

Chapter 5

Marriage

Title Page Image 5.1

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/happy-newlywed-couple-dancing-first-dance-5418405/>



Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Understand the reasons why people marry.
2. Describe today's marriage trends (based on current statistics).
3. Outline the key tasks required in the transition to marriage.
4. Identify under which conditions marriage is good for one's health.

5. Describe the influence on marital satisfaction and success.

<vignette>

Leslie's wedding date was in two weeks but she wasn't as excited as she thought she would be. She was happy to be marrying Paul, but the wedding planning was a nightmare. Their families couldn't agree on anything and since both sets of parents were paying for the wedding, there wasn't much she or Paul could do to stop the arguments. The whole event was getting out of hand. Leslie's friends weren't supportive because they thought she was crazy to be getting married so young. "Don't you know how high the divorce rate is?" they asked her. "Don't you want to have a life before you get tied down?" Leslie thought she was going to have a life: one with her partner. Most of her parents' friends had married even younger—at age 18!—and their marriages had lasted, so why couldn't hers? Maybe her friends were right . . . maybe she really didn't know what she was getting into.

Chantal was tired of the dating scene. Now age 29, she thought she would have been married by now. Most of her friends were already married or engaged, or at least happily cohabiting. She couldn't seem to find the "right" guy. Everyone kept asking her when she was going to "settle down." Settle down with whom? It's not as if she wasn't trying to meet someone. She was starting to feel a sense of panic. She needed to find someone soon or she'd never get married and have children.

Dave was tired of talking about it. Why was it so important to his parents that he get married? He was happy with the way things were. He had a great girlfriend and a great job and a lot of free time to hang out with his friends. What more could he want? How was marriage going to make his life better? Besides, he knew if he got married, the nagging wouldn't stop. His parents would then start pressuring him to have children. He wasn't sure he wanted any . . . at least not now.

<end of vignette>

Why Do We Marry?

Marriage is one possible outcome following the selection of a life partner or mate. As discussed in Chapter 4, many individuals choose to cohabitate rather than get married. Some individuals never marry, some transition from cohabitation to marriage, and others marry prior to living together (or at least get engaged before setting up a household together). But why get married? As you can imagine, the answer to this question will be different for each individual who makes that choice. Matouschek and Rasul (2008) suggest three hypotheses as to why people choose to marry rather than cohabitate. First, the couple may receive some exogenous payoff by marrying. By following socially normative customs, they are rewarded by society. Marriage may serve as a rite of passage into adulthood and social approval of the couple. Second, marriage

may act as a commitment device. Since it is still harder to end a marriage than to end a cohabiting union, getting married may promote relationship-specific investments such as purchasing a home or having children together. Finally, marriage may be used as a signalling device to state very publicly the extent of one's love for the partner. Marriage may seem a stronger signal of love ("I want to marry you") than cohabitation ("I want to move in with you"). Indeed, Matouschek and Rasul (2008) found that the majority of the couples in their study got married because it served as a commitment device.

Historically, people didn't marry for love but rather for political or economic reasons (Morton, 1992). Marriage was important in terms of creating family alliances. Love was expected to occur after the marriage, if at all. Today, reasons for marriage vary. Often, people marry for religious reasons - marriage is seen as an important part of serving a higher power. Some individuals get married for emotional security. Their partner provides them with a shoulder to lean on when it is needed or with a "soft place to fall." Other individuals marry for companionship. They enjoy spending time with their partner (who is often their best friend) and want to spend life's day-to-day moments with that person. Still others report wanting to get married before they start a family. It is important to them to be married before children are brought into the relationship.

Additional reasons for marriage include getting married because of intense physical attraction to a person or because the partner provides economic security (e.g., individuals believe that the partner can rescue them from economic disparity). Others marry because they are pressured into it by family or religious leaders, perhaps due to an unplanned pregnancy or by being told that they are "getting old." Others still get married to escape the parental home, to rebel against parental control, to rebound from a previous relationship, or to be "rescued" from an unsatisfying life (McGoldrick, 1999).

Marriage Rates

Whatever the reason for marriage, many Canadians are still making this choice. Of the 19.9 million people aged 25 to 64 in Canada in 2017, the majority were married (56%) or living in common law (15%). As you can see in Figure 5.1, the rate of married couples with children has been decreasing while the rate of cohabiting couples has been increasing. Many adults are now choosing to live in common law before marriage. Canadians are still coupling at a fairly high rate but are simply changing the way they do so.

The marriage rate can be measured in two ways: The **crude marriage rate** estimates the number of marriages for every 1000 people in a given year. The problem with this measure, however, is that the denominator in this equation includes unmarriageable people such as children and therefore is not a good indicator of the likelihood of marriage. Using the general marriage rate gets around this problem. The **general marriage rate** estimates the number of people in a population eligible for marriage and restricts the denominator to unmarried women aged 15 and older. This eliminates children from the equation. Figure 5.2 shows the conjugal status of Canadians aged 15 years and older in 2006. Notice that the largest group is made up of married couples (47.9 percent), with those never legally married representing the

second-largest group (27.6 percent) (Statistics Canada, 2006c). Of the 45,300 same-sex couples recorded on the 2006 Census, 16.5 percent were married (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010).

Figure 5.1 Percentage Distribution of Census Families by Type, Canada, 1961 to 2006

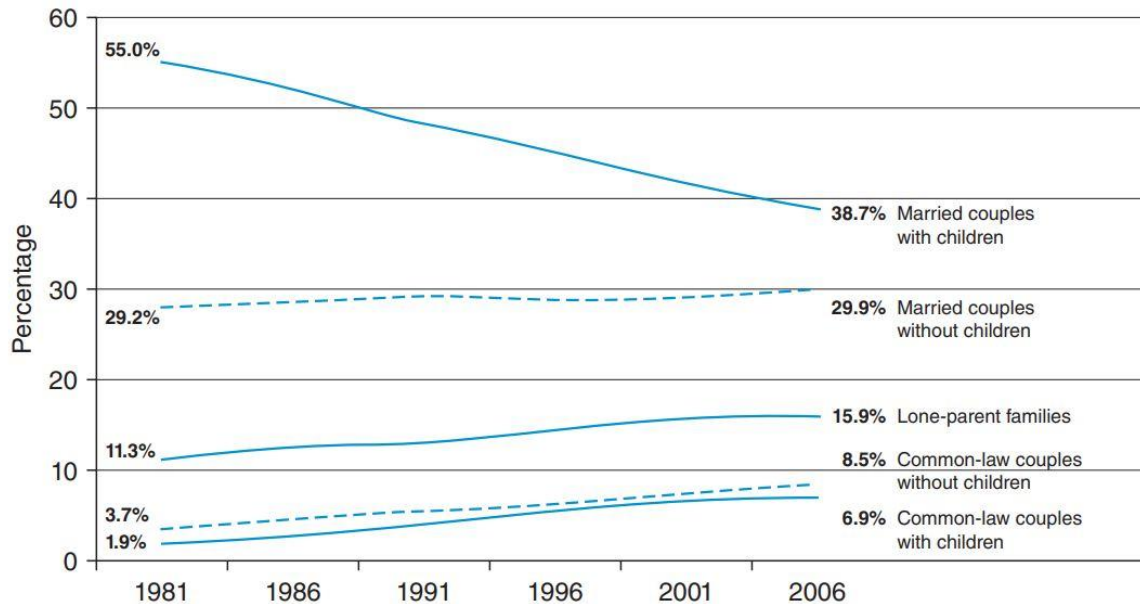
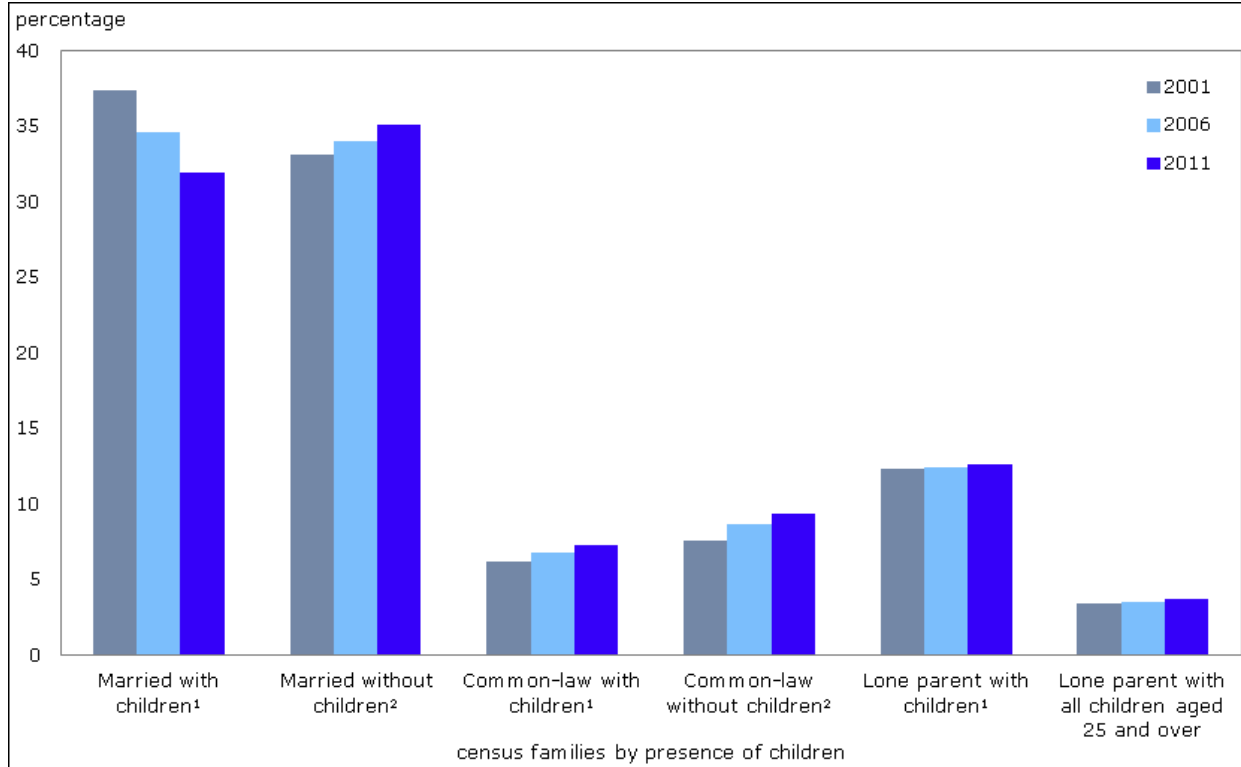


