



Marriages and Families

Making Choices in
a Diverse Society

Mary Ann Lamanna • Agnes Riedmann



EDITION

Marriages and Families

MAKING CHOICES IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

Sixth Edition

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
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*To our families, especially
Bill, Beth, Chris, and Natalie
Larry, Valerie, Sam, Janice, and Simon*

About the Authors

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Preface

As we complete our work on the sixth edition of *Marriages and Families*, we look back over five earlier editions. Together, these represent twenty years spent observing the contemporary American family.

Not only has the family changed during this time but so has sociology's interpretation of it. Even though our observation of change is not always encouraging, it *is* gratifying to find ourselves a part of the enterprise of learning about the family and to share that knowledge with students.

Our own perspective on the family has developed and changed during this period as well. We have studied demography and history and have come to pay more attention to social structure in our analysis. We continue to affirm the power of families to direct the course of their lives. But the American social milieu seems less promising today than it did when we began this book. Consequently, we now give more attention to policies needed to provide support for today's families: working parents, poor and minority families, single parents, remarried families, gay and lesbian couples, and other nontraditional families—in short, virtually all families, as the once-standard nuclear family becomes less and less prevalent (though it remains a cultural ideal and common family experience). Marriage and family values continue to be important in

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

The Book's Themes

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

MAKING CHOICES THROUGHOUT LIFE The process of creating and maintaining marriages and families requires many personal choices, and people

continue to make decisions, even “big” ones, throughout their lives.

PERSONAL CHOICE AND SOCIAL LIFE Tension frequently exists between the individual and the social environment. Many personal troubles result from societal influences, values, or assumptions, inadequate societal support for family goals, or conflict between family values and individual values. By understanding some of these possible sources of tension and conflict, individuals can perceive their personal troubles more clearly and can work constructively toward solutions. They may choose to form or join groups to achieve family or individual goals. This may include involvement in the political process to shape state or federal social policy. The accumulated decisions of individuals and families may also shape the social environment.

A CHANGING SOCIETY In the past, people tended to emphasize the dutiful performance of social roles in marriage and in the family structure. Today people are more apt to view marriages as committed relationships in which they expect to find companionship and intimacy. This book examines the implications of this shift in perspective.

Individualism, economic pressure, social diversity, and decreasing marital permanence are features of the social context in which personal decision making takes place today. As fewer social guidelines seem fixed, personal decision making becomes even more challenging.

The Themes Throughout the Life Course

The book’s themes are introduced in the prologue, and they reappear throughout the text. We developed these themes by looking at the interplay between findings in the social sciences and experiences of the people around us. Ideas for topics arose from the needs and concerns we perceived. We observed many changes in the roles people play and in the ways they relate to each other. Neither the “old” nor the “new” roles and relationships seemed to us as stereotyped or as free of ambivalence and conflicts as is often indicated in books and articles. The attitudes, behavior, and relationships of real people have a complexity that we have tried to portray in this book.

Interwoven with these themes is the concept of the

life course—the idea that adults may change through reevaluation and restructuring throughout their lives. This emphasis on the life course creates a comprehensive picture of marriages and families and enables this book to cover many topics that are new to marriage and family texts. This book makes these points:

- Many people reexamine the decisions they have made about marriage and family not once or twice but throughout their lives.
- People’s personal problems and their interaction with the social environment change as they and their marriages and families grow older.
- People reevaluate their relationships and their expectations for relationships as they and their marriages and families mature.
- Because marriage and family forms are more flexible today, people may change the style of their marriage and family throughout their lives.

Marriages and Families Making Choices

Making decisions about one’s marriage and family, either knowledgeably or by default, begins in early adulthood and lasts into old age. People choose whether they will adhere to traditional beliefs, values, and attitudes about gender roles or will adopt more androgynous roles and relationships. They may clarify their values about sex and become more knowledgeable and comfortable with their sexual choices.

Women and men may choose to remain single or to marry, and they have the option today of staying single longer before marrying. Single people make choices about their lives, ranging from decisions to engage in sex for recreation to decisions to abstain from sex altogether. In the courtship process people choose between the more formal custom of dating and the less formal “getting together.”

Once individuals choose their partners, they have to decide how they are going to structure their marriages and families. Will the partners be legally married? Will theirs be a dual-career marriage? Will they plan periods in which just the husband or just the wife works interspersed with times in which both work? Will they have children? Will they use the new reproductive technology to become parents? Will other family members live with them—parents, for exam-

ple? They will make these decisions not once but over and over during their lifetimes.

