



2012-03-02

# The Changing Meaning of Marriage: An Analysis of Contemporary Marital Attitudes of Young Adults

Nicole Margaret Kay

*Brigham Young University - Provo*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#)

---

## BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Kay, Nicole Margaret, "The Changing Meaning of Marriage: An Analysis of Contemporary Marital Attitudes of Young Adults" (2012). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 2969.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/2969>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

The Changing Meaning of Marriage: An Analysis of Contemporary  
Marital Attitudes of Young Adults

Nicole M. Kay

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

Dean M. Busby, Chair  
Alan J. Hawkins  
Jason S. Carroll

School of Family Life  
Brigham Young University

April 2012

Copyright © 2012 Nicole M Kay

All Rights Reserved

## ABSTRACT

### The Changing Meaning of Marriage: An Analysis of Contemporary Marital Attitudes of Young Adults

Nicole Kay  
School of Family Life, BYU  
Master of Science

An interesting paradox in the literature about marriage is that despite the substantial changes to marriage over the last half century, young adults remain committed to the ideal of marriage. While changes to marriage as a social institution have been well documented, research concerning the contemporary attitudes of young adults about marriage has been limited. Even less research has focused on how these contemporary attitudes may cluster young adults into groups that have different perceptions of marriage. This study explores young single adult attitudes about marriage, and group differences in these attitudes. A quota sample (n=700) of 18-35 year-old young adults was studied to understand young adults' perceptions of marriage today. Cluster analysis was then performed to analyze group differences. The young adults in this sample formed into 4 distinctive marital attitude groups: the *Religious Ready*, *Religious Realists*, *Loving the Single Life/Marital Pessimists*, and *Secular Romantics*. The formation of these attitude groups illustrates the broad variation within young adults in beliefs about marriage, especially in the dimensions of religious views of marriage, and readiness for marriage. Implications of these marital attitude groups and recommendations for further research of a marital typology for contemporary attitudes about marriage are discussed.

Keywords: marriage, attitudes, social change, young adults, contemporary, typology

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for the help and support that sustained me through the time of this degree and my time at BYU. I am grateful to Brigham Young University and its faculty, for welcoming me to campus as a young freshman, and for following me through my young adult years. I know that without this BYU experience I would not have been able to achieve the intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual growth I would need to be successful in my future. I am especially grateful for the patient mentorship of my faculty advisors, Jenet Jacobs Erickson and Dean Busby. I am also very grateful for the other faculty on my thesis committee and informal mentors who took the time to provide insight and wisdom to improve my understanding and perspective. These faculty include Alan Hawkins, Jason Carroll, Tom Holman, Susan Olsen Roper, Brian Willoughby and many other kind and patient faculty in the School of Family Life.

Additionally, I am extremely grateful for the support and love of my family, friends, and roommates, who bore with me and kept me sane during long hours of thesis writing and rewriting.

Ultimately I wish to give thanks to my Heavenly Father, who has led me to this place in my life, provided a place for learning, nurturing, and growth, and has provided me with the grace and power to reach for and accomplish something greater than myself.

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
Theoretical Foundation.....	3
Literature Review.....	4
Social Attitudes about Marriage.....	4
Individual Attitudes toward Marriage.....	5
Blending Bodies of Research.....	7
Studies of Group Differences.....	8
Research Questions.....	10
Methods.....	10
Sample.....	11
Measures.....	11
Importance of Marriage Scale.....	12
Religious vs. Secular Marital Orientation.....	13
Marital Pessimism.....	13
Romantic Relationship Initiation.....	13
Single Stage vs. Married Stage.....	13
Autonomy in Marriage Scale.....	14
Relational Readiness Scale.....	14
Analyses.....	14
Results.....	15
Descriptive Analysis of Marital Attitudes.....	15
Importance of Marriage Scale.....	15
Religious vs. Secular Marital Orientation.....	15
Marital Pessimism.....	15
Romantic Relationship Initiation.....	15
Single Stage vs. Married Stage.....	16
Autonomy in Marriage.....	16
Relational Readiness Scale.....	16
Limitations of Mean Scores and Scales.....	16
Cluster Analysis of Marital Attitudes.....	17
Cluster 4- The Religious Ready.....	17
Cluster 1- Religious Realists.....	18
Cluster 2- Loving the Single Life/Marriage Pessimists.....	18
Cluster 3- Secular Romantics.....	19

Discussion .....	19
The Divide between Religious vs Secular Perspectives of Marriage .....	20
No Rush to Get Married.....	20
The Relationally Ready .....	21
Limitations .....	22
Direction for Future Research.....	23
Conclusion .....	23
References.....	25
Table 1: Demographic Statistics .....	29
Table 2: Marital Attitude Scale Item Scores ( <i>Chronbach's Alpha</i> ).....	30
Table 3: Marital Attitude Mean Scale Scores .....	32
Figure 1. Marital Typology Cluster Graph .....	33

## Coming to Age in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: An Analysis of Marital Attitudes of Emerging Adults

