

# PART ONE

## The Social Context of Intimate Relationships

# 1 *Perspectives on Intimate Relationships*



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## Three Themes of Intimacy, Strengths, and Diversity

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

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

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

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

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

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

how marriages and families work. It is increasingly challenging to understand the diversity of couple and family relationships that exist today and will continue to increase in the future.

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

## Defining Marriage and Family

Not as many people today live in the so-called traditional family, with a dad at work and a mom at home with the kids—only about 20% of all families in the United States match this model (Tavernise, 2011, May 26). In addition to the diverse types of family structure, families may vary in cultural or ethnic background, income, size, and longevity. There are many possible family structures rather than one “right” way for a family to be organized.

### What Is Marriage?

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

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

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

**Same-sex marriage.** Eleven countries now have the freedom to marry for same-sex couples nationwide. In 2001 the Netherlands became the first country to end the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage, when their Parliament voted 107–33 to eliminate discrimination in Dutch marriage laws. Other countries around the world followed the Dutch decision: Belgium, Spain, Canada, South Africa, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Iceland, Argentina, and Denmark. Three other countries have regional or court-directed provisions enabling same-sex couples to share in the freedom to marry. These countries are Mexico, United States, and Brazil. Many other countries provide some broad protections for such couples, but stop short of marriage: Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greenland, Hungary, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay. Countries with limited protections for same-sex couples, offering some spousal rights to same-sex couples but far from full marriage equality are: Andorra, Austria, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Switzerland. And some countries that only recognize marriages between same-sex couples performed in other countries are: Israel, Mexico, and Uruguay (Freedom to Marry, 2012a).

The U.S. as a nation still denies marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples. However, six states now have the freedom to marry for same-sex couples: Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont, plus Washington, D.C. In 2012 the legislatures in Maryland, New Jersey, and Washington also passed freedom to marry bills that are still being contested. Maryland, New Mexico, and Rhode Island explicitly respect out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples, while nine states now offer broad protections short of marriage: Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, and Rhode Island allow civil unions, while California, Oregon, Nevada, and Washington offer broad domestic partnership. Four other states have limited domestic partnership (Colorado, Maine, Maryland, and Wisconsin) (Freedom to Marry, 2012b).

## What Is a Family?

**Family** can be defined in many ways. One dictionary offers the following definitions (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2012):

1. A fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.
2. The children of one of these groups.
3. A group of persons related by descent or marriage.
4. People in the same line of descent; lineage.

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

- A family consists of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011, Sept. 13).
- The term *family* is an inclusive term for people who “care, support and protect each other” (Australian Government, 2008).
- A family is defined as two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have a commitment to one another over time (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, 2004).
- The family is the most important unit of society and functions to fulfill its members’ needs for both survival and well-being. “Families” come in many forms.

A well-functioning family enhances its individual members’ ability to function





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

both within the family and in the larger community; such a family provides emotional, physical, and economic mutual aid to its members. Ideally, family is characterized by intimacy, intensity, continuity, and commitment among its members throughout the life cycle (Family Service Association, 2012).

- The definition of a family “should not rest on fictitious legal distinctions or genetic history” but instead should be based on the functional and psychological qualities of the relationship: the “exclusivity and longevity” of the relationship; the “level of emotional and financial commitment”; the “reliance placed upon one another for daily family services”; and how the couple (members) “conducted their everyday lives and held themselves out to society” (New York State Administrative Regulations, 1995).
- Definitions of the family vary along a continuum with biological conceptions on one end of the continuum and social conceptions on the other (Holtzman, 2005). Having a child through birth would be on the biological end, and adopting a child would be on the social end of the continuum. Both are legitimate definitions of family.

- Voluntary family or voluntary kin. People who care for us, support us, and feel like family to us, but are not related by blood or law (Braithwaite, 2008).
- Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one (Howard, 2002).

How Americans define *family* is clearly evolving. A research team at Indiana University led by sociologist Brian Powell surveyed more than 2,300 people between 2003 and 2010 (Berman, 2010, Sept. 15). The researchers found that “people are moving away from a traditional definition of family towards a modern definition of family,” Powell said. “That includes a greater array of living arrangements. They’re including a much broader group of people, broader combination of people as families.”

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

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

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

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

## Trends in Marriage and the Family: Change and Continuity

What are marriage and the family like today? Current trends include fewer marriages, later age of marriage, fewer children, continued flattening of divorce rates, more single-parent families and stepfamilies, a greater need for day care, more child abuse, more spouse abuse, and less connection to kin networks (National Marriage Project, 2012).

Statistics on divorce, domestic violence, and alcohol and other drug abuse, as well as stories of families in crisis, paint a rather negative picture of marriage and



Strong families enjoy leisure activities together.

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

Although some professionals emphasize the decline of marriage and the family, others see them as being in a state of transition. As Ernest Burgess and his colleagues stated in 1954, “Certainly marriage and the family in the U.S. are in the process of rapid change. But is it change for the worse? Perhaps it may be for the better” (Bernard, 1970, p. 43). In a similar vein, David and Vera Mace, pioneers in the marriage and family enrichment movement in Great Britain and the United States, argued that “marriage has not failed—it is simply in transition” (Mace & Mace, 1980, p. 260). Skolnick and Skolnick (1977), in their classic study *Family in Transition*, clearly illustrated the dramatic changes in family life over the centuries. In fact, one of the salient characteristics of the family is its ability to adapt to changing times and new challenges.

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

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

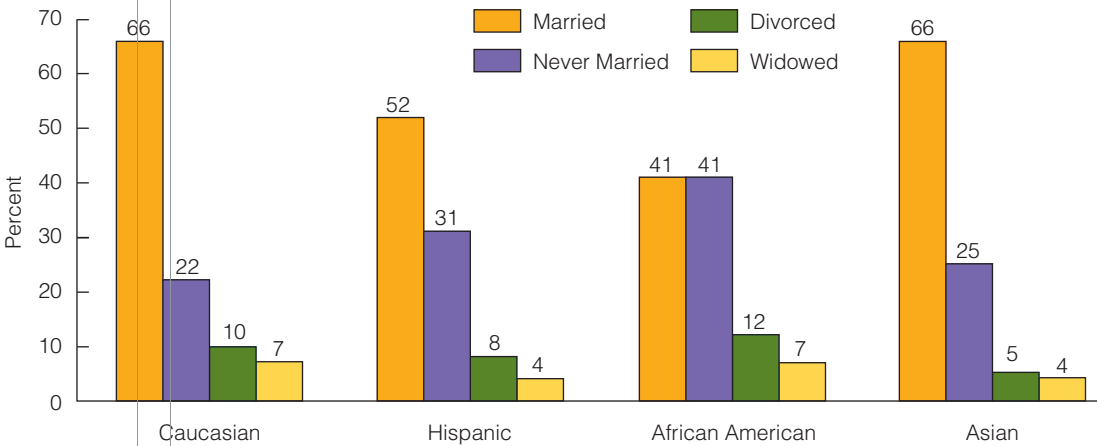
### Trends in Marriage and Cohabitation

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

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

More individuals are delaying marriage until their late 20s. Today, the median age for first marriage is 28.7 years for men and 26.5 years for women, the oldest in U.S. history. Age at marriage has been on the increase for more than 4 decades. In 1960, the median age for a first marriage was 22.8 years for men and 20.3 years for women (National Marriage Project, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

**Cohabitation.** The number of unmarried couples who are living together in the U.S. has increased dramatically over the past five decades. Most younger



**FIGURE 1.1**  
Marital Status of U.S. Population  
*Source:* U.S. Census Bureau, 2005e, table 54.



Americans are spending some time living together outside of marriage, and cohabitation commonly precedes marriage. Between 1960 and 2011 the total number of cohabitating couples increased 17-fold. Unmarried cohabitation, defined as the status of couples who are sexual partners, not married to each other, and sharing a household, is particularly common among young people (National Marriage Project, 2012). An estimated 60% to 75% of first marriages are preceded by cohabitation, and up to 80% to 85% of remarriages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003b).

## Trends in Divorce and Remarriage

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

**Divorce.** The majority of people who divorce eventually remarry. However, the increases in divorce rates in the U.S. and decline in remarriage rates have led to a steep increase in the percentage of adults in this country who are currently divorced. This percentage was only 1.8% for males and 2.6% for females



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

in 1960, but quadrupled by the year 2000 and remains high today. The percentage of divorced persons is higher for females than for males, because divorced men are more likely to remarry than divorced women. Also, among those who remarry, men tend to remarry sooner than women (National Marriage Project, 2012, p. 69).