Within the marital relationship, couples choose how they will deal with conflicts. Will they try to ignore conflicts and risk devitalized relationships? Will they vent their anger in hostile, alienating, or physically violent ways? Or will they practice bonding ways of communicating and fighting—ways that emphasize sharing and can deepen intimacy?

How will the partners distribute power in the marriage? Will they work toward a no-power relationship in which the individual is more concerned with helping and supporting the other than with gaining a power advantage? How will the partners allocate work responsibilities in the home? What value will they place on their sexual lives together? Throughout their experience family members continually face decisions about how to balance each one's need for individuality with the need for togetherness.

Parents also have choices. In raising their children, they can assume the role of martyr or police officer, for example, or they can simply present themselves as human beings who have more experience than their youngsters and who are concerned about developing supportive, mutually cooperative relationships.

Many spouses face decisions about whether to divorce. They weigh the pros and cons, asking themselves which is the better alternative: living together as they are or separating? Even when a couple decides to divorce, there are choices to make: Will they try to cooperate as much as possible or insist on blame and revenge? What living and economic support arrangements will work best for themselves and their children? How will they handle the legal process?

The majority of divorced individuals eventually face decisions about remarriage. And in the absence of cultural models, they choose how they will define step-relationships.

When families meet crises—and every family will face *some* crises—members must make additional decisions. Will they view each crisis as a challenge to be met, or will they blame each other? What resources can they use to handle the crisis?

An emphasis on knowledgeable decision making does not mean that individuals can completely control their lives. People can influence but never directly determine how those around them behave or feel about them. Partners cannot control each other's changes

over time, nor can they avoid all accidents, illnesses, unemployment, deaths, or even divorces. Society-wide conditions may create unavoidable crises for individual families.

Families *can* control how they respond to such crises, however. Their responses will meet their own needs better when they refuse to react automatically and choose instead to act as a consequence of knowledgeable decision making.

Key Changes in This Edition

As marriages and families have evolved over the last twenty years, so too has this text. Its new subtitle, *Making Choices in a Diverse Society*, illustrates the vast changes that have taken place over the last decade. With its thorough updating and inclusion of current research, plus its new emphasis on students' being able to make choices in an exceedingly *diverse* society, this book has become an unparalleled resource for gaining insights into today's marriages and families.

Over the past five editions, we have had two goals in mind for student readers: first, to help them better understand themselves and their family situations; and second, to make students more conscious of the personal decisions that they will make throughout their lives and of the societal influences that affect those decisions. These two goals continue and are reflected in the four themes of this text, described earlier.

The decision-making theme is, in fact, enhanced, in this edition. We highlighted the theme of making choices by introducing a group of theme boxes ("As We Make Choices . . .") throughout the text. These boxes emphasize human agency and are designed to help students through those moments of crucial decisions. Many of these are boxes from earlier editions, ones which our reviewers especially liked and particularly asked us not to delete.

Moreover, we have added a third goal for this edition: to help students better appreciate the variety and diversity among families today. In order to accomplish this third goal we have presented the latest research and statistical information on diverse family forms, lesbian and gay male families, and on families of diverse races and ethnicities. We consciously integrated these new materials throughout the textbook, always with an eye toward avoiding stereotypical, simplistic generalizations and, instead, explaining data in sociological and sociohistorical context. Besides integrating

information on ethnic diversity throughout the text proper, we have added an entirely new series of boxes entitled, "A Closer Look at Family Diversity." These boxes focus on the latest theory or research as it applies to some area of family diversity, from Hmong families in Minneapolis to sexuality between lesbian partners.

In addition (and as users have come to expect), we have thoroughly updated the text's research base and statistics, emphasizing cutting-edge research that addresses the diversity of marriages and families as well as all other topics. In accordance with this, users will notice as many as twelve entirely new tables and twelve entirely new figures. Revised tables and figures have been updated with the latest available statistics.

As our reviewers requested, we have included more discussion of how to apply an understanding of theory and methods to current research on families. And we have reviewed every sentence, paragraph, and section for readability, eliminated wordiness and made explanations and points clearer where appropriate.

The material formerly covered in the Managing Family Resources chapter has been moved, putting the budget material into an appendix and adding policy material in appropriate places throughout the text. Meanwhile, we have kept an applied perspective in the text, with its emphasis on decision making in today's increasingly diverse society.