One of the defining paradoxes in the literature about marriage is that despite the significant social and demographic changes to marriage in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Americans remain strongly committed to the ideal of marriage (Cherlin, 2004; Kefalas, Furstenberg, Carr & Napolitano, 2011; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Some scholars argue that marriage as a cultural ideal is stronger in the United States than any other developed country (Cherlin, 2004). According to recent estimates, nearly 90% of adults will marry at some time in their lives (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). Yet a snap shot of changes to marriage over the last several decades includes the rising divorce rate (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), the rise of cohabitation (Bumpass & Lu, 2000), the growth of children born to unwed mothers (Rector, 2010), the delayed age of marriage (US Census, 2010), and the decline of overall marriage percentages for the general population (US Census, 2010). As recently as 1970, the average age of first marriage was 21 for women and 22.6 for men; by 2010 it had increased to age 26.5 for women and 28.7 for men (US Census, 2010). In past generations, cohabitation was participated in only by a small minority of couples but currently over half (60%) of first marriages are preceded by cohabitation (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2008). In 1950, 78% of all households in the US were occupied by married couples. Recently the US Census reported that the number of married households slipped into the minority of household types (48%) with non-married households now in the majority (US Census, 2010). Currently over 40% of children are born to unwed parents in the United States (Rector, 2010). These trends are also accompanied by the increase of women in the workforce, the increase of availability contraception and abortion, and the increase of participation in higher education (Kefalas et al., 2011). Some scholars have termed these demographic trends along with weakening social norms about marriage the

deinstitutionalization of marriage (Blankenhorn, 2007, Cherlin, 2004, Regnarus & Uecker, 2011; Wilcox, 2010).

While some may assume that these demographic trends and changing norms about marriage reflect weakening commitment to or negative attitudes about marriage, repeated research indicates just the opposite (Carroll, Willoughby, Nelson & Barry, 2007; Cherlin, 2004; Edin & Kefalis, 2005; Regnarus & Uecker, 2011; Wilcox, 2010). Amidst the multitude of alternatives to marriage, the large majority of young adults still hopes for and intends to be married one day. A survey of high school seniors conducted annually since 1976 shows that the percentage of young women who respond that they expect to marry remains constant at roughly 80% for women and 78% for men (Thornton & Yount-DeMarco, 2001). In a more recent study of 11,000 young adults, 93-96% of all young adults report that they are both planning for and expecting marriage in the future (Regnarus & Uecker, 2011). Thus, concurrent with the deinstitutionalization of marriage, there remains a deep commitment to the ideal of marriage, and a hope and intention of most young adults to one day be married (Carroll et al., 2007).

Amidst the social paradox of increasing alternatives to marriage but a persistent and deep commitment to the ideal of marriage, what are contemporary young adults' attitudes and beliefs about marriage? What are never-married young adults' beliefs about the meaning of marriage? Do they feel that marriage is important and distinctive from other relationships? Do they want to marry or does marriage threaten their independence? Do they see marriage as a religious and sacred institution? Or do they see marriage as a relationship of individual romance? Are they optimistic about the prospect of marriage or nervous about its restrictions on their personal freedom? This generation of adults has come to age amidst significant cultural changes to the institution of marriage. With the significant demographic changes in marital behavior in the US

and the shifting social norms surrounding marriage, scholarship would benefit from a contemporary understanding of attitudes and beliefs that young adults have about marriage. This paper will attempt to better understand young adults' attitudes toward marriage amidst the broad social changes affecting marriage.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

In examining the subjective attitudes about and meanings of marriage, a guiding framework or theoretical foundation for understanding attitudes and beliefs is needed. Especially when examining the influence of social change on individual attitudes, a theory that incorporates social influences along with individual factors is needed. One prevalent sociological theory, symbolic interactionism (SI), helps to understand the process of meaning-making for human beings, and the importance of these meanings or attitudes on behavior (Blume, 1969). SI suggests that meaning and beliefs about objects are created from meaning-making processes embedded in individual social interactions and interactions with the larger culture. According to this theory, subjective meaning, created from a combination of personal and cultural influences, will ultimately influence actions and behaviors. Applied specifically to the demographic and social changes to marriage, SI would suggest that the broad social and cultural changes to the institution of marriage would significantly influence and shape the attitudes of young adults concerning the meaning of marriage and beliefs about marriage. Recently SI theory has been used to explore marital attitudes of young adults as well, specifically in relation to how marital attitudes affect risk behaviors and sexual behavior (Salts, Seismore, Lindholm, & Smith, 1994; Willoughby & Dworkin, 2009). Symbolic Interactionism helps to frame how individuals interact with larger social and cultural influences to create meaning and belief. SI also posits that subjective meaning, beliefs and attitudes lead to behavior. What an individual believes about

marriage will influence how an individual will behave regarding marriage. SI also suggest that the changing social norms will have a significant influence on the meaning-making of young adult attitudes and beliefs about marriage. With this underlying framework guiding my understanding of how attitudes and beliefs form, I look at the recent literature about both the differing social attitudes and beliefs about marriage, and research on individual attitudes and beliefs about marriage.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Attitudes about Marriage**