As we have seen, the chances of divorce for a first marriage entered into in recent years remains high—between 40 and 50%. But the likelihood of divorce varies considerably among different segments of the American population: the figures are higher for Blacks than for Whites, and higher in the South and West than in other parts of the country. These differences, however, are diminishing. The trend toward a greater similarity of divorce rates between Blacks and Whites has been largely attributed to the fact that fewer Blacks are marrying (National Marriage Project, 2012, p. 72).

There has been little change in such traditionally large divorce rate differences as between those who marry as teenagers and those who marry after the age of 21. Teenagers still have higher divorce rates than the rest of the population. And the divorce rate for the religiously committed remains lower than the divorce rate for the nonreligious (National Marriage Project, 2012, p. 72).

Why are there so many divorces and unhappy marriages in our society? Here are a few things to think about:

1. Many people enter marriage with unrealistic expectations.
2. Many marry the wrong person for the wrong reasons.
3. Marriage is a challenging type of relationship, even if one chooses a partner wisely.
4. Little time or effort is put into developing the relationship skills needed to create and maintain a strong marriage.

**Remarriage.** A remarriage occurs when a previously married person marries again. The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (2013) has shared a wide variety of remarriage statistics and trends in the U.S. that are worth reviewing. Much of these data are dated to the early 2000s, because national surveys and databases that allowed for analyses of marriage patterns no longer exist:

- In 2001, 10,232,000 American wives were in their second marriage (17.7% of all marriages) and 2,106,000 wives were in their third or later marriages (3.6% of all marriages).
- Many Americans have remarried at least once: 12% of men have married twice; 13% of women have married twice; 3% of Americans have married three or more times.
- The median time between a divorce and a remarriage (second marriage) is 3.5 years.
- The median age at second marriage is 35.1 for men and 32.7 for women.
- About half of women in remarriages give birth to at least one child.
- Of all divorced people 25 years old and older, 55% of the men and 44% of the women have remarried.
- The rate of remarriage for women 45 to 64 is half the rate for men the same age.
- Remarriage rates for women with children and women without children are not significantly different.
- Five years after a divorce, 58% of White women have remarried; 44% of Hispanic women have remarried; and 32% of Black women have remarried.

- Ten years after a divorce, 81% of women who were under age 25 at the time of their divorce remarried; 68% of women at age 25 or older at the time of their divorce remarried.

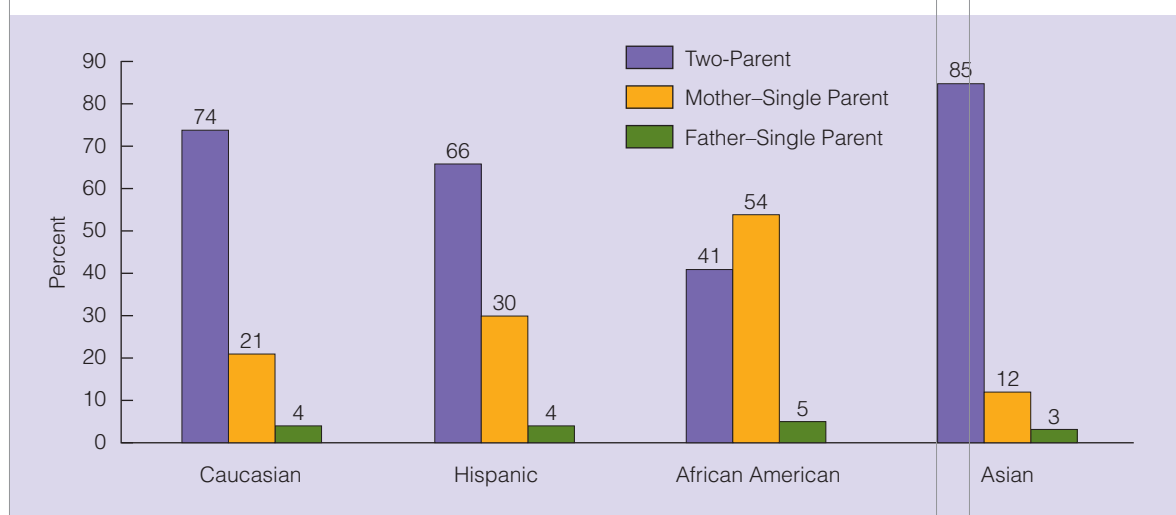
The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (2013) reports that though remarriages have always existed in the U.S., until recently the majority of remarriages followed the death of a spouse rather than a divorce. From early colonial times until as late as the 1920s, remarriage was more likely to follow widowhood than divorce. But the trend changed and by 1987, only 9% of men and women remarried due to the death of a spouse. Remarriages also show higher divorce rates than first marriage. Researchers have found that 20% of first marriages end in divorce within five years, while 25% of second marriages end within this same time frame.

The presence of children is one factor associated with the failure of a second marriage. About 40% of remarriages involve children from a previous relationship, and women who had children before their second marriages were more likely to see that marriage fail within 10 years than women without children before the second marriage. Women who reported their children were *not wanted* were more likely to see the second marriage fail within 10 years than those who said their children *were wanted*. Also, failure of a remarriage is associated with remarriages in communities with higher poverty rates, low median family income, and a low proportion of college-educated residents (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2013).

Table 1.1 provides some statistics on marriage and divorce trends. Divorce and remarriage will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 15.

## Trends in Family Structure

Family structure is becoming more complex through divorce and remarriage, which creates new kinship relationships. Contemporary families are more varied today than ever before. There are stepfamilies, same-sex parents and couples,



**FIGURE 1.2**

Family Structures with Children Under 18

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2012, Table 67.

**TABLE 1.1**      Statistics on Marriage and Divorce

- 85% of the U.S. population will marry at least once (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).
- Age at marriage has been on the increase for more than four decades. In 1960, the median age for a first marriage was 22.8 years for men and 20.3 for women. In 2009 the median age for first marriage was 28.4 years for men and 26.5 years for women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a).
- Over 75% of Americans report a belief that *being married* is an important value (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010).
- Marriage among those with college degrees appears to be getting stronger, while marriage among those with a high school degree or less is becoming increasingly unstable and unhappy (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010).
- In 2010 there were 2,096,000 marriages and 872,000 divorces (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013a).
- 23.2 million Americans—about 9.1% of the U.S. population—are currently divorced (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).
- People marrying today have a 40–50% chance of divorcing. Statistically, 40% of first marriages, 60% of second marriages, and 73% of third marriages end in divorce (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006; Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010).
- About 75% of those who divorce will eventually remarry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).
- Of the marriages that do not end in divorce, the quality of some of those may be poor (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010).
- After 10 years of marriage, it has been predicted that only 25% of couples will still be happily married (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010).
- Most divorces involve children, and more than 1 million children are affected by divorce each year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).
- Approximately 40% of children will experience divorce before adulthood (Amato, 2007).
- Women are more likely than men to file for divorce (Popenoe & Whitehead, 2010).
- Most adults adjust well to divorce over time. 30% feel their lives were negatively impacted (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).
- Divorce and unmarried child bearing are highly related to child poverty (Rank & Hirschl, 1999).
- A small number of studies have found positive individual benefits of divorce such as greater autonomy, personal growth, and happiness (Amato, 2000).
- Married people live longer than unmarried or divorced people (Waite & Gallagher, 2000).
- Married people are happier than single, widowed, or cohabiting people (Waite & Gallagher, 2000).
- Married people have more sex and a better quality sexual relationship than do single, divorced, or cohabiting individuals (Waite & Gallagher, 2000).
- Married people are more successful in their careers, earn more, and have more wealth than single, divorced, or cohabiting individuals (Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Antonovics & Town, 2004).

child-free couples, grandparents raising grandchildren, surrogate parents, foster care families, families with disabled parents and children, and a variety of informal family arrangements.

The following trends illustrate some of the changes in family structure in the United States:

- In 2010, 70% of all children lived in a nuclear family in which two parents were present. The percentage of two-parent families varies by ethnic/cultural group (Figure 1.2): 74% of Caucasian children live in two-parent homes; 66% of Hispanics; 41% of African American children; and 85% of Asian American children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).
- Single-parent families with children under the age of 18 have dramatically increased in number. In 1970, only 12% of children lived in a single-parent





Single-parent families with children under the age of 18 have dramatically increased since 1970.

home. The latest available figures indicate that 35% of children are living in a single-parent home (Child Trends Databank, 2013).