Because reviewers felt that the material in the former Prologue was too important not to be designated a regular chapter, we expanded the Prologue and renamed it Chapter 1, "Family Commitments: Making Choices in a Changing Society." The former box, "Some Facts about Families in the United States Today," a favorite of our users, now appears in Chapter 1. This chapter now defines the concept *family* and sets the stage for the text, introducing the themes and goals of the text, introducing the controversy over when families are in "decline" or simply "change," and giving statistics that show briefly what the situation of families in the United States is today—statistics that will be expanded upon throughout the textbook. Chapter 1 also includes a new "Closer Look at Family Diversity" box on family ties and immigration.

Chapter 2 discusses theoretical perspectives on families, perspectives that are integrated throughout the text wherever possible, and adds a new section on the family ecology perspective that includes family

policy discussion taken from our previous edition's Chapter 13. Box 2.1 is updated, and there is new, focused discussion on feminist perspectives and a new "Closer Look at Family Diversity" box on studying ethnic minority families.

The focus of Chapter 3 has changed from gender stereotypes and gender scripts to gender identities and how these are negotiated and maintained. There are new sections on masculinities and femininities; revised, updated discussion of gendered socialization in schools, including a new section on African American, Latina, and Asian American girls in middle school; and new material on how men change. The section on the men's movement has been revised, and a new "Closer Look at Family Diversity" box explores Chicana feminism.

Chapter 5 underwent a major revision. It now begins with a section on sexual orientation, the entire chapter having been reframed with much new material in the section on sex and society and a new section, "Evolutionary Psychologists—Once again: Is Anatomy Destiny?" that reinforces and extends the discussion in Chapter 3. A new section, "An Historical Perspective," presents material on heterosexism and homophobia; another new section, "An Interactionist Perspective: Negotiating Cultural Messages," introduces this concept and relates back to the subject's introduction in Chapter 2. In response to our reviewers' requests that we further discuss research methods wherever possible, we have added a new section, "How do We Know What We Do?" that explains surveys in general and surveys about sex in particular. The section, "Platform and Pulpit," now begins with material on Masters and Johnson's research (formerly in an appendix), and there is new, updated material on the New Christian Right.

In Chapter 6, the "Changing Attitudes Toward Marriage and Singlehood" section has been extensively revised and updated; material dealing with single women as compared with married women and single men as compared with married men has been rewritten, and there is a new "Closer Look at Family Diversity" box on African American men's friendship.

In Chapter 7, the table on the ratio of men and women by age and race has been revised to include figures for the following ethnic groups: Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Eskimo/Aleut, African American, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic white. The

concept of complementary needs, along with complimentary needs theory, have been added. There is a new “Closer Look at Family Diversity” box on early marriage in a Hmong cohort.

Chapter 8, “Marriage: A Unique Relationship,” has been a substantial revision. We believe it is the best chapter on this topic that we have ever written. The chapter begins with a new section on marriage and kinship that includes new concepts such as dominant dyad, consanguineous relationship, and *la familia*. The chapter also reframes the discussion on intrinsic versus utilitarian marriages. The section on extramarital sex has been totally rewritten, and a new section on the controversy over whether same-sex couples should legally marry is now included.

Chapter 9 includes a new discussion of family systems theory that has been incorporated into the text proper rather than appropriated to a box, a change of chapter focus from just resolving conflicts to implementing positive communication techniques, and a new “Closer Look at Family Diversity” box on religion’s role in rural African American marriages.

In Chapter 10, we reinstated French and Raven’s six bases of power, as requested by our reviewers, and added a new “Closer Look at Family Diversity” box on immigrant children, speaking English, and family power. We added material on family violence and updated that section thoroughly as well as added a new section on abuse among lesbian and gay male couples.

Material throughout Chapter 11 has been updated, while technical information on high tech fertility from the 5th edition has been moved from this chapter, as requested by our reviewers, and reformulated as an appendix (Appendix E).

In Chapter 12, new “parents and children” sections relate specifically to African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans. There is a newly revised section on raising minority children in a racist and discriminatory society, as well as a new “Closer Look at Family Diversity” box in which an Asian student talks about discrimination he encountered. Le Master’s five parenting styles have been taken out of their 5th-edition box and incorporated into the text proper.

Chapter 13 has a new section on race, ethnicity, and housework, and a new “Closer Look at Family Diversity” box on race/ethnicity, immigration, social class, and childcare.

In Chapter 14 there is a new “Closer Look at Family Diversity” box on how low-income, African American mothers care for children with sickle-cell disease, along with a new section that specifically addresses the “sandwich” generation, as requested by our reviewers.

