



<http://www.bgsu.edu/organizations/cfdr/main.html>

Phone: (419) 372-7279

cfdr@bgnet.bgsu.edu

Bowling Green State University

Working Paper Series 03-04

**INTIMATE EQUITY
THE EARLY YEARS OF COVENANT AND STANDARD MARRIAGES**

Steven L. Nock
University of Virginia

Laura Sanchez
Bowling Green University

Julia C. Wilson
University of Virginia

James D. Wright
University of Central Florida

**INTIMATE EQUITY
THE EARLY YEARS OF COVENANT AND STANDARD MARRIAGES**

Steven L. Nock
University of Virginia

Laura Sanchez
Bowling Green University

Julia C. Wilson
University of Virginia

James D. Wright
University of Central Florida

(To be presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, May 2003, Minneapolis).

Support provided by the National Science Foundation and private foundation sources.

INTIMATE EQUITY

THE EARLY YEARS OF COVENANT AND STANDARD MARRIAGES

INTRODUCTION

In their married lives, men and women must reconcile their private and intimate beliefs and concerns, but also their public roles and responsibilities. In the home, the respective involvement of spouses in formal and informal organizations, the labor force, and countless other public endeavors must be merged with the domestic arrangement. Some couples manage to blend and merge their lives without much apparent difficulty. Many others, however, appear to face significant challenges in this essential undertaking. And while the challenge is probably something that couples face on a regular basis throughout their married lives, it is also more demanding in the first years of marriage when there are few templates or tested strategies to rely on. Our work addresses the merging of lives among recently married couples. We show how newly married couples change over the first two years of their marriage. More specifically, we show how some couples appear better able to manage the task of merging their lives by relying on a traditional template of normative (traditional) marriage.

There is longstanding concern about how the basic institution of marriage will change in response to dramatic alterations in women's lives (see Nock, 1998). Despite well-known and significant increases in married women's labor force participation, for instance, it is also known that the internal arrangement of domestic responsibilities has changed much less. Young married couples continue to organize their domestic lives along rather traditional lines (Casper and Bianchi, 2002) For many, this arrangement is experienced as unfair. And for those who experience family life this way there are untoward consequences including depression or divorce (Lennon and Rosenfeld, 1994; Nock and Brinig, 2002).

Goldscheider and Waite concluded *New Families/No Families?* by noting "Why can we not return to the old balance of men's and women's work and family roles, which were 'fair' to each in terms of hours, and which provided children with mothers who cared for them intensively and fathers who supported them adequately?...The major problem for women posed by "old families" is demographic. With the increase in life expectancy and the decline in fertility, homemaking is no longer a lifetime career for women as a group. Either there has to

be a division within their adult lives, with about half their time devoted to raising two or so children to adulthood and half spent in other occupations, or women have to be divided into mothers and workers, or "real" workers and "mommy track" workers." (1991: 202-03).

And what of "New" more egalitarian and sharing families? While Goldscheider and Waite believe that this must be our future, they are less confident about the implications. "We have suggested that such families have the potential to solve critical problems facing families today. But what do we really know about them? What effects does this pioneer family form have on marriages and families and on the men, women, and children who live in them? Are more egalitarian and sharing families possible? This is largely uncharted territory." (1991: 202-03).

The core problem, it seems, is that even as the external (non familial) arrangements of adults, and especially women, have changed dramatically, the internal domestic arrangement has not changed much. We are not suggesting that domestic life should (or even typically does) mirror non-domestic life in all regards. Rather, we are saying that the responsibilities and expectations from certain non-familial involvements put constraints (available time, responsibilities, financial consequences) on how couples organize and balance their domestic and non-domestic lives.

The problem of balancing domestic and non-domestic life has attracted much attention (see Spain and Bianchi, 1996; and Casper and Bianchi, 2002 chapter 10 for reviews). But achieving such a balance, it must be recognized, is not typically a resort to some version of equal sharing. Even when couples attempt to share the workload in regard to household and childcare tasks, the balance achieved matters primarily because of how it is experienced and perceived. Some have proposed that the "solution" to the unequal organization of household responsibilities lies in equality – achieving equal (or proportionate) shares of responsibility for tasks and responsibilities (e.g., McLain, 2001). We stress, however, that equality is not the same thing as equity. The latter refers to the perceived fairness or justice in a particular circumstance. Research has shown that perceived fairness (i.e., perceived equity) is considerably more important in predicting and/or explaining divorce than is equality (or deviations from it) (Nock and Brinig, 2002; Sayer and Bianchi, 2000).