- About half (52%) of all African American families are headed by a single mother, while 25% of Hispanic families, 18% of Caucasian families, and 10% of Asian American families are headed by a single mother (Fields, 2003, p. 5). A small but growing number of families in the United States (3% to 6% of families across ethnic/cultural groups) are headed by a single father (Fields, 2003, p. 5; U.S. Census Bureau, 2005b). Some social scientists have predicted that 60% of children in the United States will have lived in a single-parent household by the time they are 18 years old, if current divorce and remarriage rates hold.
- Families are typically having fewer children today, compared to earlier generations. A woman in the early 1900s in the United States could expect to give birth to about four children during her childbearing years, considered to be ages 15 to 44. A woman living during the Great Depression of the 1930s could expect to have only two children. After World War II, the number of births per woman climbed to 3.7 in 1957, but fell to 1.8 by the mid-1970s. Since then, the birth rate in the United States has hovered around two births per woman, with the most recent number at about 2.1 births per woman. This is a rate that is slightly below the long-term replacement level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004b, p. 4-1; Day, 2011).
- The number of stay-at-home moms has declined since the 1950s, with more and more women choosing to enter the workforce (Family Focus, 2005). Most recent figures from 2011 indicate that there were 5 million stay-at-home moms in the U.S., which is 23% of all the mothers in married-couple family groups with children under age 15 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, May 19).

## Continuity in Marriage and the Family

Although we tend to focus on how marriage and the family have changed, in many ways these institutions have remained the same over several decades and continue to provide stability in our lives. For example, most people in the United States want to marry, and most couples who do so see marriage as a lifelong commitment and do not plan to divorce. Many couples want to have an egalitarian marital relationship, but equality does not mean that they will share exactly the same roles around the house. Rather, equality means that they work together to accomplish the many tasks and responsibilities required by family life on a regular basis and divide these responsibilities fairly.

Most couples who marry want to have children. Parenthood is an important goal for many couples, a fact that becomes more evident when a couple is not able to have a child. Most parents want their children to have a good education and to be at least as successful as they, the parents, are in society. In fact, most parents would like their children to do better than they have in all aspects of life.

Most family members also have a commitment to each other, although they might not always get along. They have an emotional connection to their immediate and extended family network and feel it is appropriate to call on them in times of need. This family network is an important support system, although it is often taken for granted until a crisis arises. The family is an interdependent system of people who are emotionally connected to each other.

Most families also have a value system that encompasses spiritual and/or moral beliefs that provide the foundation for their attitudes and behaviors. These values become even more important to couples after they have children or in times of crisis. Also, there is an ongoing commitment and connection between parents and their children, even after divorce. This is particularly true if the parents are given joint custody of their children. Most people also feel that the family is the most effective and efficient way of socializing children.

In summary, marriage and family provide significant continuity in our society. Unfortunately, overemphasis on marriage and family problems can overshadow the stability and continuity that these intimate relationships offer us in our daily lives.

## Focus on Marital and Family Strengths

A major theme of this book is strengths and the importance of focusing on strengths in a marriage and a family. This means paying attention to the good things your partner or children do and giving praise for the things you appreciate. Too often, married couples and family members tend to shift their focus from the positive to the things they do not like about each other.

Box 1.1 summarizes a number of important observations about relationship strengths. This includes the idea that all families have strengths, and you will observe them if you look for them rather than look only for problems. A strong marriage is the foundation for a strong family. This does not mean that single-parent families cannot be strong, but it is often harder for one parent to manage all the stressors and maintain the strengths. Strengths develop over time and are tested by struggles and ongoing issues that inevitably arise in marriage and parenting. Strengths also provide a framework for dealing with crises and for growing and changing over time.



## BOX 1.1 Putting It Together

### Learning to Focus on Strengths

Over the past 40 years, researchers looking at couples and families from a strengths perspective have developed the following propositions (DeFrain & Asay, 2007; Asay, DeFrain, Metzger, & Moyer, 2013):

- *Families, in all their remarkable diversity, are the basic foundation of human cultures.* Strong families are critical to the development of strong communities, and strong communities promote and nurture strong families.
- *Not all families are strong, but all families have strengths.* If one looks only for problems in a family, one will see only problems. If one also looks for strengths, one will find strengths.
- *Function, not structure, is most important.* When talking about families, it is common to make the mistake of focusing on external family structure or the type of family rather than internal family functioning.
- *Strong marriages and intimate partners are the center of many strong families.* The couple relationship is an important source of strength in many families with children who are doing well. Parents need to find ways to nurture a positive couple relationship for the good of everyone in the family.
- *Strong families tend to produce great kids.*
- *If you grew up in a strong family as a child, it will probably be easier for you to create a strong family of your own as an adult.* But it's also quite possible to do so if you weren't so lucky and grew up in a seriously troubled family.
- *The relationship between money and family strengths is weak.* Once a family has adequate financial resources the relentless quest for more is not likely to increase the family's quality of life, happiness together, or the strength of their relationships with each other.
- *Strengths develop over time.* When couples start out in life together, they sometimes have considerable difficulty adjusting to each other, and these difficulties are quite predictable. Adjusting to each other is not an easy task. Many couples who are unstable at first end up creating a healthy, happy family.
- *Strengths are often developed in response to challenges.* A couple and family's strengths are tested by life's everyday stressors and also by the significant crises that all of us face sooner or later.
- *Strong families don't think much about their strengths, they just live them.* It is, however, useful to carefully examine a family's strengths from time to time and discuss precisely how family members use these strengths to great advantage.
- *Strong families, like people, are not perfect.* Even the strongest of families have difficulties and disagreements. A strong family is a work of art continually in progress, always in the process of growing and changing.
- *When seeking to unite groups of people, communities, and even nations, uniting around the cause of strengthening families can be a powerful strategy.*
- *Human beings have the right and responsibility to feel safe, comfortable, happy, and loved.*

Sources: DeFrain & Asay, 2007; Asay, DeFrain, Metzger, & Moyer, 2013.

## Advantages of Marriage

Although people are delaying marriage and some are choosing not to marry, most people still value marriage. In one survey of adults, 93% rate having a happy marriage as one of the most important or very important objectives (Waite, 2001, 2003; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Waite & Lehrer, 2003; Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2009). For college freshmen, 94% said they personally hoped to get married, and they had a negative view of divorce. Over 70% agreed that children do better with both parents, and over 60% felt that children develop more emotional problems if their parents divorce.

But until recently, the positive impacts of marriage on the persons in the marriage have not been emphasized. Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher (2000) made a major contribution in that regard in their book, *The Case for Marriage*, where they summarized over 200 studies that clearly demonstrated the major positive impacts of marriage.

First, Waite and Gallagher (2000) found that married people live longer than unmarried or divorced people. In fact, Waite and Gallagher stated, "Not being married can be hazardous to your health" (2000, p. 47). Nonmarried women have a 50%

higher mortality rate than married women, and nonmarried men have a 250% higher rate than married men.

Married people live longer partially because they lead a healthier lifestyle. Single men typically engage in more risky behavior, including drinking, smoking, and drug use. Although single women typically have lower levels of risky behavior compared to men, being married also lowers the rate at which women participate in unhealthy behaviors. In addition, marriage improves a man's health as well as a woman's health. Married partners also tend to monitor each other's health more closely than cohabiting couples.

Married people are happier than single, widowed, or cohabiting people. About 40% of married people said they were very happy with their lives, whereas only 18% of divorced people, 15% of separated people, 22% of widowed, and 22% of cohabiting people were very happy.

On the basis of two national surveys, married couples have sex more frequently and find their sexual relationship more satisfying physically and emotionally than singles (Waite, 2001, 2003; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Waite & Lehrer, 2003; Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2009). In one study, 43% of the married men reported having sex at least twice a week, whereas only 26% of the single men who were not cohabiting had sex this often. The findings were similar for women; very few married women reported never having sex. Almost half (48%) of married men said sex is extremely satisfying emotionally compared to 37% of cohabiting men who found sex satisfying. There was less of a difference for married women compared to cohabiting women (42% for married versus 39% for cohabiting) who reported that sex was extremely satisfying.

