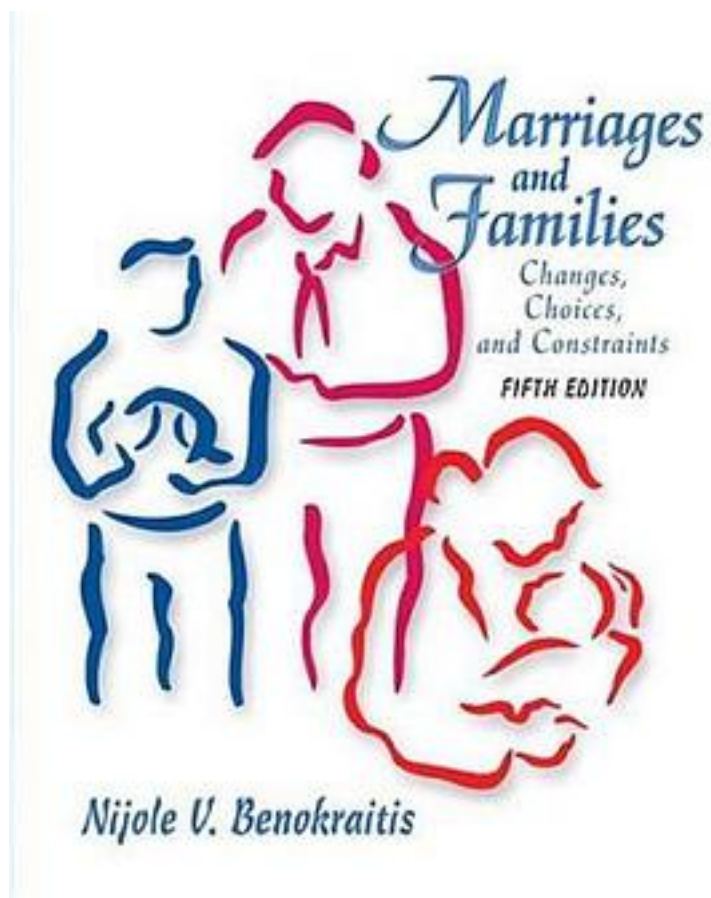


Marriages and Families



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Changes, Choices, and Constraints Marriages and Families offers students a comprehensive introduction to many issues facing families in the twenty- first century. The text's major theme "Changes, Choices, and Constraints" explores: Contemporary changes in families and their structure Impacts on the choices that are available to

family members Constraints that often limit our choices Through this approach, students are better able to understand what the research and statistics mean for themselves !Marriages and Families balances theoretical and empirical discussions with practical examples and applications . It highlights important contemporary changes in society and the family. This text is written from a sociological perspective and incorporates material from other disciplines: history, economics, social work, psychology, law, biology, medicine, family studies, women's studies, and anthropology. More about the themes: Changes Examines how recent profound structural and attitudinal changes affect family forms, interpersonal relationships, and raising children. It reaches beyond the traditional discussions to explore racial-ethnic families, single-parent families and gay families as well as the recent scholarship by and about men, fathers, and grandfathers. Contemporary American marriages and families vary greatly in structure, dynamics, and cultural heritage. Thus, discussions of gender roles, social class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation are integrated throughout this book. To further strengthen students understanding of the growing diversity among today's families, the author included a series of boxes that focus on families from many cultures. Choices On the individual level, family members have many more choices today than ever before. People feel freer to postpone marriage, to cohabit, or to raise children as single parents. As a result, household forms vary greatly, ranging from commuter marriages to those in which several generations live together under the same roof. Constraints Although family members choices are more varied today, we also face greater macro- level constraints. Our options are increasingly limited, for example, by government policies. Economic changes often shape family life and not vice versa. Political and legal institutions also have a major impact on most families in tax laws, welfare reform, and even in defining what a family is. Because laws, public policies, and religious groups affect our everyday lives, the author has framed many discussions of individual choices within the larger picture of the institutional constraints that limit our choices.

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