More generally, it is challenging for any researcher to determine whether a particular couple has arrived at a mutually satisfactory resolution of the project of balancing competing

responsibilities inside and outside the household with underlying values and beliefs. By what measure would one decide that a couple had accomplished this? In the research described in this paper, we attempt to measure this elusive concept in several ways, both behaviorally (e.g., amount of actual sharing of tasks) and by responses to questions about attitudes and beliefs (e.g., questions about fairness). We adopt a broad perspective on how equity and balance might be manifest. As such, we examine multiple domains of early marriages from both partner's perspectives.

Data.

We rely on original data collected in the past three years from scientific samples of individuals married in the state of Louisiana in 1998-9). Half of such couples entered Covenant marriages and half standard marriages.

Sampling. The data are from the first two waves of a 5-year study of newlywed couples who married in Louisiana in 1999-2000. The sample selection criteria consisted of two steps. First, 17 out of 60 parishes were selected randomly and proportionate to size. Second, from these 17 parishes, all covenant marriage licenses and the matched standard marriage licenses filed next to the covenant licenses were drawn. From this sample of marriage licenses, we used listed information about the couple, couples' parents, marriage officiator and witnesses to find the couple's location and telephone recruit them into the 5-year mail questionnaire study.

Of the 1,714 licenses that were validly part of our sampling frame, 218 couples were never found or confirmed and 105 refused to participate in the study. We eventually confirmed 1,310 couples (potentially 2,620 individuals) for a confirmation rate of 76.4%. Our response rate for the mail survey is 60% (1,572 of 2,620 individuals actually contacted). The response rate for the second-wave questionnaire was 92% excluding the couples that divorced or separated between waves. This 92% response rate included respondents either interviewed via mail survey questionnaires (the preferred method) gleaned about a 75% response rate) and telephone interviews with mail survey non-respondents (moving us from a 75% to a 92% response rate). For this study, we use a sample of married partners who completed both waves of questionnaires. In wave 1, 584 husbands and 686 wives responded. IN wave 2, 494 husbands and 585 wives did.

This analysis relies on the 494 husbands (230 covenant, 264 standard) and 585 wives (274 covenant, 311 standard) who provided both waves of information. The mean ages of covenant husbands and wives are 30 and 28 respectively, while the mean ages of standard husbands and wives are 33 and 30. The difference in age is statistically significant. The racial/ethnic composition of our covenant-married sample is 9.5% both black, 80.1% both white, and 10.4% with other racial/ethnic combinations. For our standard married sample, 12.9% spouses are both black, 74.9% are both white, and 12.2% are other racial/ethnic combinations. The difference in racial composition between the covenant and standard married couples is not significant.

Covenant Marriage. The initial purpose of assembling these data was to determine selection differences between those who sought a more rigorous marriage regime and those who did not. The Louisiana General Assembly passed covenant marriage in 1997. It authorizes couples seeking marriage to enter one of two legal forms now available in the state (similar to Arizona and Arkansas). Covenant marriage requires that a couple receive counseling about *the lifelong commitment being made*, the *seriousness of marriage*, the *obligation to seek counseling* should problems arise, and the *more restrictive grounds for divorce* (fault-based or extended waiting periods). The couple must also execute a ‘declaration of intent’ stating that they know all the relevant information needed about their partner, that they have received counseling, and that they pledge to seek counseling should problems arise in their marriage. Finally, the couple must agree that a divorce will be granted under the terms of a Covenant marriage only. This requires proof of fault on one party’s part (adultery, conviction of a felony leading to death or life in prison), physical or sexual abuse of the other partner or a child, abandonment, or a two-year separation (versus 6 months in standard Louisiana marriages).¹

Couples who wish to enter a standard marriage are not required to obtain premarital counseling. Nor are they required to sign a statement about the lifelong commitment implied

¹ La. R.S. 9:273(A)(2)(a)(Supp. 1998) concerning mandatory premarital counseling, La. R.S. 9:273(A)(1)(Supp. 1998) concerning the required Declaration of Intent that if problems arise in the marriage, spouses will take all “reasonable efforts to preserve the marriage, including marriage counseling;” La. R.S. 9:307(A) and (B)(Supp. 1998) and La. R.S. 9:307(A)(5)(Supp. 1998) concerning the limited grounds for divorce (misconduct by a spouse or two years living separate and apart).

or their promise to seek counseling if problems arise. Should they wish to divorce, those in standard marriages have recourse to customary no-fault provisions.

