May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears.

—Nelson Mandela
CHOICES IN RELATIONSHIPS

Learning Objectives

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

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

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

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

Making the right choices in your relationships, including marriage and family, is critical to your health, happiness, and sense of well-being. Your times of greatest elation and sadness will be in reference to your love relationships.

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

Facts About Choices in Relationships

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

Not to Decide Is to Decide

Not making a decision is a decision by default. If you are sexually active and decide not to use a condom, you have made a decision to increase your risk for an unwanted pregnancy and possibly contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI). If you don’t make a deliberate choice to end a relationship that is unfulfilling or going nowhere, you have made a choice to continue that relationship and eliminate the possibility of getting into a more positive and flourishing relationship. If you don’t make a decision to be faithful to your partner, you have made a decision to be vulnerable to cheating. See the Personal Choices section for more examples of taking charge of your life by making deliberate choices.
CHAPTER 1  CHOICES IN RELATIONSHIPS

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

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

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

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

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

Relationship Choices—Deliberately or by Default?

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

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

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

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

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

Most Choices Are Revocable; Some Are Not

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

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

Choices of Generation Y

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

Choices About the Use of Technology

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

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**TABLE 1.1**

Five Generations in Recent History

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

**Millennials:** persons born between 1980 and 1996.
a new relationship make the choice whether to continue texting their previous partner, spouses make the choice to send a text message thanking each other for a previous behavior or lash out at a perceived miscue, and parents decide how much screen time for their children. Heterosexual spouses view interactive technology, such as cell phones, the Internet, and social networking sites, as both facilitating distraction as well as providing a mechanism for connection (Vaterlaus & Tulane, 2019). Individuals on the job market also make choices to “clean up their social media” from embarrassing photos. Individuals must also deal with issues of cell phone or game addiction or both, stalking, and ghosting.

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

**Choices Are Influenced by the Stage in the Family Life Cycle**

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

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

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

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

**Globalization**

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

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

**Social Structure**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Culture

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

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

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

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

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

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

Collectivism: pattern in which one regards group values and goals as more important than one’s own values and goals.
at play when a partner ends the relationship because his or her partner goes against the families’ wishes.

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

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

Family of Origin (FOO)
Your family of origin is a major influence on your relationship choices. Coming from a family whose parents are married and who love each other predicts not only the positive meanings you attach to marriage (Barr & Simons, 2018) but the happiness for your own relationships with both your spouse and children. Experiences in one’s family of orientation have also been instrumental in influencing adolescents to make wise choices and stay out of trouble (Animosa et al., 2018). For example, adolescents whose parents divorce have a temporary increase in delinquent behavior (Boccio & Beaver, 2019).

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

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

Religion has an enormous influence on relationship choices.

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

The cascade of hormones that rains down on humans when they first fall in love can sometimes blind them to their poor choices.

Belinda Luscombe, journalist/novelist

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The Impact of Religion on Love, Relationships, and Sex

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR VIEWING MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Although we emphasize choices in relationships as the framework for viewing marriage and the family, other conceptual theoretical frameworks are helpful in
understanding the context of relationship decisions. All theoretical frameworks are the same in that they provide a set of interrelated principles designed to explain a particular phenomenon and provide a point of view. In essence, theories are explanations.

Social Exchange Framework

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

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

Family Life Course Development Framework

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

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

Structure-Function Framework

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

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

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

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

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

Theoretical frameworks: a set of interrelated principles designed to explain a particular phenomenon.
Social exchange framework: views interaction and choices in terms of profit and loss.
Utilitarianism: individuals rationally weigh the rewards and costs associated with behavioral choices.
Family life course development: the stages and process of how families change over time.
Family life cycle: stages that identify the various developmental tasks family members face across time.

Structure-function framework: emphasizes how marriage and family contribute to society.
and socialize offspring ensure that this socialization will occur.

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

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

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

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

- **Physical care**—Families provide the primary care for the adults, their infants, children, and aging parents.

- **Regulation of sexual behavior**—Spouses in many societies are expected to confine their sexual behavior to each other, which reduces the risk of having children who do not have socially and legally bonded parents.

- **Status placement**—Being born into a family provides social placement of the individual in society. One’s family of origin largely determines one’s social class, religious affiliation, and future occupation. The Kennedy family provides an example of multiple children being born into high status families, many of whom became politicians.