Scholars have long been studying the shifting social norms of marriage and family roles in the last half century (Amato, Booth, Johnson & Rogers 2007; Bellah, Marsden, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton 1985; Blankenhorn, 2007; Cherlin, 2004; Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001). Generally this realm of scholarship has fallen within the scope of Sociologists and those interested in broader social changes. Scholars interested in the deinstitutionalization of marriage have reviewed the evolution of changing social norms in America, and identified some broader social meanings and attitudes about marriage. In 1985, scholars identified cultural trends of the “expressive individualism” model of marriage that developed in the 1960s and 1970s (Bellah, et al., 1985). This model of marriage included an emphasis on emotional satisfaction and romantic love. This idea was further developed by scholars soon after, and termed “individualized marriage”, which was characterized by marital beliefs that included the importance of self-development, the importance of flexibility and negotiability of marital roles, and the importance of openness and communication (Cancian, 1987). These scholars surveyed articles about marriage in popular magazines across several decades that contained these themes. They found by the late 1980’s, over two thirds of the articles contained one or more themes of an individualized marriage.

Further, in 2004 Andrew Cherlin reviewed social trends that contribute to the deinstitutionalization of marriage, including the importance of self-improvement and personal satisfaction in relationships. In his article, *The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage*, Cherlin documents the evolving attitudes and demographic trends concerning marriage in the United States, beginning with an institutional marriage that emphasized practical economic, division of labor, and social obligations as primary purposes, to the individualized marriage that emphasizes individual development and emotional satisfaction (Cherlin, 2004).

These ideas and identification of social meanings of marriage represent the social context in which young adults are doing their “meaning-making” about marriage, as suggested by symbolic interaction theory (Blume, 1969). While these social norms are useful in identifying broad attitudes and social meanings of marriage, the level of individual acceptance of these meanings and beliefs about marriage is not examined, and these studies do not provide a specific framework by which to study individuals or group differences in acceptance of changing social norms about marriage. As broad social norm studies are typically based on data from broad demographic trends and theory rather than individual-based research data, these studies tend to be general and limited in application to individual or group attitudes about marriage since the level of acceptance of these meta-ideas differs for individuals and may apply more to certain populations than to others. Further investigation to specific group attitudes is needed beyond the meta-analysis of social attitudes.

### **Individual Attitudes toward Marriage**

More recently, as the population of never-married young adults grows larger and comes of age, scholars have begun to turn their attention more specifically to studying populations of young adults and their premarital attitudes. Many of these individual attitude studies about

marriage correspond with the study of emerging adulthood and the place of marriage in the adult development pathway, and are often performed by developmental scholars, examining change of beliefs and attitudes on an individual scale (Carroll, Badger, Willoughby, Nelson, Madsen, & Barry, 2009; Carroll et al., 2007; Willoughby & Dworkin, 2009). A recent theory in this area is called marital horizon theory and organizes marital attitude research around emerging adults' developmental trajectories. This theory draws on the large body of emerging adult literature, and the developmental steps and essential tasks in the transition to adulthood. Using a marital horizons theory, Carroll and colleagues suggest that young people's perceptions of marriage are central to determining the length of emerging adulthood, and predicting and shaping specific behaviors before marriage (Carroll et al., 2007). Marital horizon theory includes three dimensions of marital attitudes: 1) the importance of marriage as a life goal, 2) desired timing for marriage, and 3) personal criteria for marriage readiness. These dimensions were formed into scales, and were then examined in relation to risk behaviors such as binge drinking, smoking, marijuana use, illegal drug use, sexual behavior, and pornography use. In this specific study, the dimensions of marital importance, and timing of marriage were tested for correlation, and significant relationships were found with risk behaviors of substance use and sexual permissiveness (Carroll et al., 2007).

In a later study, Carroll and colleagues (2009) addressed the third aspect of marital horizon theory- marital readiness. This study established the use of the Criteria for Marital Readiness instrument, revealing a multi-dimensional understanding of what attributes and development steps are necessary for marriage. Specifically, Carroll found that young adults assess marital readiness in two dimensions: ability to take care of self, and then ability to take

care of others. In this particular study, marital readiness correlated with sexual permissiveness and pornography use (Carroll et al., 2009).

While these marital horizon studies are tremendously important in understanding the influence of young adults' attitudes about marriage on individual behavior, they focus almost entirely on the individual developmental pathway of young adults. While this individual analysis is helpful as well, it is limited in its ability to identify group differences or trends among populations. Additionally, at the end of the most recent study, Carroll calls on scholars to further investigate the dimensions of marital horizons theory by examining clusters of attitudes to understand group differences. He also exhorts scholars to explore a more diverse sample, and to explore more dimensions to marital attitudes within a more comprehensive framework of marital

### **Blending Bodies of Research**

While this advancement of research in both bodies of literature has paved a pathway for understanding both social and personal attitudes about marriage, both areas of literature leave a broad space between social meanings and personal meanings of marriage, without analysis to identify group trends in differentiation between levels of acceptance of social norms. According to symbolic interaction theory, both bodies of literature miss important parts of meaning-making for young adults- the examination of how deeply these social trends penetrate into the ideas and beliefs of specific groups of young adults about marriage.

