 40

U.S. Demographics and Future Trends 41



- The Hispanic Population 41
- The African American Population 42
- The Asian American Population 43
- The American Indian and Alaska Native Populations 43
- Immigration and Family Life 43
- What the Future Will Bring 44

Gay and Lesbian Couples and Families 45

- Same-Sex Couple Relationships and Marriages 45
- Gay and Lesbian Families 46
- The Challenges of Gay and Lesbian Couples and Families 47

Challenge to Researchers and Practitioners 49

- Research 49
- Practice 50

Cultural Competence 50

- Awareness 50
- Knowledge 51
- Skills 51

Kin Relationships Across Cultures 51

Family System and Sociocultural Characteristics 53

- Three Family System Characteristics 53
- Three Sociocultural Characteristics 54

Family Strengths and Challenges

Across Ethnic Groups 55

- Strengths of European American Families 55

BOX 2.2 Self-Assessment: Rate the Strengths in Your Family 56

- Strengths of African American Families 57
- Strengths of Latino Families 57
- Strengths of Asian American Families 59
- Strengths of American Indian Families 60

BOX 2.3 At Issue: Historical Trauma and American Indians 62

Cross-Cultural Family Studies 63

Challenges for Ethnic Families 63

- Assimilation, Acculturation, and Segregation 63

BOX 2.4 Diversity in Families: The Tables Are Turned: Going from the Majority to the Minority 64

- The Advantages of Being in the Majority 65
- Marriage Outside the Group 66
- Relationships Between Men and Women 66
- Relationships Between Parents and Children 67

Summary 68

Key Terms 68

Activities 68

Suggested Readings 68



3
Understanding Marriage and Family Dynamics 70

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The History of Family Science 71

- Family Science in the Early Years 72
- Family Science Today 73

Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Couples and Families 74

- Family Systems Theory 74

BOX 3.1 Putting It Together: Theories and Research 76

BOX 3.2 Putting It Together: Reorganization of the Family System After a Car Accident 79

BOX 3.3 Diversity in Families: Cultural Conflicts for a Female Chicana College Student 81

- International Family Strengths Framework 82
- Family Development Framework 87
- Symbolic Interaction Framework 89
- Social Construction Framework 89
- Feminist Framework 90

Three Key Relationship Concepts 92

- Cohesion in Couples and Families 92
- Flexibility in Couples and Families 95
- Communication in Couples and Families 97

Couple and Family Map 97

- Balanced Versus Unbalanced Families 98
- Balanced Relationships Are Healthier 98
- Value of Couple and Family Map 100

Dynamics Change in Relationships over Time 101

Summary 102

Key Terms 103

Activities 103

Suggested Readings 103





4 Communication and Intimacy 106

Couple Strengths and Issues in Communication 107

Perspectives on Communication 108

Gender Differences in Communication 108

BOX 4.1 At Issue: *Communicating About Sex* 110

Cultural Differences in Communication 110

Communication with GLBT Individuals
and Couples 111

BOX 4.2 Putting It Together: *All Together at Family
Mealtimes* 112

Using Communication to Develop Intimacy 113

Communication as a Cooperative
Endeavor 113

Content and Relationship Messages 114

Nonverbal Communication 114

Mixed Messages and Double Binds 115

Metacommunication: Clarifying Your
Communication 116

Continuous Partial Attention 117

Using Communication to Maintain Intimacy 118

Speaking: The Art of Self-Disclosure 118

When Self-Disclosure May Not Be Healthy 121

Listening: A Difficult Skill 121

Assertive, Passive, and Aggressive

Communication 123

BOX 4.3 Putting It Together: *Using Communication to
Increase Intimacy* 124

Positive and Negative Communication Cycles 124

The Positive Influence of

Assertiveness 125

The Negative Influence of

Avoidance 125

Summary 126

Key Terms 127

Activities 127

Suggested Readings 127



5 Conflict and Conflict Resolution 129

Couple Strengths and Issues in Conflict Resolution 130

Conflict and Anger: An Overview 131

The Hierarchy of Conflict 131

Anger and Conflict Taboos 133

Myths, Theories, and Facts About Anger 134

BOX 5.1 Putting It Together: *Anger: Myths and
Facts* 136

Intimacy and Conflict 136

Conflict Resolution for Couples 136

Love and Anger in Balance 137

The Dance of Anger 138

Conflict and Supportiveness in Heterosexual,
Gay, and Lesbian Couples 140

BOX 5.2 At Issue: *Ways of Dealing with Conflict in
Later Years* 141

Things to Consider in Resolving Conflict 141

Suggestions for Having a Healthy Conversation 141

Strategies for Communicating About

Difficult Issues 142

BOX 5.3 At Issue: *Ending a Conflict and Learning to
Forgive* 144

Conflict Between Parents and Children 146

Summary 147

Key Terms 147

Activities 148

Suggested Readings 148



6 Sexual Intimacy 149

Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity 150

Couple Strengths and Sexual Issues 150

Sex and Society: An Overview 152

Sexuality, Sex, and Gender 152

Historical Perspectives on Sex and Society 152

Gay and Lesbian Couples 153
Sexuality Across Cultures 155
HIV/AIDS—The Epidemic Continues 158

American Sexual Health and Behavior 159

National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior 159
The American Sex Survey by ABC News 160
Sexuality in the Later Years 162
Gay-Male and Lesbian Sexual Behavior 163

Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents and Young Adults 165

Unintended Consequences: Teen Pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) 165
Education for Sexuality 167
Sexuality Education and Parents 168

BOX 6.1 Putting It Together: Father-Child Communication About Sex 169

Is Sex Education Effective? 170
Sexual Behavior, Alcohol, and College 171

Marital and Extramarital Sexual Behavior 172

Sex Within Marriage 172
Marital Styles and Sexual Behavior 174
Infidelity 174

Toward Sexual Health 176

BOX 6.2 Diversity in Families: What's Morally Acceptable? It Depends on Where You Live 177
Sexual Dysfunction 179
Sex Therapy 181

Summary 182

Key Terms 183

Activities 183

Suggested Readings 183

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7

Gender Roles and Power in the Family 185

Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity 186

Facts About Women and Men in the United States 186

Gender Roles 186

Gender Norms and Family Life 188
Distribution of Family Work by Gender 190
Emotion Work in Marriage and Family 191
Spending Time with Children 191
Maternal Gatekeeping 192

Traditional versus Contemporary Views of Gender Roles 193
The Move Toward More Egalitarian Roles 193

BOX 7.1 At Issue: The Work-Family Interface 194
An International Perspective 194

BOX 7.2 Diversity in Families: Ethnic Variations in Who Does Housework 198

Gender Roles Across Ethnic Groups 198

Latino/a Culture 198
African American Culture 199
American Indian Culture 199
Asian American Culture 200
Gender Issues for Immigrant Couples 200

Theories About Gender Roles 201

Social Learning Theory 201
Cognitive Development Theory 201
Family Systems Theory 203
Feminist Framework 203

BOX 7.3 At Issue: Gender Inequality as a Global Problem 204

Power in Families 204

Power in Couple Relationships 205
Egalitarian Roles and Marital Satisfaction 206
Suggestions for Minimizing Power Issues 207