In Chapter 15, there is a new section, “Other Factors Associated with Divorce,” that points to such demographic factors as marrying young and premarital childbearing; the section on the economic consequences of divorce has been revised; there are new sections that explore the issue of no-fault divorce laws and if they’re responsible for ex-wives’ and their children’s poverty; and there is a new section on survey versus clinical findings regarding children of divorce. There is a new section on the possible reasons for the negative effects of divorce on children, adult children of divorced parents, and intergenerational relationships, and the stability of marriages for adult children of divorced parents.

Chapter 16 has been retitled “Remarriages” in the plural to demonstrate that remarriages are not all alike; and a section has been added to show the diversity of remarriage types, from those without any children to those with step and biological children. This chapter has a new case study, “My (Remarried) Family,” along with a new section on remarriage and children’s living arrangements.

The Afterword (formerly the Epilogue) now includes an entirely new section on family values. This section is designed to be especially text-student interactive: Students are asked to think critically and answer questions about what they think family values are and the relationship between these and social policy.

All the appendices have been revised and updated as needed. Two new appendices have been added from material previously in the text proper: Appendix E: High-Tech Fertility, and Appendix I: Managing a Family Budget.

The Summary sections of each chapter have been revised, as have all Study Questions sections at the end of each chapter.

Special Features of Marriages and Families

- **A broad, up-to-date research base.** The content is based on extensive research. More than 2,500 sources are cited, including many recent studies.

- **Interview case studies.** Agnes Riedmann talked with individuals of all ages about their experiences in marriages and families. These interviews appear as boxed excerpts, balancing and expanding topics presented in the chapters. We hope that the presentation of individuals' stories in their own words will help students to see their own lives more clearly and will encourage them to discuss and reevaluate their own attitudes and values.
- **Enrichment material.** Boxed material on making choices and on family diversity, drawn from classic research, new studies, popular social science, and newspaper and journal articles supports and expands the chapter content.
- **Pedagogical aids.** An outline of topics to be covered introduces each chapter. A large number of charts and diagrams present current data in easily understood form. End-of-chapter study aids include a summary, a list of key terms, study questions, and annotated suggested readings. A comprehensive glossary defines and illustrates important terms.

Ancillary Materials Available

The Instructor's Resource Manual with Test Items (written by David Treybig, Baldwin-Wallace College) includes for each chapter lecture outlines and suggestions, student activities, chapter review sheets, and video suggestions. Each chapter also includes multiple-choice, true-false, and completion questions with page references.

The Study Guide (also written by David Treybig of Baldwin-Wallace College) contains for each chapter an overview and summary, points to ponder, key terms, key research studies and concepts, study tips, and test items (that include true/false, short-answer, multiple choice and essay questions with an answer key).

New to this edition, the *Marriages and Families* World Wide Web Home Page offers materials for students and instructors, including links to Internet resources relevant to the study of marriages and families, exercises for students using the World Wide Web, Instructor's Resource Manual material, and more. Access the Lamanna/Riedmann Web site through the Wadsworth URL: <http://www.wadsworth.com/wadsworth.html>.

In addition, new videotapes selected to reflect the diversity of marriages and families covered within the textbook will be available to adopters; contact your ITP sales representative for details.

The Small Group Activities and Collaborative Exercises Workbook consists of suggestions and resources for student activities appropriate for small groups and collaborative learning environments.

Wadsworth Marriage and Family Videotape is available upon adoption. This features four 30-minute segments from the Intelcom telecourse series, "Portrait of a Family," which was developed to support this text. Topics include gender roles, communication, conflict and divorce.

Transparencies contain forty two-color acetates that include charts and graphs from the text.

Testing now includes both computerized testing and new online testing for adopters.

Acknowledgments

This book is a result of a joint effort on our part; neither of us could have conceptualized or written it alone. We want to thank some of the many people who helped us.

Looking back on the long life of this book, we again acknowledge Steve Rutter for his original vision of the project and his faith in us. We also want to thank Sheryl Fullerton and Serina Beauparlant, who saw us through earlier editions as editors and ongoing friends.

As has been true of our past editions, the people at Wadsworth Publishing Company have been professionally competent and a pleasure to work with. We are especially grateful to Eve Howard, our editor, who worked with us diligently on this edition. We value the skill and patience of Robin Lockwood, production manager, who shepherded our book through a complex production. Hal Humphrey served as project editor. Thanks also go to copy editor Jennifer Gordon for a wonderful job, to Linda Rill for photo research, and to Jeanne Bosschart and Linda Rill for permissions. We are also grateful to editorial assistants Deirdre McGill and Carrie Kahn, as well as to former assistant editor at Wadsworth, Susan Shook. Our cover and interior design are the work of Stuart Cuttriss and Jane Hambleton. Our illustrations were done by Hans & Cassidy, and our indexing, by Katherine Stimson. Thanks to everyone.