In studying marital attitudes, scholars have also called attention to the fact that not all young adults have the same marital attitudes, and that group differences are important (Carroll et al., 2009; Arnett, 2006). In emerging adult development theory, scholars acknowledges that although emerging adulthood is defined by common experienced experiences and attitudes, emerging adults themselves represent a wide diversity of life experiences and trajectories

(Arnett, 2006). Arnett states specifically that, “an understanding of subgroup differences and individual differences is essential to a complete understanding of emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2006, p. 14). Another emerging adult scholar also emphasizes the subgroup differences between young adults that are progressing toward adulthood when he investigated potential impacts of varying marital attitudes of young adults (Cote, 2006). In order to understand young adults’ marital attitudes and beliefs, and understanding of group differences among young adults is necessary.

### **Studies of Group Differences**

A couple of preliminary group attitude studies have been done in this area. The National Marriage Project, housed at the University of Virginia, has been studying broad cultural changes to the institution of marriage for several years. In the 2001 *The State of Our Unions* publication, authors focused specifically on young adult attitudes toward marriage, dating, cohabitation and parenthood (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001). This was the first large-scale study to look specifically at contemporary attitudes about dating and marriage among young adults. Based in a focus group and sample performed by the Gallup Organization, they used a statistically representative national sample of 1,003 young adults age 20-29. Their primary finding was that almost all young adults were hoping to find a deep emotional and spiritual connection with one person for the rest of their life- a soulmate. Ninety four percent of never-married singles agreed that “when you marry, you want your spouse to be your soulmate, first and foremost” (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001, p.2). The study also found that 78% of young adults agree that marriage should be a lifelong commitment. Overall, the authors agree that young adults’ marital attitudes were shifting away from institutional understandings that emphasize larger social, religious, economic or public purposes associated with marriage, surpassing companionate

relationships of friendship and love and turning into a more exalted and demanding standard of spiritualized union of souls (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001, p.3). While this and continuing studies from the organization are extremely valuable, they do not attempt to examine the data beyond simple statistics, and are not able to look at group differences. However the research gives valuable insight on the dimensions of contemporary marital attitudes

Looking more specifically at group differences in attitudes, recently a very important preliminary study was conducted considering both the blend of social norms and individualized variability in attitudes about marriage, and how these attitudes may form into a group typology (Hall, 2006). The study observes that a person's attitudes and beliefs about marriage are multifaceted, including a blending of social norms, relationships, and personal experience. After conducting a thorough content analysis of a literature on the cultural meanings of marriage, five general themes about the meaning of marriage emerge: a) Marriage is special vs. other relationships, b) the purpose of marriage may be either self-fulfilling or selfless, c) marriage will affect one's sense of individuality, d) marriage may be conceived as a romantic/soulmate model, or a pragmatic, realistic endeavor, and marriage can incorporate gender role distinctions or not. These five dimensions were formed into scales of marital meaning, and tested on a convenience sample of 527 students. Clusters of attitudes were also formed, although not analyzed. This work is fundamental to identifying and understanding the multifaceted nature of marital attitudes and beliefs, and examining group differences. Hall calls for a replication of such a study with a broader and more diverse sample to confirm results and further analyze clusters of marital meaning.

From a review of the literature, we can see that a broad understanding of contemporary changes to marriage and individual trajectories of marital attitudes have been studied and

documented. However, group analysis and research on young adults' attitudes about marriage is limited. Considering the importance of marriage in the adult life-span, and the impact that this generation of young adults will have on society, scholarship would benefit from further understanding of marital attitudes and beliefs of young adults, and differences in groups of young adults' beliefs about marriage. Such an analysis may yield a useful preliminary typology for scholars to examine larger groups of young adults and develop a framework by which to study marital attitudes and to better understand contemporary attitudes about marriage.

In this study I will attempt to blend scholarship of social norms and individual attitudes toward marriage to create a multi-dimensional tool for assessing contemporary marital attitudes of never-married young adults. I will also attempt to create a marital attitude typology by which to understand and analyze data by subgroup differences of groups of young adults.

### **Research Questions**

Thus this study attempts to answer three questions: 1) What are general contemporary young adults' attitudes about marriage? 2) Can distinctive subgroups of young adults' attitudes about marriage be identified? 3) What do subgroup differences reveal about young adults attitudes about marriage?

### **Methods**

The participants from this study come from the entire population of participants who completed the READY questionnaire from October 2009 to January 2012. READY is a research-based internet relationship evaluation instrument for single individuals, and is an adaptation of the RELATE instrument for couples (Busby, Holman & Taniguchi, 2001). Individuals complete READY online after being exposed to the instrument through a variety of settings. Some

participants took READY after hearing about it in a college class and many others after finding it on the internet.