Figure 5.1 Percentage Distribution of Census Families by Type, Canada, 1961 to 2006

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population, Catalogue no. 97-554-XCB2006011.

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Figure 5.2 Conjugal Status of Canadian Population Aged 15 Years and Older, 2006



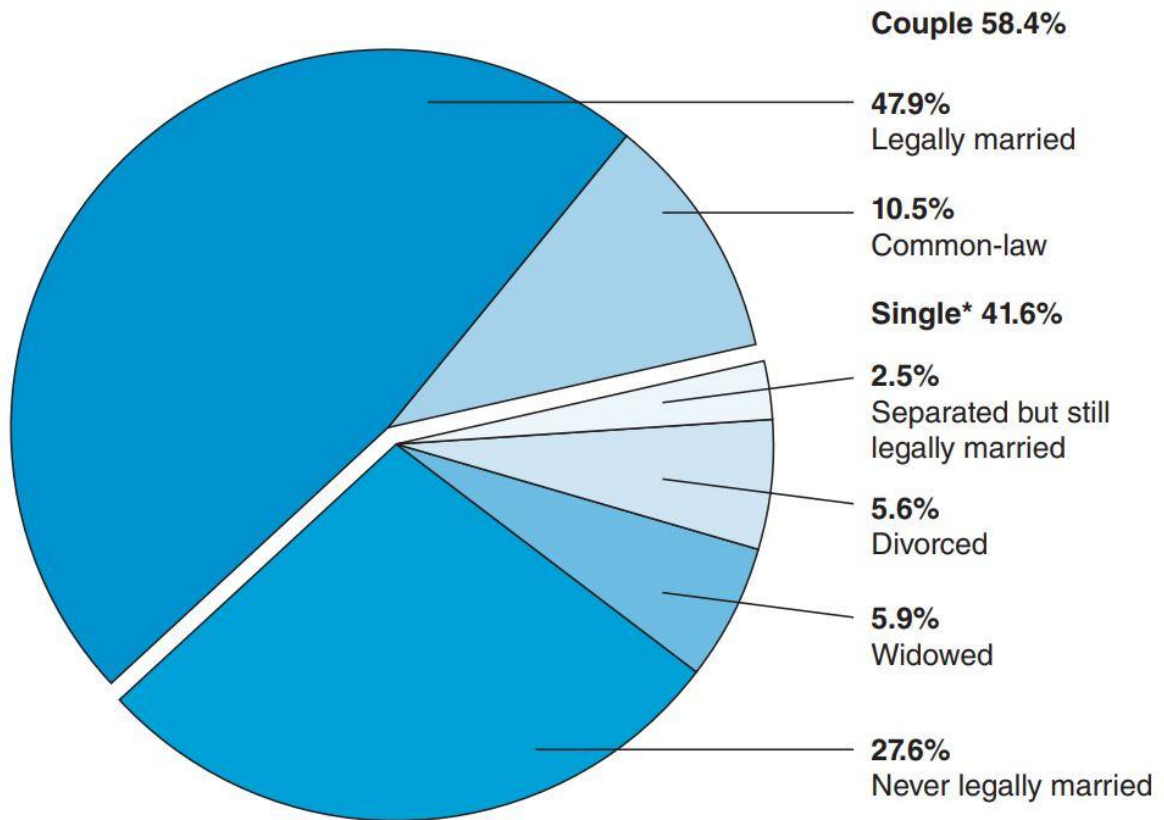


Figure 5.2 Conjugal Status of Canadian Population Aged 15 Years and Older, 2006

*Not in marital or common-law relationship.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Canada, Catalogue no. 97-552-XCB2006007

Figure 5.3 Total First Marriage Rate: Percentage Who Can Expect to Legally Marry Before Age 50, 1981 to 2004

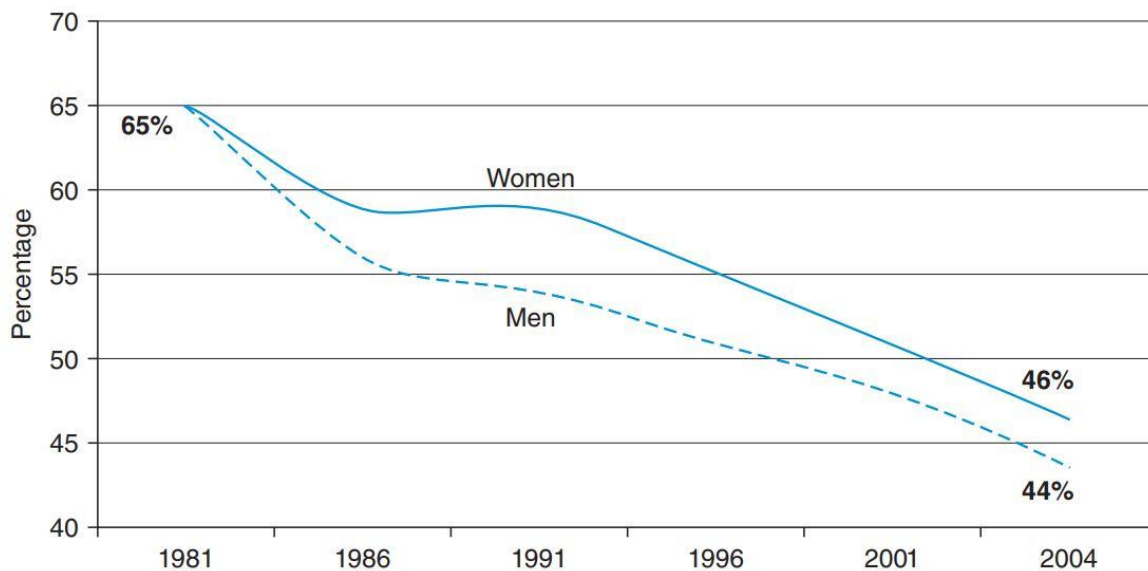


Figure 5.3 Total First Marriage Rate: Percentage Who Can Expect to Legally Marry Before Age 50, 1981 to 2004

Source: Statistics Canada (2010)

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Figure 5.3 shows the change in total first marriage rate from 1981 to 2004. Total first marriage rate is the percentage of individuals who can expect to marry before age 50. In 1981, 65 percent of both men and women could expect to marry at least once before age 50 (Statistics Canada, 2010). In 2004, this had decreased to 46 percent for women and 44 percent for men. Not all marriages are first marriages, however. In 2003, 66.2 percent of the marriages that year were first marriages for both spouses, 18.4 percent were marriages in which one of the spouses was getting remarried, and 15.5 percent involved marriages in which both spouses were getting remarried (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010). Data Box 5.1 examines the marriage rate by province or territory in 2005.

