

Continue life cycle of family - decision of marriage/cohabitation, and then the decision to have children or not

Chapter 4 - Getting together

Marital and relationship happiness

- Has not changed since the 1980's, people are similarly happy
- One study found that levels of happiness are high at the early stage of marriage, rise at the birth of the first child, and the all time low is when there are teenagers around, and then it rises again as children leaves home, but it never really attains the same level as the earliness of marriage

How do you measure this?

- Criteria: asking couples, look for signs of conflict, *divorce is not a criteria*, *different cohorts and different opinions/expectations for a satisfactory marriage*,
- Challenge: mixed marriage; different cultural backgrounds, you have to make sacrifices/adjustments around cultural/religious traditions, especially when children are being raised and the values among that, relationships with the inlaws that are from different cultural backgrounds (expectations for you or your husband), adjusting to not only your partner but also the group they are in

4 influences on relationship satisfaction

1. What individuals bring to the relationship

- Individual characteristics/qualities that they bring into the marriage, you bring in everything (history, past experiences), and this can shape how you perceive and approach your partners behaviour
- The big five personality theory: trait theory
- The emotional health of partners, being able to empathize and having good interpersonal skills (managing emotions)
- Past history, and struggles that one has gone through

2. How couples interact

- Relationship style of a particular couple and how is it related to problem solving
- Functional styles of interactions through the two individuals
- Each of the partners, what is their perception of this relationship
- Doing activities together relates to greater satisfaction to the relationship
- Quality of communication: directly affects the way that couples are making decisions together and solving problems, if you have high levels of good communication then you are less likely to have problems and more likely to be able to solve ones that arise
- Couples who decide together that they want to have children usually remain happy compared to an unplanned pregnancy (disagreement) in the relationship
- Quality of communication: capitalization, a positive response from sharing good news with another individual, non-verbal cues/verbal, sensitive to cues

3. How couples deal with conflict

- Verbal disagreements tend to be higher when a couple is having problems in a relationship, the level of interpersonal confidence is also important, often we have to analyze the problem and if you both perceive it the same, or whether the

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problem becomes solved for both partners, depending on the issue you might agree to disagree

- Some individuals are fairly non-assertive, they do not defend their position and give into the other person
 - Others are direct and can sometimes be aggressive or violent
 - Some use indirect methods of communication
 - Some are passive aggressive
 - Some use subtle or non-verbal messages
 - As part of a couple, you have to understand the balance between expressing your own concern and value while simultaneously taking care of the entire relationship
 - Typically in stable relationships, there is one negative interaction for every 4-5 positive interactions
 - When one partner demands change, complains and criticizes and the other is withdrawing (demand-withdraw argument)
 - Immigrant couples: unfamiliar social system and that can place additional strain on a relationship
4. How extended families and other people might affect the couple
- Your family of origin, family you grew up in, has experiences there that taught you how to communicate, and showed you your expectations regarding relationships and how they go, your family models what a relationship should look like
 - Parents can create stress in their children's relationships/marriage, 5 areas:
 1. balancing the amount of time you spend with your nuclear family vs. extended family (problematic if there is spousal expectations that do not align with your parents expectations)
 2. changing family roles/rules compared to the ones you grew up with
 3. pleasing parents vs. pleasing spouse
 4. struggling for power among different individuals
 5. fearing future obligations to older relatives (influence)
 - Whether your parents approve/like your spouse and the relationship and stress that comes with that
 - In general, all of this influences how your family affects the new family you have created
 - Social environment can affect the relationship, relying more on friends than family for support (LGBTQ+ community)
 - The area where you live and the commonalities that come with the region
 - Economic factors, sustainable resources for a couple to thrive
 - Social media can affect relationships: real life friends were more important for people that are now alone (divorced, widowed, separated) than people in marriages

Different types of marriages

- Nine dimensions on marriage

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1. Personality issues
2. Communication
3. Conf resolution
4. Financial management
5. Leisure activities
6. Sexual relationship
7. Children and parenting
8. Family and friends
9. Religious orientation

