



# Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths

By David Olson, John DeFrain, Linda Skogrand

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Since the first edition in 1994, *Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths* has helped thousands of college students learn how to create and maintain enduring intimate relationships. Three distinctive themes of intimacy, marital and family strengths, and diversity are woven throughout the text, with the goal of integrating research, theory, and practical ideas to promote healthy and productive relationships.

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**Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths By David Olson, John DeFrain, Linda Skogrand Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #88828 in Books
- Brand: Brand: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages
- Published on: 2013-09-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.10" h x 1.10" w x 8.80" l, 2.90 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 640 pages



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## **Editorial Review**

### **About the Author**

**Linda Skogrand** is an assistant professor and family life extension specialist at Utah State University in Logan, Utah. She began her professional career as a social worker in the inner-city of St. Louis, Missouri, and throughout her career has enjoyed a balance between academic institutions and social service organizations. Her current position as an extension specialist allows her to take knowledge and research findings and make them available to people in communities in Utah and throughout the nation.

Skogrand's social service experience includes providing HIV/AIDS education programs for street kids, people in prison, and gang members, and overseeing the design of an AIDS house for the Latino population. She has also taught family courses at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, for 17 years and was adjunct faculty at the University of Minnesota for several years.

She has published articles focusing on values in parent education, the lives of families who have experienced Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, transcendence of traumatic childhoods, spirituality, strong Latino marriages, and debt and marriage. She has co-authored several books including *Surviving and Transcending a Traumatic Childhood: The Dark Thread*, *Coping with Sudden Infant Death*, and *Sudden Infant Death: Enduring the Loss*. Her current research focuses on strong marriages in the Latino and American Indian cultures and she is currently conducting a national study of what makes "great" marriages with John DeFrain.

Skogrand has been married to her high school sweetheart, Steven Gilbertson, for the past seven years and resides in Logan, Utah. She has three adult children, Aaron, Jennifer, and Sara. Her children's multiracial heritage has taught her much about diversity.

**John DeFrain** is an extension professor of family and community development at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and has focused his professional energy for the past 35 years in better understanding how families learn to live happily together.

He cofounded the National and International Symposium on Building Family Strengths, which grew into a consortium of groups organizing 35 allied conferences in the United States and around the world since 1978. Recent gatherings have been held in Australia, China, Mexico, and Korea, and upcoming conferences are planned for southern Africa, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and the United States. His research with a team of investigators around the world has collected data on family strengths from 21,000 family members in 27 countries.

DeFrain has served as consultant to courts, universities, churches, agencies, and individual families on marriage, parenting, grief, divorce, and child custody issues. He recently received the Outstanding New Extension Family Specialist Award, and the MISS Foundation Phoenix Award for service to bereaved parents who have lost children. He has coauthored more than 60 professional articles on family issues and 18 books, including *Secrets of Strong Families*; *Sudden Infant Death: Enduring the Loss*; *Stillborn: The Invisible Death*; *On Our Own: A Single Parent's Survival Guide*; *Building Relationships*; and *Parents in Contemporary America: A Sympathetic View*. His most recent books are: *The Family Strengths Perspective: Strong Families Around the World*; *The Dark Thread: Surviving and Transcending a Traumatic Childhood*; and *Creating Strong Marriages and Families: A Strengths-Based Activity Book*.

He and his wife and best friend, Nikki DeFrain, M.S., have three grown daughters connected to two sons-in-law and a great boyfriend-in-law, and a grandson. Nikki was especially important in the development and writing of this textbook, offering support in innumerable areas of the project and expertise in her own areas of study. The DeFrains are very interested in understanding family strengths and challenges from a global perspective, and have traveled and studied family relationships in 17 countries.

**David Olson** is professor emeritus of family social science at the University of Minnesota, where he has been for more than 25 years. He is founder and president of Life Innovations. He is a past president of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) and a past president of the Upper Midwest Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (UMAMFT).

He is a fellow and clinical member of the American Association for Marital and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and a fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA). Olson is also a member of the editorial boards of six family journals. He has received numerous awards, including the Distinguished Contribution to Family Therapy Research Award from both AAMFT and the American Family Therapy Association (AFTA).

Olson has written or edited more than 20 books, including *Empowering Couples, Building Relationships, Families: What Makes Them Work, Circumplex Model, Power in Families, Treating Relationships*, and 10 volumes of the *Inventory of Marriage and Family Literature*. He has published more than 100 articles with the theme of bridging family research, theory, and practice.

Olson and his colleagues at the University of Minnesota have developed the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems and a variety of couple and family assessment tools, including PREPARE, ENRICH, FACES, PAIR, and AWARE.

He is happily married to Karen Olson, who has provided companionship and support throughout this and numerous other projects. They have three terrific children (Hans, Amy, and Chris), a great son-in-law (Daniel), and five wonderful grandchildren (Adrienne, Evan, Chelsea, Alex, and Ava). Olson has been blessed with a fun-loving and caring family that continues to sustain and support him.

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