Age at Marriage

The age at which people marry is increasing (see Figure 5.5). In 2008, the median age for marriage was 29.6 years for women, while the median age for men was 31.0 years. In comparison, the average age of marriage for men in 1970 was 25.0 years and the average age for women in 1960 was 22.6 years. Same-sex couples tend to marry somewhat later, with the median being 42.7 years for men in same-sex marriages and 42.1 years for women in same-sex marriages (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010). We generally marry someone who is close to us in age (**age homogamy**), with husbands in heterosexual marriages being slightly older (by

about 2 years) than wives, especially when we are young (Mitchell, 2009). As we get older, the age gap between spouses increases. This can lead to a marriage squeeze (discussed in Chapter 3) where mid-life and older women commonly are squeezed out of opportunities to marry. This occurs because, normatively speaking, men marry younger women. As people age, it is not uncommon for a middle-aged man to marry someone much younger than himself. The same is not true for middle-aged women. Exchange theory would suggest that the man is trading wealth and status for the younger woman's beauty (therefore, men with higher status and more resources will be more successful in marrying much younger women than men with lower status and fewer resources). Accordingly, the number of eligible men in a woman's age group decreases as the woman ages, since she must compete with younger women. In addition, as we move into later life, women outlive men (Chappell, McDonald, & Stones, 2008); therefore, there are even fewer eligible men in the elderly age group.

Data Box 5.1

If You Want to Get Married, Does It Matter Where You Live?

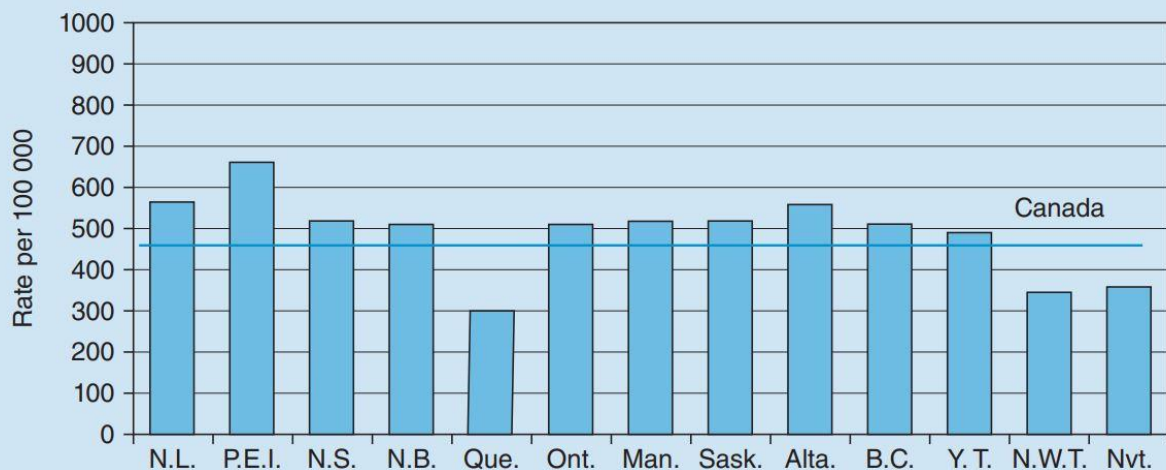


Figure 5.4 Marriage Rate, 2005, Canada, Provinces, and Territories

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Source: Statistics Canada, Annual Demographic Statistics, 91-213-XIB2005000, April 2006; <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=91-213-XIB&lang=eng#olcinfo> and the Statistics Canada CANSIM database <http://cansim2.statcan.gc.ca>, Figure 5. 2, April 5, 2011.

Figure 5.4 displays the marriage rate in each of Canada's provinces and territories. Prince Edward Island has the highest rate of marriage, while Quebec has the lowest rate. Why do you think this is the case?

Figure 5.5 Average Age at First Marriage, Canada, 1921 to 2004

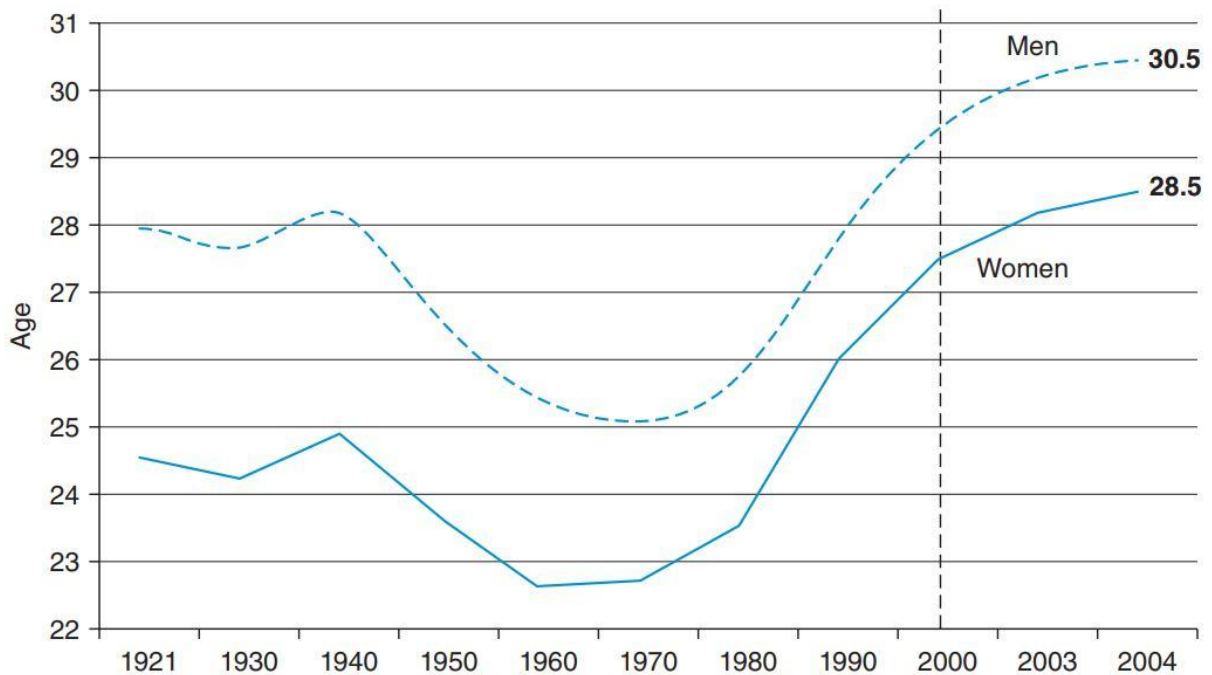


Figure 5.5 Average Age at First Marriage, Canada, 1921 to 2004

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 101-1002

Defining Marriage

Traditionally, marriage was defined as the *voluntary union for life of one man to one woman to the exclusion of all others*. Note that this implies a lifelong commitment to another person and also that the marriage is heterosexual and monogamous. Because of this definition, gay and lesbian couples were not able to marry or divorce until July 20, 2005, when the Civil Marriage Act legalized same-sex marriage across Canada (see Box 5.1). Though research on same-sex marriage is extremely limited there has been emerging literature over the years. This chapter will focus on heterosexual marriage for the most part. Findings regarding same-sex marriage will be included whenever possible. It is anticipated that we will gain more knowledge in this area in the future.

Box 5.1

The First Same-Sex Divorce in Canada

The first same-sex divorce in Canada was granted on September 13, 2004, to “M. M.” and “J. H.” in Ontario. The couple married on June 18, 2003 (the Ontario Court of Appeal had

legalized same-sex marriage in Ontario one week prior to this date). The problem with the couple's divorce application was that, according to the Divorce Act at the time, the term spouse was defined as "either of a man or a woman who are married to each other." Thus, the couple was not eligible for divorce since they did not fit the definition of spouses to each other. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that this definition of spouse was unconstitutional and thereby granted the divorce.

Source: CBC News (2004).

Image 5.2

<https://unsplash.com/photos/Z0Wa2A5NVTM>



In Canada, only monogamy is legal. **Monogamy** is the marriage of one person to another at one time. We often practise serial monogamy, which means that a person can have more than one marriage partner in his or her lifetime but must have these partners one at a time (in other words, he or she must get divorced and then remarry).

Some areas of the country practise **polygamy**, or marriage to several individuals at the same time. It is believed that this practice is supported by the values of both genders and is often linked to religious beliefs. The most common form of polygamy worldwide is **polygyny**, in which one man has several wives. **Polyandry**, the marital practice in which one woman has multiple husbands, is rare but is practised in parts of Africa and Southeast Asia. This practice occurs in conditions of extreme poverty and can be a way to keep the population from growing

too large (Harris, 1997). (A woman can have only one child every nine months, while a man can have as many children as he has partners; therefore, if a woman has several husbands, the number of children born is significantly reduced). According to Beeby (2006), new policy and laws around polygamy are being considered as some refugees and immigrants come to Canada with foreign polygamous marriages, as well as because of the open practice of some polygamous groups in Canada, such as those in Bountiful, British Columbia (see Box 5.2).