As noted, our larger research project is intended to answer several basic questions about the two types of couples. First we are interested to identify and quantify the amount of selection involved into the two types of marriages. The two attract different populations, and pre-existing differences likely persist to explain many (if not most) differences that may be found when the two groups are compared. We are also interested in evaluating the implementation of the law in Louisiana and its effect (if any) on differential divorce rates once all known and measured selection effects are removed. In this work, we focus on the related issue of differential development: how do men and women in each type of marriage change between the first six months and the second years of their marriages?

The second year of marriage is a particularly suitable point at which we may observe the testing and modification of domestic strategies for managing conflict, resolving disputes, establishing routines and rituals, and coming to terms with many unanticipated aspects of married life. As we examine these two types of couples, we must bear in mind the nature of the selection effects we have discovered. Put simply, those who select Covenant marriages are undoubtedly different from those who do not in many ways. We have spent considerable time investigating this issue and have discovered several prominent dimensions on which the two types of couples differ most obviously. Covenant couples have marginally higher levels of completed education, are more politically conservative, are more religious, are more likely to seek and receive marriage counseling, have more support (in terms of approval of the marriage, and for help and assistance). Covenant couples are less likely to have cohabited before marriage. They are also more likely to rely on more pro-social forms of communication and conflict resolution (i.e., they are less likely to engage in destructive or hostile forms of conflict resolution such as avoidance, sarcasm, or hostility).

Most importantly for this work, covenant marriage (CM) and standard marriage (STND) wives have comparable incomes and labor-force involvements. At Wave 1, the averages were \$21,485 (STND) and \$18,663 (CM) (sig. < .05), but by Wave 2, the averages were \$22,662 (STND) and \$22,182 (CM) (sig. = .769). They also have comparable labor-force involvements. At Wave 1, 77% of Standard and 78% of Covenant wives were in the labor force (sig = .870). At Wave 2, 71% of Standard and 77% of Covenant wives were (sig = .138).

The two types of wives differ in the presence of minors in the household, however. At Wave 1, 43% of Standard wives had minors in the household compared with only 27% of Covenant wives (sig < .05). At Wave 2, there were comparable differences (52% of Standard and 38% of Covenant wives had minors). Finally, with respect to completed schooling, 44% of Standard wives, but 54% of Covenant wives obtained at least a BA (sig = .053). In sum, Covenant and Standard wives have comparable incomes, and labor-force involvements, though Covenant wives have somewhat greater educational attainment and are less likely to have a minor in the household early in the marriage.

MEASURES USED FOR ANALYSIS

Dependent Variables. Our primary purpose in this paper is to examine the changes we observe between the first few months of marriage (our first surveys were administered in the first 4 - 6 months of marriage, on average) and the end of the second year of marriage (18 months after the completion of the first questionnaire). Specifically, we focus on these dimensions of married life:

1. Marital Adjustment- Agreement. We use the well-known and validated Dyadic Adjustment Scale measure of consensus (agreement) in marriage (Spanier, 1976). The 11 item scale has a range of 0 to 55 (Wave 1 mean for husbands = 43.6, s=6.18, alpha=.865; mean for wives = 44.25, s = 6.20, alpha=.803) The 11 items in this scale include the following:

Please indicate the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list (answers ranged from Always agree [5] to Always Disagree [0])

- a) Handling family finances,
- b) How we spend our leisure time,
- c) Religious matters,
- d) My friends,
- e) My partner's friends,
- f) Philosophy of life,
- g) Dealing with parents and in-laws,
- h) Our aims, goals, and things believed important,
- i) The amount of time we spend together,
- j) Who does what around the house,
- k) Career decisions

2. Commitment. We measure commitment to the relationship by a series of questions about how life would change if the marriage were to end. Our presumption is that individuals who anticipate small (or no) changes as a result of divorce or separation have lower levels of commitment to the relationship (Nock, 1995). This 6-item scale has a range of 5 to 25 (Wave 1 mean for husbands = 11.74, $s=3.51$, $\alpha=.816$; mean for wives = 11.41, $s=3.10$, $\alpha=.817$). The scoring of this scale is such that higher values indicate lower levels of commitment. The items in this scale include the following:

While nobody likes to think about separation or divorce, imagine if you can how various aspects of your life might change if that were to happen. For each of the following areas, how do you think things would change if you and your partner were to separate?