### **Sample**

The sample for this study consisted of a total of 700 single, never-married adults, age 18-35 with the average age being 23. The sample was 71.7% female ( $n = 497$ ) and 28.3% male ( $n = 196$ ), consisting mostly of students with 78.3% currently enrolled in college or having obtained an undergraduate degree, and 17% pursuing or having obtained a graduate degree. The sample was predominately white (68.7%), including African Americans (14.8%), Asians (6.2%), and Latinos (3.7%). The religious affiliation of the sample was 25.9% Catholic, 38.6% Protestant, 9.6% LDS, while 22.9% claim no religion. A total of 87% of the sample was either not dating at all or only occasionally dating, while 9% were in a serious relationship and 4.7% were engaged to be married. (See Table 1)

### **Measures**

According to the literature, some prevalent social dimensions of young adults' beliefs and perspectives about marriage included the distinctiveness and importance of the marriage relationship compared to other relationships (Waite & Gallagher, 2000), religious vs. secular perspectives of the marriage relationship (Cherlin, 2004), optimism vs. pessimism about getting married (Dennison & Koerner, 2006), romantic vs. pragmatic ideas about relationship formation (Whitehead & Popenoe, 2001), individual autonomy in the marriage relationship (Hall, 2006), and relational readiness (Carroll et al, 2009). In addition to what the literature has suggested, scholars involved in the creation of the RELATE instrument used in this study were able to participate in a large national focus group on young adults marital attitudes. During a national social marketing study with the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center one of the scholars

from the RELATE Institute Board was involved in studies of marital attitudes of emerging adults. The study included a nationally representative and diverse group of more than 4,000 young adults. After focus groups and thorough examination, several dimensions of EAs attitudes about marriage emerged. The dimensions that emerged were similar to those discussed in the literature. Following this experience, three professors from the RELATE Institute board then developed scales to include and measure these dimension of marital attitudes.

Thus, in accordance with literature and the preliminary results of the national focus groups, seven scales of marital attitudes were created. These seven scales included dimensions discussed above, including: the importance of marriage, religious vs. secular perspective of marriage, marital optimism vs. pessimism, romanticism vs. realism, individualism vs. relational orientation and single stage vs. married stage of life, and marriage readiness. Each scale was a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 3 (It depends) to 5 (Strongly Agree). After thorough exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis on a preliminary 250 person sample, scales were formed from the various dimensions of marital attitudes and tested for reliability (See Table 2). The reliability and items of the specific scales are discussed below.

**Importance of Marriage Scale.** This scale measured the importance and permanence of the marriage relationship in the life course of a young adult. This scale is a 5-item scale with items such as “Being married is among the one or two most important things in life”; “Living together is an acceptable alternative to marriage”; and “I am confident my marriage will last a lifetime”. Higher scores indicated a life-long marriage goal perspective. Chronbach’s alpha for this scale was .75.

**Religious vs. Secular Marital Orientation.** This scale measured the belief of the importance of religion in marriage. Some of the items include: “To me, marriage is a sacred institution”; “Marriage involves a covenant relationship with God, not just a legal contract recognized by the law”; “My religious beliefs have a strong influence on my attitudes about marriage”, and “I plan to marry someone of the same religious faith”. Higher scores indicated a higher religious view of marriage. Reliability analysis revealed excellent internal consistency with a Chronbach’s alpha of .91.

**Marital Pessimism.** This is a 5-item scale that captured negative attitudes and anxiety toward getting married. The items include: “I worry I will lose my independence when I marry”; “The idea of a lifelong commitment scares me”; “the fear of divorce makes me nervous about getting married”; and “I am confident that my marriage will last a lifetime”. Higher scores indicate greater marital pessimism. Reliability with Chronbach’s alpha was .67.

**Romantic Relationship Initiation.** This six-item scale was used to measure young adults’ anxiousness to initiate or delay romantic relationships. Items included: “I am likely to fall in love almost immediately if I meet the right person”; “I tend to emphasize careful thinking over strong feelings in relationships”; “Even if the timing isn’t right, when I fall in love the relationship should become the top priority”; and “It is important to consider a relationship from all angles before I get emotionally attached to someone”. Higher scores indicate a more romantic view of relationships. Chronbach’s alpha was .56.

**Single Stage vs. Married Stage.** This was a five-item scale used to test the perceived readiness of EAs to be married versus their desire to remain single. Items included questions such as: “It’s important to fully experience the single life before you marry and settle down”; “I don’t really worry about marriage right now, I am mainly focused on enjoying being single”; and

“Currently I’d rather be married”. Items that were worded toward a marriage orientation were reverse coded so that a higher score indicated a stronger single-stage orientation. Chronbach’s alpha for the scale was .79.

**Autonomy in Marriage Scale.** This 5-item scale measures the perceived amount of autonomy vs. togetherness that is good in a marriage relationship. Items included: “I would rather hold on to my independence than get married.”; “I really love my personal freedom” and “In marriage, having time alone is more important than togetherness.” Chronbach’s alpha was .63.