Traditionally, marriage was a sacred phenomenon maintained by a higher power and socially maintained by religious institutions. Religious teachings provided the guidelines for conduct. Marriage was also a social obligation (to create and nurture new members of the society) and was maintained by the community. Guidelines for conduct were maintained by conformity to social norms. Modern ideas about marriage revolve around the notion that marriage is for individual growth and well-being. The goal is to increase individual happiness. Often, guidelines for conduct are found in self-help books (hopefully ones based on scientific research on relationships!). With knowledge of high divorce rates, some individuals may consider signing a prenuptial agreement (see Box 5.3) before they marry, as it can facilitate clear communication before marriage and help avoid unnecessary conflict if the marriage dissolves.

Box 5.2

Polygamy in Bountiful, British Columbia

Two religious leaders of a faction of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of LatterDay Saints, Winston Blackmore and James Oler, were charged with one count each of breaching Section 293 of the Criminal Code, which bans polygamy in Canada, because they entered into a conjugal relationship with more than one individual at a time. In fact, Blackmore (who is 52 years old) is married to 19 women while Oler (age 44) is married to 3 women at the time of this writing.

British Columbia Supreme Court Judge Sunni Stromberg-Stein dropped the charges against the men, as there is question about whether the ban on polygamy is unconstitutional since it violates religious freedoms.

Source: CBC News (2009).

A fairly novel way to be married today is **living apart together, or LAT marriages** (formerly called commuter marriages), where the individuals in the marriage live in separate homes, usually in separate cities, often in separate countries, and at times in separate houses in the same neighbourhood (Borell & Karlsson, 2002). Sometimes this is a short-term arrangement, while for others this can be a lifelong living arrangement. Typically, the main reason for a LAT marriage is the career advancement of one or both spouses forcing them to live apart (Levin, 2004). Sometimes one partner becomes the “trailing spouse” who relocates several times to “follow” the other partner, having to restart his or her own career in each new location. For example, a married graduate student may have to move three times before he or

she gets a career off the ground: once to attend graduate school, a second time to take on post-doctoral training, and a third time to begin his or her first academic job. If he or she is married, the spouse may have to move each time as well.

The Transition To Marriage

The transition to marriage is the time when a newly married couple must learn to integrate with each other and with their extended families. This transition requires the couple to negotiate their roles as a married couple (McGoldrick, 1999). People often spend a lot of time planning their wedding ceremony and reception but give little thought to how the marriage will function *after* the wedding. People have expectations about their own role and their partner's role in the marriage but often these are *assumed* and not discussed. What happens on the day after the wedding, and on all the days that follow? This section outlines a few common marital "tasks" that must be negotiated by the newly married couple.

Box 5.3

Should You Have a Pre-Nup?

Marston (1997) challenges the assumption that only the rich, selfish, or greedy benefit from having a prenuptial agreement. This type of agreement is a legal document that specifies how premarital assets will be divided if the marriage were to end. Marston points out that the vilification of prenups seems irrational given that the document simply helps to enforce how assets will be divided should the marriage fail and that drafting one can potentially improve communication between engaged partners on important topics (e.g., personal finances, provision of care for children and stepchildren) that should be discussed prior to the marriage. For the prenuptial to be fair, Marston suggests that each party consult with an independent lawyer to ensure that each person is aware of his or her rights prior to signing the contract.

Source: Marston (1997).

The first task is to determine how the couple will present themselves to the larger society. Although we don't often think in these terms, this task is akin to developing a marital "theme" or image. Are we going to be the "fun, party couple," the "renovators," the "money machines," or the "black sheep"? The couple must find their unique place or identity within their extended family network that they then present outwardly through their social interactions. They also have to negotiate the meaning of their own new identities as spouses in this relationship. Does this mean that the wife takes her husband's surname, or does she keep her own name? Note that, in Quebec, women generally do not change their names when they marry and this choice is becoming more common among women who have established their careers before marriage.

A second task is to negotiate marital boundaries. What should be the extent of connection within the marriage and between family members and friends? Now that the couple is married, how much leisure time should be devoted to "couple time" versus "time with friends and family"? Is it okay for a wife to go out dancing with her friends on a Friday night without her husband? Is it

okay for a husband to have a few drinks with the guys at the local pub without his wife? Or, does the couple have to go to these events together? Must they go together always or only some of the time? How much time should the couple spend with their respective parents? How close should this bond be now? Is it okay to share every detail of their married life: the latest fight, their plans to buy a house, or their plans to have a baby? Should they talk to or visit their respective parents every day? What information is private and what is not private? Can the parents drop by at will? Do they get a key? Do they have to call first? Does the couple have to attend regular family dinners? Or, do they have to live with one set of parents, as is the custom in some cultures? You may have some strong feelings associated with these questions, but there is no correct option. All of these boundaries must be negotiated between the newlyweds and their families, and sometimes must be renegotiated over time.

A more commonly anticipated task is determining how the household will be managed. Does the couple join their bank accounts or keep separate accounts? Or, should they have a combination of these? Who pays the bills and is in charge of the finances? How will major purchase decisions be made? How much is too much to spend before you have to let your spouse know? Becker (1981) discusses investments in marriage. The more investments you make, the harder it is to dissolve the marriage. In a sense, you are creating barriers to leaving. Joining bank accounts and funds is one such investment. Having separate accounts may feel less constraining but it is also linked to higher risk for divorce (Blumstein & Swartz, 1983). Another area of household management is the division of labour within the household. Will household labour be divided along traditional gender lines, where the husband takes care of the yard and car and the wife takes care of the household tasks? Or, do we divide them by talent, ability, expertise, or simply who is willing to scrub toilets? Or, is this division determined by who holds the power in the relationship?

Finally, the “emotional climate” of the marriage must be negotiated. How will conflicts be resolved? Does the couple stay up as long as needed to resolve a conflict, or do they go to bed angry and try to resolve it the following day? Is yelling okay, or must you remain calm at all times? This may sound strange as you are reading it but think about the conflict resolution style used in your own family. Does everyone remain calm, or is there a lot of yelling? Can you imagine entering a room full of strangers (e.g., your in-laws) who are in the middle of a fight and yelling very loudly (or, alternately, who are very quiet and reserved), when you are used to the opposite? At best, it would seem strange; at worst, it would be terrifying! Keep in mind that we often “learn to fight” from our family of origin. If our family is loud, speaks their mind, and then lets the conflict blow over quickly, that is how we will approach conflicts in our new marriage. Your partner, on the other hand, may have been socialized into a very different style of conflict resolution. Once again, there is no right approach. A couple must negotiate what is and is not allowed in their own marriage. They also will negotiate a “sexual script.” Although this doesn’t sound very romantic, it must be negotiated as a married couple. Perhaps you expect to have sex every day (perhaps this was the pattern you established while you were dating, so why would it change now?). Your partner, on the other hand, may have other ideas (more or less frequent sex). With challenging work demands, deadlines, and setting up a new household, a couple may find their real sex life does not match their ideal sex life. They may need to set up

“appointments” (formally or informally). Finally, a couple needs to negotiate how best to provide emotional support to each other. If your spouse wants to talk about a problem, do you try to solve it for him or her? Or, do you simply provide a sounding board and let him or her vent frustrations? As you can imagine, the transition to marriage is often bumpy, but this should not be cause for immediate alarm. Over time, these transitional tasks are resolved and a husband and wife learn how to be a married couple.

Marriage and Health

It is generally believed that marriage is good for one’s health. Marriage has been linked to a number of health benefits such as decreased mortality, increased cardiovascular health, increased immune system functioning (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001), and increased psychological health. There are three common perspectives that explain the link between marriage and health: selection, protection, and marital quality hypotheses. We discuss each in turn.

Selection

The **selection hypothesis** states that it is not marriage per se that is responsible for the link between marriage and health. Rather, healthier people tend to marry each other and unhealthy people have a harder time finding and keeping a mate. Getting married is associated with the availability of suitable partners (who is available) and the desirability of our own traits (how desirable we are to potential mates) (Fu & Goldman, 1996). People with poor past health or those who show evidence of poor future health have lower rates of marriage. This is explained by exchange theory and the **assortative mating principle**. People pair up with individuals much like themselves and search for the best possible match they can get in exchange for the resources they have to offer. Exchange theory suggests that people with desired attributes will be the winners in the mating game. They will be selected as the best option in a set of available options. Thus healthy people tend to marry each other and unhealthy people are left to marry similarly unhealthy people or do not marry at all (i.e., they get squeezed out of marriage). In this sense, marriage does not cause better health. Research that has tested the selection hypothesis has found limited support for it. That is, despite this matching process in mate selection, marriage does seem to provide health benefits beyond the selection effect (Friedman, 1991).