- **Social control**—Spouses in high-quality, durable marriages provide social control for each other that results in less criminal behavior. Parole boards often note that the best guarantee against recidivism is a nonconvicted spouse who expects the partner to get a job and avoid criminal behavior and who reinforces these behaviors (Andersen et al., 2015).

### Conflict Framework

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

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

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

### Symbolic Interaction Framework

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

---

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

*Symbolic interaction framework*: views marriages and families as symbolic worlds in which the various members give meaning to each other’s behavior.
interpersonal interaction and involves the concepts of the definition of the situation, the looking-glass self, the self-fulfilling prophecy, and taking the role of the other.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Couple and Family Technology Framework**

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

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

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

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

(Continued)
MARRIAGE

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

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

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

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

Elements of Marriage

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

Legal Contract

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

In some states (e.g., Alabama) individuals can marry at age 14 with parental or judicial consent. In California, individuals can marry at any age with parental consent. The marriage license certifies that a legally empowered representative of the state performs the ceremony, often with two witnesses present. The marriage contract gives power to the state
over the couple—should they decide to divorce, the state can dictate the terms—who gets custody of the children, division of property, and child support. One of the reasons some individuals cite for not marrying is to “keep the government out of my business.”

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

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

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

Emotional Relationship

Ninety-three percent of married adults in the United States point to love as their top reason for getting married. Other reasons include making a lifelong commitment (87%), having companionship (81%), and having children (59%) (Cohn, 2013). American emphasis on love as a reason to marry is not shared throughout the world. Individuals in other cultures, such as India, do not require feelings of love to marry—love is expected to follow, not precede marriage. In these countries, parental approval and similarity of religion, culture, education, and family background are considered more important criteria for marriage than love. While love is an important motivation for marriage, it is companionship in the United States which promotes a couple in courtship to remain committed and move toward marriage (Ogolsky et al., 2016).

Sexual Monogamy

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

Legal Responsibility for Children

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

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

Public Announcement

The legal binding of a couple in a public ceremony is often preceded by an engagement announcement. Following the ceremony there is a wedding
announced in the newspaper. Public knowledge of the event helps to solidify the commitment of the partners to each other and helps to marshal social and economic support to launch the couple into married life.

**Types of Marriage**

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

**Polygyny in the United States**

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

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

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

**Polyandry**

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

**Pantagamy**

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

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

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

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

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

**Pantagamy**: a group marriage in which each member of the group is “married” to the others.
expression of this value is the existence of family policies—not to be confused with social policies—in the form of laws, policies, and services designed to support the family (Cherlin, 2019).

Benefits of Marriage

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

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

| TABLE 1.3 |
| Benefits of Marriage and the Liabilities of Singlehood |

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

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

Ghost marriage: A marriage between two deceased parties or one deceased party with a living person. The Chinese ghost marriage is a folk tradition which does not involve a legal bond between the parties.
control with spouses—for example, ensuring partners moderate their alcohol or drug consumption or both, and don’t ride motorcycles. The marriage benefit also involves spouses providing social, emotional, and psychosocial support as an in-resident counsellor and loving and caring partner (Rauer, 2013; Tumin & Zheng, 2018).

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

**Marriage—Then and Now**

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

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**Couple Preparation and Relationship Education**

Whether couple preparation is known as marriage preparation, premarital counselling, or marriage education, the federal government has a vested interest in couple relationship or couple education programs. The estimated societal costs of divorce and family instability on communities, states, and the nation are a minimum of $53 billion; the economic cost for the couple getting divorced is between $15,000 and $20,000 (Clyde & Hawkins, 2019). The philosophy behind marriage preparation education is that building a fence at the top of a cliff is preferable to putting an ambulance at the bottom. To the degree that people select a mate wisely and have the skills to manage conflict, communicate, and stay married, there is greater economic stability for the family and less drain on social services in the United States for single-parent mothers and the needs of their children.

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

Kanter and Schramm (2018) emphasized the efficacy of “brief interventions” for marriage education and found 12 such programs amid large databases. These interventions included issues such as self-esteem, distress related to conflict, and gratitude that promoted healthy relationship functioning. The researchers concluded that such brief interventions can be helpful for promoting healthy relationships. McGinnis and Burr (2013) also found a correlation between couple relationship education and relationship satisfaction.