Summary 208

Key Terms 209

Activities 209

Suggested Readings 209

8

Managing Economic Resources 210



Money and Happiness 211

Marriage and Money 213

BOX 8.1 At Issue: The Effects of Debt on Newlyweds 215

Diversity and Financial Style 216

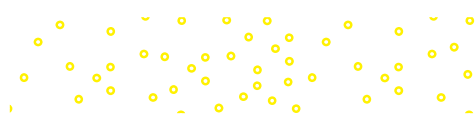
The Cost of Divorce 218

Why Do Finances Cause Problems? 218

BOX 8.2 Putting It Together: Steps to Financial Freedom 219

Family Income and Expenses 220

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Family Income 220

BOX 8.3 At Issue: *The Recession and Fertility Rates* 221

Does It Pay to Work Outside the Home? 224

Smart Money Management 225

Creating a Budget 225

Pooling Money: Pros and Cons 226

Credit: Uses and Abuses 227

Credit Cards—Dangerous

Plastic 227

BOX 8.4 At Issue: *Debt in the United States* 228

Purchasing a Home 228

Avoiding Debt and Bankruptcy 231

Financial Counseling 231

Summary 232

Key Terms 233

Activities 233

Suggested Readings 233

PART III

Stages of Intimate Relationships 234

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9

Friendship, Love, Intimacy, and Singlehood 234

Friends Versus Lovers 235

The Fabric of Friendship 235

The Tapestry of Love 237

BOX 9.1 Putting It Together: *Ten Traits of Love* 238

The Love Triangle 239

Jealousy: A Green-Eyed Monster or Real Love? 240

BOX 9.2 At Issue: *Love and Science* 241

Looking for Love on the Internet 242

Exploring Intimacy: From Experience to Relationship 244

Paths to Intimacy Differ in Males and Females 244

Intimacy and Communication 245

Intimate Experiences Versus an Intimate

Relationship 246

The Paradox of Marriage and Intimacy 246

Developing Intimacy in Couple Relationships 247

Communication Skills 248

Couple Closeness 248

Couple Flexibility 248

Personality Compatibility 248

Conflict Resolution 249

Intimacy Games 249

Constructive Intimacy Games 251

Destructive Intimacy Games 251

Limiting Destructive Games 253

Attachment Theory and Intimacy 254

Being Single 255

A Historical Perspective on Being Single 257

Being Single Today 257

BOX 9.3 Diversity in Families: *Definitions of Singlehood* 258

Summary 262

Key Terms 262

Activities 262

Suggested Readings 263



10

Dating, Mate Selection, and Living Together 264

Courtship Patterns 265

Parent-Arranged Marriages 265

What Has Happened to Dating? 268

Trends in Searching for a Partner 270

BOX 10.1 Putting It Together: *Dating Do's and Don'ts* 272

Ongoing Relationships 272

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do 273

Dating Among Older People 273

Choosing a Mate 274

Those Who Are Like Us 275

Age and Finding a Mate 275

Birth Order 276

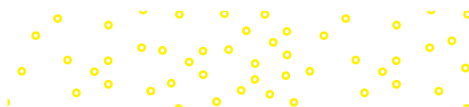
Similar Personalities or Different Personalities 276

Interracial and Interfaith Marriages 276

Finding a Good Mate 279

Patterns of Mate Selection 279

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Conflict and Violence in Relationships 280

BOX 10.2 At Issue: *Partner Violence
Warning Signs* 282

Living Together 283

Cohabitation's Dramatic Increase 283
Reasons for Cohabiting 284

BOX 10.3 Putting It Together: *Ten Ideas to Consider
Before Cohabiting* 286
Difficult Choices 286

Summary 287

Key Terms 287

Activities 287

Suggested Readings 287

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11

Marriage: Building a Strong Foundation 289

Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity 290

Perspectives on Marriage Today 290

The Benefits of Marriage 291
Marriage and Black Americans 292
Marriages over Time 292
The Decline in Marriage 293

Components of a Successful Marriage 294

Marriage Education 296

Premarital Education 297
What Constitutes an Effective Premarital Program? 298

BOX 11.1 Putting It Together: *The PREPARE Program
for Premarital Counseling* 299

BOX 11.2 At Issue: *Predicting Marital Success* 300
Predicting a Successful Marriage 300

The Importance of Families

of Origin in Marriage 301

Kathy's Family of Origin 301
Jim's Family of Origin 302
Goals for the Marriage 302

Newlywed Years 303

Keeping Marriages Strong 305

Five Types of Marriage 305
Why Marriages Fall Apart 307
Keeping Your Marriage a Top Priority 307
The Role of Forgiveness in Marriage 307
The Role of Sacrifice in Marriage 309
Prayer in Marriage 309

Federal Healthy Marriage Initiative 310

Summary 311

Key Terms 311

Activities 311

Suggested Readings 311



12

Parenthood: Joys and Challenges 312

Roots and Wings 313

Children and Happiness 313

Children and Individual Happiness 313
Children and Couple Happiness 314

Couple Strengths and Issues in Parenting 314

The Challenge of Parenthood 315

Myths and Realities of Parenthood 316
The Transition to Parenthood 318
Financial Issues and Children 320

Adoption 320

The Child-Free Alternative 322

Styles of Parenting 325

Democratic Style 326
Authoritarian Style 327
Permissive Style 327
Rejecting Style 327
Uninvolved Style 327
Democratic Parenting Works Best 328

Theories of Childrearing 328

Issues in Parenting 330

The Need for Positive Discipline Today 331
Corporal Punishment and Its Consequences 332

BOX 12.1 Putting It Together: *The Mother's Book by
Mrs. Child* 333
Child Care 333

BOX 12.2 Diversity in Families: *Child Care for the
Growing Hispanic Population* 334

BOX 12.3 At Issue: *Looking for a Very High Quality
Child Care Program and Positive Caregiving* 336
Coparenting 337
Single Mothers 338
Gay and Lesbian Parenting 339
Fatherhood and Motherhood Today 339
When a Child Dies 342
Educational Programs and Resources for Parents 343

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The Joy and Enduring Satisfaction of Parenthood 346

BOX 12.4 Putting It Together: *A Young Mother's Diary* 347

Summary 347

Key Terms 348

Activities 348

Suggested Readings 348

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13

Midlife and Older Couples 350

Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity 351

Family Life in the Middle Years 352

Defining Middle Age 352

Middle Age: A Crisis or An Opportunity? 353

The Middle-Aged Person and the Working World 354

Sexuality in Middle Age 354

BOX 13.1 Diversity in Families: *Childlessness: The Invisible Group* 355

The Middle-Aged Marriage 357

Divorce During the Middle and Later Years 358

Empty Nest, Spacious Nest, or Cluttered Nest? 358

Caught in the Middle: The Sandwich Generation 359

Grandparenthood 360

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren 362

BOX 13.2 Diversity in Families: *Grandparents and Grandfamilies* 364

Family Life in the Later Years 364

Defining Old Age 365

Conventional Wisdom About Old Age 366

Retirement 370

BOX 13.3 At Issue: *Alzheimer's* 371

Long-Term Marriages 372

Losing a Spouse 374

Couple Relationships in the Later Years 375

BOX 13.4 At Issue: *I Am Aware That I Am No Longer Anyone's "Most Important Person": The Desolation of Grief* 376

Changes in Family Dynamics in the Later Years 377

Summary 377

Key Terms 378

Activities 378

Suggested Readings 379

PART IV

Challenges and Opportunities 381

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14

Stress, Abuse, and Family Problems 381

Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity 382

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Couple and Family Stress 383

What We Know About Stress 383

Coping with Stress 384

Stress and Life Events 384

BOX 14.1 At Issue: *Ambiguous Loss: When We Are Uncertain If a Person Is In or Out of Our Family* 386

Top Five Stressors for Couples 388

Five Tips for Dealing with Stress in Your

Relationship 388

The ABC-X Family Crisis Model 389

Life as a Roller Coaster 390

A Roller Coaster Course of Adjustment 391

Family Systems Changes Before

and After the 9/11 Attacks 391

War and Its Effect on Families 393

Couples 394

Children 395

BOX 14.2 At Issue: *The Impact of War on Families Left Behind* 396

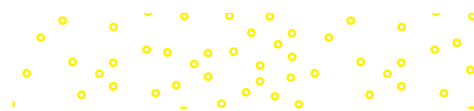
The Role of the Community in Supporting Military Families 398

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and War 400

Family Coping Strategies 401

Theoretical Perspectives 401

Coping with 9/11 402



BOX 14.3 Putting It Together: Strategies for Managing Stress 404

Domestic Violence 404

- Incidence of Domestic Violence 405
- Diversity and Domestic Violence 407
- National Survey of Domestic Violence 407
- Relationship of Physical Abuse and Psychological Abuse 408
- Factors Contributing to Domestic Violence 409
- Patterns of Domestic Violence 412
- Treatment and Prevention of Domestic Violence 412
- Domestic Violence and Children 414

Child Abuse and Neglect 414

- Incidence of Child Abuse and Neglect 415
- Psychological Aggression and Spanking 415
- Alternatives to Spanking 417
- The Long-Term Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect 417
- Transcending Abuse 418
- Families at Risk 419
- Treatment and Prevention of Child Abuse 420

Sibling and Child-to-Parent Abuse 421

- Sibling Abuse 421
- Child-to-Parent Abuse 422

Alcohol Problems in Families 423

- Alcohol and Family Violence 424
- The Family's Reaction to Alcohol Abuse 424
- Treatment and Prevention of Alcoholism 426
- Acknowledging the Dangers of Legal Drugs 428