Married sex is better sex because of four factors: *proximity*, *a long-term contract*, *exclusivity*, and *emotional bonding* (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). In terms of proximity, being married means your partner is more available, and partners are more comfortable with each other. Because they plan to remain married, married couples are often more willing to invest time, money, and energy in the relationship. By being more sexually exclusive, married couples are more willing to develop a mutually agreeable relationship. Emotionally, married couples feel more connected to each other than cohabiting couples.

Being married is also good for men in regard to their career and financial earnings (Waite, 2001, 2003; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Waite & Lehrer, 2003; Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2009). They argue that marriage is almost as important as education in predicting a man's success in a career. Their explanation of why this is so may raise the hackles of some readers, so let's discuss what they are saying in some depth. Why would marriage statistically predict a man's success in a career as much as his level of education? Waite and Gallagher propose that many married men are more successful because they can focus more on earning money and know that other tasks such as meals, laundry, and child care will be handled by their wives. Also, a wife often contributes ideas about her husband's job and generally supports the career of the husband.

The controversy ignites when wives don't feel equally supported in their careers, of course. And if an egalitarian relationship is not created—a genuinely 50/50 marriage—a couple runs the risk of ending up with two marriages, rather than one. Jessie Bernard, an eminent family sociologist, explained her two-marriages concept quite compellingly four decades ago in her classic book *The Future of Marriage* (1972). Bernard argued that marriage was simply better for men than for women because women take care of men, but men in a male-dominant society aren't as willing or capable or inclined to take care of women. She argued that in many cases there are two marriages: *his* marriage and *her* marriage, and his



marriage is a much better deal because the wife attends to the husband's needs with more energy and interest than the husband attends to hers.

The argument looks like this behind closed doors, and it is still being fought today in some households:

**She:** "Well, I took your suits to the laundromat and got them cleaned and pressed. And I got a great present for your secretary's birthday. Oh, your Mom called, and I told her you were too busy to go out to dinner this week, but I would take her to lunch Friday."

**He [distracted as he looks through the mail]:** "Oh, yeah, thanks. . . ."

**She [miffed as blood pressure rises]:** "I could use a good wife!"

**He [startled and angered by her sarcasm, responds in kind]:** "You couldn't afford one!"

[And on and on.]

The concept of two marriages helps explain why women today are more likely to file for divorce than men: In essence, more women feel let down by marriage than men. The solution, of course, is not to bog down in *his* marriage and *her* marriage, but to work together to create *our* marriage. This, however, is no simple task.

Married couples accumulate more financial wealth, which is a total of their assets (home, car, investments, savings) after deducting their debts (mortgages, other loans, credit card debt). Married couples are able to combine their incomes, which is helpful inasmuch as more women work outside the home and increasingly are earning as much as or more than the husband. This pooling effect is worth 12% to 14% for couples at the age of 30 and it increases to 30% for retired couples compared to single individuals. Married couples are also more responsible in their spending because they have another person involved in the decision about spending. Conversely, if a person gets divorced the wealth is divided and each person starts over again (Waite, 2001, 2003; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; Waite & Lehrer, 2003; Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2009).

Married people, especially women, are less likely to experience domestic abuse than cohabiting and separated women. The abuse rate for separated women is about 3 times higher than that for divorced women and 25 times higher than that for married women. Also, arguments between couples tend to lead to physical abuse in 4% of married couples compared to 13% for cohabiting couples.

Children generally fare better in families where their parents are married (Manning & Brown, 2006). Children from homes where the parents are married tend to be more academically successful, more emotionally stable, and more likely to assume leadership roles. This is, in part, because of the stability and guidance of two parents. Also, a married couple can model communication and collaborative behaviors, which helps childhood learning.

Marriage is much different from cohabitation (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Cohabitation is seen by society and sometimes by the partners themselves as a temporary arrangement, whereas marriage is still seen as a lifelong commitment. Marriage is seen as a sexually exclusive relationship, and cohabitation is sometimes perceived as more sexually open to others. People who are cohabiting are typically less willing than married couples to be financially responsible for their partners. For married couples there are higher expectations to be seen and to operate as a couple socially than is true for cohabiting couples. Cohabiting couples have less-positive attitudes toward marriage and more-positive attitudes toward divorce than married couples.

In summary, marriage seems to have multiple benefits for both the husband and the wife. Married people live longer, are healthier and happier, and feel better

emotionally. They also have more sex and a better sexual relationship. Married people are also more successful in their careers, earn more, and have more wealth. Married women experience less domestic abuse. Children raised by married parents tend to be more emotionally stable and academically successful. So, in many ways, married persons do experience numerous positive outcomes from being married that single and cohabiting couples do not receive.

This is not to say, of course, that if you are unhappy with the person you are living with that if you rush out and get married everything will work out fine. And this is not to say that if you are unhappy as a single person that if you rush out and get married you will suddenly be happy as a married person. All this is saying is that for many reasons marital relationships from a statistical perspective look stronger than cohabiting relationships, and married people tend to do better in life in many ways, compared to single people. This is not always the case when looking at individual situations, but on average it is true.

## Impact of the Social Environment on Relationships

Human beings do not live and love in a vacuum. Just as we are connected to the special people in our lives—our friends and loved ones—so we are inextricably embedded in our social environment. The **social environment** comprises all the factors in society, both positive and negative, that impact on individuals and their relationships, such as the mass media, the Internet, changing gender roles, and growing urban crowding. As individuals, we each have a modest influence on society, yet society clearly shapes our personal attitudes and behaviors and ultimately our couple and family relationships.

There is emerging interest about the interface between individual and family lives and community life. Basically, it has been found that the strengths of the community enhance life in the family (DeFrain & Asay, 2007). A good example of this is a study showing that when neighborhood factors were controlled, African American students were less likely to drop out of school than White students (Van Dorn, Bowen, & Blau, 2006). Bámaca, Umaña-Taylor, Shin, and Alfaro (2005) found that psychological outcomes for Latino adolescents were related to community assets, with more positive outcomes occurring in neighborhoods that had more assets. This occurred even when parenting influences stayed the same. Other researchers found that problem behaviors for African American children decreased when social assets in the neighborhood increased (Caughy, O'Campo, Nettles, & Lohrfink, 2006). It has also been found that the incidence of teen cohabitation and nonmarital births increased as ties with the community decreased (Houseknecht & Lewis, 2005). These studies make it apparent that there is an interface between families and the communities in which they live and that community strengths enhance family strengths.

We may be drawn to the Western ideal of rugged individualism—going boldly where no man or woman has gone before—but the reality of our lives is probably closer to the East Asian notion that each of us is but a drop of water in the ocean of life. Cultural norms and expectations have a powerful impact on us, especially if we try to behave against these norms. Visiting another culture is one way to experience the pervasive influence the social environment has on our lives, as the following personal account illustrates.



**FIGURE 1.3**

Elements of the Social Environment That Affect Couples and Relationships

Although families work and play together to create a haven in a sometimes bewildering and hazardous world, countless elements in the social environment can challenge a family's drive for balance and stability.

*"When my husband and I were living in China, everything was so different from what we were used to: the language, the food, the music, the dress, everything. Now this is a hard thing to explain to someone who has not already experienced it, but being out of my own culture, my own environment, I started to feel after a few months in China like my identity as a person was disappearing.*

*"It was like I was shrinking. Without my family and my friends at home, without our dog Jessie, without my music, without my food, without our crummy old car, I felt so disconnected, so insignificant. One day I would have given \$50 for a genuine American cheeseburger. It sounds crazy talking about it now.*

*"We both finally did adjust pretty well to China. After about a year or so I kind of turned an emotional corner. And after 2 years I felt like an old hand at surviving culture shock. Today, I love China. But we also love home. And I learned something very important from all this: The social environment I'm used to is very, very important to me. I felt like a fish out of water for a while when taken away from what's familiar to me. I'm not the great individualist I thought I was."*

In general, the social environment shapes us much more than we can shape the social environment. However, we are not puppets of the social environment. Growing up in an alcoholic family is not an excuse for being an alcoholic. Similarly, being abused as a child does not justify abusing one's own children. Countless people grow up in violent families but are able to rise above those life experiences. Individuals can make positive choices in their lives, regardless of their past lives.

## Stress, Change, and Materialism

"Whatever you're doing," one anonymous observer noted, "it's not enough." The velocity of life in this country appears to many people to be increasing exponentially, and our inner demons press us to perform, to produce, to consume, to move. These voices accelerate as social change presses upon us. **Stress** is the body and mind's reaction to life. Stress is directly related to change, and the greater the change, the higher the level of stress. The continuous cascade of new developments in society today can be defined broadly as *progress* perhaps, but many of these developments add stress to our lives.