If we separated or divorced, that aspect of my life would get (answers ranged from Much Worse [1] to Much better [5] – or Does not Apply to me):

- a) Your standard of living
- b) Your social life
- c) Your career opportunities
- d) Your overall happiness
- e) Your sex life
- f) Being a parent

3. Satisfaction with Fairness in Marriage. This single item is taken from a scale designed to measure satisfaction in marriage. (Answers ranged from Very Dissatisfied [1] to Very Satisfied [5]. Wave 1 mean for husbands = 4.09, $s=.92$; mean for wives = 4.06, $s=.94$. The question is:

In every marriage, there are some things that are very good and other things that could use some improvement. Right now, how satisfied would you say you are with each of the following aspects of your marriage?

- a) The degree of fairness in our marriage

4. Traditionalism in regard to matters of gender. This 5-item scale is intended to measure the degree to which individuals endorse traditional views about the role of women (and men) in marriage. We take these items from several scales in our questionnaires. Answers ranged from Strongly agree [5] to Strongly disagree [1]. We calculated the average of the five items (wave 1 mean for husbands = 2.74, $s=.84$, $\alpha=.799$; mean for wives =

2.58, $s = .80$, $\alpha = .794$). Higher scores indicate greater traditionalism. The items in this scale include the following:

- a) All in all, family life suffers when the wife has a full-time job
- b) A husband's job is to earn money, a wife's job is to look after the home and family
- c) Taking care of children should be mainly a woman's responsibility
- d) By nature, women are better than men at making a home and caring for children
- e) It works best when the man earns the money and the woman takes care of home and family

Independent Variables. As we will describe in the following paragraphs, our analytic strategy is to measure change between wave 1 and wave 2 on each of the measures just described. Our interest is to determine the extent to which the amount of change differs between those in Covenant and Standard marriages. More centrally, we are interested to determine the extent to which such change can be explained by changes in the centrality of a traditional model of marriage. In brief, we are asking whether longitudinal changes in outcomes can be explained by longitudinal changes in the centrality of marriage. This is our central concern, and our measure of it is intended to capture the degree to which spouses embrace an institutional (as opposed to individualistic) view of the marital relationship.

5. Centrality of marriage in life. This 8-item scale is designed to measure the centrality accorded an institutional (traditional) view of marriage by husbands and wives. It was constructed by assembling questions pertaining to the centrality of marriage in life, the centrality of children in marriage, and the life-long commitment implied by marriage vows, and the sacred nature of wedding vows. Answers ranged from Strongly Agree [5] to Strongly Disagree [1]. The scale has a range of 8 to 40 (Wave 1 mean for husbands = 25.18, $s = 5.65$, $\alpha = .772$; mean for wives = 23.85, $s = 5.14$, $\alpha = .772$). The items in this scale include the following:

- a) No matter how successful he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he is married
- b) No matter how successful she is, a woman is not truly complete as a person unless she is married
- c) One of the main reasons to get married is to have children
- d) Being married is one of the most important things in life
- e) If a couple has children, they should stay married, no matter what
- f) Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get
- g) Long waiting periods to get a divorce give people time to get over their anger and work out their problems

h) Marriage is an unbreakable covenant with God, not just a contract recognized by the law

6. Covenant or Standard marriage? We distinguish each husband and wife as being a partner in a Covenant or a Standard marriage. This is determined by responses by each partner, and our verification of those responses by an examination of a copy of the marriage license filed by the couple. Our sampling strategy attempted to obtain equal numbers of each type of marriage. In this analysis, we rely on 585 females (311 in standard marriages and 274 in Covenant marriages,) and 494 men (264 in Standard and 230 in Covenant marriages.)