Summary 429

Key Terms 430

Activities 430

Suggested Readings 431

15

Divorce, Single-Parent Families, and Stepfamilies 433

Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity 434

Divorce in Today's Society 434

- Historical Trends 434

BOX 15.1 Diversity in Families: The Globalization of Divorce 436

- Divorce Laws and Views on Divorce 437

Understanding Divorce 439

- The Culture of Divorce 439
- The Impact of Divorce on Adults 440

BOX 15.2 At Issue: Fathers' Experiences with Marital Separation 441

- The Impact of Divorce on Children 442

Single-Parent Families 444

- Fathers 446
- Strengths of Single-Parent Families 448
- Challenges of Being in Single-Parent Families 449
- Benefits of Being in Single-Parent Families 451
- What Resources Do Single-Parent Families Rely On? 452

Stepfamilies 453

- Differences Between Nuclear Families and Stepfamilies 454
- Children in Stepfamilies 455
- Couples in Stepfamilies 456
- Stepfamilies in Diverse Populations 458
- Boundary Ambiguity in Stepfamilies 459
- Stepfamilies in Later Life 459
- Building Stepfamily Strengths 459

Summary 461

Key Terms 461

Activities 461

Suggested Readings 462

16

Strengthening Marriages and Families Worldwide 463



Global Perspectives on Family, Community, and Cultural Strengths 464

- Family Strengths 465
- Community Strengths 465
- Cultural Strengths 465
- Two Visual Models Integrating Family, Community, and Cultural Strengths 466

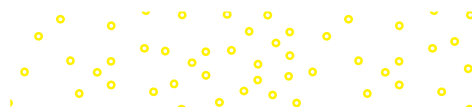
BOX 16.1 Diversity in Families: The Perennial Philosophy 468

Premarital and Marriage Programs 468

- Premarital Programs for Marriage 469
- Couple Education Programs 471

Marital and Family Therapy 471

- Common Problems in Couple Relationships 471
- Problems Related to Closeness and Flexibility 472
- Common Questions About Marital and Family Therapy 473
- Family Therapy Case Study 476



Strengthening Your Marriage and Family Relationships 479
Building a Stronger Marriage 479
BOX 16.2 Putting It Together: Building a Stronger Marriage 480
Building a Stronger Family 480
BOX 16.3 Putting It Together: Building a Stronger Family 481

The Future of Your Family 481
Summary 482
Activities 483
Suggested Readings 483

Appendices

Appendix A

Couple and Family Scales A-1

Appendix B

Family Science and Family Research Methods A-7

Note: Appendices C and D, added below, are available online. And, please visit the Web site: www.mhhe.com/olson9e to access them.

Appendix C

Contraception and Abortion Options

Appendix D

Pregnancy and Childbirth

Glossary G-1

References R-1

Name Index I-1

Subject Index I-11



This page intentionally left blank

Boxed Features

-  **Box 1.1 Putting It Together:** *Learning to Focus on Strengths* 15
-  **Box 2.1 Diversity in Families:** *Race Has No Place* 40
-  **Box 2.2 Self-Assessment:** *Rate the Strengths in Your Family* 56
-  **Box 2.3 At Issue:** *Historical Trauma and American Indians* 62
-  **Box 2.4 Diversity in Families:** *The Tables Are Turned: Going from the Majority to the Minority* 64
-  **Box 3.1 Putting It Together:** *Theories and Research* 76
-  **Box 3.2 Putting It Together:** *Reorganization of the Family System After a Car Accident* 79
-  **Box 3.3 Diversity in Families:** *Cultural Conflicts for a Female Chicana College Student* 81
-  **Box 4.1 At Issue:** *Communicating About Sex* 110
-  **Box 4.2 Putting It Together:** *All Together at Family Mealtimes* 112
-  **Box 4.3 Putting It Together:** *Using Communication to Increase Intimacy* 124
-  **Box 5.1 Putting It Together:** *Anger: Myths and Facts* 136
-  **Box 5.2 At Issue:** *Ways of Dealing with Conflict in Later Years* 141
-  **Box 5.3 At Issue:** *Ending a Conflict and Learning to Forgive* 144
-  **Box 6.1 Putting It Together:** *Father-Child Communication About Sex* 169
-  **Box 6.2 Diversity in Families:** *What's Morally Acceptable? It Depends on Where You Live* 177
-  **Box 7.1 At Issue:** *The Work-Family Interface* 194
-  **Box 7.2 Diversity in Families:** *Ethnic Variations in Who Does Housework* 198
-  **Box 7.3 At Issue:** *Gender Inequality as a Global Problem* 204
-  **Box 8.1 At Issue:** *The Effects of Debt on Newlyweds* 215
-  **Box 8.2 Putting It Together:** *Steps to Financial Freedom* 219
-  **Box 8.3 At Issue:** *The Recession and Fertility Rates* 221

-  **Box 8.4 At Issue:** *Debt in the United States* 228
-  **Box 9.1 Putting It Together:** *Ten Traits of Love* 238
-  **Box 9.2 At Issue:** *Love and Science* 241
-  **Box 9.3 Diversity in Families:** *Definitions of Singlehood* 258
-  **Box 10.1 Putting It Together:** *Dating Do's and Don'ts* 272
-  **Box 10.2 At Issue:** *Partner Violence Warning Signs* 282
-  **Box 10.3 Putting It Together:** *Ten Ideas to Consider Before Cohabiting* 286
-  **Box 11.1 Putting It Together:** *The PREPARE Program for Premarital Counseling* 299
-  **Box 11.2 At Issue:** *Predicting Marital Success* 300
-  **Box 12.1 Putting It Together:** *The Mother's Book by Mrs. Child* 333
-  **Box 12.2 Diversity in Families:** *Child Care for the Growing Hispanic Population* 334
-  **Box 12.3 At Issue:** *Looking for a Very High Quality Child Care Program and Positive Caregiving* 336
-  **Box 12.4 Putting It Together:** *A Young Mother's Diary* 347
-  **Box 13.1 Diversity in Families:** *Childlessness: The Invisible Group* 355
-  **Box 13.2 Diversity in Families:** *Grandparents and Grandfamilies* 364
-  **Box 13.3 At Issue:** *Alzheimer's* 371
-  **Box 13.4 At Issue:** *I Am Aware that I Am No Longer Anyone's "Most Important Person": The Desolation of Grief* 376
-  **Box 14.1 At Issue:** *Ambiguous Loss: When We Are Uncertain If a Person Is In or Out of Our Family* 386
-  **Box 14.2 At Issue:** *The Impact of War on Families Left Behind* 396
-  **Box 14.3 Putting It Together:** *Strategies for Managing Stress* 404
-  **Box 15.1 Diversity in Families:** *The Globalization of Divorce* 436
-  **Box 15.2 At Issue:** *Fathers' Experiences with Marital Separation* 441
-  **Box 16.1 Diversity in Families:** *The Perennial Philosophy* 468
-  **Box 16.2 Putting It Together:** *Building a Stronger Marriage* 480
-  **Box 16.3 Putting It Together:** *Building a Stronger Family* 481

About the Authors

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David Olson is professor emeritus of family social science at the University of Minnesota. He is founder and president of Life Innovations. He is a past president of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) and a past president of the Upper Midwest Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (UMAMFT) and a fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA). Olson is also a member of the editorial boards of multiple family journals. He has received numerous awards, including the Distinguished Contribution to Family Therapy Research Award from both AAMFT and the American Family Therapy Association (AFTA).

Olson has written or edited more than 20 books, including *Couple Checkup; Remarriage Checkup; Empowering Couples; Building Relationships; Families: What Makes Them Work; Circumplex Model; Power in Families; Treating Relationships*; and 10 volumes of the *Inventory of Marriage and Family Literature*. He has published more than 100 articles with the theme of bridging family research, theory, and practice.

Olson and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota are well known for having developed the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems and a variety of couple and family assessment tools, including PREPARE, ENRICH, FACES, PAIR, and AWARE.



Courtesy of David H. Olson

John DeFrain, Ph.D.

John DeFrain is a professor emeritus of family studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His professional focus has been the development of couple and family strengths nationally and internationally.

DeFrain's research on family strengths and challenges from a global perspective has been recognized around the world. He holds an Honorary Appointment as Conjoint Professor of Family Studies at the University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia; serves as a research scientist in the Center for Family Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, People's Republic of China; received an Onassis Foundation Fellowship to work at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji; has consulted with the Department of Family Development of the federal government of Mexico and other Mexican organizations; and has worked with the EMMA Foundation in Romania, helping to develop programs for families whose child has died. DeFrain was the 2014 recipient of the National Council on Family Relations Jan Trost Award for outstanding contributions to international family studies. He is currently working with the Doha International Family Institute in Qatar on a proposed study of the strengths and challenges of Arab families in 22 countries.