Agnes Riedmann especially acknowledges her mother, Ann Langley Czerwinski, Ph.D., who helped her significantly with past editions.

Sam Walker has contributed to each edition of this book through his enthusiasm and encouragement for

Mary Ann's work on the project. Larry and Valerie Lamanna have enlarged their mother's perspective on the family by bringing her into personal contact with other family worlds—those beyond the everyday experience of family life among the social scientists!

Reviewers gave us many helpful suggestions for revising the book, and although we have not incorporated all of their suggestions, we considered them all carefully and used many. The review process made a substantial contribution to the revision. Peter Stein's work as a thorough, informed, and supportive reviewer throughout the various editions has been an especially important contribution. Sixth edition reviewers include:

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Students and faculty members who tell us of their interest in the book are a special inspiration.

To all of the people who gave their time and gave of themselves—interviewees, students, our families and friends—many thanks.

Mary Ann Lamanna
Agnes Riedmann

A Student's Guide to Learning

As you start out on this exploration of marriages and families, you no doubt hope to gain some insights into this social institution that is a major element in shaping our lives. For instance, what is a functional family? For that matter, what is a family? How do so many different interpretations of marriage and family work within one society? Where is this institution called family headed and how will all these rapid changes affect you?

This book will help you gain both a better understanding of yourself and your own personal family situation, as well as a deeper understanding and broader perspective of the societal diversity that exists outside—and maybe even within—your family structure. Through the text's focus on decision making, you'll learn to become more aware of the personal decisions you must make throughout your life and how to make educated choices based on knowledge. You'll also discover how society influences your decision making.

As marriages and families have evolved over the last twenty years, so too has this text. Its new subtitle, *Making Choices in a Diverse Society*, illustrates the vast changes that have taken place over the last decade. With its thorough updating and inclusion of current research, plus its new emphasis on your being able to make choices in an exceedingly *diverse* society, this book is an unparalleled resource for gaining insights into today's marriages and families.

Take a few minutes to look over the next few pages. This Guide to Learning is a quick run-through of the text's major elements—all developed to help you to understand the changing nature of families today and to make informed choices in an increasingly complex and fluid society.

Making Choices . . .

The Decision Making Perspective

What's really behind the decisions you make? This diagram of the cycle of knowledgeable decision making is a great visual aid in helping you gain a better understanding of the decision making process and how social forces affect the personal choices you make. The diagram also illustrates one of this book's important themes: decision making within the context of a diverse society.

(From Chapter One: Family Commitments: Making Choices in a Changing Society)

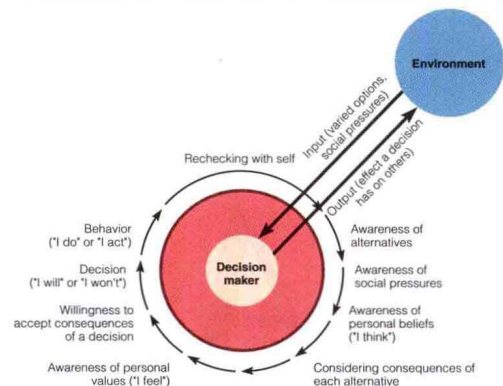


FIGURE 1.2

I The cycle of knowledgeable decision making. (Source: Adapted from O'Neill and O'Neill 1974)

AS WE MAKE CHOICES

BOX 5.2

Communicating About Sex

Negotiating our own sexuality and sexual expression in face-to-face relationships can be tricky. (Maybe that's why cybersex is so popular!) Sexual expression carries the promise of "transcending the limits of the individual and relating intimately... to other persons" (Francoeur 1987, p. 531). At the same time, sharing our sexuality makes us tremendously vulnerable. Both women and men need clear and positive feedback to know what brings their partners the greatest joy and fulfillment. One popular seminar leader on relationship communication and sex recommends that couples take a half hour every so often, particularly when they are not feeling negative about sex, and talk about it.

Here are some questions to stimulate an informative conversation:

- What do you like about having sex with me?
- How did you feel when I did _____?
- Would you like more sex?
- About how much sex would you like each week (or month, or day)?
- Would you like for us to spend more (or less) time when we have sex?
- Is there something specific you would like me to do in the next month during sex?
- Is there a new way you would like me to touch you? If yes, would you show me?