We now want and expect things to happen fast. We now have voice mail, e-mail, and texting, and we even call regular mail snail mail. We used to have telephones in our homes and offices. Now we carry them in our pockets, purses and packs and attach them to our belts. We also do multiple tasks at one time. We drive cars while we talk on the phone, put on our makeup, sing along with the CD player, eat a cheeseburger, plan our day, and of course text. Not only have these technological changes increased the volume of information we receive and must respond to, but the time in which we are expected to respond has been shortened—from a few days to return a letter to a few hours to return an e-mail to seconds as we answer our ubiquitous cell phones and read our text messages.

As a society, we also have a great appetite for material possessions—for *stuff*. In fact, everything has to be new, if we were to believe media sales pitches: We need new cars, new houses, new clothes, perhaps a new nose. The business world is brimming with stories of corporate takeovers and downsizing. Companies come and go every day, and workers are cast off like old furniture. In this kind of consumer culture, it's not such a stretch to imagine that finding a new partner is the easiest option when there are problems with the old relationship. As the old male chauvinist joke goes, "I'm tired of my 40-year-old wife. I'm going to trade her in for two 20-year-olds."

Combined, technology and materialism increase our level of stress in all areas of life. We feel pressured to do more and to have more—and to run faster while grasping for all of it. The first casualty in such an environment is our individual sense of well-being. The second casualty is our bond of affection and closeness with each other.

You can counter these trends by being more proactive in your personal life. You can look for ways to be less materialistic and less caught up in the hectic pace of life. This is a personal choice that you can make, which will influence how much you let these factors affect you.

### **Lack of Time for Oneself and Significant Others**

According to family researchers, one of the most difficult qualities to develop in many American families is the ability to spend enjoyable time together. Not only do we find ourselves challenged by a busy and competitive social environment outside the home, but once we return home, we often feel we need time to unwind from a hectic day before reconnecting with others.

For many in today's society, the boundaries between the home and work are being blurred. As sociologist Arlie Hochschild (Hochschild, 1997, 2009, 2010) observed, work becomes more like home and home becomes more like work. Caught in the time bind, the more time we work, the more stressful home life becomes. The more stressful home life becomes, the more we want to escape back to work. Hochschild argues that we must challenge the economic and social system that invites or demands long hours at work, and focus our efforts on investing less time in the job and more time in couple and family relationships.

Families that have discretionary income can purchase labor such as child care and people who care for the household in order to free up time for families to eat out or engage in recreational or leisure activities. Low-income families may not have the option to purchase services and may experience greater challenges in finding time for themselves and other family members. Researchers have found that low-income families are less likely to spend time in activities outside the home but instead intentionally build relationship time into mealtime and other household activities (Tubbs, Roy, & Burton, 2005).



You can counter these trends by purposefully setting time aside for yourself and also time to be with your significant others. Some people have found their alone time is to have 15 minutes with coffee in the morning; others look for time alone at the end of the day, going for an hour-long walk or exercising at the recreation center. For couples, it is important that they purposefully find time to reconnect after a hectic day, even though on some days it might be for only 10 to 15 minutes together. Families also need time to be with each other, and although it is often hard to find time, more families are taking time to set up regular rituals, eating together as often as possible, and not allowing the world to steal their time together.

## Increasing Use of Child Care Outside the Family

What do we do about our kids when both parents work outside the home? This is one of the most challenging questions our society faces today. In the United States today more than half of mothers with young children work outside the home, compared to about one in three in the 1970s. Working mothers are now the rule rather than the exception. Women have been moving into the workforce not only for career satisfaction but also because they and their families need the income. Many women who are married have husbands who make less than \$30,000 a year (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013).

While parents are working, who's minding the kids? The U.S. Census Bureau reports that there are approximately 20 million children in the U.S. under five years of age. In a typical week, 12.7 million children (63% of the total) are in some type of regular child care arrangement, defined as at least once a week; 37% of the families had no regular child care arrangement (Laughlin, 2010). These preschoolers were more likely to be cared for by a relative (41%) than by a nonrelative (35%), while 11% were regularly cared for by both. Twenty-three percent of preschoolers were regularly cared for by their grandparent, and 16% were cared for by their father. The survey only asked about child care provided by the father for the time the designated parent was working. Care by other relatives (7%) or by the mother while she worked (4%), or by siblings (3%) was less frequent.

Nearly one-fourth of all young children were cared for in organized facilities, with day care centers (14%) being more commonly used than nursery or preschools (6%). Overall, other nonrelatives provided home-based care to 13% of preschoolers, with 6% cared for by family day care providers. More than one-third of the young children (7.3 million) were not in a regular child care arrangement when the research was conducted.

Mothers and fathers struggle with questions about day care:

- Do I need to work outside the home? Is employment essential for our family's well-being? For my well-being? And how will it affect our child's well-being?
- Will I be able to develop a bond with my child if she spends so much time away from me?
- Will I spend more money on child care, extra clothes, lunches, and transportation than I make on the job?
- How will the stresses of the job affect me personally? Our family? Can all this be balanced effectively?
- How will our child adapt to outside care? Will he receive good care? Will it be as good as the care we can give him?
- Will our child enjoy being with other children? Will the child's social development be enhanced by these opportunities?

For parents, finding satisfactory answers to these and countless other child care-related questions is a considerable challenge.

Parents now are becoming more active in finding ways to balance time away from their children and quality child care. Parents are checking out day care centers more carefully and are looking more critically at teachers and their relationship with their child.

## **Instability of Couple and Family Relationships**

Many observers have argued that our fast-moving and competitive social environment is directly responsible for the high rate of marital dissolution and the increase in single-parent families and stepfamilies. Although personality conflicts and troubles within a marriage clearly contribute to marital breakdown, societal factors and values also influence our intimate behavior.

Rather than come home from work and sit on the front porch to talk with family and neighbors, we often hide behind closed doors in a cocoonlike atmosphere, plopped down in front of the television or a computer. As a result, many of our personal impressions come from the media. We may know more about our favorite actor's marriage than we know about how the couple is doing next door. Perhaps we are choosing to live like this, of course, in the name of personal privacy. But married life on television and in the tabloids is far different from the average couple's life. It can be argued that the steady diet of extramarital affairs and marital conflict we receive from the media helps create a *culture of divorce* in this country.

However, we believe that more people are feeling the need to maintain their close personal relationships. People are seeking more stability in their relationships and are trying to stay more connected. Married couples are more interested in building a stronger marriage, and families are trying to find ways to spend more quality time together.

## **Violence, Criminal Victimization, and Fear**

Violent and abusive behavior continues to be a major cause of death, injury, stress, and fear in our country. More than 1.2 million violent incidents were reported in 2011, according to the FBI, while property crimes hit a nine-year low (Frieden, 2012). The Gallup Poll has found that despite a sharp decline in the United States' violent crime rates since the mid-1990s, the majority of Americans continue to believe that the crime problem in this country is getting worse rather than better, as they have believed for most of the past decade. The latest statistics indicate that 68% of Americans say there is more crime in the U.S. than the year before, 17% say less, and 8% volunteer that crime is unchanged. In contrast to the 68% who say it is getting worse on the national level, 48% say crime in their local area is getting worse, and 38% say there is an area within a mile of where they live where they would feel unsafe walking alone at night. Why do people tend to feel that crime is increasing rather than decreasing? Gallup argued that this unwarranted pessimism may stem from the imperfect views of crime that Americans receive from the news and other sources, as well as Americans' overall mood (Saad, 2011).

Sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence are major public health problems in the U.S., according to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(2011, November). Consequences for survivors of these forms of violence can include mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suicide attempts, and other health consequences including gastrointestinal disorders, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and gynecological or pregnancy complications. These can lead to hospitalization, disability or death. Women are more likely to be affected by sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking:

- 1.3 million women were raped during the year preceding the survey.
- Nearly one in five women have been raped in their lifetime, and one in 71 men have been raped during their lifetime.
- One in six women have been stalked, and one in 19 men.
- One in four women have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner, and one in seven men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner.