DeFrain co-founded the Global Consortium for International Family Studies. The organization links universities in the United States, Australia, India, and other countries, making it possible for students in many nations to learn about how to strengthen families from teachers in the global network.



Courtesy of John DeFrain

DeFrain's research has been published in 160 professional articles in books, journals, and Extension publications; and he has co-authored and co-edited 34 books, including: *Coping with Sudden Infant Death*; *Secrets of Strong Families*; *Stillborn: The Invisible Death*; *On Our Own: A Single Parent's Survival Guide*; *Parents in Contemporary America*; *Sudden Infant Death: Enduring the Loss*; *Building Relationships*; and *We Cry Out: Living with Developmental Disabilities*. His most recent books are: *Surviving and Transcending a Traumatic Childhood: The Dark Thread*; *Family Treasures: Creating Strong Families*; *Strong Families Around the World: Strengths-Based Research and Perspectives*; *The Strengths and Challenges of New Immigrant Families: Implications for Research, Education, Policy, and Service*; *Getting Connected, Staying Connected: Loving Each Other Day by Day*; *Family Violence from a Global Perspective: Strengths-Based Perspectives*; and *The World of Bereavement: Cultural Perspectives on Death in Families*.

John would like to thank his spouse Nikki DeFrain and his three daughters, three sons-in-law, and four grandchildren for teaching him so much of what he knows about marriage and family.

Linda Skogrand, Ph.D.



Courtesy of Linda Skogrand

Linda Skogrand is a professor and family life Extension specialist at Utah State University in Logan, Utah. She began her professional career as a social worker in the inner city of St. Louis, Missouri, and throughout her career has enjoyed a balance between academic institutions and social service organizations. Her current position as an Extension specialist allows her to take knowledge and research findings and make them available to people in communities in Utah and throughout the nation. She is a member of the working group for the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network (NERMEN), which provides relationship education materials nationally for Extension educators and others who provide relationship and marriage education.

Skogrand's social service experiences include providing HIV/AIDS education programs for street kids, people in prison, and gang members, and overseeing the design of an AIDS house for the Latino population. She also taught family courses at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, for 17 years and was adjunct faculty at the University of Minnesota.

She has authored numerous journal articles focusing on topics such as transcending a traumatic childhood, diversity, strong Latino marriages, strong Navajo marriages, strong African American marriages, relationship and marriage education for low-income and diverse populations, and benefits of stepfamily education for Latino and low-income audiences. She is currently involved with a federal grant bringing fatherhood education to Utah fathers in communities as well as fathers in jails.

Skogrand is nationally known for her work with diversity—hearing the voices that are not typically heard in family research. With that focus in mind, she has conducted research with Latino couples and Navajo couples and created curricula for these populations based upon this research. These curricula include *Strong Latino Couple Relationships* for the Latino population and *Strong Marriages for Navajo Couples* for the Navajo people so members of these populations can strengthen their couple relationships in ways that are consistent with their cultural values. Currently, she is collaborating with the 4-H director in Alaska in conducting research in order to ultimately bring 4-H to youth in remote Native villages in culturally appropriate ways.

Preface

Our colleague and friend, the late Dr. David R. Mace, once said, “Nothing in the world could make human life happier than to greatly increase the number of happy couples and strong families.” Throughout nine editions, our goal in writing *Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths* has been to provide students with information about marriage and family relationships that will help them move toward Mace’s goal.

We have tried to make the concepts and ideas presented in this book useful and meaningful so students will be able to apply them to their own lives. We hope to help students integrate intellectual ideas and personal experiences, thereby enriching both. Although the text deals with some complex ideas and materials, it is written in a style that is accessible to students new to the field of family studies and to those wishing to learn more about intimate relationships.

Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity

Three distinctive themes have guided our efforts in writing this book, and they are woven throughout the text. The first is *intimacy*, and our focus is on how to develop and maintain close relationships. Most people seek connectedness and want to be involved in intimate relationships, the most intimate being marriage and family. This book is full of ideas, principles, and suggestions for building and keeping intimate relationships in your life. As a result, we hope this will be a book that you will want to keep and refer to throughout your life.

The second key theme is *marital and family strengths*. The family strengths perspective is based on the premise that if you approach relationships from a “problem-oriented” perspective, you will find problems. If you look for strengths, you will find strengths. Growing numbers of family educators and family therapists are using this approach today, helping families recognize their own strengths and use them as a foundation for positive growth. In Chapter 1, we identify a number of strengths that have been found to be present in healthy marriages and families all over the world. Throughout the book, we show how these strengths help families provide healthy and nurturing settings that promote the growth and well-being of individual family members, better enabling them to face the challenges and solve the problems they encounter.

Although the theme of marital and family strengths is integrated throughout the book, three chapters focus especially on this theme: Chapter 2 highlights the couple and family strengths of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, including gay and lesbian couples and families; Chapter 14 examines how families can use their strengths to manage stress, abuse, and other family issues; and Chapter 16 looks at how families, communities, and cultures can work together to build a healthier world in the future.

The third key theme is *diversity*, and, wherever possible, we consider how concepts, research, and theories about the family apply to couples and families of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We also focus on the diversity in structure that characterizes families today, looking at the many different forms that *family* can take. Diversity in sexual

orientation—gay and lesbian relationships and families in our society—is another type of diversity we explore. The theme of diversity is introduced in Chapter 1, discussed in detail in Chapter 2, and integrated into discussions throughout the book. One of the four categories of the boxes throughout the text is dedicated to exploring diversity in families.

Family Systems and Family Strengths

We present innumerable theories of family in this book, but we focus especially on family systems theory. Recognizing that the family unit is a system of interdependent parts, we look at how families maintain themselves, yet change; how family members can be separate, yet connected; and how communication facilitates the processes of change and growth. We focus on communication and conflict resolution skills as essential tools for creating healthy intimate relationships. We also look at how families can learn to function well within the larger systems of community and society.

The family strengths perspective was developed by Nick Stinnett, John DeFrain, and many of their colleagues across the country and around the world. We use this perspective throughout the text as a model for understanding and evaluating families. With it, we identify and focus on six key qualities of healthy families: commitment, appreciation and affection, positive communication, enjoyable time together, spiritual well-being, and the ability to manage stress and crisis effectively. The research driving this model has involved thousands of family members in the United States and other countries around the world.

In Chapter 3, we introduce the Couple and Family Map, an assessment tool that was developed by David Olson and his colleagues. The Couple and Family Map is based on concepts from family systems theory, and it focuses on the three dimensions of cohesion, flexibility, and communication. It has been used in hundreds of studies to help researchers understand and evaluate families. Throughout the text, we cite studies that have used the map as a theoretical base. An ongoing family case study, described in the Instructor's Manual, can be used to show students how the Couple and Family Map is applied. Appendix A contains the instructions and materials to apply the map to couple and family relationships.

Updates in the Ninth Edition

Like a healthy couple and family, a good textbook needs to identify major issues and change over time. We have tried to describe the current issues in marriage and families today and identify how these relationships are changing.

The field of relationships, especially marriages and families, is increasingly changing and becoming more diverse and complex. Marriage is being preceded and/or replaced by cohabitation, and two-parent families are becoming less common. Same-sex couples are increasing, as are single parents and people who are choosing not to marry. We will now highlight some of the changes we have made in each of the 16 chapters.

Overall, it is important for the reader to know that as we work on a new edition of the textbook, we check every citation to be sure that it is the most up-to-date source available. In addition, worldwide databases are tapped, organizations that collect the most recent data about marriages and family are searched, and the most reliable research and commentary are chosen to help keep the book current. This process takes 18 months.

To give the reader an idea of the magnitude of our task, this textbook has more than 1,500 references. For this ninth edition, we checked each of these references individually to make sure they represent the most current research and thinking on the subject; and we

replaced those references which could be updated with new research and commentary. In total for this edition, nearly 850 new references were added and more than 700 old references were deleted. The task of revising this book took, literally, hundreds of hours. Was it worth the effort? You will have to be the judge.

Part I: The Social Context of Intimate Relationships

In **Chapter 1, Perspectives on Intimate Relationships**, we have completely updated national statistics on marriage and divorce in America. We have added some new definitions of *family* for the reader, and discussed the controversy between the so-called *exclusionists* and *inclusionists*. The latest developments in the struggle over same-sex marriage in the United States are discussed, followed by new statistics on cohabitation and remarriage. We present several propositions on how to look at couples and families from a strengths-based perspective, and go on to discuss why, from a statistical perspective, marital relationships look stronger than cohabiting relationships. New statistics are featured that show Americans are generally pessimistic about the prospects for the country's economy and for international peace in the near future, but the vast majority are optimistic about how they and their family will do in the coming year.

