1.1 What is the view/theme of this text?
A central theme of this text is to encourage you to be proactive—to make conscious, deliberate relationship choices to enhance your own well-being and the well-being of those in your intimate groups. Though global, structural, cultural, and media influences are operative, a choices framework emphasizes that individuals have some control over their relationships. Important issues to keep in mind about a choices framework for viewing marriage and the family are that (1) not to decide is to decide, (2) some choices require correcting, (3) all choices involve trade-offs, (4) choices include selecting a positive or negative view, (5) making choices produces ambivalence, and (6) some choices are not revocable. Generation Yers (born in the early 1980s) are relaxed about relationship choices. Rather than pair bond, they “hang out,” “hook up,” and “live together.” They are in no hurry to find “the one,” to marry, and to begin a family.

1.2 What is marriage?
Marriage is a system of binding a man and a woman together for the reproduction, care (physical and emotional), and socialization of offspring. Marriage in the United States is a legal contract between a couple and their state that regulates their economic and sexual relationship. The federal government supports marriage education in the public school system with the intention of reducing divorce (which is costly to both individuals and society). The various types of marriage are polygyny, polyandry, polyamory, pantagamy, and domestic partnerships.

1.3 What is family?
In recognition of the diversity of families, the definition of family is increasing beyond the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition to include two adult partners whose interdependent relationship is long-term and characterized by an emotional and financial commitment. Types of family include nuclear, extended, and blended. There are also traditional, modern, and postmodern families. See the table to the right for differences between marriage and family.

1.4 How have marriage and the family changed?
The advent of industrialization, urbanization, and mobility involved the demise of familism and the rise of individualism. When family members functioned together as an economic unit, they were dependent on one another for survival and were concerned about what was good for the family. The shift from familism to individualism is only one change; others include divorce replacing death as the endpoint for the majority of marriages, marriage and relationships emerging as legitimate objects of scientific study, the rise of feminism, changes in gender roles, increasing marriage age, and the acceptance of singlehood, cohabitation, and childfree marriages. Marriages and families today must also deal with the additional stresses of terrorism.

1.5 What are the theoretical frameworks for viewing marriage and the family?
Theoretical frameworks provide a set of interrelated principles designed to explain a particular phenomenon and provide a point of view. The following table gives an overview of the frameworks used in this text.
1.6 What are some factors to keep in mind when evaluating research?

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

**beliefs** definitions and explanations about what is thought to be true.

**binuclear family** family in which the members live in two households.

**blended family (stepfamily)** a family created when two individuals marry and at least one of them brings a child or children from a previous relationship or marriage.

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

**collectivism** pattern that one regards group values and goals as more important than one's own values and goals.

**common-law marriage** a marriage by mutual agreement between cohabitants without a marriage license or ceremony (recognized in some, but not all, states).

**conflict framework** view that individuals in relationships compete for valuable resources.

**control group** group used to compare with the experimental group that is not exposed to the independent variable being studied.

**domestic partnership** a relationship in which individuals who live together are emotionally and financially interdependent and are given some kind of official recognition by a city or corporation so as to receive partner benefits.

**experimental group** the group exposed to the independent variable.

**extended family** the nuclear family or parts of it plus other relatives.

**familism** philosophy in which decisions are made in reference to what is best for the family as a collective unit.

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

**family life course development** the stages and process of how families change over time.

**family life cycle** stages which identify the various challenges faced by members of a family across time.

**family of orientation** the family of origin into which a person is born.

**family of origin** the family into which an individual is born or reared, usually including a mother, father, and children.

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

**family systems framework** views each member of the family as part of a system and the family as a unit that develops norms of interaction.

**feminist framework** views marriage and the family as contexts for inequality and oppression.

**feral children** wild, undomesticated children who are thought to have been reared by animals.

**functionalists** structural functionalist theorists who view the family as an institution with values, norms, and activities meant to provide stability for the larger society.

**Generation Y** children of the baby boomers, typically born between 1979 and 1984. Also known as the Millennial or Internet Generation.

**hypothesis** a suggested explanation for a phenomenon.

**individualism** philosophy in which decisions are made on the basis of what is best for the individual.

**institution** established and enduring patterns of social relationships.

**IRB approval** Institutional Review Board approval is the OK by one's college, university, or institution that the proposed research is consistent with research ethics standards and poses no undo harm to participants.

**marriage** a legal contract signed by a couple with the state in which they reside that regulates their economic and sexual relationship.

**marriage-resilience perspective** the view that changes in the institution of marriage are not indicative of a decline and do not have negative effects.

**mating gradient** the tendency for husbands to marry wives who are younger and have less education and less occupational success.

**modern family** the dual-earner family, in which both spouses work outside the home.

**nuclear family** family consisting of an individual, his or her spouse, and his or her children, or of an individual and his or her parents and siblings.

**open relationship** a stable relationship in which the partners regard their own relationship as primary but agree that each may have emotional and physical relationships with others.

**pantagamy** a group marriage in which each member of the group is “married” to the others.
**polyamory** a term meaning “many loves,” whereby three or more men and women have a committed emotional and sexual relationship.

**polyandry** a form of polygamy in which one wife has two or more husbands.

**polygamy** a generic term referring to a marriage involving more than two spouses.

**polygyny** a form of polygamy in which one husband has two or more wives.

**postmodern family** non-traditional families emphasizing that a healthy family need not be heterosexual or have two parents.

**primary group** small, intimate, informal group.

**random sample** sample in which each person in the population being studied has an equal chance of being included in the sample.

**role** the behavior with which individuals in certain status positions are expected to engage.

**secondary group** large or small group characterized by impersonal and formal interaction.

**sequential ambivalence** the individual experiences one wish and then another.

**simultaneous ambivalence** the person experiences two conflicting wishes at the same time.

**social exchange framework** spouses exchange resources, and decisions are made on the basis of perceived profit and loss.

**sociological imagination** the perspective of how powerful social structure and culture are in influencing personal decision making.

**status** a social position a person occupies within a social group.

**structural-function framework** emphasizes how marriage and family contribute to the larger society.

**symbolic interaction framework** views marriage and families as symbolic worlds in which the various members give meaning to each other’s behavior.

**theoretical framework** a set of interrelated principles designed to explain a particular phenomenon and to provide a point of view.

**traditional family** the two-parent nuclear family with the husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker.

**utilitarianism** the doctrine holding that individuals rationally weigh the rewards and costs associated with behavioral choices.

**values** standards regarding what is good and bad, right and wrong, desirable and undesirable.