Protection

The protection hypothesis states that marriage provides social and economic supports that are linked with improved health (Whitson & El-Sheikh, 2003). For example, marriage improves physical health by improving emotional health. Emotional health and physical health are linked. You can make yourself sick (e.g., give yourself a stomach ache) by feeling nervous. Marriage also reduces risk-taking behaviour. The fact that you are now responsible for another person

(your spouse would be greatly affected by your illness or death) makes you cut back or eliminate risky behaviour. Finally, marriage can help in the early detection of an illness so that treatment can be sought in time for it to be effective. For example, you may have the beginnings of skin cancer on your back due to sun damage. Since you are not able to view your back easily, you may not notice or may ignore the fact that a mole is changing shape and size. Your partner, however, can easily see your back and may alert you to this problem in time for you to have the mole removed before it becomes life-threatening.

Ross, Mirowsky, and Goldstein (1990) propose the **social support hypothesis** as an explanation for the link between marriage and health. Marriage allows us opportunities for social engagement and companionship. Through marriage, we extend our social networks to include those of the spouse. This offers us many opportunities to interact with others. The development of these friendships can provide meaning in our lives. Regular contact with other individuals promotes well-being. We feel loved and valued by our family and friends. Individuals who report having positive relationships throughout their life also report fewer physiological problems later in life. Therefore, having a social network can improve your health (Ryff & Singer, 2005).

Marriage can also affect our behaviour. It can change our moods and influence our health habits (Robles & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2003). Married couples often begin diet and exercise programs together. Or, one spouse will insist that the other quit his or her drinking or smoking habit.

Marriage may also provide financial security. Married individuals are generally more financially secure than the non-married. It is less expensive for two people to live together than for two people to live alone. For example, a couple pays only one rent or mortgage payment, heating bill, cable bill, and utility bill. Also, as part of a married couple, you have a backup; knowing that you are not solely responsible for paying all of the bills can provide a huge psychological benefit. If you were to lose your job, both you and your spouse could find a way to pay the household expenses. Mortality and morbidity are reduced for those who have financial resources. If you become ill and need special treatment, you can afford to pay for that treatment and recover.

However, marriage is more protective of men's health than of women's health (Gove, 1984). This may be because women tend to have more intimate sources of social support than men do. When women need someone to listen to their problems, they often call friends who provide them with moral support. Sometimes they leave their husbands completely out of the loop, as men often tend to try to "fix" issues when women simply want someone to listen to them! Men, on the other hand, are likely to seek emotional support from their wives. It is less common for a man to call up a friend to talk about his problems. Male friends are people to do activities with and thus men tend to have fewer people who they can intimately connect with in times of emotional upset. Men are also more likely to engage in risky behaviours prior to marriage than women are (Umberson, 1987). Therefore, after getting married they may alter their behaviour significantly, thereby improving their chances for a long and healthy life. For example, they may regularly drive too fast, skydive, eat fatty foods, and drink a lot of alcohol before marriage and then, once married, significantly cut back on these behaviours. Women already engage in fewer

risky behaviours and thus do not benefit as much from a reduction in such behaviours once they are married.

Marital Quality

The quality of one's marriage can greatly affect the link between marriage and health. The **stress buffering hypothesis** states: "the negative consequences of stress are diminished by the presence of social support . . . [thus] the quality of the marriage impacts the effectiveness of the protective function of marriage" (Riessman & Gerstel, 1985, p. 288). In other words, the protection hypothesis works only if the marriage is good, because a quality relationship will help to eliminate stress. Not only do good marriages protect one's health, but bad marriages can further reduce health. The **social strain hypothesis** states: "not only do unfulfilling marriages fail to protect the individuals involved but [they] can also impede the well-being of the marriage partners" (Riessman & Gerstel, 1985, p. 288). Positive relationship quality (e.g., marital harmony and marital satisfaction) is associated with higher levels of well-being across the life course. For men, this reduces their risky behaviours. Positive quality is also related to physiological responses to stress (we adapt and cope better with stress when in a happy marriage). Negative quality (e.g., conflict), in contrast, is associated with poor physical and psychological health. It increases depression and bad health behaviours, which in turn decreases physiological mechanisms such as cardiovascular, endocrine, and immune functioning (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). Unfortunately, negative quality has a greater impact on health than positive quality does, especially for women (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1993), as women have traditionally been socialized to focus on their relationships. Thus, a failed marriage may be viewed as more of a detriment to women than to men.

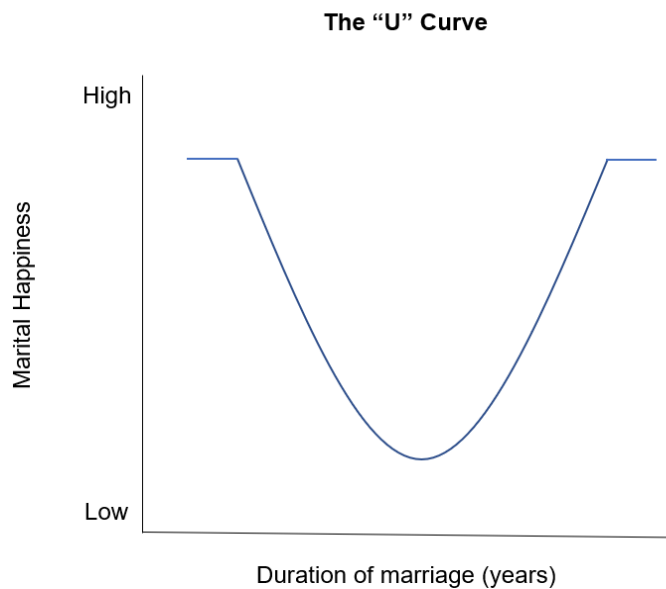
Marriage and Happiness

Research on happiness in marriage has been vast. Several terms (with minor differences in meaning) have been used interchangeably in the literature: *marital happiness*, *marital adjustment*, and *marital satisfaction*. All of these terms are used to ask the question: How happy, satisfied, or well adjusted are you in your marriage?

The majority of research on marital satisfaction over the life course has shown that happiness in marriage takes the form of a U-shaped curve (see Figure 5.6). People are happiest (most satisfied with their marriage) on the day they get married. Then, over time, marital satisfaction declines to its lowest point during mid-life or when children hit their teenage years. (Think back: Were you an easy teenager to live with?). Marital satisfaction then begins to increase slowly as people move through retirement and later life, but it never reaches the same level of satisfaction as when first married. Interestingly, even childless couples experience this U-shaped curve over the life of their marriage, although the decrease in happiness is not as drastic as for couples with children (therefore, we cannot blame all of the decline on the kids!). In fact, Twenge, Campbell, and Foster (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of studies linking parenthood and

marital satisfaction. They found that parents report lower marital satisfaction than non-parents. The number of children influences satisfaction, with more children causing less satisfaction with the marriage. The authors suggest that decreases in marital satisfaction after the birth of a child are due to conflict over roles and the decrease in freedom parents have when caring for young children.

Figure 5.6 Marital Satisfaction over the Life Course



Many other factors have been found to be associated with marital satisfaction. Amato, Johnson, Booth, and Rogers (2003) found that declines in marital quality were associated with premarital cohabitation, job demands, and extended work hours of the wife, while increases in marital quality were associated with increased economic resources, egalitarian attitudes, and support for the idea of lifelong marriage. Increases in the husbands' share of housework made the husbands feel worse about their marriages but made the wives feel better!

Image 5.3



Schoen, Rogers, and Amato (2006) examined the links between wives in a heterosexual marriages' employment and marital satisfaction. Using two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households data set, the authors found that unhappy wives were more likely to move from part-time to full-time employment over the two waves. However, contrary to predictions made by economic theories (such as social exchange theory), the full-time employment status of wives was related to increases in marital stability (but not necessarily to satisfaction). It appears that working wives may make the marriage more stable but less satisfying.

Plagnol and Easterlin (2008) examined changes in life satisfaction over the life course. They found that women tend to have higher well-being early in life while men tend to have higher well-being later in life. The authors explain that women tend to fulfill their material and family goals early in life (e.g., they buy a house and car, travel, and have children). Men tend to be more satisfied with their financial and family lives later in life (e.g., the house is paid off, they have adequate retirement funds, and child rearing is over for the most part). The authors suggest that an underlying factor that influences these outcomes is the shift in the proportion of men and women in marital and non-marital unions over the life course (recall our discussion of sex ratios in Chapter 3). Women tend to marry at higher proportions when they are young, but because of differences in longevity and the mating gradient (men marrying younger women), men in later life are proportionally higher in marital status than women.