A number of major challenges Americans face in the broader social environment are described. This section includes the latest statistics on who's minding the kids, looking at the percentages of young children in the care of their parents, other relatives, child care centers, or nonrelatives in home-based arrangements. Violence and domestic abuse in this country are reviewed using very recent research. The latest data on the problems caused in families by tobacco use and excessive alcohol use are reviewed. New research is presented on how family socialization has dropped dramatically in recent years, attributed to increased internet use. And finally, we have added a section on Family and the Environment, which discusses the problem of overpopulation and environmental degradation, and how all of us in our families can help protect the earth. For the new Ninth Edition, Chapter 1 has been extensively revised and strengthened.

In **Chapter 2, Cultural Diversity and Diversity in Family Structure: Family Strengths and Challenges**, we have added information about the impact of the 2015 Supreme Court ruling to legalize same-sex marriages. There is new information about what the increase in diversity means for the projected U.S. population in the year 2060. Updated information about the ethnic population distribution in the United States is included.

Chapter 3, Understanding Marriage and Family Dynamics, features updated sections on the past, present, and future of the field of family studies or family science. The latest thinking on family systems theory, the international family strengths perspective, the family development, symbolic interaction, social construction, and feminist theoretical frameworks are presented. And the couple and family map show how family dynamics can change over time. All references in this chapter have been checked carefully and new material has been added in each section.

Part II: Dynamics of Intimate Relationships

In **Chapter 4, Communication and Intimacy**, there is new information about how communication differs between men and women and how this affects couple relationships. The chapter has a new Box about communicating about sex and how lack of communication affects

sexual health. In addition, there is an added section about the challenges of gay and lesbian couples as they communicate with their friends and family.

In **Chapter 5, Conflict and Conflict Resolution**, there is a new section on guidelines for couples as they resolve conflict. A recent study about how couples deal with conflict in later years has been added in a new Box. Another new Box discusses how to end conflict and learn to forgive. There is also new information about conflict between parents and children.

Chapter 6, Sexual Intimacy, includes new data from a nationwide survey of married couples which focuses on the quality of their sexual relationship. The story of the international HIV/AIDS crisis is updated, more than three decades into the struggle to control the spread of the deadly disease. New insights from the National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior are presented. And all the discussions on sexuality in the later years, gay-male and lesbian sexual behavior, sexual behavior and young adults, and marital and extramarital behavior are revised to include the latest thinking. Chapter 6 concludes with new developments in the understanding of sexual dysfunction and sex therapy.

Chapter 7, Gender Roles and Power in the Family, provides the most up-to-date information about gender roles, including facts about men and women such as poverty rates, educational achievement, labor force participation, use of health care, and being victims and perpetrators of crimes. There is also a new Box about ethnic variations about who does housework and why this occurs. There is a new section about power in couple relationships.

Chapter 8, Managing Economic Resources, has become an increasingly important topic as it relates to couple and family relationships. There is new information in this chapter about how spending money to help others increases one's sense of well-being. There is a new Box about how the Great Recession of 2007 affected fertility rates and also a new Box about debt for families in the United States.

Part III: Stages of Intimate Relationships

Chapter 9, Friendship, Love, Intimacy, and Singlehood, features updates of the research in all sections of the chapter, including the materials on friends compared to lovers, attachment theory and intimacy, and being single. Highlights focus on how researchers study love from a scientific perspective; looking for love on the internet; how straight couples met their partner; definitions of singlehood and statistics on singles; and new research explaining why marriage is still very popular in the United States, even while singlehood is on the rise.

In **Chapter 10, Dating, Mate Selection, and Living Together**, we added a new section about how dating has changed. There is also a new topic that focuses on recent trends in searching for a partner, including an extensive discussion about the use of the internet in finding a partner. There are also two new sections that discuss ongoing relationships and the challenges of breaking up.

In **Chapter 11, Marriage: Building a Strong Foundation**, the latest marriage statistics are reported. New information about how marriages fare over time is included. Prayer in marriage has become an increasingly important topic and research about this topic is presented.

In **Chapter 12, Parenthood: Joys and Challenges**, we have added updated information about the multiple costs of raising a child. New information about adoption has been included. Given that more and more same-sex couples are becoming parents, new information about gay and lesbian parenting is provided. A new Box presents the challenges faced by a young mother after childbirth.

Chapter 13, Midlife and Older Couples, has been thoroughly revised and updated, including the sections on family life in the middle years; middle age as a crisis or opportunity;

sexuality in the middle years; the empty nest, spacious nest, or cluttered nest; grandparenthood; family life in the later years; long-term marriage; and losing a spouse. Highlights of new material in the book include new insights from around the world on how long adult children should stay in the nest before they leave home; data from a new, nationally representative study of grandparenthood; and an Australian woman who lost her husband to cancer writes about the continuing story of her grief. In the eighth edition of this textbook she described grief from the perspective of a woman whose husband had died just five months to the day before she sat down to write. In this ninth edition of the textbook she continues her story, telling us how her grief has evolved slowly over 4 years as she struggles to create a new life without her best friend.

Part IV: Challenges and Opportunities

In **Chapter 14, Stress, Abuse, and Family Problems**, new thinking has been added on war and how it affects the lives of service members and their families; dating violence and domestic violence statistics have been updated; statistics on the effects of alcohol abuse have been updated; the material on how the family adjusts to the crisis of alcoholism has been enhanced; the section on Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups has been revised extensively, including an update on the size and scope of these international organizations; the material on smoking has been extensively updated; and new statistics are presented on deaths each year caused by legal and illegal drugs in the United States.

Chapter 15, Divorce, Single-Parent Families, and Stepfamilies, has a new Box focusing on fathers' experiences with marital separation and other new sections describing the difficult and bumpy road of adjusting to divorce for all family members. There is also updated information about the increasing percentage of households headed by fathers.

Chapter 16, Strengthening Marriages and Families Worldwide, has new material in the discussion of the research on global perspectives of family, community, and cultural strengths; the section on couple education programs has been updated and strengthened; new data from a nationwide survey of the top 10 stumbling blocks for couples is presented; and many new *Suggested Readings* have been added.

Appendices

Appendix A, Couple and Family Scales, based on research over the past 35 years that continues today, remains helpful to students who want to learn how to describe and assess couples and families from a family systems perspective. Having students use these scales to evaluate their own family or another family is a very useful and insight-producing assignment. See the *Activities* section at the end of Chapter 3 for more details on the assignment.

Appendix B, Family Science and Family Research Methods, has been reviewed and all the references have been updated to include the most recent citations.

Appendix C, Contraception and Abortion Options, was thoroughly revised with new material added in the sections on methods of contraception; abortion laws; abortion procedures; and physical and emotional aspects of abortion. Several new *Suggested Readings* were also added. Appendix C is available online.

Appendix D, Pregnancy and Childbirth, saw complete updates of references, and a major revision of the section on alternative approaches to birth, including the latest new methods used around the country. The section on infant mortality was also extensively revised. Appendix D is available online.

How We Do Our Job

The field of family studies or family science continues to grow dramatically. Thanks to advances in computer technology and search engines scouring massive databases, we have been able to update this text to include the most current statistics and cutting-edge research studies. As noted earlier, nearly 850 new sources are cited in this volume, carefully gleaned from computer-driven searches, searching the top journals in the field of marriage and family, and keeping our eyes open literally every day of our lives for interesting new material for this textbook.

The tools listed below have proven to be especially useful as we do our job:

- *Google Scholar* is a web search engine owned by Google Inc., and is a widely used search engine on scholarly work on the internet. Google receives several hundred million queries each day through its various services. We have found Google Scholar especially useful when trying to track down the source of different ideas, quotations, or data that we have run across.
- *U.S. government web sites* of the federal government provide a wealth of information about families that proves useful for textbook writers. Some of our favorite web sites include Administration on Aging; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; CIA *World Factbook*; Library of Congress; National Center for Health Statistics; National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Bureau of the Census; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center; U.S. Office of Justice; and the Statistical Abstracts of the United States.
- *Professional organizations and other useful web sites* include the Alan Guttmacher Institute; Alliance for Children and Families; American Academy of Pediatricians; American Association for Marital and Family Therapy; American Psychological Association; Child Trends; Compassionate Friends; Mayo Clinic; M.I.S.S. Foundation; National Healthy Marriage Resource Center; National Council on Family Relations; National Marriage Project; Pew Research Center; Planned Parenthood; and WebMD.
- *The media* provide some of our favorite sources, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Associated Press*, *The Economist*, *The Nation*, *AARP Magazine*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New Republic*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Business Week*, *Money Magazine*, *NPR*, and *PBS*.