- Is there anything new you would like me to try?
- Is there anything you would like to try that we've never done?
- Is there anything I used to do that you would like me to do more of or again?

Note that a conversation like this needs to be mutual and reciprocal: *Both* partners ask and answer these questions—and they accept each other's answers without judgment either of themselves or of their partner.

What makes it difficult to talk about our sexual desires is that we don't want to hurt our partner's feelings and, conversely, we would hate to hear that we are disappointing our partner in any way at all. Meanwhile, we don't want to feel pressured to do anything that would not feel comfortable to us. So when answering these questions, it is important that you make it clear that you are not demanding more. The dialogue works best if its only purpose is to share information.

Then, too, you should not do things that do not feel right to you. But if your partner wants something that doesn't seem important to you or seems unpleasant, you might consider keeping an open mind. And when your partner does not seem open to things you favor, try to accept that at least for now. "A secret of great sex is to build on the strengths you have and not focus on the problems or what you are missing" (Gray 1995, pp. 53–55).

Many New "As We Make Choices" Boxes to Help You in Those Moments of Crucial Decisions

This box, "As We Make Choices: Communicating About Sex," provides you with some useful questions that can help you turn what might have been awkward, stilted, self-conscious conversation about sex into a sincere, open, meaningful dialogue.

(From Chapter Five: Our Sexual Selves)

A Rock-Solid Research Base . . .

This latest edition of *Marriages and Families* is filled with a wealth of statistics and research references that are the latest and most solid data available. As you read through the many topics on marriages and families and the data that supports the material, you'll gain new insights into the forces shaping our society and your own daily life.

Some 500 new sources have been added to this edition, including references from *The American Sociological Review*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, and *The Journal of Marriage and the Family*, as well as periodicals such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Newsweek*.



Children learn much about gender roles from their parents, whether they are taught consciously or unconsciously. Parents may model roles and reinforce expectations of appropriate behavior. On the other hand, children also internalize messages from available cultural influences and materials surrounding them.

playing with other-sex toys (Lytton and Romney 1991).

Boys have toys that develop spatial ability and creative construction; girls have toys that encourage social skills (Lips 1995). Toys considered appropriate for boys encourage physical activity and independent play, whereas "girls' toys" elicit closer physical proximity and more talk between child and caregiver (Calders, Huston, and O'Brien 1989). As children get older, Patrick is more likely to have a computer than is Patricia (Nelson and Cooper 1990). And Patrick may join the Boy Scouts, an organization originated to "make big men of little boys."

Beginning when children are about 5 and increasing through adolescence, parents allocate household chores—both the amounts and kinds—to their children differentially, that is, according to their sex. Patricia

will more likely be assigned cooking and laundry tasks; Patrick, painting and mowing (Burns and Homel 1989; McHale et al. 1990).⁶ Because typically girls' chores are daily and boys' sporadic, girls spend more time doing them—a fact that "may convey a message about male privilege" (Basow 1992, p. 131). Some parents unconsciously allow (even expect) sons to be inconsiderate, rude, and interrupting while their sisters are reminded to be a little quieter and less mentative (Orenstein 1994, pp. 46–47).

6. The number of girls and boys in a family apparently influence chores are distributed. Families with all girls, for example, may assign traditional male-child tasks to girls than do families with one boy. And the age and gender of siblings are important. Reiss found that when an older sibling is of the same sex, play acts to be gender-stereotyped; if the older sibling is of the other's sex play is common (Brody and Steelman 1988).

Girls and Boys in the Family

Most studies on gender socialization beliefs and practices have been conducted on non-Hispanic white families. One study of black families indicated that both sons and daughters are socialized toward independence, employment, and child care (Hale-Benson 1986). Still, because most of the research presented in this section has focused on middle-class whites, findings may or may not apply to other racial/ethnic or class categories.

At least among middle-class whites, parents treat female and male infants differently. From the 1970s on, parents have reported treating their sons and daughters similarly (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974; Antill 1987), but differential socialization exists and typically is subtle and not deliberate (Shapiro 1990). Even parents who support nonsexist child rearing for their daughters are often concerned if their sons are not aggressive or competitive "enough"—or are "too" sensitive (Pleck 1992).