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

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

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

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

**CULTURE AND DIVERSITY**

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

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

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

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

**Friends**

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

**Pets**

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

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**Definitions**

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

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

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

**Domestic partnerships:** relationships in which cohabitating individuals are given some kind of official recognition by a city or corporation so as to receive partner benefits.
upkeep and medical care is identified and custody is given on the best interests of the pet.

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

**CULTURE AND DIVERSITY**

The age at which a citizen is allowed to marry varies by country. Most countries identify 18—China is the exception with marriage allowed at 21—as the minimum age to marry though some permit marriage earlier—13 in Columbia—with parental consent. Being able to “rent” a family member is available in Japan. Japan’s rent-a-family industry involves one’s ability to rent a wife, husband, child, sibling, you name it. Indeed, a Japanese woman who wants a traditional wedding but who has no man in her life can rent a stand-in groom, bridesmaids, ushers, and so forth. She need only show up with her parents to have the event of her lifetime—the cost is $47,000. Grieving widows and widowers can also rent a spouse, parents who are estranged from their children can rent engaged children, and the elderly can rent grandchildren. One such company is called Family Romance, founded by Yuichi Ishii who has 1200 freelance actors from which to choose. Ishii has played the husband to 100 women. These are social, not sexual, relationships (Batuman, 2018).

**Types of Families**

There are various types of families.

**Family of Origin**

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

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

**Family of Procreation**

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

**Nuclear Family**

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

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

**Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern Family**

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

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

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

**Traditional family**: the two-parent nuclear family, with the husband as breadwinner and the wife as homemaker.
When Families Are Destroyed by the Government

In Australia, between 1885 and 1969, between 50,000 and 100,000 “half-caste”—people with one White parent—Aboriginal children were taken by force from their parents by the Australian police. The White society wanted to convert these children to Christianity and to destroy their Aboriginal culture, which was viewed as primitive and without value. The children were forced to walk or were put on a camel or a train and taken hundreds of miles away from their parents to church missions. Australian government destruction of Aboriginal families is the theme of *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, a movie available on DVD.

One of the children, Bob Randall, taken from his parents at age 7 wrote of his experience:

> Instead of the wide open spaces of my desert home, we were housed in corrugated iron dormitories with rows and rows of bunk beds. After dinner we were bathed by the older women, put in clothing they called pajamas, and then tucked into one of the iron beds between the sheets. This was a horrible experience for me. I couldn’t stand the feel of the cloth touching my skin (Randall 2008, p. 35).

The Australian government subsequently apologized for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that inflicted profound grief, suffering, and loss on the Aborigines. However, Randall noted that the Aborigines continue to be marginalized and that nothing has been done to compensate them for the horror of taking children from their families.

America is also guilty of separating children from their parents. In 2018-2019, 2,800 children, including toddlers, were separated from their illegal immigrant parents who were incarcerated awaiting trial, which could take three months. Records were often not kept regarding which child belonged to which parents, so that reconnection of the children with their parents was difficult (Jervis & Gomez, 2019). A historical look at such a practice in America reveals that not only were children separated from their parents during slavery—fathers were sold off to different plantation owners—but Native American children as young as five were taken from their families in order to “civilize” them in White boarding schools or non-Indian families—a practice that lasted more than 100 years and formally ended only with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.

with the husband as breadwinner and the wife as homemaker. The *modern family* is the dual-earner family, in which both spouses work outside the home. **Postmodern families** include same-sex couples and their children as well as mothers who are single by choice. Polyamorous families are also an example of this category.

**Binuclear Family**

A *binuclear family* is a family in which the members live in two separate households. This family type is created when the parents of the children divorce and live separately, setting up two separate units, with the children remaining a part of each unit. Each of these units may also change again when the parents remarry and bring additional children into the respective units called a **blended family**. Hence, the children may go from a nuclear family with both parents, to a binuclear unit with parents living in separate homes, to a blended family when parents remarry and bring additional children into the respective units.

**Extended Family**

The **extended family** includes not only the nuclear family or parts of it but other relatives as well. These relatives include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. An example of an extended family living together would be a husband and wife, their children, and the husband’s parents, the children’s grandparents. The extended family is particularly important for African-American, Asian-American, and Latino-American families. Extended families, such as aunts (“tias”) and uncles (“tios”), frequently play an active role in the parenting (Ansion & Merali, 2018). We earlier made reference to fictive kin, which may also become part of one’s extended family.