Finally, but probably most importantly, to update this and every edition of *Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths*, we literally go through every issue of the following 12 professional journals, searching for solid and interesting new research and thinking: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Family Relations*, *Marriage and Family Review*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *National Council on Family Relations Report*, *Journal of Family Communication*, *Child Development*, *Journal of Family Psychology*, *Family Process*, *Families in Society*, and the *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*.

Online Resources

The Ninth Edition of *Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths* is accompanied by a number of supplementary learning and teaching resources available on the Online Learning Center web site at www.mhhe.com/olson9e.

For the Student

AWARE Online. AWARE is a computerized assessment that contains 15 categories that match the chapters in the book. After completing the AWARE Online assessment, the student receives a 19-page *AWARE Personal Report* that identifies relationship areas and issues that are strengths for the student and problematic issues that need to be considered. AWARE helps personalize the course by showing students how their current relationship attitudes compare with those of professionals in the field. It also stimulates students' interest and involvement in the class by highlighting current relationship issues. To learn more about AWARE, go to the Online Learning Center web site at www.mhhe.com/olson9e.

Additional Student Resources. The Online Learning Center web site that accompanies this text offers a variety of resources for the student. Students will find interactive multiple choice and true/false chapter quizzes, and an annotated list of other online resources. Please visit the text OLC site at www.mhhe.com/olson9e.

For the Instructor

The ninth edition of *Marriages and Families* is now available online with Connect, McGraw-Hill Education's integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect also offers SmartBook for the new edition, which is the first adaptive reading experience proven to improve grades and help students study more effectively. All of the title's web site and ancillary content is also available through Connect, including:



Instructor's Manual. For each chapter of the text, the Instructor's Manual provides a chapter outline, learning objectives, a chapter summary, a list of key terms, lecture notes, suggested activities, and suggested readings. The Instructor's Manual also can be downloaded from the Instructor's Online Learning Center.

AWARE Online. AWARE is an acronym for **A**wareness of **A**ttitudes and **R**elationship **E**xpectations. AWARE contains 15 categories that match the chapters in the textbook. After the students have completed the AWARE Online assessment, the instructor can view online and print a 20-page *AWARE Instructor Summary*. The summary provides an overview of the background areas, along with the strengths and issues for the class on 15 categories and the Couple and Family Map. There are several advantages for using AWARE with a class.

- First, the instructor can quickly and efficiently learn about the relevant relationship attitudes of the students in the class.
- Second, by knowing the strengths and growth areas for the class, the instructor can tailor the class to better serve the needs of that class.
- Third, AWARE provides background information about the students that an instructor could not easily ask in a class.
- Fourth, the instructor can provide the class with summary feedback about their relationship attitudes for each chapter in the book.
- Fifth, AWARE personalizes the class for the students and stimulates their interest and involvement in the class.
- Last, AWARE helps engage the students in the class and facilitates greater class interaction. For more information about AWARE, go to www.mhhe.com/olson9e.

Test Bank. The Test Bank offers multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter in the text. The Test Bank can be downloaded as a Word file from the

Homework and Adaptive Learning

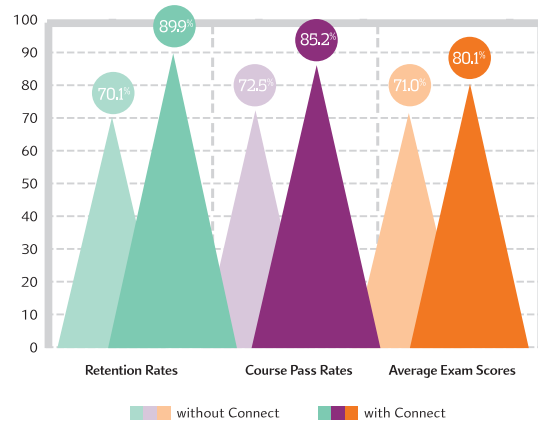
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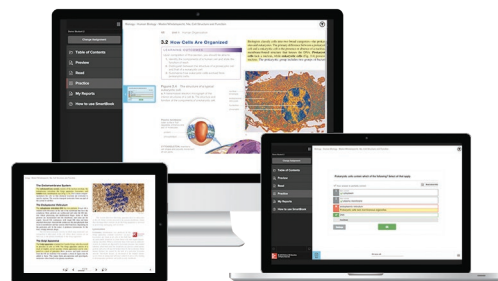
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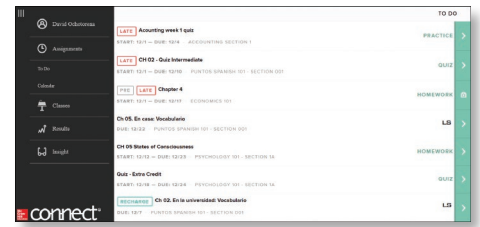
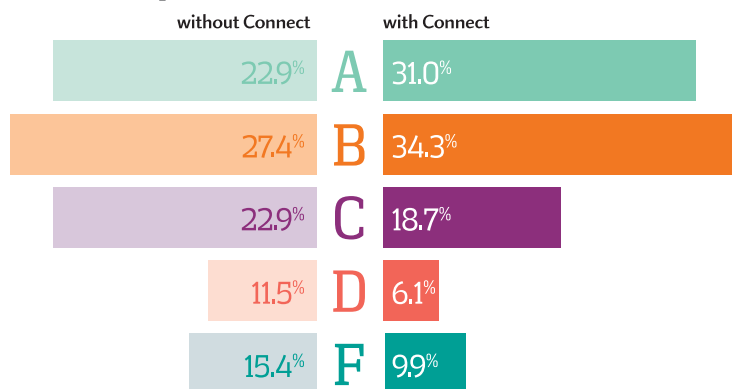
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- If you're looking for some guidance on how to use Connect, or want to learn tips and tricks from super users, you can find tutorials as you work. Our Digital Faculty Consultants and Student Ambassadors offer insight into how to achieve the results you want with Connect.

Online Learning Center web site at www.mhhe.com/olson9e. A Computerized Test Bank is also available on the web site.

PowerPoint® Slides. A collection of tables and figures from the text, augmented by additional graphics, allows instructors to add visual content to their lectures. The PowerPoint® slides are also available on the web site.

Additional Online Resources. The Instructor's side of the OLC offers access to the student chapter quizzes, an annotated list of other online resources and internet exercises. The Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint® slides, and more can be accessed on this web site at www.mhhe.com/olson9e.

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Linda Skogrand

PART ONE

The Social Context of Intimate Relationships

1 *Perspectives on Intimate Relationships*



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Three Themes of Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity

Defining Marriage and Family

Trends in Marriage and the Family: Change and Continuity

Focus on Marital and Family Strengths

Advantages of Marriage

Impact of the Social Environment on Relationships

Changing the Social Environment

Positive Responses to the Social Environment

Summary

Key Terms

Activities

Suggested Readings

Three Themes of Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity

Most people need *intimate relationships* with other people. Intimacy is sharing intellectually, physically, and/or emotionally with another person. In this text we will focus on intimacy in marriage and family relationships and on how they are maintained and how they can become broken.

Intimacy usually occurs when individuals disclose information about themselves, allowing themselves to become vulnerable, and involves trusting that the other person will not use that information to cause harm. Sharing information that involves intimacy usually results in receiving support from the other person.

Intimacy will be discussed throughout this book in terms of dating, romance and courtship, sexual relationships, communication, dealing with conflict, and other aspects of marriage and couple relationships. Intimacy may look different at different times in the life cycle. In addition to having intimacy in couple relationships, intimacy occurs in parent-child relationships, relationships with extended family, and relationships with others who take the place of family. Most intimate relationships go through periods when that closeness is threatened or destroyed. Our goal is to provide you with ideas and exercises to help you improve your ability to develop and maintain intimate relationships throughout life.