Seven sectors of this:

- 40% of marriages are devitalized (unsatisfied)
- 9% were vitalized marriages (completely satisfied)
- Financially focused marriages: financial management is satisfied, but the rest of the marriage is not satisfactory
- Conflicted marriages: low on many aspects
- Balanced couples: communicated well and had high levels of problem solving
- Harmonious levels: saw children as a burden, and were happy with each other
- Traditional couples: dissatisfied with sexual relationship and communication, but had a satisfying relationships with outer parts

Infidelity

- In general, sex outside of a committed relationship is seen as wrong, and sometimes looked at as being worse if the women is the one being unfaithful (not ethical but aparent in society)
- Anything from a one-night stand, to a complete affair shows infidelity
- Different researchers define this differently, which makes it hard to compare or show commonalities between different types
- Traditionally, men were shown to be less faithful but recent studies show a close to the gender gap and it is mostly equal now in terms of faithfulness in relationships
- Often once infidelity has been revealed, the primary relationship is affected, one study showed that it is the single most prevalent reason for divorced
- 25-50% of divorces in the US are due to infidelity

Throughout the lifespan of the happiness

- Not only explained through infidelity
- One study looked at why couples stay together for fifty years
 - happy couples spoke of the importance of respecting each other and showing dignity, agreeing on a level of closeness that is comfortable for each of them, shared a vision of what their life together should be like
 - unhappy couples who were married for a long time believed that divorce was not an option for them
- Couples that were generally happy in the beginning were more likely to stay happy throughout the relationship/marriage
- When marriage tends to encounter rough times, there are factors that are important;

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- commitment: encourages couples to work at solving problems together, in order to make the relationship last, if you do not have this, then it is likely you will separate
- forgiveness: important in preparing a marriage, especially in cases of betrayal
- Decline in marriage rates are mostly due to cohabitation and later marriages, most people are still in some sort of romantic relationship for most of their lives

We are now at the stage where the family is either married or cohabiting

Question: do we have children or not?

Decision to have children

Factors

- Having children is seen as a natural part of adult life and in some cultures you must explain why you did not choose this
- Change in social status, and an important developmental task
- This is not a light subject and it requires many years of commitment, and a decision that is made within a social context between two people
- Canadian families over time have changed in the age of mothers delivering first children, the number of children a family will have, changes through social class background, ethnic background and regions of the country

Fertility

- Patterns in the Canadian family: how many children are born and the average age when a woman has a child
- These affect how the population in Canada grows and the age structure of society
- Total fertility rate: number of children a woman will have over the course of her reproductive life, how many children are you expecting to have
- At the time of Canadian confederation, Canada was a high fertility society, women had many children (up to 10/12), this can be advantageous as there are no social service benefits or medicare and having a large family gives good genetic life for your genes and provide a social system of a large family helping each other
- At this time there was a lack of reliable contraceptive and there was encouragement to have many children
- The fertility rate started falling in the 1900's as less people lived in rural environments and moved to cities, women gained many rights and gave them more things to do in their lives than bear children and raise them
- After the great depression there were uncertainties and the rate has fallen to 2 children after the late 1970's
- The baby-boom period demonstrated a large fertility rate, however much after there were many changes that showed growth in the human population for women
- Over the last four decades in general, women are having fewer children and at a higher age, specifically there are less women giving birth in their 20s and more in their 30s
- Earlier in the 20th century many women had children over many reproductive years, as now we have children later, the time that you are giving birth and having young children around is shorter

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- The crude birth rate: the number of births during a year per one thousand people, the birth rate is a dominant factor in determining the rate of natural population growth, in Canada the birth rate has been falling steadily over time, sometimes in the past there have been efforts to increase the birth rate (family allowance programs, payments to parents, subsidized child care, parental leave programs)
- The main factor nowadays is the financial decision to have children, having many children today would require a billion dollar salary in an urban region

