Chapter Outline

- Singlehood
- Cohabitation
- Common Law Marriages and Domestic Partnerships
- Gay and Lesbian Cohabitation
- When Friends Are Like Family

Singlehood

- The Unmarried Population
  - There are more single women than men; a ratio of 89 men to every 100 women in the U.S. population, 18 and older, who are not currently married.
  - Women make up nearly 53% of all unmarried Americans. Sixteen percent of the unmarried population, representing approximately 16.5 million people, are age 65 years old or older.
Singlehood

Never Married Singles in America: An Increasing Minority

- The increases in the numbers of single adults are the result of several factors:
  - Delayed marriage
  - Increasingly expanded educational, lifestyle, and employment options open to women
  - Increased rates of divorce
  - More liberal social and sexual standards
  - Uneven ratio of unmarried men to unmarried women

Relationships among the Unmarried

- When intentionally single heterosexual people form relationships within the singles world, both the man and the woman tend to remain highly independent.
- Unmarried women and men are typically employed and, thus, tend to be economically independent of each other.
- They may also be more emotionally independent because their energy may already be heavily invested in their work or careers.
Types of Never-Married Singles

- Voluntarily and temporarily unmarried
- Involuntarily and temporarily unmarried
- Voluntarily and permanently unmarried
- Involuntarily unmarried

Singlism and Matrimania: Myths and Misconceptions

1. All singles, especially single women, want to be coupled.
2. Singles are miserably lonely, bitter, and envious of their coupled friends.
3. Singles are self-centered and immature.
4. Single women will someday regret not having married and not having families. They are alternately and unflatteringly portrayed as either sexually deprived or sexually promiscuous.
5. Single men are frequently portrayed as threatening, irresponsible, sexually obsessed, or gay.
6. Children of single parents are destined to suffer emotionally, socially, academically, financially, and behaviorally.
7. Singles lack a partner and, therefore, lack a purpose.
8. Singles will age and die alone.
9. Married people with families deserve special benefits, perks, higher pay, and other resources that singles don’t need.

Cohabitation

- Few changes in patterns of marriage and family relationships have been as dramatic as changes in cohabitation.
- Over the past 40 years, cohabitation has increased more than 20-fold.
- It has increased across all socioeconomic, age, and racial groups.
Cohabitation

- The general climate regarding sexuality is more liberal than it was a generation ago.
- The meanings of marriage and divorce have changed.
- Men and women are delaying marriage longer.
- Women are less economically dependent on marriage.
- Cohabitation has become normalized as a stage or phase in one’s life course.

Cohabitation: Factors in Increase

- Cohabitation is more likely among those with less education.
- Men with less than full-time, year-round employment are more likely to cohabit than to marry.
- The childhood experience of parental divorce or family instability increases the likelihood that one will enter a nontraditional lifestyle such as cohabitation.
- There are racial differences that often overlap with class differences regarding the likelihood of growing up in cohabiting parent households.
Types of Cohabitation – Four Types
- Trial marriage
- Precursor to marriage
- Substitute for marriage
- Coresidential dating

Types of Cohabitation – Five Types
- Prelude to marriage
- Stage in the marriage process
- Alternative to singlehood
- Alternative to marriage
- Indistinguishable from marriage

Types of Cohabitation – Three Types
- Accelerated cohabitants
- Tentative cohabitants
- Purposeful delayers
What Cohabitation Means to Cohabitors

- Delays age of marriage
- Cohabiting couples lack the socio-economic rights of married couples in the U.S.
- Banks may not look at cohabiting couples the same as married couples

Cohabitation and Remarriage

- Roughly half of those who remarry after a divorce cohabit before formally remarrying.
- Postdivorce cohabitation is now more common than premarital cohabitation.
- Marital quality and happiness appear to be lower among postdivorce (pre-remarriage) cohabiters.

Cohabitation and Marriage Compared

- Different Commitments
  - Marriages begin with spouses pledging a lifelong commitment to each other.
  - Living together tends to be a more temporary arrangement than marriage.
  - Cohabiters are less certain of a lifetime together and tend to live more autonomous lives.
Cohabitation and Marriage Compared

- **Sex**
  - Married couples experience more fulfilling sexual relationships.
  - Heterosexual cohabitants have more frequent sexual relations.

- **Finances**
  - Overall, cohabiting women and men have more precarious economic situations than married couples.

Cohabitation and Marriage Compared

- **Children**
  - Births during cohabitation do not seem to significantly affect—either positively or negatively—the cohabiting relationship.

- **Health**
  - Married people have somewhat better general health than cohabitants, who, in turn, have better health than the separated and divorced, widowed, and never married.
Cohabitation and Marriage Compared

- Cohabitating couples tend to have poorer relationships with more violence.
- Married couples tend to do more household chores than cohabitating couples.

Effect of Cohabitation on Later Marriage

- The effects of premarital cohabitation on marriage have been the focus of considerable research and popular attention.
- Most research consistently indicates that such couples are more likely to divorce than those who do not live together before marriage.
- Little research supports the idea that cohabitation leads to beneficial marital outcomes when compared against couples who don’t cohabit before marriage.

Effect of Cohabitation on Later Marriage

- The negative effects of couples cohabiting prior to marriage:
  - More negative marital communication
  - Lower levels of satisfaction
  - Lower levels of male commitments to one’s spouse
  - Gradual erosion of the value of marriage
  - Greater likelihood of divorce
Common Law Marriages and Domestic Partnerships

- **Common law marriage**
  - A couple who “lived as husband and wife and presented themselves as married” was considered married before the 19th century.
  - Still recognized in nine states and the District of Columbia

- **Domestic partners**
  - Cohabiting heterosexual, lesbian, and gay couples in committed relationships
  - Domestic partnership laws that grant some of the protection of marriage to cohabiting partners are increasing the legitimacy of cohabitation.

Gay and Lesbian Cohabitation

- The 2010 U.S. Census reported over 600,000 gay or lesbian couples living together.
  - On average, incomes of households headed by same-sex couples are higher than those of married couples.
  - Greater percentage of partners in same-sex households have earned college degrees.
  - Average income of same-sex households is higher than married couples.
  - Same-sex couples are more likely to be dual earners than married couples.
  - The 20% of same-sex couples who are raising children, like married couples with children, have an average of two children.

Same-Sex Couples: Choosing and Redesigning Families

- Gay men and lesbians construct families of choice, whose boundaries are fluid and cross household lines.
- Lesbians and gay men construct and count on their families of choice, which may become the only family or the more important ones they have.
- In their efforts to have and raise children, further evidence can be seen of the chosen and constructed nature of family for many gay men and lesbians.
Same-Sex Couples: Choosing and Redesigning Families

- Lesbians and gay men who have children may lack legal protection and have a higher chance of losing access to a child they helped parent.

When Friends Are Like Family

- Friends can be important in a family-like role
- Development of care networks to assist in day-by-day parental tasks

Summary

- There has been a dramatic increase in the unmarried population.
- The population of women and men who are unmarried is diverse.
- Cohabitation is increasing accepted because of a more liberal sexual climate, changed meaning of marriage, and divorce.
- Reasons for cohabitation vary.
- Domestic partnership law and policies are changing.