**FAMILY POLICY**

- **Modern family**: the dual-earner family, in which both spouses work outside the home.
- **Postmodern family**: lesbian or gay male couples or parents and mothers who are single by choice, which emphasizes that a healthy family need not be the traditional heterosexual, two-parent family.
- **Binuclear family**: a family in which the members live in two households.
- **Blended family**: a family created when two individuals marry and at least one of them brings a child or children from a previous relationship or marriage. Also referred to as a stepfamily.
- **Extended family**: the nuclear family or parts of it plus other relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.
CHAPTER 1  CHOICES IN RELATIONSHIPS

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage can be thought of as a social relationship that sometimes leads to the establishment of a family. Indeed, every society or culture has mechanisms for guiding their youth into permanent emotional, legal, or social relationships that are designed to have and rear offspring. Although the concepts of marriage and the family are sometimes used synonymously, they are distinct. The late sociologist Lee Axelson noted some of the differences in marriage and the family (Table 1.4).

Changes in Marriage and the Family in the Last 70 Years

Various researchers have noted the enormous changes that have occurred in marriage and the family. A basic change has been in the reasons for marriage. The most basic purpose for marriage in history has been to acquire the advantages of having in-laws and to expand the family labor source (Coontz, 2016). Marriage today is about emotional intimacy and companionship and a context for self-discovery, self-esteem, and personal growth (Finkel, 2019). Other changes since the 1950s are identified in Table 1.5.

TABLE 1.4
Differences Between Marriage and the Family in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARRIAGE</th>
<th>FAMILY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usually initiated by a formal ceremony</td>
<td>Formal ceremony not essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves two people</td>
<td>Usually involves more than two people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages of the individuals tend to be similar</td>
<td>Individuals represent more than one generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals usually choose each other</td>
<td>Members are born or adopted into the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends when spouse dies or is divorced</td>
<td>Continues beyond the life of the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex between spouses is expected and approved</td>
<td>Sex between near kin is neither expected nor approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires a license</td>
<td>No license needed to become a parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procreation expected</td>
<td>Consequence of procreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses are focused on each other</td>
<td>Focus changes with addition of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses can voluntarily withdraw from marriage</td>
<td>Parents cannot divorce themselves from obligations via divorce to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money in unit is spent on the couple</td>
<td>Money is used for the needs of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation revolves around adults</td>
<td>Recreation revolves around children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1.5
Changes in Marriages and Families—1950 and 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1950</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Relationship Values</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family Relationship Values</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong values for marriage and the family. Individuals who wanted to remain single or child-free were considered deviant, even pathological. Husband and wife should not be separated by jobs or careers.</td>
<td>Individuals who remain single or child-free experience social understanding and sometimes encouragement. Single and child-free people are no longer considered deviant or pathological but are seen as self-actuating individuals with strong job or career commitments. Husbands and wives can be separated for reasons of job or career and live in a commuter marriage. Married women in large numbers have left the role of full-time mother and housewife to join the labor market.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Robots Are Here

Oxford dictionary defines technology as an ‘application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry.’ There are also different types of technology including information communication, biomedical engineering, robotics, artificial intelligence, entertainment media, and space and energy. In the family and technology sections of this text, the term technology is used to include any practical use, translation or application of scientific knowledge which can include design, products, or services. We begin with robots.

The term robot is defined as a machine with human-like features which is able to sense, think, and act. Robots can be categorized according to their mobility such as tabletop robots, mobile robots, and service robots. Table 1.5 on the next page presents a comparison of different types of robots and their applications.

Table 1.5: Comparison of Different Types of Robots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tabletop Robots</td>
<td>These robots operate on a fixed surface.</td>
<td>iRobot Sphero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Robots</td>
<td>These robots can move around independently.</td>
<td>Nintendo WiiBot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Robots</td>
<td>These robots perform specific tasks, such as cleaning or food delivery.</td>
<td>iRobot Braava mopping robot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1.5 (Continued)
As stationary, wheeled, and so forth; they can also be divided into categories based on their application such as industrial, domestic and household, rehabilitation, and entertainment. Misselhorn (2018) notes that robots are “flying airplanes or drones; they are trading high-frequency stocks; and they are controlling our working and living environment” (p. 161).