ANALYTIC STRATEGY AND RATIONALE

The title of this presentation is “Intimate Equity.” This warrants some explanation. For the past year, our research team has been investigating the trajectories of both covenant and standard marriages (for both husbands and wives) to see how they change, and how individuals cope with the ordinary problems of early marriage. In both qualitative and quantitative work, we have been made aware of a central theme that discriminates between the two types of unions. We describe the difference as *institutionalization of the marriage*. Covenant couples describe their marriages as involving three parties; the husband, the wife, and the marriage itself. For covenant couples, the marriage warrants consideration apart from the individualistic concerns of either partner. In regard to some matters, covenant couples appear to defer to the interests of their marriage even when the individual concerns of the partners may appear to conflict. And this orientation to married life, we argue, helps resolve the customary problems faced by newly married couples in regard to fairness and equity.

The basis of institutionalization is a model of marriage that informs the mundane and ordinary aspects of the married relationship (see, e.g., Nock, 1998, ch 2.) This view of marriage elevates the normative (expected) model of marriage to prominence in the relationship. Thus, we find that covenant couples endorse traditional marital vows with strong personal commitments (marriage for life, the central role of children in marriage, the role marriage plays in producing a complete individual, etc.). Standard couples sometimes endorse similar views, but much less often, and less strongly.

Now that we are attempting to describe the trajectories of the two types of couples, we find that the institutionalization of the marriage explains large portions of the differences we typically find when we compare the two types of couples.

We have actually identified two related bases of this institutionalized view of marriage. The first, as just described, is an orientation about the central role that a traditional marriage plays in the lives of the couple. The other is religious, and we are currently investigating the issue with reliable scales. In this paper, we focus on the former measure only (see “Centrality of Marriage” scale, above). Not surprisingly, the measure of centrality of marriage is related to our measures of the centrality of religion (frequency of prayer, attendance at services together, etc.) but not that strongly. Wives’ scores on the measure of the centrality of marriage and the centrality of religion correlate at .323. Husbands’ scores correlate .263. Accordingly, we believe that each measure taps a different source of an institutionalized view of marriage.

In our analyses, we focus on change between the first round of surveys (at about 4-6 months of marriage) and the second (at about 2 years of marriage) on each scale described earlier. We employ a simple change-model regression approach (technically, static-score regression) in which we take the score of a scale at the second wave (2 years of marriage) as our dependent variable, and the score of the same scale at the first wave (6 months of marriage) as a control. The control for the value at Wave 1 means that any unexplained variation is change. We then ask whether changes in the centrality of marriage explain such differences.

Our focus on change is noteworthy. When change in one dimension produces change in another, this is the strongest statistical evidence available for cause and effect, short of a true randomized experiment. We are unable to specify which change came first in this analysis, however. accordingly, we simply note that a causal connection between the factors investigated probably exists. It is important to understand that our results pertain solely to differences over time in early marriages. To the extent that we are able to explain such changes as a result of an increasing (or decreasing) sense of the central role of traditional marriage in the relationship, this is very strong evidence in support of our central argument that a guiding model of marriage is a key cause of the measured differences between the two types of couples. As we will show, covenant couples change in uniformly positive directions as they adjust to marriage. Standard couples also change, but not as much, and not uniformly in positive directions.

To anticipate our conclusion, we will show that a guiding model of marriage (in this case, what we describe as an institutionalized view) helps resolve the challenges most newly married couples confront. Additionally, we have found that **either** the centrality of religion **or** the centrality of marriage serve similar purposes. Though we will be unable to describe the different roles played by each measure in this presentation, it should be noted that sometimes one, sometimes the other, and sometimes both types of institutionalization explain the differences in how couples change over time. The implications of such a finding are that successful marriages are not necessarily based on a religious foundation, but rather the values embraced by all major religions in regard to marriage serve the same purpose. In other words, it is the institutional view of marriage (a model that stresses the traditional vows of matrimony) that appears important, whether this is strictly religious or finds its source elsewhere. This is a theme we are currently investigating because we believe it is critical that we identify as many sources of strong marriages as possible. We suspect that such sources include a guiding template of normative beliefs, such as those shown in this presentation.

FINDINGS:

We present our findings separately for men and women by type of marriage. Our equations involve three steps. First, we simply determine whether individuals in each type of marriage differ (at 2 years of marriage). Then we determine whether there have been different amounts of *change* for individuals in each type of marriage. Finally, we determine whether such differential changes (if found) can be attributed to the centrality accorded to an institutional view of marriage. These results are summarized in Table 2 - 5.