Research shows that parents handle infant sons more roughly and respond more quickly to crying baby girls (Lips 1995). As a toddler, Patricia will probably have a doll, Patrick, a truck. A study of 120 babies' and toddlers' rooms found that girls had more dolls, fictional characters, children's furniture, and the color pink; boys had more sports equipment, tools, toy vehicles, and the colors blue, red, and white (Pomerleau et al. 1990). And most parents, especially fathers, discourage their children, especially sons, from

Topics of High Interest Backed by Recent Research

This discussion of girls and boys in families is richly supported by current research references. The text's hundreds of current references give you an informed and analytical view of the status of marriages and families today. (From Chapter Three: Our Gendered Identities)

Parents also model different behaviors. As Chodorow notes, most children are cared for by mothers primarily. This situation may convey to children the idea that child care (and nurturance in general) is "women's work." Meanwhile, fathers may appear to be involved with "more important" and prestigious things (Burns and Homel 1989).

Gender socialization in early childhood begins a continuing process whereby females and males are channeled into separate spheres of skills and interests (Lips 1995). Although relations in the family provide early feedback and help shape a child's developing identity, play and peer groups become important as children try out identities and adult behaviors. We turn our attention now to research on differences in boys' and girls' play.

... Comprehensive and timely



Should same-sex couples marry? The question is controversial, even among gay men and lesbians.

gay activist Craig Dean and his lover, Patrick Gill, formed the Equal Rights Marriage Fund after they were denied a marriage license in 1991. At about the same time, after being denied a marriage license in Hawaii, Patrick Lagon, a graphic artist in his 30s, and Joseph Melillo, a chef in his late 40s, sued to gain Hawaii's legal recognition of their sixteen-year relationship. Two lesbian couples joined the suit. Lagon explained that both he and Melillo were raised to expect to fall in love and marry "like anybody else" (De Lama 1994). The men talk proudly of their "simple" life together, characterized by TV, pet dogs, a flower garden, and weekend drives (Gross 1994).

In response to the suit, in 1993 the Hawaii Supreme Court voted 3-2 that refusal to recognize same-sex marriages may violate sex discrimination laws. Among other things, the court said that defining

marriage as necessarily between one man and one woman was "circular and unpersuasive" reasoning. The court sent the case back to a lower court where the state was required to prove that it had a "compelling interest" in denying same-sex couples the right to marry.

As a result, in their 1994 legislative session, Hawaii's lawmakers sought to clarify the state's marriage statute. They considered, on the one hand, a state constitutional amendment that would limit marriage to heterosexuals and, on the other, a broad domestic partnership act (see Box 6.2) that would appease same-sex couples without giving them the right to marry legally. Legislators finally agreed on a bill stating that marriage is meant for "one man and one woman" but also creating a commission to propose remedies for any discrimination against same-sex

couples or both. Couples may publicly declare their commitment in ceremonies among friends or in some congregations and churches, such as the Unitarian Universalist Association or the Metropolitan Community Church, the latter expressly dedicated to serving the gay community. Catholics have access to a union ceremony designed by Dignity, a support association for gay and lesbian Catholics. In a 1993 gay rights march in Washington, D.C., 1,500 same-sex couples participated in a mass wedding with ministers and rice (Salholz 1993). None of these couples is legally married, however. By law, dating to a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1974, marriage is defined as a union between one man and one woman; hence same-sex marriage is not legally recognized in the United States.

Meanwhile, some cities and counties have passed domestic partner laws (defined in Box 6.2). According to this concept, unmarried couples may register their partnership and then receive some of the legal benefits of marriage, such as joint health or auto insurance or bereavement leave, for example. Besides practical benefits, registering as domestic partners has emotional significance for some same-sex couples, who do so as a way of publicly expressing their commitment (Ames 1992). But registering as domestic partners lacks the deep symbolism of marriage. "Gays and lesbians were raised in the same culture [as] everyone else," notes gay historian Eric Marcus. "When they settle down they want gold bands [and] legal documents" (in Salholz 1993).

Attitudes toward gay rights have generally become more liberal. Nevertheless, a 1993 poll by the *Washington Post* found that 53 percent of Americans oppose homosexual relationships in general and 70 percent are against same-sex marriage (Salholz 1993). For religious fundamentalists and other conservative groups, the case against gay marriage is unambiguous: Marriage is intrinsically straight. From this point of view, the move to legalize marriage is an "attempt to deconstruct traditional morality." As the posters proclaim, "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve" (Salholz 1993; Gross 1994).

Legal Marriage and Hawaii

While several western European nations are beginning to consider it, the only countries that legally recognize gay male and lesbian marriages are Denmark and Norway (Singer and Deschamps 1994; Wyman 1994). This situation may be about to change, however. U.S.

