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Sommario/riassunto	National news reports periodically proclaim that American life is lonelier than ever and generate considerable anxiety about the declining quality of American's social ties. This book challenges such concerns by asking a simple yet significant question: Have Americans' bonds with family and friends changed since the 1970's, and, if so, how? Noted sociologist Claude S. Fischer examines long-term trends in family ties and friendships and paints an insightful and ultimately reassuring portrait of Americans' personal relationships. This book analyzes forty years of survey research to address whether and how Americans' personal ties have changed- their involvement with

relatives, the number of friends they have and their contacts with those friends, the amount of practical and emotional support they are able to count on, and how emotionally tied they feel to these relationships. The book shows that Americans today have fewer relatives than they did forty years ago and that formal gatherings have declined over the decades- at least partially as a result of later marriages and more women in the work force. Yet neither the overall quantity of personal relationships nor, more importantly, the quality of those relationships has diminished. Americans' contact with relatives and friends, as well as their feelings of emotional connectedness, has changed relatively little since the 1970's. Although Americans are marrying later and singly people feel lonely, few Americans report being socially isolated and the percentage who do has not really increased. The author maintains that this constancy testifies to the value Americans place on family and friends and to their willingness to adapt to changing circumstances in ways that sustain their social connections. With so many voices heralding the demise of personal relationships, it's no wonder that confusion on this topic abounds. An engrossing and accessible social history, this book brings a much-needed note of clarity to the discussion. Americans' personal ties, this book assures us, remain strong. -- Inside Cover