**Relational Readiness Scale.** This scale attempts to measure young adults’ perceived readiness for an intimate, committed relationship such as marriage. This 5-item Likert scale includes question such as “I feel emotionally ready to be in a close committed relationship” and “With regard to communicating with others, I feel ready to be in a close, committed relationship”. The 5-item scale had an internal reliability rating of .86 for this sample.

### **Analyses**

The analyses for this study were performed sequentially in order to answer each of the research questions posed for this study. First, in order to understand the contemporary attitudes of young adults about marriage in this sample, simple descriptive statistics were performed on the seven dimensions of marital attitudes, with an analysis of mean scores for the entire sample. Second, hierarchical cluster analysis was performed on the marital attitude scales to determine if the sample could be organized into membership groups according to their attitudes about marriage. Third, in order to more richly understand group differences, each cluster group was examined for differences.

## Results

### Descriptive Analysis of Marital Attitudes

Looking at the individual responses to the items in each marital attitude scale reveals some information about the overall attitudes of young adults about marriage in this sample. The mean scores of the overall sample, along with male and female separately are reported in Table 3.

**Importance of Marriage Scale.** The overall mean score for this scale was 3.48, one of the highest scores among the marital attitude scales. Of the five items, those with the highest score were “I am confident my marriage will last a lifetime” (M=3.99), and “Being married is among the one or two most important things in life” (M=3.57). This reflects the overall confidence in and importance of the ideal of marriage for these young adults.

**Religious vs. Secular Marital Orientation.** The overall mean score for this scale was 3.48 as well, indicating a high religious orientation toward marriage of the sample. The highest scoring items were “To me, marriage is a sacred institution” (M=4.02), “Marriage involves a covenant with God, not just a legal contract recognized by law” (M=3.64) and “I plan to marry someone of the same religious faith” (M=3.40). All other items received mean scores above 3.0.

**Marital Pessimism.** The mean score for this scale was 2.53, indicating a lower pessimism about marriage for the sample. The highest ranking response was to “The fear of divorce makes me nervous about getting married” (M=2.96). “The idea of a life-long commitment scares me” (M=2.47) and “I would rather hold on to my independence than get married” (M=2.45) were the second and third highest scores for the items in this scale.

**Romantic Relationship Initiation.** The mean score for this scale was 2.94, meaning most of the sample perceived themselves as less romantic, but felt their romantic or pragmatic perspectives of relationships “depends” on the situation. There was quite a bit of variability in

the individual items. For example, the item “I am a romantic person” resulted in a very high 3.9 mean score on the 5 point scale. However, most respondents also agreed with the question, “It is important to consider a relationship from all angles before I get emotionally attached to someone” (M= 3.73).

**Single Stage vs. Married Stage.** The mean score for this scale was 3.20, indicating overall more draw toward the single stage of life. The highest scores were for the items “It is important to fully experience the single life before you marry and settle down” (M=3.62) and “Currently I would rather be married” (M=3.39) as a reverse coded item.

**Autonomy in Marriage.** The mean score for this scale for the sample was 2.88, indicating less resistance to losing personal freedom in marriage for the overall sample. The strongest indicators of this were the items “In marriage, having time alone is more important than togetherness.” (M=2.41) and “I would rather hold on to my independence than get married.” (M=2.45).

**Relational Readiness Scale.** The mean score for this scale was 3.62, indicating an overall positive trend toward relational readiness. Overall the highest scoring items were “All things considered, I feel ready to be in a close, committed relationship” (M=3.83) and “With regard to communication, I feel ready to be in a close relationship” (M=3.92).

**Limitations of Mean Scores and Scales.** While it is helpful to understand mean scores, they mask individual and group variance, masking the variability in individual perceptions and attitude groups. This is where cluster analysis will help to demonstrate the rich variability in the sample.

## **Cluster Analysis of Marital Attitudes**

In order to more fully investigate sub-groups of marital attitude, I performed a cluster analysis on the seven marital-outlook scales. Cluster analysis is a descriptive statistical technique that is used to identify groups of similar people. Cluster analysis allows a researcher to investigate whether respondents scored similarly on a set of variables and whether they divide into meaningful classifications. Cluster analysis places individuals with similar scores into homogeneous groups with the greatest possible distinction. Thus, the different cluster groups are dissimilar in significant ways. This is especially useful when trying to study a certain population with significantly different attitudes or characteristics.

In this study, I used Ward's hierarchical clustering procedure on the seven marital attitude scales described above to identify groups of emerging adults who were similar in their attitudes and orientations to marriage. This method begins with each individual in the sample and combines the most similar individuals to create clusters. At each step, Ward's method chooses which pair of clusters to combine next by merging the pair of clusters that minimizes the sum of square errors, or sum of squared deviations from the cluster mean, across all clusters. This hierarchical method gives analysts a range of clusters to choose from. I tested a number of solutions (2-6 clusters) to determine the distribution of the sample and the solution that best differentiated groups. Analyzing the dendrogram of the cluster analysis revealed that four clusters was the optimal fit for the data, with the smallest fusion distance or merging cost between the four clusters (Blashfield, 1976; Shalizi, C., 2009). Table 3 shows the mean values of the final 4 cluster solution on the seven marital attitude scales and outcome variables.

