

PREFACE



People everywhere form bonds of friendship, develop close intimate relationships, cohabit, and raise children, but each of these acts is conditioned by cultural expectations, customs, norms, rules, mysteries, and ceremonies. Of all the institutions that have shaped human life, marriages and families have been the most important. While marriage and family relationships constitute basic institutions, both for the individuals involved in them and for society as a whole, they are neither simple nor static. On the contrary, they are constantly changing, evolving with time, and adapting to place. It is in these relationships that many of the most distinctive features of human life are most clearly and unambiguously illustrated.

Love, sex, marriage, and families are subjects of intrinsic interest to nearly everyone. Perhaps this is so because they represent common experiences that are given special favor and protection in one way or another by all societies. Familial activities and relations are intertwined with many other kinds of activities and relations. Accordingly, marriage and family relationships must be understood as part of the cultural life as a whole.

Different societies have different conceptions of what constitutes a marriage or family, but in all societies the relations between the sexes and the generations have an identifiable pattern. Marriage and family life are so decisive in the formation of personality and the shaping of people's most intimate feelings that as they evolve, surely personal habits, social arrangements, quotidian emotions, and even one's innermost thoughts will also change. This diversity and malleability make it difficult to comprehend contemporary marriages and families, yet it is the very reason understanding is necessary.

The literature on marital and family relations is fragmented and diverse, "running all the way from superstition-based folklore, to imaginative fiction, to poetic outpourings, to philosophical speculation, to popularized magazine articles and advice columns, and finally to reports of scientific investigations" (Christensen 1964, p. x). Yet, the multidisciplinary study of these relationships has only just been recognized as a distinct area of study (Burr and Leigh 1983). Over the past two decades, Family Science has emerged as a significant and burgeoning field of study in the social and behavioral sciences (Hollinger 2003). Unfortunately, much of the scholarship has been limited to English-speaking, Western, industrialized countries, and little work has taken an international perspective.

The purpose of the *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family, Second Edition*, is to peruse the current state and panoramic diversity of marriage and family life in an international context. The basic aim of this encyclopedia is to make information that is often difficult to find and analyze available to students, scholars, journalists, and other interested readers in an easy-to-use reference source. This information is vital to contemporary life in a global society because modernization and globalization continue to alter the way people live. These social forces and the change they inevitably bring about weaken the foundations of the old norms and customs without creating any consensus on new ones. Instead of living in small towns where surveillance by family and friends is ubiquitous, people now live mostly in cities where anonymity is the rule and few care about what they do.

That new conditions engender new attitudes is indisputable, but the salient question is not change per se but the response to it. Many people expect marriage and family relations to respond to changes due to globalization by providing the emotional nurturance that is not easily attained in other, more impersonal social contexts. In order to address this expectation, greater understanding and mutual respect for diverse arrangements and behaviors is essential.

The *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* is a significant expansion and revision of the *Encyclopedia of Marriage and the Family* published in 1995. This project began in 2000 with the goal of creating a focal reference source on the diverse marriage and family lifestyles evident around the world. An exceptional group of scholars representing different disciplines and perspectives was invited to serve on the Editorial Board, which met in Denver to plan the scope of the project. All the entries from the *Encyclopedia of Marriage and the Family* were reviewed in light of the present edition's strong international focus: Some were updated, others substantively revised, and still others deleted. Additional topics, issues, and countries were identified for the new edition, scholars were commissioned to contribute to the project, completed entries were carefully reviewed by the Editorial Board for readability and content, and final entries were compiled.

Format of the Encyclopedia

The expanded *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* comprises four volumes and is a compendium surveying the shared patterns and amazing variation in marriage and family life in a rapidly changing multicultural world. These volumes, as in the first edition, present “knowledge about marriages, families, and human relationships and about the psychological, cultural, and societal forces that influence them” (Levinson 1995, p. x). One critical addition justifies the doubling in length of the second edition, namely, the integration of a global perspective.

The incorporation of an international focus was not an easy one to bring to fruition. As noted above, marriage and family scholarship is multidisciplinary and thus not confined to scholars in a single academic discipline. Further, the study of marriage and family is not pervasive in all countries; that is, more research is available on the industrialized West than on developing countries. The inconsistent coverage presented a significant obstacle to overcome, making the *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* an impressive accomplishment indeed.

In keeping with the inclusive and multidisciplinary definition used in the first edition, the terms *marriage* and *family* are used in the broadest sense, not just to include socially approved, durable heterosexual unions that beget children, but also to encompass a wide variety of topics and issues pertinent to these relations and contemporary variations that may be less traditional such as abortion, gay and lesbian parenting, infidelity, and spouse abuse. However, this second edition significantly differs from the first in its deliberate attention to marriage and family in an international context. Given global diversity and the lack of scholarly attention to marriage and family in many nations worldwide, a representative rather than comprehensive selection of countries and ethnic groups was identified.

Fifty countries representing the regions of the world from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and the Caribbean were selected. Every attempt was made to identify scholars from within (rather than outside) the countries, to write about family life in their nations. Twelve entries on unique racial/ethnic groups were also included. These groups were selected because they were either indigenous (e.g., First Nations families in Canada, Yoruba families) or prominent (e.g., Basque families, African-American families) in heterogeneous nations and research was available about their distinct family patterns. In addition, eleven entries on specific religions or belief systems (e.g., Catholicism, Evangelical Christianity, Islam, Confucianism) were included because of the profound impact these systems have in guiding and supporting lifestyle choices and patterns.

The contributors are family scholars with particular expertise on the topic or country on which they are writing. They represent numerous disciplines such as family studies, psychology, sociology, social work, gerontology, history, home economics, law, medicine, and theology. A concerted effort, which achieved significant success, was made to solicit scholars from outside the United States. Contributors from Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas strengthened the overall presentation. A more competent and internationally representative group of scholars has yet to be convened in this field. Accordingly, readers can be assured of the veracity of the close to four hundred entries.

Use of the Encyclopedia

The *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* is designed for use by general readers interested in the dynamics of marriage and family around the world, as well as students and scholars seeking a unique source of information regarding global family lifestyles. This extensive reference work serves as a springboard to new insight and understanding. In fact, it is the first comprehensive publication to focus on marriage and relationships from an international perspective.

Readers will find detailed entries that integrate often discrete information into a concise, readable review. Entries are cogent, carefully documented, and accompanied by a bibliography incorporating cited works and suggestions for further reading. All entries are signed and include cross references to related content. These cross references facilitate the use of the multi-volume set and make the content more accessible. Thus, a reader may begin reading an entry on one aspect of his or her field of inquiry and move easily to other entries on related aspects of the subject. For example, after reading the entry on godparents, one might consult the entries on extended families and kinship, and then move on to consider

particular countries where godparents are important, such as Mexico and the Philippines, or even look at the entry on Catholicism because of the salient role of godparents within this religion. Someone who is interested in chronic illness could examine the entry on that topic, and then read about specific illnesses (e.g., Alzheimers, AIDS, depression, schizophrenia) or find more generic discussions on health and families, caregiving, death and dying, and grief.

At the beginning of the first volume, alphabetical lists of entries and contributors with affiliations are presented. A notation of (1995) after an entry title in the lists indicates that the entry has been essentially reprinted from the first edition, with an updated bibliography. A comprehensive index of concepts, names, and terms at the end of volume four is designed to assist readers in locating topics throughout the *Encyclopedia* and directs readers to the discussion of these subjects. Many subjects are not treated in separate entries but instead appear within the context of more comprehensive articles.

Acknowledgments

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JAMES J. PONZETTI, JR.

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