Nationwide in 2011, there were an estimated 681,000 victims of child abuse and neglect, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2011). The unique victim rate was 9.1 victims per 1,000 children in the population. Victims in the age group of birth to one year had the highest rate of victimization at 21.2 per 1,000 children in the national population. Victimization was split between the sexes with boys accounting for 48.6% and girls accounting for 51.1%. Fewer than 1% of victims were of unknown sex. Eighty-seven percent of the victims were comprised of three races or ethnicities: African American (21.5%); Hispanic (22.1%), and White (43.9%). More than 75% of the victims suffered neglect (78.5%). More than 15% suffered physical abuse (17.6%). Less than 10% suffered sexual abuse (9.1%). Child fatalities are the most tragic consequences of maltreatment. An estimated 1,570 children died from abuse and neglect in the U.S. This is 2.10 deaths per 100,000 children in this country.

Most recent statistics on suicide indicate that 34,598 people took their own life in the U.S. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2013). The overall rate was 11.3 suicide deaths per 100,000 people. An estimated 11 suicide attempts occur for every person who actually ends his or her life. Risk factors for suicide include: depression and other mental disorders, or substance-abuse disorder; a prior suicide attempt; family history of mental disorder or substance abuse; family history of suicide; family violence, including physical or sexual abuse; firearms in the home, the method used in more than half of all suicides; incarceration; and exposure to the suicidal behavior of others, such as family members, peers, or media figures.

Gun violence in the U.S. is far greater than gun violence in any other of the G-8 countries which collect data. The Group of Eight includes the eight largest economies in the world (ABC News, 2012). There are an estimated 88.8 civilian guns per 100 people in the U.S., according to the Small Arms Survey, a number unparalleled in the rest of the world and higher than the other G-8 countries for which there are data. The U.S. also has a much higher rate of homicides by gun—3.2 homicides by firearm per 100,000 people, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Homicide Statistics. Italy, the G-8 country with the second highest rate of homicides by firearm, comes in far behind the U.S. According to United Nations data, a person is 4.5 times more likely to die from gun violence in the U.S. than in Italy. In France, the homicide by firearm rate is 0.1 per 100,000. That is one in a million.

## Use of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs

Drinking and smoking are woven into the very fabric of American culture, and yet the use of legal substances—alcohol and tobacco—kills hundreds of thousands of Americans every year, far more deaths than can be attributed to illegal drugs.

Some statistics compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013b), give a good picture of the situation concerning alcohol:

- There are approximately 80,000 deaths attributable to excessive alcohol use each year in the U.S., making alcohol use the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death in our country.
- Excessive alcohol use is responsible for 2.3 million years of potential life lost each year, or an average of about 30 years of potential life lost for each death.
- In 2006 there were more than 1.2 million emergency room visits and 2.7 million physician office visits due to excessive drinking.
- In 2006 the economic costs of excessive alcohol consumption were estimated at \$223.5 billion.
- Excessive alcohol use increases the risk of unintentional injuries, including traffic injuries, falls, drownings, burns, and unintentional firearm injuries.
- Excessive alcohol use increases the risk of violence, including intimate partner violence and child maltreatment. About 35% of victims report that offenders are under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol use is associated with two out of three incidents of intimate partner violence. And alcohol is a leading factor in child maltreatment and neglect cases, and the most frequent substance abused among these parents.
- Excessive alcohol use increases the risk of miscarriage and stillbirth among pregnant women, and a combination of physical and mental birth defects among children that last throughout life.
- Excessive alcohol use increases the risk of alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency resulting from high blood alcohol levels that suppress the central nervous system and can cause loss of consciousness, low blood pressure and body temperature, coma, respiratory depression, or death.

CATHY

BY CATHY GUISEWITE



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- Long-term health risks associated with excessive alcohol use include neurological problems (dementia, stroke and neuropathy); cardiovascular problems (myocardial infarction, cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation and hypertension); psychiatric problems (depression, anxiety, and suicide); social problems (unemployment, lost productivity, and family problems); cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colon, and breast; liver diseases (alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis, Hepatitis C virus); and other gastrointestinal problems (pancreatitis and gastritis).

The research-based evidence on the negative effects of tobacco use is also overwhelming, regardless of what the advertisers say. Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013c):

- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the U.S. Each year, an estimated 443,000 people die prematurely from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and another 8.6 million live with a serious illness caused by smoking.
- Despite these risks, about 46.6 million U.S. adults smoke cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco, cigars, and pipes also have deadly consequences, including lung, larynx, esophageal, and oral cancers.
- Smoking harms nonsmokers as well. An estimated 88 million nonsmoking Americans, including 54% of children aged 3–11 years, are exposed to secondhand smoke. Even brief exposure can be dangerous, because nonsmokers inhale many of the same poisons in cigarette smoke as smokers.
- Secondhand smoke exposure causes serious disease and death, including heart disease and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults and sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks in children. Every year, primarily because of exposure to secondhand smoke, it is estimated that 3,000 nonsmoking Americans die of lung cancer, more than 46,000 die of heart disease, and about 150,000–300,000 children younger than 18 months have lower-respiratory tract infections.
- Add to this enormous health toll the significant economic burden of tobacco use: more than \$96 billion each year in medical costs and another \$97 billion a year from lost productivity.
- Cigarette companies spend about \$13 billion per year on advertising their products. This comes to \$36 million per day (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009c, d).

The number of deaths caused by alcohol is dwarfed by the number of deaths caused by tobacco, as we have seen: approximately 80,000 alcohol-related deaths in a recent year, compared to 443,000 tobacco-related deaths. These are legal drugs, killing 523,000 Americans each year. Illegal drugs claim the lives of an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 Americans each year (Centers for Disease Control, 2007). Thus, an estimated 22 to 44 times as many people are killed by legal drugs in this country each year, compared to the number killed by illegal drugs.

You can counter these trends by limiting or eliminating altogether your use of tobacco and alcohol, which is easier if you choose friends who also have a similar lifestyle. By limiting your use, you can minimize the addicting quality of these drugs, which are very difficult to stop using once one is addicted. Because drugs negatively affect your body in the short and long run, adopting a lifestyle without them will bring you a healthier life.

Too much time on the Internet can create problems in relationships for many people.

## The Internet and Human Relationships

In our continuous quest to market technological solutions to human problems, much has been made of the computer's potential for connecting human beings. In the movie *You've Got Mail*, Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks fall in love via e-mail. It is a charming notion, but research tells a more complicated story.

The Internet is used extensively by people of all ages. Some of the trends we see for adults using the Internet include the following (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005d):

- People 35 to 54 years of age use the Internet more than other adult age groups.
- Men and women use the Internet about equally.
- Married people use the Internet more than single people.
- College graduates are more likely to use the Internet than people who do not have college degrees.



Janis Christie/Getty Images

Research indicates that more than 68% of households used broadband Internet access service, and approximately 80% of households had at least one Internet user, either at home or elsewhere (Economics and Statistics Administration, 2011). Parents and children use the Internet for e-mailing, text messaging, listening to music, reading the newspaper, shopping online, and many other activities. Monitoring children's use of the Internet is increasingly difficult as young people rely on it to do homework, which means they also have access to unsuitable Web information.

Research at the University of Southern California indicates that more and more of America's Internet-connected households report erosion of face-to-face family time, increased feelings of being ignored by family members using the Web, and growing concerns that children are spending too much time online (Annenberg Center for the Digital Future, 2009). The USC research team reported that the percentage of people who say they spend less time with household members since being connected to the Internet nearly tripled, from 11% in 2006 to 28% in 2008. Total hours devoted to family socializing dropped by more than 30% over the three-year period, from about 26 hours per month to 17.9 hours per month.

According to a study by Wolak, Mitchell, and Finkelhor (2006), one in seven youths have received unwanted sexual solicitations on the Internet, one in three have experienced unwanted exposure to sexual material, and one in eleven have been subjected to threatening or other offensive behavior. The good news is that these numbers were lower than they were 5 years before, as a result of national Internet safety programs.

Pedophiles often use the Internet to lure children into participation in sexual behavior. Sexual exploitation of children on the Internet is an increasing concern for parents, law enforcement agencies, and legislators (Wolak et al., 2006). Research indicates that parents have made efforts to monitor young people's use of Internet sites, with one study indicating that 61% of parents regulated their teen's Internet use (Wang, Bianchi, & Raley, 2005).

What about adult access to pornography on the Internet? What affect does it have on marriage and family lives? It is estimated that 15% of individuals visiting Internet porn sites develop sexual behaviors that interfere with their lives (Gustafson, 2005). On a very basic level, pornography is viewed in secret, which creates deception in marriage and contributes to divorce (National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families, 2007). In addition, Dr. Mary Anne Layden, a psychotherapist and expert on sexual addiction, concludes that involvement in pornography is the common theme in sexual violence. Layden says that pornography increases the likelihood of sexual addiction, and 40% of sex addicts will lose their spouse, 58% will have financial difficulties, and 27% will lose their jobs or be demoted (Gustafson, 2005).