**Cluster 4- The Religious Ready.** This group was the largest cluster of the sample comprising 32.5% of the sample ( n= 227). The individuals in this group were characterized by

having the highest scores on the *Marital Importance* scale (M=4.13). This group also scored second highest of the clusters on the *Religious vs. Secular* perspectives of marriage scale (M=4.36). Of the clusters, this group scored the lowest on the *Marital Pessimism* scale (M=2.03), *Autonomy in Marriage* scale (M=2.48), and the *Single vs Married Stage* scale (M=2.48). They were the highest on the *Romantic Relationship Initiation* scale (M=3.10) and also the *Relational Readiness* scale (M=4.14). Of all the groups, this group claimed most of the highest and lowest ratings on the marital-outlook scales, setting themselves apart as a distinctive group with their eyes set firmly on marriage. As such, they will be called the *Religious Ready*.

**Cluster 1- Religious Realists.** This membership group was very similar to Cluster 4 (see Figure 1), but comprised only a small portion of the sample (16.9%, n=118). This group had slightly lower scores for the *Importance of Marriage* scale (M= 4.09) but the highest scores of the entire sample on the *Religious vs. Secular* scale (M= 4.55). However, their *Marital Pessimism* scores were the second highest of the sample (M=2.72), and their *Romantic Relationship Initiation* scores were the lowest of the sample (M=2.71). They scored second highest of the clusters on *Single vs. Married Stage* (M=3.66) and *Autonomy in Marriage* (M= 2.99) and second lowest of the clusters on *Relational Readiness* (M= 3.18). Because this group is distinctively religious but more pessimistic about marriage and cautious about initiating relationships, they will be called the *Religious Realists*.

**Cluster 2- Loving the Single Life/Marriage Pessimists.** This group made up the second largest cluster of the sample (30.9%, n = 216) and was most distinctively defined by the lowest scores of the sample on the *Importance of Marriage* scale (M=2.84), and on the *Marital Pessimism* scale (M=3.06). They also rated the highest of all the groups on the *Single Stage vs. Married Stage* (M=3.81), indicating they are not worried about marriage now and are focused on

enjoying the single stage of life. Of all the groups, they also scored the highest on the *Autonomy in Marriage* scale (M=3.30) and the lowest on the *Relational Readiness* scale (M=3.12). Because it is important for this group to fully experience the single life, and because they feel less urgency to move toward marriage, this group will be referred to as the *Loving the Single Life/Marriage Pessimists* cluster.

**Cluster 3- Secular Romantics.** This group was the most similar to Cluster 2, containing 20% of the total sample (n= 138) and is most distinguished by having the lowest scores on *Religious vs. Secular* (M=2.56), the second lowest scores on the *Importance of Marriage* scale (M=2.89), but the highest scores on the *Romantic Relationship Initiation* scale (M=3.10) and the *Relational Readiness* scale (M= 3.91). Because this group is ready for romance and relationships, but do not necessarily espouse religious views of marriage or think marriage is a special relationship, they will be called the *Secular Romantics*.

### Discussion

This purpose of this study was to better understand young adults' attitudes about marriage in general, and specific group differences in these attitudes about marriage. Analysis of the entire sample supports what has been found in previous literature; despite the changing social norms surrounding marriage, on average the sample believes that marriage is important and distinctive relationship. Additionally the sample in general tends to feel that marriage is a religious institution, feeling ready for a close committed relationship. However this kind of limited analysis suffers from over-simplification and obscures the more nuanced understanding that is revealed in cluster analysis. The four cluster groups that emerge reveal rich information about the variance of young adults' attitudes about and acceptance of social norm changes about marriage. Each group demonstrates a very distinctive set of attitudes and beliefs about marriage.

### **The Divide between Religious vs Secular Perspectives of Marriage**

The two dimensions that bring the most differentiation among all the marital attitude groupings are the *Religious vs Secular* scale and the *Importance of Marriage* scale (see Figure 1). These two dimensions divide the sample into two overall marital attitude groups- those who have a religious view of the meaning of marriage (“Marriage involves a covenant with God, not just a legal contract”) and who hold a strong belief in the importance of marriage (“Being married is among the one or two most important things in life”) versus those who have a more secular orientation and do not feel that marriage is particularly special or important. Cluster 4 *Religious Ready* and Cluster 1 *Religious Realists* both fit into the first category, which comprises 49.3% of the total sample ( $n= 345$ ). The other two clusters- *Loving the Single Life* and *Secular Romantics* have a less religious perspective of marriage and perceive marriage as comparable to other romantic relationships (“Living together is an acceptable alternative to marriage.”) and comprise 50.6% of the total sample ( $n=354$ ). This suggests that of all the marital dimensions used in this study, the greatest variation in sub-group differences is found in the religious perspective of marriage, and the importance or specialness of the marriage relationship. It also suggests that the sample is almost exactly divided in half according to religious or non-religious orientations about the meaning of marriage.