Identifying and focusing on *strengths* and building on those strengths are essential for developing and maintaining successful marriage relationships. The focus of this textbook on couple and family strengths provides evidence from the United States and many other countries around the world on how families succeed in the face of life's inherent difficulties (DeFrain & Asay, 2007). By concentrating only on a family's problems and a family's failings, we ignore the fact that it takes a positive approach in life to succeed. The family strengths perspective is a worldview or orientation toward life and families that is positive and optimistic, grounded in research conducted among thousands of couples and families globally. It does not ignore family problems but restores them to their proper place in life: as vehicles for testing our capacities as families and reaffirming our vital human connections with each other. Not all families are strong, of course, but all families have strengths, and these strengths can be a foundation for continued growth. When one only looks for problems in marriages and families, that is all that one will find. By looking for a relationship's strengths, we create a more balanced and realistic picture of the couple and family situation. Finally, looking for what makes families strong helps us discover knowledge that is useful in helping other families. The strong families identified by researchers around the world become the experts for teaching other families how to create a happy and resilient family environment.

Focusing and building on strengths in relationships will be evident throughout this book in relation to couples, marriage relationships, single-parent families, gay and lesbian relationships and families, parenting practices, relationships in diverse cultures, and life in the middle and later years.

Today there is more *diversity* in family and couple relationships than ever before. There are a variety of family structures that are described in this book, including married couples, cohabiting couples, gay and lesbian couples, single-parent families, stepfamilies, and grandparents raising grandchildren. There is also greater cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States than ever before, with minority cultural groups becoming a greater proportion of the total population. These cultural groups bring a wide array of values, beliefs, and practices to our understanding of how marriages and families work. It is increasingly challenging to understand the diversity of couple and family relationships that exist today and will continue to increase in the future.

The three themes of intimacy, strengths, and diversity are critical in understanding couple and family relationships today. These themes and the research and literature surrounding these themes are essential for developing healthy and happy relationships. Knowledge about the latest research in each of these areas will help you develop healthy relationships and better understand and appreciate those around you.

Defining Marriage and Family

Not as many people today live in the so-called traditional family, with a dad at work and a mom at home with the kids—only about 20% of all families in the United States match this model (Tavernise, 2011, May 26). And a survey by the Pew Research Center (2015, January 16) makes it clear that the image of the American family popularized by television programs like “Leave It to Beaver,” which aired from 1957 to 1963, does not reflect family life today. Using data from the American Community Survey and the U.S. Census Bureau, Pew researchers found that 46% of children under age 18 live in households headed by two heterosexual parents in their first marriage. Compare this to 1960, when 73% of children lived in this kind of household, and in 1980 when 61% of children lived with two heterosexual parents in their first marriage. The Pew Research team argued, “Rapid changes in American family structure have altered the image” of families. “While the old ‘ideal’ involved couples marrying young, then starting a family, and staying married till ‘death do they part,’ the family has become more complex and less ‘traditional.’” In addition to the diverse types of family structure, families may vary in cultural or ethnic background, income, size, and longevity. There are many possible family structures rather than one “right” way for a family to be organized.

What Is Marriage?

Marriage is by nature a multifaceted institution. We define **marriage** as *the emotional and legal commitment of two people to share emotional and physical intimacy, various tasks, economic resources, and values.*

The following nine characteristics of marriage were identified by the late Carlfred Broderick (1992, 1993, 2016). A former president of the National Council on Family Relations, Broderick found these characteristics to be common across income levels, educational levels, and ethnic and cultural groups in the United States:

- *Marriage is a demographic event.* Each marriage creates a social unit in society.
- *Marriage is the joining of two families and social networks.* When individuals marry, they marry not only each other but their partner’s family and friends. Their social network may comprise friends of both partners, but only those friends liked by both partners tend to remain friends of the couple.
- *Marriage is a legal contract between the couple and the state.* Each state specifies the rights and responsibilities of the partners.
- *Marriage is an economic union.* A married couple usually becomes a single financial unit for most purposes. As a group, married couples are probably society’s most important financial decision makers—buying, selling, borrowing, and sharing resources as one.
- *Marriage is the most common living arrangement for adults.* Few people choose to live alone. Marriage is also the most popular living arrangement for adults.
- *Marriage is the context of most human sexual activity.* Most married couples rate sexual activity positively, especially in the early years.
- *Marriage is a reproductive unit.* Most married couples become parents and see parenting as an important goal and a valued purpose in their lives.

- *Marriage is a unit that socializes children* (although children can also be raised by single parents, extended families, grandparents, and other caregivers).
- *Marriage is an opportunity to develop an intimate, sharing relationship.* Although many marriages fail, many others provide a supportive context in which people develop and maintain intimacy.

Same-sex marriage. On June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the freedom to marry for same-sex couples nationwide. In a 5-4 decision in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Court wrote:

No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. . . . [These men and women] ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.

The nation's highest court explained that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (Supreme Court of the United States, 2015; Freedom to Marry, 2016).

Gay rights advocates in the United States and around the world hailed the decision as a major victory in the struggle for equal protection under the law, while opponents decried the decision.

There are now 16 countries in the world that allow same-sex couples to marry. These countries are mostly in the Americas and Europe: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United States, and Uruguay. Also, certain subjurisdictions of five other countries (parts of Denmark, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) allow same-sex couples to marry. A similar law in Finland is not yet in force. In addition, as of 2015, South Africa is the only African country where same-sex marriage is recognized, and no country in Asia allows same-sex marriage ceremonies. Israel accepts same-sex marriages performed overseas (Same-Sex Marriage, 2016).

There are 196 countries in the world today. Homosexuality is illegal in 76 countries (Erasing 76 Crimes, 2016, April 21). There are 10 countries where being gay may be punishable by death: Yemen, Iran, Iraq, Mauritania, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates (*Washington Post*, 2014, February 24).

What Is a Family?

Family can be defined in many ways. One dictionary offers the following definitions (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2016):

1. A group of people who are related to each other.
2. A person's children.
3. A group of related people including people who lived in the past.

There are innumerable other definitions of family, and following is a collection that represents a diversity of perspectives:

- A family consists of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).
- The term *family* is an inclusive term for people who “care, support and protect each other” (Australian Government, 2008).
- A family is a group of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who usually live together in the same household. This includes all families such as newlyweds without children, same-sex



Strong families are good for raising healthy and happy children. Extended families are a great source of support in raising children.

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partners, couples with dependent, single mothers or fathers with children, and siblings living together. At least one person in the family has to be 15 years or older. A household may contain more than one family (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

- A family is defined as two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have a commitment to one another over time (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, 2015).
- The family is the most important unit of society and functions to fulfill its members' needs for both survival and well-being. "Families" come in many forms. A well-functioning family enhances its individual members' ability to function both within the family and in the larger community; such a family provides emotional, physical, and economic mutual aid to its members. Ideally, family is characterized by intimacy, intensity, continuity, and commitment among its members throughout the life cycle (Family Service Association, 2012).
- The definition of a family "should not rest on fictitious legal distinctions or genetic history" but instead should be based on the functional and psychological qualities of the relationship: the "exclusivity and longevity" of the relationship; the "level of emotional and financial commitment"; the "reliance placed upon one another for daily family services"; and how the couple (members) "conducted their everyday lives and held themselves out to society" (Braschi v. Stahl Assocs. Co., 1989).
- Definitions of the family vary along a continuum with biological conceptions on one end of the continuum and social conceptions on the other. Having a child through birth would be on the biological end, and adopting a child would be on the social end of the continuum. Both are legitimate definitions of family (Holtzman, 2005, 2011).
- Voluntary family or voluntary kin. People who care for us, support us, and feel like family to us, but are not related by blood or law (Braithwaite, 2008; Braithwaite et al., 2010).
- 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 (Howard, 2002).

How Americans define *family* is clearly evolving. A research team at Indiana University led by sociologist Brian Powell surveyed more than 2,300 people between 2003 and 2010

(Berman, 2010, September 15; Powell, Bolzendahl, Geist, & Carr Steelman, 2010). The researchers found that “people are moving away from a traditional definition of family towards a modern definition of family,” Powell said. “That includes a greater array of living arrangements. They’re including a much broader group of people, broader combination of people as families.”

The Indiana research team identified three clusters of Americans, when it comes to defining family: *exclusionists* who hold onto a more narrow definition of family; *moderates* who are willing to count same-sex couples as family if children are involved; and *inclusionists* who have a very broad definition of family. In 2010, the researchers found that almost everyone—99.8%—agreed that a husband, wife, and kids count as a family. Ninety-two percent said that a husband and wife without the kids made a family. “Children provide this, quote, ‘guarantee’ that move you to family status,” Powell said. “Having children signals something. It signals that there really is a commitment and sense of responsibility in a family.”

The researchers also found that 83% of Americans say unmarried couples with children are a family. Only 39.6% said that an unmarried man and woman living together were a family, but adding kids jumped the number up to 83%. Thirty-three percent said a gay male couple was a family. Sixty-four percent said they became a family when they added children. This number rose from 54% to 64% between 2003 and 2010. “People right now are really reevaluating their views about same-sex couples,” Powell said.