Sex is big business, and some say it has become a national obsession. This trend has been fueled by an increase in Internet sex reaching deep into our homes, causing problems for children and for marriage and family relationships.

## Changing Gender Roles and the Balance of Power

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of mothers working outside the home. This development has helped fuel an ongoing discussion of the roles of women and men in America and how power should be allocated in society as a whole and between household partners in particular.

Though 22 governments around the world currently have female heads of state, the United States has yet to elect a woman president (Institute for Women's Leadership, Rutgers University, 2011). Nevertheless, women are serving as associate justices in the Supreme Court, as senators and representatives of Congress, and in countless other positions of power and influence in both government and the business world. With the emergence of women in traditionally male roles, particularly in positions of power, **gender roles** (the traits and behaviors assigned to males and females in a culture) are being redefined.

Just as *supermoms* struggle to find a meaningful balance between work and family, so too men are challenged by their own changing world. Years ago, a man's home may have been *his* castle; today it's an *egalitarian haven*. Just how fairly power and work should be shared in American households is a topic of considerable discussion today. Some observers suggest that men still have a long way to go before true equality is reached in the home.

Many maintain that women have been the true pioneers of the gender revolution, arguing that wives have more quickly changed their roles *outside* the home than men have changed their roles *inside* the home. Still others question how equal we really want males and females to be in our society. They assert that females and males are biologically different and that wives should stay at home to better socialize our children. Regardless of one's position, it's impossible to deny that gender roles and relationship power balances are evolving in today's society.

## Urban Migration and Overcrowding

"The history of American agriculture," according to Rex Campbell, a rural sociologist at the University of Missouri at Columbia, "is the history of technology in rural areas" (Campbell, cited in Graham, 1998, p. 9; also, Campbell, 2010). When farmers depended on animals for work and transportation, small towns dotted the rural landscape in the heartland about 6 miles apart. Eventually, trucks and tractors replaced horses and mules, farms got bigger, and the number of farmers and farm families declined steadily over the years. Small towns also shrank in size.

What do we lose when a small town vanishes? What do we lose when the kids grow up and leave the farm or ranch for the city? A realist, focusing solely on harsh economic forces, might say that the young person is leaving the farm to find work and a more stable life in an urban environment. An idealist might argue that we lose a little bit of the fabric of America, a small piece of the American dream. American rural societies tend to be caring environments in which many honest and hard-working individuals live and join together to help each other and their communities to succeed (Struthers & Bokemeier, 2000).

Another trend is that more people are moving away from the large cities to smaller communities within commuting distance. Although it may take a village to raise a child, a villagelike atmosphere can also be created in an urban neighborhood, in an apartment building, or among relatives and friends scattered about a city. The impersonal forces of urban living can be countered by the creation of villagelike social structures in the neighborhood, in the workplace, in religious institutions, and in community settings. Villages today are also being created in cyberspace. Many people enrich their already vibrant social lives by connecting to loved ones, friends, and colleagues globally via the Internet. One's neighborhood may reach out through several continents.

## Financial Problems and the Global Economy

Financial issues are the most common stressors couples and families face, regardless of how much money they make. Researchers have consistently found that economic distress and unemployment are detrimental to family relationships. More than one in five children in this country live in poverty (22%), and more than one in three poor people are children (36%) (National Poverty Center, 2010).

Food security in American households and communities is defined as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. The latest data indicate that 85.1% of U.S. households were food secure throughout 2011, while 14.9% were food insecure at least some time during that year (United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2013).

The National Coalition for the Homeless argues that it is very difficult to estimate how many people are without a home in the United States, but the best approximation comes from a study conducted by the Urban Institute, which found that 3.5 million people are likely to experience homelessness in a given year, and 1.35 million of these people are children. The most recent statistics available indicate that children under age 18 account for 39% of the homeless population; and that 42% of homeless children were under the age of 5. It is argued that two trends are largely responsible for the rise in homelessness in the past 20 to 25 years: a growing shortage in affordable rental housing and, at the same time, an increase in poverty (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009, July).

Many Americans today are doing well financially, and yet many other Americans live close to the edge, lacking savings and chronically spending more than they earn. Easy credit lines have contributed to mounting debt and difficulty. Credit card debt, which carries extraordinarily high interest rates, plagues many Americans, and many are in over their heads from housing payments spurred, again, by easy credit. As we have seen, debt threatens not only individuals and families but also the well-being of the lenders and, eventually, the economy as a whole.

Although economic survival is challenging for many people in the United States, residents of many countries around the world are in far worse straits. Nonetheless, their economic problems do not exist in isolation; as business commentators and politicians frequently point out, we are living in a global economy. The strength of the American economy is inextricably linked in complex ways to the economies of many other nations.

Thus the employment situation in Asia, Europe, or Latin America influences marriage and family relationships not only in those corners of the world but in this country as well. For example, if American farmers can't find markets for their produce in the United States or elsewhere, they aren't going to be able to buy American cars, Japanese televisions, or shirts crafted in Malaysia. Likewise, if the Japanese or Malaysians can't find markets for their products at home or abroad, income and employment will drop in those countries, and Malaysians won't be going to college in California and Japanese won't be vacationing in Hawaii.

Although individuals cannot directly influence the economic changes in the United States or internationally, they can control their own spending. The most positive approach is that people should have a saving and investment plan, which is only possible if a person stays out of debt by limiting credit card spending and other overspending.



## Changing the Social Environment

Recently, there have been a number of initiatives with the goal of improving the social environment in order to improve the lives of individuals and families in communities. An example of one of these initiatives is the Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota, a nationally known organization that conducts research and creates programming around assets that promote healthy growth and development of young people (Search Institute, 2013). Twenty of the 40 assets that have been known to help youth have to do with positive experiences that young people receive from interactions in their communities. Several communities have enhanced community assets, such as schools, neighborhoods, and youth organizations, with the goal of ultimately improving the lives of young people.

William Doherty, a family scholar at the University of Minnesota, has developed the Families and Democracy Model, which provides strategies to engage citizens to make changes in their communities (Doherty, 2013). The model provides direction to family professionals and community citizens to come together to solve problems that affect individuals and families. After hearing from a family professional about the loss of family time in today's busy society, community members in one neighborhood decided to do something to change this societal trend. Using the Families and Democracy Model, the community developed and implemented the Putting Family First initiative, which encourages families and community institutions to make family time a high priority. One of the outcomes of this initiative was the cancellation one night a week of all community activities so that families could spend time together.

Many communities have schools, organizations, and religious institutions that provide positive experiences for the individuals and families who live in those communities. Even when those institutions are not present, community initiatives can create a social environment that will benefit the community's residents.

## Positive Responses to the Social Environment

Because the social environment in which we live poses many problems for couples and families, it is important that couples and families be more proactive, beginning with their own relationships. There is growing evidence that people are happier, healthier, and wealthier if they are in a marriage (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). And a strong marriage brings even more positive benefits for the individuals, the couple, and their family.