Box 5.4

The Myth of Lesbian Bed Death

Lesbian bed death refers to the idea that, women in lesbian or queer relationships will experience a dramatic decrease in frequency of sexual contact and thus sexual satisfaction the longer they are in a relationship (Bridges & Horne, 2007). Bridges & Homes (2007) sought to empirically assess this concept by having 1,070 women in the U.S. and Canada fill out a survey comprised of a combination of scales of sexual satisfaction and marital adjustment. The results of the study revealed that, among this sample, lesbian bed death is more myth than reality. What the results suggested instead is that the predictable lowering in sexual frequency over time only correlates with a lowering in overall sexual/relationship satisfaction if there is a sexual desire discrepancy *and* if that discrepancy is perceived to be problematic. Participants who experienced sexual desire discrepancy but did not perceive it as problematic experienced no less relationship satisfaction than participants who had no sexual desire discrepancy.

Source: Bridges, Sara K. & Horne, Sharon G. (2007) Sexual Satisfaction and Desire Discrepancy in Same Sex Women's Relationships, *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 33(1), 41-53.

Marital satisfaction does not always lead to marital stability. Can you think of a couple you know who seem to be very unhappy yet have been together for years, or even decades? Can you also think of a couple who seemed to be very happy yet broke up anyway? Lewis and Spanier (1979) proposed four types of marriage based on level of marital satisfaction and marital stability. One type of couple is happy and stable, with a high level of marital quality and a high level of marital stability, thus their risk of separation or divorce is very low. This type of couple intuitively makes sense. If a couple is happy, they should be likely to stay together. Another type of couple is unhappy and unstable (they have a low level of marital quality and a low level of stability). This type also makes intuitive sense: If a couple is unhappy, their risk of breaking up should be higher (they are unstable). We also know that there are couples who are unhappy yet stay together for a variety of reasons, such as for the sake of their children. These are unhappy and stable couples who have a low level of marital quality and a high level of stability. The type of marriage that initially was most puzzling to researchers occurs when a couple is happy yet unstable (they have a high level of marital quality but a low level of marital stability). Why would someone leave a satisfying relationship?

Levinger (1965, 1976, 1999) proposed an attraction-barrier model of couple commitment that can explain these relationship types. The model attempts to predict the level of commitment an individual has to his or her relationship. Levinger states that in order to predict a person's level of commitment, we need to take into account all of the attractions to the relationship, all of the barriers to leaving the relationship, alternative attractions that are present, as well as any barriers to leaving a particular alternative. **Attractions** in this model are the net attractions to the marriage (rewarding aspects minus negative aspects) (e.g., love for one's partner). These keep an individual invested in the relationship. **Barriers** are restraining forces (both internal and external) that make a person feel that he or she must stay in the relationship (e.g., religious beliefs or children). **Alternative attractions** are the individual's net attractions to the most

salient alternative to the relationship (e.g., the sum of all feelings for another partner or for single life), and these act as forces that pull the individual out of the relationship. **Alternative barriers** refer to the strength of the barriers around leaving the alternative (e.g., the mistress gets pregnant, your job requires you to move and your family doesn't want to come along). Thus, commitment to a relationship depends on the level of attractions to the relationship, plus the level of barriers to leaving the relationship, minus the alternative attractions net of barriers around leaving the alternative.

Box 5.5

Key Findings for a Happy Marriage

[This video](#) describes 3 ways to build a happy marriage and avoid divorce.

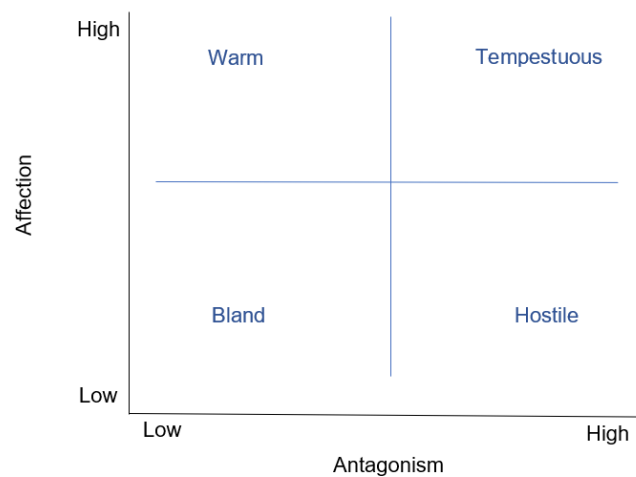
Based on this model, we can explain why happy couples may still be unstable. A person may have a high level of marital attractions (high satisfaction with the marriage) but at the same time may have low barriers (few things keeping him or her in the marriage) and have several or at least one strong alternative. He or she may also have alternative barriers and thus the combination of factors would make the individual choose to leave despite having high satisfaction. Let's look at an example: Matt is happy as Jill's husband. They share similar values, enjoy many of the same activities, and hardly ever fight (high level of attractions). However, Matt and Jill have no family living nearby and have no children of their own (low barriers). Matt was recently told by his boss that he is being promoted and must move to Europe (alternative); if he chooses not to go, the company will have to let him go as there is no longer a need for his position where he currently resides (alternative barrier). Jill has her own thriving career and would not have the same opportunities in Europe. Matt decides that it is better to end the relationship than to try to make a go of it long distance.

Premarital factors and interaction patterns can also have an effect on marital satisfaction (and subsequent stability). Caughlin and Huston (2006) proposed several models of marital change that illustrate how these patterns can affect satisfaction and stability over time. The emergent distress model assumes that when people get married, they begin their marriage feeling positive about it (e.g., high levels of love and affection, trust, and intimacy). Over time, however, negative factors (such as negative interaction patterns) start to chip away at the positive aspects of marriage. Gottman and Levinson (1992) propose four common interaction patterns that are very destructive to a relationship: contempt, criticism, defensiveness, and stonewalling. From the emergent distress perspective, a person may say, "You aren't as nice as you used to be."

The disillusionment model also assumes that all marriages begin with high levels of positive factors. However, some people idealize their partners and ignore or fail to see their partners' negative traits. Over time, the "rose-coloured glasses" come off (people cannot maintain the idealization and continue to ignore the negatives), which then leads to declines in satisfaction. Disillusioned individuals may say, "You aren't the person I thought I married."

The enduring dynamics model states that people begin their marriages with a realistic view of their partners (are aware of both positive and negative aspects of their partners). The pattern of interaction established while dating continues into married life. If, for example, you had a rocky relationship with many dramatic ups and downs while dating, you will have the same rocky relationship in marriage. The relationship doesn't necessarily change or get better after marriage! However, as we become older and busier with day-to-day responsibilities, this drama may not be as enticing as it once was, which then leads to dissatisfaction.

Figure 5.7 The Two Sides of Satisfaction



Source: Adapted from Caughlin and Huston (2006 p. 132)

Caughlin and Huston (2006) thus propose that we can identify four types of marriage based on levels of positive and negative marital quality. They use the dimensions of affection and antagonism (see Figure 5.7). Couples high in affection and low in antagonism are labelled warm couples. On the opposite end of the spectrum, if there is high antagonism (conflict) in the marriage and low levels of affection, couples are labelled *hostile*. Couples with high levels of both affection and antagonism are *tempestuous* (dramatic) while those with low levels of both affection and antagonism are *bland*, or boring.

Marital Interaction

As discussed, marital interaction patterns can greatly affect the quality of a marriage. Gottman, Coan, Carrère, and Swanson (1998), through observations of couples, found that there seems to be a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions necessary to maintain satisfaction in a given relationship. In other words, if you say or do something negative, you had better be prepared to

say or do five nice things to even out the score. This is because we tend to focus more on the negative aspects of our partner and relationship than we do on the positive aspects. Therefore, it takes many more positive interactions to make up for the one negative interaction that occurred. Depending on the severity of the negative, you may need many more than five positives (five was the average). For example, you could spend several decades happily married and generally enjoying life together and all of that could be ruined by one serious negative act: you are unfaithful. In some cases, no amount of positives can ever make up for that one negative behaviour. Box 5.6 discusses some of the common mistakes in communication made by relationship partners.

Peterson (2002) proposes four common types of relational conflict. **Criticism** occurs when a person makes verbal or non-verbal demeaning acts. For example, you may call your partner demeaning names, which generally leads to or escalates conflict. **Illegitimate demands** are another common source of conflict. This occurs when you ask your partner to do unjust things for you (e.g., lie to, trick, or deceive a family member). **Cumulative annoyances** are repetitive behaviours your partner does that become extremely frustrating over time (e.g., continuously clearing his or her throat, leaving dirty socks on the floor). Finally, **rebuffs** occur when you fail to act on a demand (e.g., your partner asks you for a glass of water and you do not bring it to him or her).

