Sexuality in Adulthood

Chapter 14
Being Single

- Decline in marriage rates
- Pursuing educational and career goals
- Cohabitating
- Getting married later
- Less social stigma for single people today
- Many are not single by choice
- Many single people are lonely
- Most are well adjusted and content

Being single is the most common lifestyle among people in their early 20s.
Being Single

Most singles practice serial monogamy
• Becoming involved in one exclusive relationship after another

A few are “swinging singles”

Some practice celibacy
• Complete sexual abstinence
Being Single

Critical Thinking

Why do you think the relationship between sexual hookups and self-esteem is different for college men and women in the Felder and Carey (2010) study?

Why do you think that parental discouragement of relationships apparently contributed to hookups with oral sex for college women?
Cohabitation

POSSLQ
- People of Opposite Sex Sharing Living Quarters
- Introduced by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to refer to cohabitation
- Living together as though married but without legal sanction

Rates have increased 10 fold since 1960

Generally socially accepted today

Precedes more than half of marriages
- Some research has found a positive correlation between cohabiting before marriage and divorce
Cohabitation

Reasons
- Alternative to living alone
- Not ready for marriage
- Offers commitment without legal ties
- Economic benefits
- Avoid resistance of marriage by adult children

Children as common as in married households

More prevalent among less educated and less affluent people
Marriage

Most common lifestyle in US

• Rates decreasing

Long and varied history

• Wife considered property
• Men arranged marriages for gain
• View of women as loving companions rather than chattel has grown over time
Marriage

Why Do People Marry?

• Meets personal and cultural needs
• Legitimizes sexual relations
• Provides a legal sanction
• Offers an institution in which to raise children
• Restricts sexual relations
• Orderly transmission of wealth to next generation
• To satisfy desires for companionship and intimacy
• To be happier
Types of Marriage

Monogamy
- Marriage to one person

Polygamy
- Simultaneous marriage to more than one person

Polygyny
- Man is married to more than one woman at the same time

Polyandry
- Woman is married to more than one man at the same time
Types of Marriage

**Arranged Marriage**
- Families of the bride & groom arrange the union

**Gay Marriage**
- Marriage to someone of the same sex
- Many countries, some states have extended marriage rights to gay couples
- Others offer civil unions, domestic partnerships, or registered partnerships
- Younger people more supportive
- Many others support civil unions, but not use of the term marriage

**Open or Group Marriage**
- Permit relationships with people outside the marriage
Whom Do We Marry

In the choice of their marriage partner, most people practice homogamy

- The practice of marrying people who are similar
- Racial and ethnic background, education, religion, age, social background and standing

Some marriages also show a mating gradient

- Tendency for women to “marry up” (in social and economic status) and for men to “marry down”
Marital Sex

Western views restrictive prior to sexual revolution of 1960s and 1970s

- Foreplay lasts longer and is more varied
- Frequency of coitus has not changed significantly since the 1950s
  - Frequency declines with years of marriage
  - Older couples engage in coitus less frequently
- More varied coital positions are used today
- Coitus lasts longer today
- Sexual satisfaction
  - Orgasmic consistency is higher today for men and women
  - Women in their 40s are somewhat more likely to reach orgasm consistently
- Emotional satisfaction is linked to sexual satisfaction
Marital Satisfaction

- Commitment
- Adequate income
- Sharing in housework
- Generosity towards one’s spouse
- Support of family and friends
- Agreement on raising children
- Sexual satisfaction
# Infidelity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional adultery</th>
<th>Extramarital sex kept hidden from one’s spouse</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consensual adultery</strong></td>
<td><strong>Extramarital sex engaged in openly with the knowledge and consent of one’s spouse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinging (mate swapping)</td>
<td>Both spouses share extramarital sexual experiences</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Patterns of Infidelity

People engage in extramarital sex for many reasons:

- **Fulfill sexual or nonsexual needs**
- **Revenge**
- **Curiosity and personal growth**
- **Women looking for emotional closeness**
- **Women less accepting of sex without emotional involvement**
Attitudes Toward Infidelity

Only a minority of married people admit to affairs

About 90% of people in the U.S. say that affairs are “always wrong” or “almost always wrong”
Effects of Infidelity

Discovering infidelity can evoke a variety of emotional responses

• Jealousy, shame, inadequacy, anger

The harm incurred on the marriage depends on the meaning of the affair to the individual and his or her spouse

• Gender may affect how it is viewed

Discovery of infidelity may motivate the couple to try to improve their relationship

Discovery may speed up dissolution of a troubled marriage
Divorce

Between 40-50% of marriages in the US end in divorce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons include</th>
<th>Relaxation of legal restrictions on divorce</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased economic independence of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People have higher expectations of marriage compared to previous generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problems with communication and a lack of understanding are the most common reasons given for divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important predictors are a husband’s criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Divorce

A woman’s income drops by 24% and a man’s declines by about 6%

Divorced and separated people have high rates of physical and mental illness and suicide

### Effects on the child

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Divorce is hardest for children in the first year following the breakup</th>
<th>Boys greater problems earlier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls greater problems later</td>
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</tbody>
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Adjustment is easier when both parents maintain their parenting responsibilities and set aside their differences in the presence of children

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Divorce

Staying Together for the Children

Studies show that parental bickering and fighting is linked to the same kinds of problems children experience when their parents separate or divorce.

Exposure to marital conflict is stressful and has health consequences.
Divorce

Blended families

Stepfamilies increasingly common with the rise in divorce and remarriage

Can be a positive situation

Many disband due to conflict

Higher incidence of sexual abuse by stepparents
Sex in the Later Years

Sexual daydreaming, sex drive, and sexual activity decline with age
- Negative attitudes towards sex increase

Do not necessarily lose their sexuality

Sexual activity among older people influenced by
- Physical structures and changes
- Psychological well-being
- Feelings of intimacy
- Cultural expectations
Sex in the Later Years

Female Physical Changes

- Many changes result from a decline in estrogen production
  - Less vaginal lubrication occurs
  - Vaginal walls lose elasticity
- Orgasms may not feel as physically intense
Sex in the Later Years

- Changes may result from a decline in testosterone levels
  - After age 50, men take progressively longer to achieve erection
    - Erections become less firm
  - Men may need more time to reach orgasm
  - The refractory period tends to become longer with age
  - Orgasms may not feel as physically intense
Sex in the Later Years

Patterns of Sexual Activity

- Frequency declines with age
- Broaden sexual repertoire to accommodate physical changes of aging
  - Oral-genital stimulation
  - Fantasy
  - Pornography
  - Anal stimulation
  - Sex toys
- Availability of an interested & supportive partner is most determinate factor in continued activity
Sex and Disability

Sexual wellness involves five factors (Nosek et al 2004)

- Positive self-concept
- Knowledge about sexuality
- Positive, productive relationships
- Cope with barriers to sexuality
- Maintaining sexual health