The term ‘personal robots’ is used to describe robots that serve as personal assistants to the user, and may serve multiple functions or reside with the user and families. Personal robots, which have been developed to perform domestic tasks such as vacuuming and laundry folding, have received increasing attention. The United States and other countries, such as Japan, Italy, and France, have launched projects to explore the use of robots as personal assistants for elderly people and people with disabilities (Marx, 2018; Guttler et al., 2015). Robots have also been used in rehabilitation (Mekki et al., 2018; Chemuturi et al., 2013) and to protect property. Regarding the latter, Knightscope is a five-foot high, 400-pound security bot hired to patrol the grounds of an animal shelter in the Mission District of San Francisco (Marx, 2018).

The development of robots to function in home settings is a unique challenge. In addition to functionality, the appearance of personal robots must be acceptable to users. The extent to which robots have become lifelike is uncanny. Hanson Robotics (“Why human-like robots”) has created strikingly realistic humanlike robots including those with a full range of human facial expressions, such as anger, surprise, and so forth. The charming Sophia (“Being Sophia”), Hanson Robotics’ latest robot, has appeared in many shows and interviews around the world and become a media celebrity.

Will robots be considered as “family”? The U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as “a group of two or more people who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together: all such people are considered members of one family.” Using this definition, only humans will be considered as family members. However, what if future personal robots not only perform domestic tasks and share the same dwelling, but also socialize our children, take care of our aging parents, and serve as an important source of intimate relations? Is it possible to have a deep, meaningful, and reciprocal relationship between humans and robots? Although some individuals view advancements in technology, including the use of robots, as important to an improved quality of life, others are apprehensive about such a future. The fear of being replaced by robots is real. It has been predicted that by 2030, between 30% and 47% of our jobs will be replaced by robots (Marx, 2018).

Artificial Intelligence expert Noel Sharkey reported that teenagers risk losing their virginity to sophisticated humanoid robots (Roxby or Rocky, True Companion) and that the new companion for children may be robots with whom they may bond. Companies in South Korea and Japan are manufacturing and marketing “child care” robots that will likely enter mainstream use within a few years. In addition, “companion” humanoid units like Pepper or Paro are being used to provide companionship to elderly people in Asian countries such as Japan (Marx, 2018). What choices will individuals, couples, and families make about the use of this technology in their own lives? If a robot can provide companionship to an elderly parent in another city, will the offspring still choose to visit? Will parents get a dog for their children or will this choice be replaced with a robotic dog such as CHiPi?

To what degree are robots accepted by undergraduates? Forty-four percent of 345 undergraduates reported that they could view robots in the home as family members who performed chores (Chang, Huff, & Knox, 2019). According to a survey of 1,000 adults, 77% of Americans think it will be normal to have a robot in their home within 20 years (Smith & Loehrke, 2017). Over two thirds, about 68%, of 2,001 millennial respondents in a Prudential Financial survey reported that they fully expect the next generation to establish emotional relationships with the robots that serve them (Smith & Loehrke, 2018).

Dr. David Levy, an expert on artificial intelligence and the author of Love and Sex with Robots, has predicted a new type of family in the future. According to Levy, this new nuclear family will consist of human parents, robot parents, and human-robot children (Levy, 2017).

The use, function, service, and capability of robots will continue to expand. Roboethics, which investigate implications and consequences of robotic technology will become increasingly important. The morality and ethics of artificial intelligence has already surfaced (Misselhorn, 2018). For example, should the vacuuming robot Roomba kill a ladybug or go around it? How much monitoring of an elderly person should occur that is reported to concerned adult children? The morality, ethics, and choices regarding robots in the family elicit new questions which future research may address.

**“Pepper” is being used for companionship of the elderly in some countries such as Japan.**

BSIP/Universal Images Group/Getty
Hughes et al. (2018) emphasized the absence of research methods content in marriage and family textbooks. A content analysis of the major leading texts revealed that only 1% of the content included the science of research. “Aren’t we social scientists?” asked Robert Hughes. Why don’t we talk about our science?!

Research is valuable since it helps to provide evidence for or against a hypothesis. For example, it is assumed that hookups do not become monogamous love relationships. But almost a fourth of couples, about 23%, in one study who reported having hooked up also noted that they transitioned into a long-term romantic relationship with their hookup partner (Erichsen & Dignam, 2016). Researchers follow a standard sequence when conducting a research project and there are certain caveats to be aware of when reading any research finding.

Steps in the Research Process

Several steps are used in conducting research.