Immigration and population

- Immigration does help to maintain the Canadian population as it would be decreasing if we did not have them, their decision to have children might be crucial to how they enter the Canadian society
- Different cultures of origin have different opinions on gender preferences, timing of children and the amount of children
- The selection effect: people who choose to migrate may have different fertility rates than people who do not choose to migrate (lower), there are many factors that can influence this
- Convergence affect: over time immigrants might alter their fertility rates to match that as to Canadian society as a whole
- The fact that immigration can sometimes have a disruptive effect on fertility, partially when it separates a couple for a long-period of time

Shrinking family size -- factors

- Education for women, more women pursue education and have an employment that they desire and
- Employment, as more women are working outside of the home, there is an inverse relationship between women in the workforce and the total fertility rate, as more women enter the workforce the fertility rate declines
- Role incompatibility hypothesis: the idea that there is a strain to have the two competing roles of mother and employee, in certain jobs this can be very stressful, and certain careers did not allow time for children
- Medical science, there are two major factors;
 1. Better prenatal and postnatal care for the majority of the people in Canada, declining infant mortality, before this you would have a lot of children to ensure that at least some would survive and grow old and reproduce, now most children born today will live until adulthood
 2. Contraception, it is more acceptable and convenient and effective, particularly with the release of pills and devices for women to ensure they do not get pregnant but can still enjoy sex
- Financial resources, children can be expensive to raise and this goes along with the general living expenses which can be determined by what part of the country you live in, there are lots of extra costs in education
- Individual choices, people are looking at individuals and couples and their decision making process of whether or not to have a child/children, for many couples this a decision they make together, however it can be problematic when there are child bearing

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expectations that differ, in this scenario the decision is often not or not have little children, the relationship of the couple can also factor this (unstable relationships)

- One survey found that the strength of their relationship, state of finances and state of health were the most important considerations when deciding to have a child/children
- A shrinking family has an impact on family dynamics and society as a whole, especially in terms of caring for people across their lifespan

Pressures to have children

- Myth of motherhood: motherhood is an instinct that can fulfill a woman in a way that nothing else can
- Family planning, intentionally spacing and planning the amount of children across time
- In national surveys, 2-3 children are usually planned
- Decisions of contraception, abortion, family lasting

Theoretic views

Conflict theory: social inequalities, infertility rates of different groups/classes, advantages/disadvantages for the number of children you have

Structural functionalists: social institutions, factors that affect fertility rates, economic trends

Symbolic interactionists: personal/couple reasons for having/ not having children

Feminist theories: power/control over reproducing, social policies about this

Developmental approach: having children as an important developmental task of the family

Systems theory: different systems in the family

Ecological theory: different fertility rates and how the wider society views this

Not having children -- factors

- 8-9% of couples still remain to choose this, perhaps due to age or postpone it and then decide later that they will not have any children due to a lifestyle choice
- Others decide early on that they will remain childless, they are more likely not to be highly religious (pressures), better educated and others find there is no difference in education
- Voluntarily childless women are more likely to be employed with higher level positions and work more hours, spend more time focused on their careers
- Some couples may fear that having children may damage their relationship or change their relationship in a negative way
- Some women choose not to parent as they choose to focus on their career and individual life, or may fear giving up the equality that they have established on their relationship
- Men who choose not to parent usually think about the high cost of rearing children or may want to keep their life options open
- Couples who choose not to have children face disadvantages: some workplaces give scheduling priority to women with children, social pressure to have a family (after a year or two after the couple is married), woman can be labelled as selfish or less emotionally complete
- Advantages: higher satisfaction in marriage, healthiness in your lifestyle

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Unwanted children

- 40% of all pregnancies in Canada are unplanned, if this is also not desired than there are many ways to evoke this
- Until the mid 1970's unmarried woman who got pregnant were seen as promiscuous, abortion was illegal and if you kept the child than you were labelled socially and life was difficult, adoption was pressured or to give-up the child to another family member, usually the mother was sent somewhere else to complete her pregnancy