Before turning to the specific results, we simply note the large differences between individuals in the two types of marriages in regard to the centrality of marriage. Table 1 shows that at Time 2, both Covenant husbands and wives had significantly higher scores on this scale (3.40 points higher on average for Covenant wives, 3.77 higher for Covenant husbands). By controlling for the Time 1 values, it is possible to determine the magnitude of change over time. This shows that covenant partners significantly increased their scores (compared to their standard counterparts) between waves (an additional increase of 1.52 for covenant wives, and 1.68 for covenant husbands). In sum, the two types of couples differ notably on the extent to which partners embrace an institutional (traditional/normative) model of marriage.

We now turn to our dependent variables, beginning with the Spanier Consensus (Agreement) scale. The values in Model [1] show the average differences between Covenant and Standard individuals at Time 2. Model [1] shows that both Covenant husbands and wives indicate higher degrees of consensus (agreement) at Wave 2 (1.73 points for wives, 1.90 points for husbands). In Model [2] we control for the degree of consensus at Time 1. The coefficient for “Covenant?” now reflects the amount of change between waves. Model [2] shows that Covenant partners increased their agreement (by .877 for wives and .892 for husbands) more than did Standard partners. Finally, in Model [3] we enter the measure of Centrality of Marriage at Time 1 and Time 2. Entering values for both waves measures the change in Centrality between waves. The question is whether such changes in Centrality explain the greater increase in Consensus among Covenant couples shown in Model [2]. The results show that the improvements in consensus *are explained* by the increases in the centrality of marriage. The coefficients for “Covenant” become statistically insignificant once changes in Centrality of Marriage are entered. Greater consensus is a product of greater centrality.

Turning next to the measure of Commitment (See Table 3), we find very similar results, but only for wives. As this table shows, Covenant husbands and wives report greater commitment to their relationship at Wave 2 (lower scores on the scale). They also become more committed to their marriages over time. But where this growing commitment is explained by growing centrality of marriage for wives, it is not for husbands (who also show growing centrality of marriage). Covenant husbands’ growing commitment is only partially explained by their institutionalized view of marriage. Other factors undoubtedly influence Covenant husbands’ growing commitment, as well.

The third measure is the satisfaction with the fairness in the marriage. Just as was found for commitment, these results show that Covenant husbands and wives are more likely to describe themselves as satisfied with the fairness in their marriage. Model [2] shows that covenant partners become increasingly convinced of this over time (compared to their standard counterparts). But improved perceptions of fairness are a result of wives commitment to the traditional template of marriage. This is not true, however, for husbands.

To this point, we have found that covenant partners are more likely to agree, and become increasingly likely to do so over time. We have found similar results with respect to commitment and fairness in the marriage. But these beneficial changes appear to be largely

explained by a view of marriage as a traditional normative arrangement (especially for women). To conclude this investigation, we turn finally to the issue of gender traditionalism.

Here we find that both partners in Covenant marriages are more traditional with respect to gender. Moreover, they become somewhat more traditional yet, with time. But this is not totally explained by the centrality of marriage. Rather, the ideological values tapped by this measure are only modestly related to the traditional model of marriage our scale measures (bivariate correlations are about .40 between the two measures for women, and .30 between the two measures for men). In short, covenant couples are more traditional with respect to gender, and they are more committed to a traditional marriage, but the two are not that strongly linked. This makes sense in light of earlier findings showing that the commitment to a traditional view of marriage leads to better communication (consensus), greater commitment, and a higher sense of fairness about the marriage (mainly among wives). Covenant wives are more traditional with respect to gender ideals, and they have marriages that are seemingly more equitable. Does this suggest that equity in early marriage (what we call intimate equity) is compatible with traditional gender ideals? It does. But our results also suggest that endorsing an institutional model of normative marriage influences perceived equity in marriage.