1. **Identify the topic or focus of research.** Select a subject about which you are passionate. For example, are you interested in studying social media and relationships, which has become a new focus for family researchers (Dworkin et al., 2018)? Give your project a title in the form of a question—“Do People Who Use Social Media Have Happier Relationships Than Those Who Do Not?”

2. **Review the literature.** Go online to the various databases of your college or university and read research that has already been published on social media use. Not only will this prevent you from “reinventing the wheel”—you might find that a research study has already been conducted on exactly what you want to study—but it will also give you ideas for study.

3. **Develop hypotheses.** A hypothesis is a suggested explanation for a phenomenon. For example, you might hypothesize that high social media use is associated with lower relationship satisfaction because the individuals look to external secondary group contexts for interaction and affirmation of closer informal primary group contexts.

4. **Decide on type of study and method of data collection.** The type of study may be **cross-sectional**, which means studying the whole population at one time—in this case, finding out from persons about their current use of social media—or **longitudinal**, which means studying the same group of individuals across time—in this case, collecting data for each of four years of college. The method of data collection varies: It could involve using archives with secondary sources such as journals, surveys, interviews with one or both partners, or a case study that focuses on one couple. A basic difference in research methodology is quantitative, which relies on surveys or archival material for data collection, or qualitative where interviews and case studies are conducted.

5. **Get IRB approval.** To ensure the protection of people who agree to be interviewed or who complete questionnaires, researchers must obtain IRB approval by submitting a summary of their proposed research to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of their institution. The IRB reviews the research plan to ensure that the project is consistent with research ethics and poses no undue harm to participants. When collecting data from individuals, it is important that they are told that their participation is completely voluntary, that the study maintains

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**Hypothesis:** a suggested explanation for a phenomenon.

**Cross-sectional:** analysis of data representing one point in time. For example, infidelity the first year of marriage in contrast to longitudinal data which would look at infidelity throughout the marriage.

**Longitudinal:** analysis of data on a phenomenon over time. For example, infidelity over the years of a marriage in contrast to cross-sectional data which would look at infidelity at one point in time.

Researchers present their new research at professional conferences like the National Council on Family Relations which is included in textbooks.
their anonymity, and that the results are confidential. Respondents under age 18 need the consent of their parents. Rinehart et al. (2017) confirmed that collecting research from undergraduates on “sensitive topics” such as rape does not increase participant distress unduly. Indeed, subjects may benefit from their participation in research. Bay-Chen (2017) found increased sexual self-esteem from participants who reviewed their sexual history.

6. Collect and analyze data. Various statistical packages are available to analyze data to discover if your hypotheses are true or false.

7. Write up and publish results. Writing up and submitting your findings for publication are important so that your study becomes part of the academic literature.

**Caveats to Consider in Evaluating Research Quality**

“New Research Study” is a frequent headline in popular magazines which promises accurate information about “hooking up,” “what women want,” “what men want,” or other relationship, marriage, and family issues. As you read such articles, as well as the research in texts such as these, be alert to their potential flaws. Many of the various issues to keep in mind when evaluating research are identified in Table 1.6.

**FUTURE OF MARRIAGE**

While marriage will remain the lifestyle choice for 85% of adults in the United States, the delay for some in getting married, postponing it until their late 20s or early 30s, will continue. Hooking up, friends with benefits, and cohabitation will be experiences for many, but the goal of marriage to one person with children will be the destination context for today’s youth. The 15% who elect never to marry will become not only a growing but less stigmatized segment of our population.

Pearce et al. (2018) emphasized the increasing diversity and complexity of family structures—those who are single parents, divorced, cohabiting, same-sex couples/parents, living with parents/grandparents, widowed, and those who have never been married. Increasingly, while individuals will have different family experiences as a result of growing up in varied contexts, the emotional function of connectedness and support will remain a unique benefit of family life.

Although the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, social acceptance will increase slowly. Indeed, even acceptance in one’s own family will be slow (Kennedy et al., 2018).