Fortunately, there are countless ways to provide for oneself and one's close relationships and at the same time help make the world a better place. There are types of work and lifestyle that provide not only financial security but also emotional satisfaction and the comfort of knowing that one's life actually makes a difference. The following account illustrates the reciprocal value of giving to others. This is what Raedene, 20, an undergraduate student and volunteer in a Big Brothers Big Sisters program, had to report:

*I felt it was my job as a college student as well as a citizen to give something that I had always received, a little love and attention. I signed up for training in the program and was contacted by one of the organizers. After attending many long hours of training, I wondered if I had gotten myself into something more than I had bargained for. They required me to spend at least 5 hours a week with my match. I didn't think that I possibly had time but decided to give it a shot.*

*About 5 days after training, I received a phone call that I was going to be matched with a little 5-year-old girl. I met my supervisor at the home of Elizabeth, my new little friend. A little nervous, I walked into their home. It was really strange. The minute I sat down, Elizabeth jumped up on my lap like she had known me for years. "Could you read this book to me? ... Watch this! ... Come into my room!" She just couldn't stop talking.*

*I did know from that minute on that this young child needed my love and attention more than 5 hours a week. I felt a sense of warmth come over me. To think that I was second-guessing 5 hours a week to give to a child who needed me. We played for a couple of hours until her mom felt comfortable with the match. I told Elizabeth that I would phone her Monday. Her response was, "Don't forget." When I left all I could do was smile. I knew I was in for some fun.*

*Over the semester I have seen much growth in her, socially and intellectually. She's in kindergarten and is always telling me how much she likes it, and I always try to reinforce how much fun school is. I understand what she talks about, and I listen to what she has to say. I feel she has gained so much trust in me over the past four months.*

*I am able to communicate openly with her mother. I offer suggestions to her on many topics. I am very honest with her mother, and her mother trusts me a lot, too. I have learned how difficult a time their family has dealing with finances, stepparents, and stepsiblings. I have seen much growth in their family over the past 4 months. I am very happy that I chose to volunteer my time. I wish everyone would volunteer because not only does the child benefit from the experience, but you do, too.*

The late Betty Friedan (1921–2006), a pioneer in the latest wave of the feminist movement, said, "People's priorities—men's and women's alike—should be affirming life, enhancing life, not greed." She argued for a basic restructuring of our economy and society, putting the lives and interests of people first. The restructuring cannot be accomplished in terms of women versus men, Blacks versus Whites, old versus young, conservative versus liberal. "It can't be done by separate, single-issue movements now, and it has to be political to protect and translate our new empowerment with a new vision of community, with new structures of community that open the doors again to real equality and opportunity" (Friedan, 1997; National Women's Hall of Fame, 2013).

## Summary

- The family today is not in danger of extinction, but it is changing. The American family is more diverse today, in terms of family structure and ethnicity, than ever before.
- Somewhat under half the people marrying today will probably divorce at some time in their lives, often because they enter marriage with unrealistic expectations, marry the wrong person, marry for the wrong reasons, or have few skills to deal with the many challenges of marriage.
- Marriage is the emotional and legal commitment of two people to share emotional and physical intimacy, various tasks, and economic resources. A family is

two or more people who are committed to each other and who share intimacy, resources, decision-making responsibilities, and values.

- Some of the major trends in family structure, marriage, divorce, and remarriage are the following: There are both more families headed by single women and more stepfamilies today than there were in the 1950s and 1960s; families are smaller today; women are more likely to work outside the home after marriage; both men and women are marrying at a later age; cohabitation before marriage has increased dramatically; the divorce rate increased but has now stabilized at somewhat under 50%; and about 75% of those who divorce later remarry.

- Though not all families are strong, all families have strengths, and strengths develop over time. Strengths help families cope with stress and problems and help families better manage change.
- Marriage has many advantages for individuals, including a longer life, better health and healthier lifestyle, more money and wealth, a better sexual relationship, less domestic abuse for women, and more successful children.
- Human beings do not live and love in a vacuum. Besides being connected to special people in our lives, we are inextricably embedded in our social environment. As individuals, couples, and families, we have little influence on society, but society has a great deal of influence on our personal attitudes and behaviors.
- There are many elements in our social environment that pose difficult challenges for couples and families. These include stress, change, and materialism; lack of time for oneself and significant others; the increasing use of child care outside the family; instability of couple and family relationships; violence; the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; the Internet's effects on human relationships; changing gender roles and the balance of power in intergender relationships; urban migration and overcrowding; and financial problems and the effects of the global economy on families.
- Community initiatives led by community members and family professionals have made some communities more supportive of youth development and building strong family relationships. These initiatives can be models for other communities.
- Surveys over the years indicate that the majority of Americans think their marriages and families are doing pretty well and that their lives are generally satisfying.

## Key Terms

marriage	stress
family	gender role
social environment	

## Activities

1. In small groups, write down your own definition of the family. Share your responses within the group and compare how your ideas are similar and/or different.
2. What is your definition of marriage? After writing your definition, compare it with the definition used in this book.
3. Interview a grandparent or a great-grandparent (or another older person you would like to get to know better) about family life in *the old days*—both positive and negative aspects. Some interesting areas to explore might be (1) growing up in a family, (2) a woman's place

in the world 50 or more years ago, (3) gender roles, (4) the Great Depression of the 1930s, (5) World War II, (6) major family crises, (7) religion, and (8) philosophies of child rearing.

4. What are the major stressors in your social environment? Make a list and discuss it with others. How did you deal effectively with these stressors?

## Suggested Readings

Al-Anon/Alateen. (2013). "For over 55 years, Al-Anon (which includes Alateen for younger members) has been offering strength and hope for friends and families of problem drinkers. It is estimated that each alcoholic affects the lives of at least four other people . . . alcoholism is truly a family disease. No matter what relationship you have with an alcoholic, whether they are still drinking or not, all who have been affected by someone else's drinking can find solutions that lead to serenity in the Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship." Web site: <http://www.al-anon.alateen-org/english.html>.

Alcoholics Anonymous. (2013). In their own words, AA is "a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." AA charges no dues or fees for membership and is self-supporting through member contributions. It is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution. AA does not wish to engage in any controversy, and neither endorses nor opposes any causes. "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety." Web site: <http://www.aa.org/lang/en/subpage.cfm/page=1>.

Asay, S. M., DeFrain, J., Metzger, M., & Moyer, B. (2013). *Family violence from a global perspective: A strengths-based approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DeFrain, J., & Asay, S. M. (2007). *Strong families around the world*. London and New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Bryant, J., & Bryant, J. A. (2001). *Television and the American family*. (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Cherlin, A. (2009). *The marriage-go-round: The state of marriage and family in America today*. Clashing values have caused more partnering and repartnering in the United States than elsewhere in the world, Cherlin argues. The reason, in part, is that Americans value both marriage and individualism.

Dalla, R., DeFrain, J., Johnson, J., & Abbott, D. A. (2009). *Strengths and challenges of new immigrant families: Implications for research, education, policy, and service*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield. Explores the lives of East Indian, Sudanese, Somali, African, Asian Indian, Korean, Irish, Egyptian, Israeli,

Chinese, Mexican, and other immigrants. "A wonderful introduction for those wanting to study or work with immigrant families."

Deal, R. L., & Olson, D. H. (2010). *The remarriage checkup: Tools to help your marriage last a lifetime*. Minneapolis: Bethany House. Ways in which remarried couples can build on their strengths and overcome relationship problems.

DeFrain, J., & Asay, S. M. (Eds.). (2007). *Strong families around the world: Strengths-based research and perspectives*. London and New York: Haworth Press/Taylor & Francis.

Esteinou, R. (2009). *Construyendo relaciones y fortalezas familiares: Un panorama internacional*. Mexico, D.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social. This book, published in Spanish in Mexico City, is the first book in Latin America to focus on family strengths. The book is the result of the Mexican Family Strengths Conference held in Cuernavaca, and includes articles from Mexico, Australia, Botswana, China, Italy, Korea, and the United States.

Kartemquin Films. (2008). *The new Americans*. Web site: [kartemquin.com](http://kartemquin.com). Follows 4 years in the lives of a diverse group of contemporary immigrants and refugees as they start new lives in America. An Indian couple is viewed through the dot-com boom and bust in Silicon Valley. A Mexican meatpacker struggles to reunite his family in rural Kansas. Two families of Nigerian refugees escape government persecution. Two Los Angeles Dodgers prospects follow their big dreams of escaping the barrios of the Dominican Republic. And a Palestinian woman marries into a new

life in Chicago, only to discover that in the wake of September 11, she cannot leave behind the pain of the conflict in her homeland.

National Marriage Project. (2012). *The state of our unions: Marriage in America 2012*. Web site: <http://www.nationalmarriageproject.org>.

National Stepfamilies Resource Center. (2013). Web site: <http://stepfamilies.info>.

Northern Territory Government. (2008). *Strong families: Sharing cultural parenting knowledge*. Darwin, N.T., Australia: Department of Health and Community Services. Focuses on four strong families in Australia: the Ahmed family from Somalia; the Albert family from Thailand and Australia; the Gray family from Papua New Guinea; and the Casimiro-Branco family from East Timor. The families share their personal stories, their family traditions, and how they have dealt successfully with the challenges of life they face in Australia today.

Olson, D. H., Olson-Sigg, A., & Larson, P. J. (2008). *The couple checkup*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. Based on a survey of 50,000 couples, the book is an effort to help couples find the strengths in their relationship and build on these strengths.

Straus, M., Gelles, R., & Steinmetz, S. (2006). *Behind closed doors: Violence in the American family*. New Brunswick, NJ: Translation Publishers.



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