Research on attributions in conflict (cognitive thought processes related to how we view ourselves and others) has shown that during conflict we are generally more motivated to look for reasons for our own and our partner's behaviour (we want to understand why we did what we did and why they did what they did) than at any other time. Unfortunately, we tend to view the causes of our behaviour as innocent but will attribute evil motives to our partner's behaviour. Thus, we get into disagreements about motives (e.g., "You did that on purpose"; "No, I didn't") that are impossible to solve. We try to convince the other person that our view of why they behaved the way they did is correct and that their own understanding of their own behaviour is incorrect. You can see how this will never get resolved! Unhappy couples tend to attribute their partners' negative behaviour to internal ("Your personality makes you an inconsiderate person"), stable ("You are always inconsiderate"), and global ("You are inconsiderate to everyone") causes. They also attribute positive behaviour to external ("Your mom told you to bring me a gift"), unstable ("You bring me a gift only when you want something"), and specific ("You only neglect me") causes. Happy couples think in the opposite way (Fincham, Harold, & Gano-Phillips, 2000). You can now see how thought processes affect how we view our partners' behaviour and how they subsequently affect our satisfaction with the relationship.

Box 5.6

Improving Your Communication

All relationships have conflict. Conflict is inevitable. Unless we are married to ourselves, we are going to encounter differences in opinion at some point in our relationship. However, some

married couples do a better job than others of communicating through conflict. The following are some common mistakes made during conflict that only end up making things worse:

- Focusing on the negative and continuing to make negative statements.
- **Cross-complaining** occurs when a person answers a complaint with a complaint of their own instead of listening to the partner's point of view. For example, the partner says, "You need to put your dirty laundry in the hamper." Instead of listening to the request for help with domestic chores, a partner who cross-complains responds with something like: "Well, you need to iron my shirts!"
- Offering **counter-proposals** occurs when instead of listening to and accepting a valid solution offered by the partner, an individual comes up with a counter-proposal—not because it is a better idea, but rather to not do what the partner suggested.
- **Mindreading** occurs in two ways: (1) an individual expects the partner to be able to read his or her mind (e.g., "If you cared, you would *know* what I want"), and (2) an individual decides in his or her mind what the partner's intentions were (e.g., "You did that just to get me back!").
- **Self-summarizing** occurs when an individual continues to repeat his or her points ad nauseam until the partner stops trying to make arguments of his or her own (in other words, the individual doesn't listen to what the partner is saying but rather keeps repeating him or herself until the partner gives up).
- **Kitchen-sinking** occurs when every argument or infraction that has occurred in the past is brought into the current argument instead of the partners focusing on the *current* issue.

Source: Adapted from Miller, R., & Perlman, D. (2009). *Intimate Relationships*, 5e, McGraw-Hill Ryerson. Reprinted with permission.

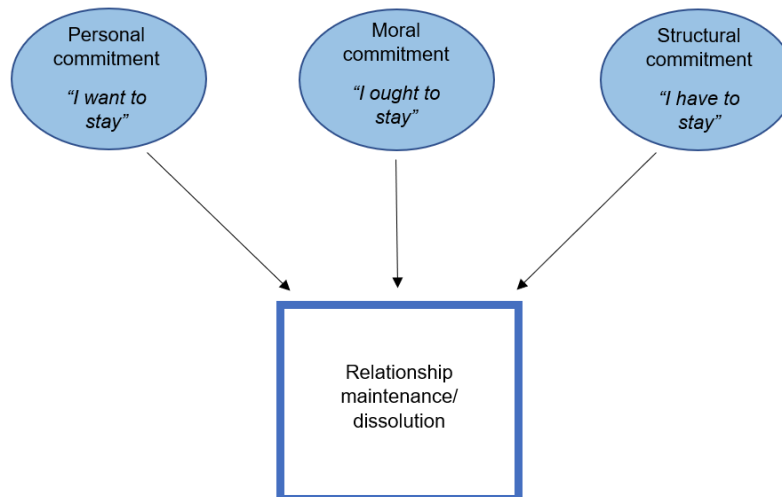
There are five ways in which a conflict can end (Peterson, 2002): (1) **separation** or withdrawal of at least one partner without any resolution to the conflict; (2) **domination**, where one person continues to pursue his or her goal until the other partner gives in; (3) **compromise**, where both partners reduce their expectations and find a mutually acceptable alternative (a problem with compromise, however, is that neither partner is completely satisfied and may still tend to focus on what they had to give up in the compromise); (4) **integrative agreement**, where both people have their goals satisfied (this can be difficult to achieve in most situations); or (5) **structural improvement**, where a positive change is made in the relationship (e.g., negative attributions are changed, trust is developed, and hope is increased). Conflict *can* increase intimacy and satisfaction if done fairly! If there is a lot of conflict, however, our commitment to the marriage may begin to suffer.

Marital Commitment

Johnson (1999) developed a model of commitment that distinguished between three types of commitment to a relationship: personal commitment, moral commitment, and structural commitment (see Figure 5.9). **Personal commitment** refers to being dedicated to continue with a course of action. It consists of three components with respect to marital commitment: (1) attraction to one's partner, (2) attraction to the relationship, and (3) definition of the self in terms of the relationship. Personal commitment relates to the phrase *I want to stay*. We generally want to stay in a relationship because we like who our partner is as a person (attraction to partner). We also may want to stay in a relationship because we like the relationship itself (attraction to the relationship)—it functions well and makes us happy. We also may want to stay in a relationship because part of our identity is wrapped up in that relationship. Who would we be if we weren't "Mrs. Smith" or "Jane's husband"? We like the identity associated with the role of spouse. All of these factors give us a sense of personal commitment, or wanting to stay.

Moral commitment refers to feelings of obligation to maintain the relationship. Here, we feel we *ought* to stay. The feeling of obligation comes from both a sense of social duty ("I can't leave him now after all of these years. What would people think of me leaving him alone as an old man?") and personal feelings of obligation to the spouse ("I can't leave her now after all that she has done for me"). We may also believe we are the type of person who honours their commitments ("I always do what I promised to do") (general consistency values) and thus feel obligated to stay.

Figure 5.9 Johnson's Commitment Model



Source: Adapted from Johnson (1999, p. 77)

The third category of commitment in this model is **structural commitment**, or conditions that cause a person to continue on a course of action once he or she has initiated that course of action regardless of whether he or she is personally committed to it. This speaks to social factors that may increase commitment. Here, the phrase *I have to stay* fits well. This category is

composed of four parts: (1) irretrievable investments, (2) termination procedures, (3) social pressure, and (4) attractiveness of available alternatives. Irretrievable investments are investments made in the relationship that you cannot get back once it has ended. Time, for example, is an irretrievable investment. You can never regain the years spent with an individual. Children and assets such as a home are also considered irretrievable investments. Even though you may not completely lose your children or the money invested in the home, you never get all of them or it back. For example, you may have to share custody of your children, so you do not get to spend all of your free time with them. You also may split the proceeds of the house, so you cannot buy the same amount of house after doing so. Of course, there are exceptions to this, but the underlying point should be apparent. How difficult, expensive, or time consuming termination procedures are can also cause you to feel as if you have to stay. If you cannot afford to get divorced and do not have the time or energy to deal with the process, you may decide it is not worth leaving the relationship. Social pressure can also make you more committed to your existing relationship. This is not because your friends or family will make you like your partner more, but rather that they may pressure you to stay in the relationship for their own benefit (even though they may phrase it as being beneficial to you). They may talk about social stigma associated with divorce (“People will think something is wrong with you”) or about damage you may cause your children, or about how divorce may affect your friendship (“We won’t be able to hang out anymore if you break up”—although this may not be stated directly). Finally, attractiveness of available alternatives may also play a role in your level of structural commitment. If you have no other options (other than being alone) or if the options are not very appealing, you may decide to stay with your spouse.

As you can see, marital satisfaction and marital commitment are not the same thing. You can be unhappy in your marriage yet still feel obligated to (moral commitment) or stuck in (structural commitment) the relationship.

Career Box 5.1

Protections in Marriage

Emily and Alex decided it was time to get married. They wanted to have children and both believed they should do so in the context of marriage. Both Emily and Alex were deeply committed and wanted to make sure their marriage would work. Emily decided to look into premarital counselling and workshops that she and Alex could attend. She believed that this would force them to have some “hard discussions” that they seemed to be avoiding, such as disclosing their personal financial assets and liabilities as well as discussing their ideas about parenting. Emily specifically wanted to discuss which religion they would follow and teach to their children.

Alex had other ideas. He didn’t think counselling was necessary. He believed that they were reasonable adults and could “work things out” as issues arose. It didn’t seem important to decide on religion and delve into finances now. Alex wanted to plan a fun wedding and a great honeymoon, not spend time attending marriage preparation classes. He thought they should have a covenant marriage. Then they wouldn’t be able to break up on a whim, so there would

be less risk of divorce.

With whom do you agree: Emily or Alex?