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**TABLE 1.6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEAKNESS</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCES</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample not random</td>
<td>Cannot generalize findings</td>
<td>Opinions of college students do not reflect opinions of other adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No control group</td>
<td>Inaccurate conclusions</td>
<td>Study on the effect of divorce on children needs control group of children whose parents are still together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age differences between groups of respondents</td>
<td>Inaccurate conclusions</td>
<td>Effect may be due to passage of time or to cohort differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear terminology</td>
<td>Inability to measure what is not clearly defined</td>
<td>What is definition of cohabitation, marital happiness, sexual fulfillment, good communication, quality time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher bias</td>
<td>Slanted conclusions</td>
<td>A researcher studying the value of a product should not be funded by the organization being studied. (Ornstein &amp; Thomas, 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time lag</td>
<td>Outdated conclusions</td>
<td>Often-quoted Kinsey sex research is over 70 years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distortion</td>
<td>Invalid conclusions</td>
<td>Research subjects exaggerate, omit information, recall facts or events inaccurately, or do all of these actions. Respondents may remember what they wish had happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception</td>
<td>Public mislead</td>
<td>Researchers change research data to continue receiving economic support of sponsors (Google scientific misconduct).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mischievous responders</td>
<td>Invalid data</td>
<td>Respondents mislead researcher by providing extreme or untruthful responses to be “funny” (Cimpian et al., 2018).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The visibility of immigrant families in the United States will increase. Political policies such as separating children from parents according to administration rulings will be challenged in court, and immigrant families, now 13.5% of the U.S. population, will increase (Radford & Budiman, 2018).

Finally, technology and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) will continue to become a part of family living. However, while experts note that AI will improve the lives of most people, there are concerns about how advances in AI will affect what it means to be human, to be productive, and to exercise free will (Anderson & Rainie, 2018).

**SUMMARY**

What is the view or theme of this text?

A central theme of this text is to encourage you to be proactive—to make conscious, deliberate relationship choices to enhance your own well-being and the well-being of those in your intimate groups. Some of the important choices are whether to marry, whom to marry, when to marry, whether to have children, whether to remain emotionally and sexually faithful to one's partner, and whether to use a condom. Important issues to keep in mind about a choices framework for viewing marriage and the family are that (1) not to decide is to decide, (2) some choices require correcting, (3) all choices involve trade-offs, (4) choices include selecting a positive or negative view, (5) making choices produces ambivalence, and (6) some choices are not revocable. Most emerging adults are in no hurry to find "the one," to marry, and to begin a family.

What are the theoretical frameworks for viewing marriage and the family?

Nine theoretical frameworks were discussed. The most commonly used are the family systems framework, the human ecology framework, the symbolic interaction framework, and the social exchange framework. The newest framework is the couple and family technology framework.

What is marriage?

Marriage is a system of binding adults together to have, care for, and socialize offspring if they choose to. The federal government regards marriage as a legal contract between a couple and the state in which they reside that regulates their economic and sexual relationship. Other elements of marriage involve emotion, fidelity, and a formal ceremony. Types of marriage include monogamy and polygamy. Various forms of polygamy are polygyny, polyandry, and pantagamy.

What is family?

The U.S. Census Bureau defines family as a group of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. In recognition of the diversity of families, the definition of family is increasingly becoming two adult partners whose interdependent relationship is long-term and characterized by an emotional and financial commitment. The family of origin is the family into which you were born or the family in which you were reared. The family of procreation represents the family that you will begin should you marry and have children. Central concepts of the family are traditional, modern, and postmodern. Types of family include nuclear, binuclear, extended, and blended.

What are the steps in the research process and what caveats should be kept in mind?

Steps in the research process include identifying a topic, reviewing the literature, deciding on methods and data collection procedures, ensuring protection of subjects via getting IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval, analyzing the data, and submitting the results to a journal for publication.

Caveats that are factors to be used in evaluating research include a random sample where the respondents providing the data reflect those who were not in the sample; a control group where the group is not subjected to the experimental design for a basis of comparison; objectively defined terminology being used to study the phenomenon; researcher bias which is present in all studies; time lag which takes two years from study to print; and distortion or deception of data, which, although rare, some researchers do. Few studies avoid all research problems.

What is the future of marriage?

Marriage will continue to be the lifestyle of choice for the majority, about 85%–90%, of U.S. adults. Individuals will increasingly delay getting married until their late twenties to early thirties in order to complete their educations, launch their careers, or become economically independent or all of those. And there will be an increase in those who never marry.
CHAPTER 1  CHOICES IN RELATIONSHIPS

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WEB LINKS

Institute for Family Studies
https://ifstudies.org/

National Council on Family Relations
http://www.ncfr.org/

U.S. Census Bureau
http://www.census.gov/

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