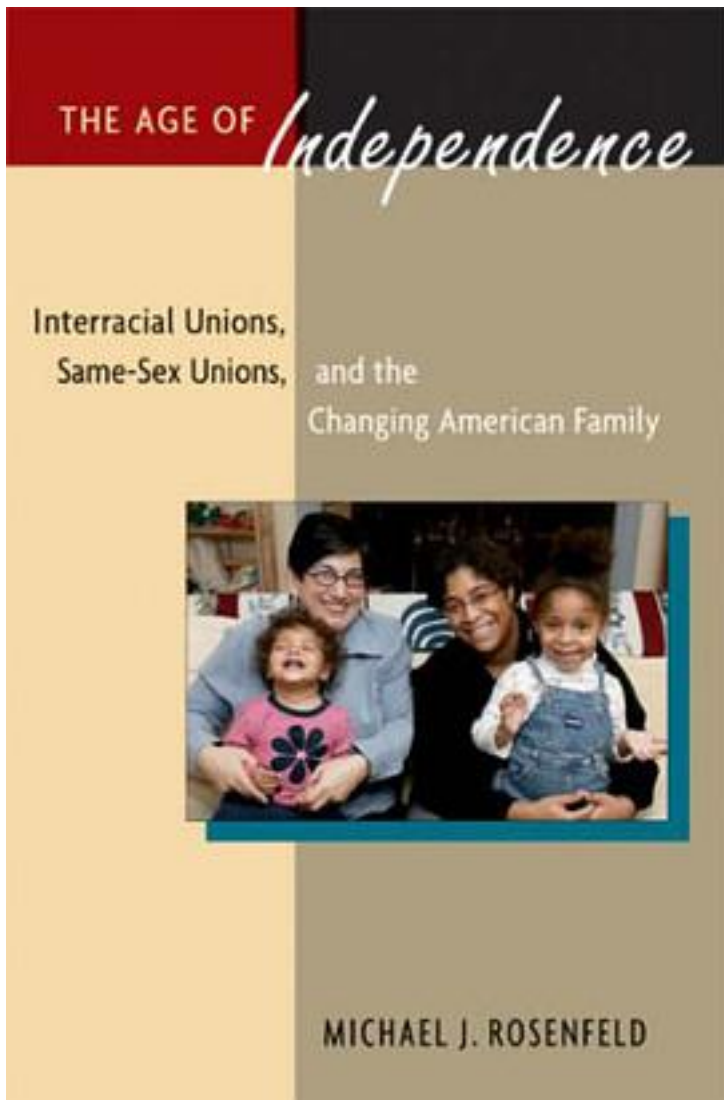


The Age of Independence



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出版者:Harvard University Press

出版时间:2007-3-13

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780674024977

Michael Rosenfeld offers a new theory of family dynamics to account for the interesting and startling changes in marriage and family composition in the United States in recent years. His argument revolves around the independent life stage that emerged around 1960. This stage is experienced by young adults after they leave their parents' homes but before they settle down to start their own families. During this time, young men and women go away to college, travel abroad, begin careers, and enjoy social independence. This independent life stage has reduced parental control over the dating practices and mate selection of their children and has resulted in a sharp rise in interracial and same-sex unions - unions that were more easily averted by previous generations of parents. Complementing analysis of newly available census data from the entire 20th century with in-depth interviews that explore the histories of families and couples, Rosenfeld proposes a conceptual model to explain many social changes that may seem unrelated but that flow from the same underlying logic. He shows, for example, that the more a relationship is transgressive of conventional morality, the more likely it is for the individuals to live away from their family and area of origin.

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