CONCLUSION

We have sought to show why Covenant couples appear (on several measured dimensions) to have stronger marriages than their Standard counterparts. This is the very beginning of a much longer story. Still, our preliminary results suggest that the source of that higher quality of marriage (and the increasing quality as well) is a relationship in which marriage, itself, is embraced as a central element in the relationship between two individuals. Admittedly, our evidence on this is indirect. We cannot show that our measures of centrality of marriage are mirrored in an ongoing perception of marriage having its own existence and needs. Nor can we rule out the possibility that changes in marital quality or perceived equity are the cause of a growing commitment to an institutionalized view of marriage. We believe, however, that we have found the first empirical evidence in support of an old idea. Two individuals do not easily make a strong marriage. Rather, it takes the presence of a set of guiding principles around which these two individuals orient their behaviors and thinking. A commitment to a model of marriage, per se, as worthy, important, and for life appears to produce better marriages.

REFERENCES

- Casper, Lynne M., and Suzanne M. Bianchi.
2002. *Continuity and Change in the American Family*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Goldscheider, Frances K., and Linda J. Waite
1991. *New families, no families? : the transformation of the American home*. Berkeley University of California Press.
- Lennon, Mary Clare and Sara Rosenfeld.
1994. Relative Fairness and the Division of Housework: The Importance of Options. *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 506-531.
- McClain, Linda C.
2001. "The Domain of Civic Virtue in a Good Society: Families, Schools, and Sex Equality." *Fordham Law Review* 69, No. 5 (April 2001): Pp. 1646-47.
- Nock, Steven L.
1995 "Commitment and Dependency in Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol 57: 503-514.
1998. *Marriage in Men's Lives*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Nock, Steven L., and Margaret F. Brinig.
2002. "Weak Men and Disorderly Women: Divorce and the Division of of Labor." pp 171-210 in *The Law and Economics of Marriage and Divorce* (Anthony W. Dnes and Robert Rowthorn, eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..
- Sayer, Lianna., and Suzanne M. Bianchi.
2000. "Women's Economic Independence and the Probability of Divorce: A Review and Reexamination." *Journal of Family Issues*, 2000, 21, 7, Oct, 906-943
- Spain, Daphne G., and Suzanne M. Bianchi.
1996. *Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Spanier, Graham G.
1976. "Measuring Dyadic Adjustment: New Scales for Assessing the Quality of Marriage and Similar Dyads." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 38 (1): 15-30.

TABLE 1: CENTRALITY OF MARRIAGE- WAVE 2

	WIVES		HUSBANDS	
	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]
Covenant? (1=Y)	3.40*	1.52*	3.77*	1.68*
Centrality Wave 1		.526*		.499*
N		510		396
R ²	.125	.387	.135	.374

* P , .05

TABLE 2: AGREEMENT (CONSENSUS) IN MARRIAGE SCALE

	WIVES			HUSBANDS		
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Covenant? (1=Y)	1.73*	.877*	.555	1.90*	.892*	.816
Consensus Wave 1		.756*	.746*		.668*	.659*
Centrality Marriage Wave 1			-.001			-.104*
Centrality Marriage Wave 2			.104*			.136*
N			455			359
R ²	.020	.467	.472	.029	.424	.435

* p < .05

TABLE 3: COMMITMENT SCALE – WAVE 2

	WIVES			HUSBANDS		
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Covenant?(1=Y)	-.910*	-.521*	-.277	-1.60*	-.906*	-.629*
Commitment Wave 1		.527*	.520*		.569*	.527*
Centrality Marriage Wave 1			.004			.083*
Centrality Marriage Wave 2			-.119*			-.178*
N			436			351
R ²	.025	.313	.338	.062	.392	.439

* p < .05

TABLE 4: SATISFACTION WITH FAIRNESS IN MARRIAGE – WAVE 2

	WIVES			HUSBANDS		
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Covenant?(1=Y)	.202*	.169*	.130	.218*	.177*	.225*
Fairness Wave 1		.554*	.546*		.437*	.438*
Centrality Marriage Wave 1			-.012			-.014
Centrality Marriage Wave 2			.025*			.003
N			504			394
R ²	.010	.239	.248	.014	.186	.192

* p < .05

TABLE 5: GENDER TRADITIONALISM SCALE – WAVE 2

	WIVES			HUSBANDS		
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[1]	[2]	[3]
Covenant? (1=Y)	.561*	.179*	.139*	.431*	.192*	.144*
Traditionalism, Wave 1		.674*	.641*		.652*	.632*
Centrality Marriage Wave 1			-.014*			-.004
Centrality Marriage Wave 2			.032*			.019*
N			505			396
R ²	.110	.521	.541	.081	.510	.52