Throughout this book, you will find comprehensive coverage of important and timely topics such as this provocative discussion of same sex marriages in Chapter 8. Sensitive, complete coverage of issues like these are important to your understanding of the many controversial issues related to marriage and the family.

couples that might result from denying them the legal right to marry (Gross 1994). The outcome will be either legalization of same-sex marriage by Hawaii's Supreme Court or a broad and far-reaching domestic partnership act—and perhaps both (Gross 1994). At the time of this writing, many observers think that Hawaii is about to legalize same-sex marriage.

By itself, any court ruling in Hawaii would not affect other states. But many same-sex couples from throughout the United States could marry legally in Hawaii, then seek recognition of their marital status in their home states. States usually recognize one another's legal decisions, according to the *principle of reciprocity*. The only exception is when one state claims a violation of local public policy, which is expected to be the explanation for not recognizing gay marriage in the twenty-three states where sodomy remains a criminal act (see Chapter 5). Within the next several years the issue is likely to find its way to the U.S. Supreme Court (Gross 1994).¹

Views of Gay Rights Activists on Same-Sex Marriage

Lesbians and gay men who favor legalized same-sex marriage argue that legal marriage yields economic and other practical advantages. Marrieds can lower their taxes by filing a joint return; if one spouse dies or is disabled, the other is entitled to Social Security benefits; legal partners can inherit from one another without a will; spouses are immune from subpoena regarding testimony against each other. Some companies offer health insurance to an employee's legal spouse and dependents. And when one or both partners suffer from AIDS or other serious illness, the protections of marriage could prove highly beneficial (Stoddard 1989; Wyman 1994).

Moreover, unlike heterosexual couples, homosexual couples receive little social support for continuing long-term relationships. On average, relationships for both gay males and lesbians last two years to three years, and a pattern of serial monogamy exists (Harry

1983). As Mary Mendola, lesbian author of the *Mendola Report* (1980), explains:

The major difference separating us as heterosexual and lesbian couples over our lesbian marriage had none of the support systems Mr. and Mrs. Nest Door enjoyed. I had not had a bridal shower or a bachelor party depending on how one looks at it. . . . Aunts and uncles did not come to visit and admire our home. We never received anniversary cards. As trivial as these things may seem, they represent something vitally important: heterosexual couples are encouraged to stay together. . . . Lesbian and homosexual couples have no such support systems. Rather than being encouraged to stay together, we are conditioned to believe there is no future for us as couples. (p. 4)

Being able to marry legally could help to change this situation.

Furthermore, denying lesbians and gay men the right to marry implies that they are not as good or valuable as heterosexuals. The right to marry legally could remedy this. Some lesbians and gay men believe that legal marriage would be their "most important civil rights victory" yet; related successes would follow. For instance, laws banning same-sex sodomy (see Chapter 5) would very likely be repealed or declared unconstitutional. "And social custom—already in flux—would undoubtedly change" (Wyman 1994).

Gay and lesbian opponents of legal same-sex marriage, such as gay rights attorney Paula Enfield, object to mimicking a traditionally patriarchal institution based on property rights and institutionalized husband-wife roles. As one lesbian explained,

When my home I feel married to Frances, but I don't consider us "married." The marriage part is still very heterosexual to me. One of the reasons I don't like to associate with marriage is because heterosexual marriage seems to be in trouble. It's like looking through on the Titanic. Frances is my life partner; that's how I'm accustomed to thinking of her. (in Sherman 1992, pp. 189–90)

More generally, opponents object to giving the state power to regulate primary adult relationships. They stress that legalizing same-sex unions would further stigmatize any sex outside marriage, with unmarried lesbians and gay men facing heightened discrimination (Enfield 1989).

get that lifelong fidelity is far from universal; on the other hand, specific acts of infidelity may not be routine or continual. The contrasting data on extramarital sex suggest that today, as in the past, many spouses are torn between lifelong commitment to a sexually exclusive marriage and desire for outside sexual relationships. For the majority of mates, however, the decision to marry involves the promise to forgo other sexual partners. If we interpret fidelity to mean a primary commitment to one's partner and the relationship, then maintaining emotional intimacy becomes essential to being faithful. Without continued intimacy and self-disclosure, partners may not remain in love or keep a central place in each other's lives. Emotional commitment, in this view, is the essential element of primacy, as much or more than sexual fidelity per se. This ideal of primacy can make marriage relationships more satisfying.

To sum up, marriage entails making ongoing choices about permanence and primacy. In the next section, we'll examine whether same-sex couples should marry legally.

Should Same-Sex Couples Marry?

Many gay male and lesbian couples live together in long-term, committed relationships (Allen and Demos 1995). Partners may exchange vows or