Sixty percent of Americans in 2010 said that if you considered yourself to be a family, then you were one.

We personally believe that any definition of family should be broad enough to encompass a range of family structures, dynamics, and functions. Our definition of family is *two or more people who are committed to each other and who share intimacy, resources, decision-making responsibilities, and values*. This definition is inclusive and allows for diversity in family structure, family values, and ethnic and cultural groups. At a Wimbledon tennis match, sisters Venus and Serena Williams were going to play each other and a sports writer asked, “Will this match hurt your relationship with your family?” The immediate answer was: “Tennis is just a game. Families are forever.”

Trends in Marriage and the Family: Change and Continuity

What are marriage and the family like today? Current trends cited by the Pew Research Center (2016) include:

More breadwinner moms. A record 40% of all households with children under the age of 18 include mothers who are either the sole or primary source of income for the family, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. The share was just 11% in 1960.

Contemporary parenthood has changed dramatically in the past half century. Dads are doing more housework and child care; moms are doing more paid work outside the home. Neither dads nor moms have overtaken the other in their “traditional” realms, but their roles are converging.

The marriage rate has declined and the marriage age has risen. Barely half of U.S. adults are married, continuing a downward trend. In addition, the median age at first marriage for men and women has never been higher.

The American public is sharply divided in its judgments about sweeping changes in the structure of the American family. About a third generally accept the changes over the past half century; a third are tolerant but skeptical; and a third consider the changes bad for society.

More than 4 in 10 American adults have at least one step relative in their family—either a stepparent, a step or half sibling, or a stepchild.

There has been a decline in marriage and a rise of new families over the past half century.

The preeminent family unit of the mid-20th century—mom, dad, and the kids—no longer has the stage to itself. A variety of new arrangements have emerged, giving rise to a broader and evolving definition of what constitutes a family.

The college marriage gap has reversed. In a reversal of a long-standing marital pattern, college-educated young adults are now more likely than young adults lacking a bachelor's degree to have married by the age of 30.

Statistics on divorce, domestic violence, and alcohol and other drug abuse, as well as stories of families in crisis, paint a rather negative picture of marriage and family life today. These snapshots of troubled families may be newsworthy, but the situations they describe are not new. For decades, many respected social scientists have predicted that the institutions of marriage and the family would not survive. For example, in 1927, psychologist John B. Watson predicted, “In 50 years, unless there is some change, the tribal custom of marriage will no longer exist.” He believed marriage would disappear because family standards had broken down. In 1937, Pitirim Sorokin, a respected Harvard sociologist, wrote, “The family as a sacred union of husband and wife, of parents and children, will continue to disintegrate” (Bernard, 1970, p. 42). Ten years later, Carl Zimmerman, also a Harvard sociologist, noted, “There is little left now, within the family itself or the moral code, to hold the family together” (Bernard, 1972).

Although some professionals emphasize the decline of marriage and the family, others see them as being in a state of transition. As Ernest Burgess and his colleagues stated in 1954, “Certainly marriage and the family in the U.S. are in the process of rapid change. But is it change for the worse? Perhaps it may be for the better” (Bernard, 1972). In a similar vein, David and Vera Mace, pioneers in the marriage and family enrichment movement in Great Britain and the United States, argued that “marriage has not failed—it is simply in transition” (Mace & Mace, 1980, p. 260). Skolnick and Skolnick (1977), in their classic study *Family in Transition*, clearly illustrated the dramatic changes in family life over the centuries. In fact, one of the salient characteristics of the family is its ability to adapt to changing times and new challenges.

Today, pessimists and optimists disagree about how to interpret these trends and what to do about them. The pessimists see recent changes as an indication that marriage and family



Strong families enjoy leisure activities together.

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are in serious trouble and are declining in their significance to society. They believe that we need to return to a more traditional value system to curtail these negative trends. The optimists, on the other hand, see recent changes as a reflection of the flexibility of marriage and family and the ability of these institutions to adapt to the increasing stresses of modern life. They believe marriage and the family will survive and thrive.

In fact, marriage and the family have survived over time despite all the predictions of their imminent collapse. Moreover, marriage remains the most popular voluntary institution in our society, with about 85% of the population marrying at least once (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2004).

Trends in Marriage and Cohabitation

There are several important trends in the United States that will be briefly described in this section: a decline in the percentage of those who are married, an increase in the number of those delaying marriage until they are older, an increase in the number of the never married, and an increase in the number of couples who choose to cohabit before—or instead of—marrying.

Marriage. Although marriage remains popular in the United States, it is not as popular as it once was. The percentage of people over the age of 18 who are married has steadily declined. In 1970, 68% of adults were married; in 1980, 66%; in 1990, 62%; and about 60% in 2000 (see Figure 1.1). In 2006, homes headed by married couples dipped to 49.7% (Roberts, 2006). This is the first time that married-couple households dipped below 50%, thus making married couples a minority in the United States. There are two reasons for this change: Many couples are choosing to stay single longer or are choosing to cohabit. There are also increased numbers of elderly people who have lost their spouse, which is adding to the number of single-family households. In addition, there are increasing numbers of same-sex couples who are not typically counted as being married.

More individuals are delaying marriage until their late 20s. Latest statistics indicate that the median age for first marriage is 28.4 years for men and 26.5 years for women, the oldest in U.S. history. Age at marriage has been on the increase for more than four decades. In 1960, the median age for a first marriage was 22.8 years for men and 20.3 years for women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a).

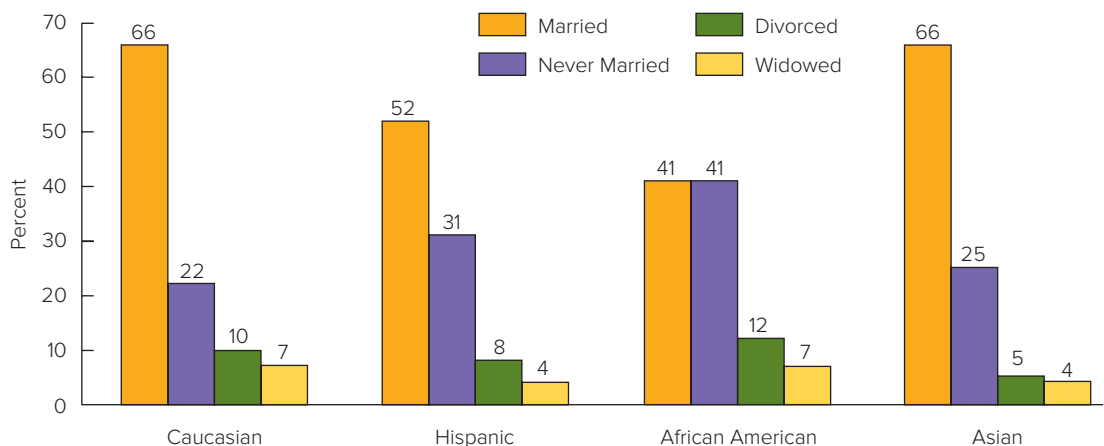


FIGURE 1.1
Marital Status of U.S. Population

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2004/2005. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004/2005.

Cohabitation. Unmarried cohabitation, defined as the status of couples who are sexual partners, not married to each other, and sharing a household, is particularly common among young people. The rise of cohabitation has dramatically reshaped family life in the United States. Nearly nonexistent in 1960, the number of cohabiting couples increased 17-fold and reached 7.5 million by 2010. More than two-thirds of American adults cohabit before they marry, and about 40% of children live in a cohabiting family during childhood. Most young Americans are spending some time living together outside of marriage, and cohabitation commonly precedes marriage. An estimated 60% to 75% of first marriages are preceded by cohabitation, and up to 80% to 85% of remarriages (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008; Kennedy & Fitch, 2012; Kreider, 2010).

Trends in Divorce and Remarriage

Although marriage is still popular, it is not necessarily lasting, with new estimates indicating that the lifetime probability of divorce or separation now falls between 40% and 50% (American Psychological Association, 2016; National Marriage Project, 2012, p. 67). However, the majority of those getting divorced will remarry.

Divorce. The majority of people who divorce eventually remarry. However, the increases in divorce rates in the United States and decline in remarriage rates have led to a steep increase in the percentage of adults in this country who are currently divorced. This percentage was



Cohabitation was once rare, but today a majority of young men and women of marriageable age live together without being married for some time, and about 40% of all children before reaching age 16 will spend some time in a cohabiting family.

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