Covenant marriages have come about to try to make it more difficult to end a marriage. Nock, Sanchez, and Wright (2008) wrote a book about covenant marriage. Over the past few decades, political and religious leaders have promoted marriage as a solution to many of our long-standing social problems (e.g., increase in divorce rates, increase in cohabitation rates, increase in single motherhood). Covenant marriage laws require a couple to choose between a covenant marriage and a conventional marriage. Covenant marriage makes it harder to dissolve the marital relationship. It often requires premarital counselling and proof of fault (e.g., adultery or abuse), or at minimum requires long waiting periods before a divorce will be granted. A person entering into a covenant marriage must sign an agreement to abide by the covenant rules (meaning that they agree that if they choose to divorce, they will have to prove fault and attend premarital counselling before it will be granted). This is in stark contrast to the no-fault divorce requirements associated with conventional marriage. Career Box 5.1 illustrates two very different ways to attempt to “protect” one’s marriage from dissolution.

Conclusion

Marriage is only one possible outcome following the selection of a mate. The reasons for marrying vary from person to person. Most Canadians will partner at some point in their lives, but the way in which we do so is changing. Fewer individuals are choosing to marry and cohabitation is becoming a popular alternative to marriage. Age at marriage is increasing, with same-sex couples marrying at older ages than opposite-sex couples. The transition to marriage involves several tasks that the couple must negotiate (e.g., household division of labour). Generally, marriage has been found to be good for our health—especially for men’s health. However, marital satisfaction tends to decline for most couples, leading to instability for approximately one third of couples who marry for the first time. Interaction patterns that we develop in marriage, including conflict and communication styles, can help to stabilize marriages, as can having a strong commitment to marriage.

Summary of Key Points

- Matouschek and Rasul (2008) provide three reasons why people choose to marry: (1) marriage may serve as a rite of passage into adulthood, (2) marriage may act as a commitment device, and (3) marriage may be used as a signalling device.

- Historically, people did not get married for love, but rather for political or economic reasons. Love was expected to occur after the marriage, if at all. Today, reasons for marriage vary.
- According to the Vanier Institute of the Family (2010), 58.4 percent of individuals in 2006 were in a conjugal union and, of those, 80 percent were married.
- Of the 45 300 same-sex couples recorded on the 2006 Census, 16.5 percent were married (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010).
- In 2003, 66.2 percent of the marriages that year were first marriages for both spouses, 18.4 percent were marriages in which one spouse was getting remarried, and 15.5 percent involved marriages in which both spouses were getting remarried (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010).
- In 2003, 66.2 percent of the marriages that year were first marriages for both spouses, 18.4 percent were marriages in which one spouse was getting remarried, and 15.5 percent involved marriages in which both spouses were getting remarried (Vanier Institute of the Family, 2010).
- We generally marry someone who is close to us in age (age homogamy), with husbands being slightly older than wives, especially during young adulthood.
- Monogamy is the only legal form of marriage in Canada. This is the marriage of one person to another at one time. Polygamy, or marriage to several individuals at the same time, is practised (but is not legal) in parts of Canada.
- The transition to marriage is the time when a newly married couple must learn to integrate with each other and with their extended families. Several tasks must be negotiated, such as determining their marital identity, negotiating the meaning of their own new identities as spouse in the relationship, negotiating marital boundaries, determining how the household will be managed, and negotiating the “emotional climate” of the marriage.
- It is generally believed that marriage is good for one’s health. Marriage has been linked to decreased mortality rates, increased cardiovascular health, increased immune system functioning, decreased functional disability, and increased psychological health. There are three common perspectives that explain the link between marriage and health: selection, protection, and marital quality hypotheses. Marriage is more protective of men’s health than of women’s health.
- The majority of research on marital satisfaction over the life course has shown that happiness in marriage takes the form of a U-shaped curve. We begin our married lives

happy, experience a decline in happiness at mid-life, and then return to higher levels of happiness in later life.

- Lewis and Spanier (1979) proposed four types of marriage based on level of marital satisfaction and marital stability: (1) happy-stable, (2) unhappy-unstable, (3) unhappy-stable, and (4) happy-unstable.
- Levinger (1965, 1976, 1999) proposed an attraction-barrier model of marital commitment. To predict the level of commitment to marriage, we need to take into account attractions to the relationship, barriers to leaving, alternative attractions, and any barriers to leaving a particular alternative.
- Premarital factors and interaction patterns can have an effect on marital satisfaction and subsequent stability. Caughlin and Huston (2006) proposed several models of marital change that illustrate how these patterns can affect satisfaction and stability over time: the emergent distress model, the disillusionment model, and the enduring dynamics model.
- Gottman et al. (1998), through observations of couples, found that there seems to be a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative interactions necessary to maintain satisfaction in a given relationship.
- Peterson (2002) proposes four common types of relational conflict: criticism, illegitimate demands, cumulative annoyances, and rebuffs.
- There are five ways in which a conflict can end: (1) separation or withdrawal of at least one partner, (2) domination, (3) compromise, (4) an integrative agreement, and (5) a structural improvement.
- Johnson (1999) developed a model that distinguished between three types of commitment to a relationship: personal commitment, moral commitment, and structural commitment.
- Covenant marriage makes it harder to dissolve a marital relationship, often requiring premarital counselling and proof of fault or at minimum requiring a long waiting period before a divorce is granted.

Glossary

age homogamy Marrying someone who is close to us in age.

alternative attractions Alternatives to a marriage (e.g., another partner or single life). These act as forces that pull a person out of a marriage.

alternative barriers Barriers around leaving an alternative to a marriage.

assortative mating principle People choose mates who are much like themselves.

attractions Positive aspects of a marriage and partner (net attractions to the marriage equal rewarding aspects minus negative aspects).

barriers Restraining forces (both internal and external) that make a person feel that he or she must stay in a relationship.

compromise Both partners reduce their expectations and find a mutually acceptable alternative in a conflict.

counter-proposal This occurs when instead of listening to and accepting a valid solution offered by the partner, an individual comes up with a different proposal instead.

covenant marriage A marriage contract in which the individuals agree to terms that make it harder to dissolve the marital relationship (should they want to divorce). It often requires premarital counselling and proof of fault (e.g., adultery, abuse) or at minimum requires a long waiting period before a divorce is granted.

criticism Occurs when a person makes verbal or non-verbal demeaning acts.

cross-complaining Occurs when a person answers a complaint with a complaint of his or her own instead of listening to the partner's point of view.

crude marriage rate The number of marriages for every 1000 people in a given year.

cumulative annoyances Repetitive behaviours a partner does that over time become extremely frustrating.

domination Occurs when one person continues to pursue his or her goal until the partner gives in during a conflict.

general marriage rate The number of people in a population eligible for marriage, restricting the denominator to unmarried women age 15 years and older.

illegitimate demands Occur when you ask your partner to do unjust things for you.

integrative agreement Occurs when both people have their goals satisfied in a conflict.

kitchen-sinking Occurs when every argument or infraction from the past is brought into the current argument instead of focusing on the current issue.

LAT marriages (living apart together) Marriages in which the spouses live in separate homes.

mindreading Occurs when you expect your partner to be able to read your mind or when you decide in your own mind what your partner's intentions were.

monogamy The marriage of only one person to another at one time.

moral commitment Feelings of obligation to maintain a relationship.

personal commitment Dedication to continuing a course of action (Johnson, 1999).

polyandry The marital practice in which one female has multiple husbands.

polygamy Marriage to several individuals at the same time.

polygyny The marital practice in which one man has multiple wives.

prenuptial agreement A legal document that specifies how premarital assets will be divided if the marriage were to end.

protection hypothesis States that marriage provides social and economic supports linked with improved health.

rebuffs Occur when you fail to act on a demand.

selection hypothesis States that it is not marriage per se that is responsible for the link between marriage and health, but rather that healthier people tend to marry each other and unhealthy people have a harder time finding and keeping a mate.

self-summarizing Occurs when an individual continues to repeat points in an argument until the partner stops trying to make arguments of his or her own.

separation Withdrawal of at least one partner without any resolution to a conflict.

social strain hypothesis States that marriages with high levels of negativity do not protect individuals but actually can decrease their well-being.

social support hypothesis An explanation for the link between marriage and health. Marriage allows opportunities for social engagement and companionship that improve our well-being.

stress buffering hypothesis The negative effects of stress are reduced by the presence of social support.

structural commitment Conditions that cause a person to continue on a course of action once he or she has initiated that course of action, regardless of whether he or she is personally committed to it (Johnson, 1999).

structural improvement Occurs when a positive change is made in a relationship following a conflict.

Connections

<http://www.samesexmarriage.ca/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2009/09/23/bc-polygamy-charges-blackmore-01er-bountiful.html> (Expired Link)

<https://www.lovingmorenonprofit.org>

www.todaysfamilynews.ca (Expired Link)

<https://www.datehookup.com/content-the-wowring-world-wedding-traditions-guide.htm>

https://www.iafl.com/iaml_law_journal/back_issues/volume_1/an_overview_of_pre_nuptial_agreements_in_canada/index.html (Expired Link)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/background/samesexrights/samesexdivorce.html> (Expired Link)