### **No Rush to Get Married**

A second observation of the sub group differences is that within the two overall halves of the sample (religious and non-religious), there is another distinctive divide within the groups. This attitude divide happens on the *Relational Readiness* scale and on the *Single vs Married Stage* scales. Within the religious and non-religious groups, there is a divide on relational readiness and inclination to initiate a romantic relationship. Those who belong to the *Religious Realists* (Cluster 1), and those who belong to the *Loving the Single Life/Marriage Pessimists*

(Cluster2) both have high mean scores on the *Marital Pessimism* scale, along with low scores on the *Relational Readiness* scale and high scores on the *Single vs Married Stage* scale. This indicates that among the groups of both religious and non-religious young adults there is a significant group that, while valuing marriage, is in no rush to get to the altar. In the case of those with a religious orientation toward marriage, it is the minority of the group. However in the half of the sample that is not religiously oriented toward marriage, the group is the majority of the group, and by itself is 31% ( $n=216$ ) of the entire sample. These young adults may have had negative experiences in their past that makes them a little more pessimistic about what marriage will bring to their lives, or they may just be enjoying their single years. Regardless, while valuing and hoping for marriage some day, they do not feel ready for a committed serious relationship at the present and intend to take things slow and intentionally before jumping into anything romantic. Considering that these two clusters together comprise nearly half of the sample, this group mentality deserves further attention in future research.

### **The Relationally Ready**

The converse of those two clusters that shy away from marriage and commitment, are the two groups, both religious and non-religious, who are ready to move on to the married stage of life, are willing to initiate a romantic relationship if the possibility comes along. These are the *Religious Ready* and the *Secular Romantic* groups. These two groups cluster together most distinctively on *Relational Readiness*, low scores on *Autonomy in Marriage*, and the lowest scores on *Single vs Married Stage* and the *Marital Pessimism* scale. These young adults have positive views of marriage, are more likely to initiate a romantic relationship quickly, and feel ready to move on to the next stage of life. Together these two groups comprise more than half of

the sample (52.3%), although completely divergent on their orientation about the religious or special nature of marriage.

Overall, from studying sub-group differences, it is clear that religious views of marriage play a very distinguishing role between marital attitudes. Additionally, romantic views of love and relationships are not necessarily reserved only for the religiously devote perspective of marriage, but for a large group of secular singles as well.

Thus, in response to the second research question, it is clear that the marital attitudes of emerging adults are best examined in sub-group clusters to grasp the full dynamic of commitment to marriage, relational readiness, romanticism, pessimism, individualism, and other dimensions of attitudes toward marriage. This kind of typology proves helpful in better determining the state of the emerging adult population as a diverse group rather than a homogenous population that seems to only feel ambiguous about these issues.

### **Limitations**

This sample is like that of many other studies of young adults in that it over-represents college-educated young adults compared to a national demographic. This creates a limitation in the generalizability of the study to non-college attending young adults. Although, recent qualitative literature has provided comparisons between low-income working class emerging adults, suggesting that the aspiration for and intention to marry is similar among low-income populations (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; England & Edin, 2007), there may still be differences in religiosity, readiness, and other relevant dimensions of marital attitudes. This study is also a very limited pilot study of a marital attitude typology. These findings would be greatly improved with further investigation on larger and more diverse populations.

### **Direction for Future Research**

The study of this sample of young adults illustrates clearly that analysis of group differences yields valuable information about young adult attitudes and beliefs about marriage. These distinctive groups compromise significant portions of the sample. It is possible that the same kind of clustering would be found in other studies of young adults. This preliminary study and formation of groups may serve as a springboard for other studies of group attitudes, using the cluster groups as a typology. Indeed, the groups in this study are so distinctively divided by religious or secular attitudes about marriage and differing levels of readiness, it would be a mistake to approach or study young adults marital attitudes as a homogenous group. This would become important when considering the developmental trajectories of young adults for developmental scholars, or in demographic or sociological research that provides recommendations to policy makers, interest groups and academics who study marriage. Currently research uses a myriad of instruments and attitudes by which to study marital meanings and beliefs. More research to validate the dimensions of marital meaning used in this study as an instrument is needed.

### **Conclusion**

Using symbolic interactionism as a guiding framework, this study attempted to integrate changing social norms about marriage in a more nuanced understanding of the group marital attitudes and beliefs of young adults. The purpose of the study was to investigate the general contemporary attitudes of young adults' about marriage, determine if distinctive group differences existed in the sample, and analyze group differences. According to the findings, the attitudes of the young adults in this study reflect the general positive attitude about marriage that has been found in previous studies. Upon examination of the cluster analysis, it became apparent

that there were very distinctive group differences within the population. These marital attitude groups divided clearly into four groups, with differing perspectives on the sacredness of the marital relationship, and relational readiness. As the findings suggest, attitudes and beliefs about marriage are multifaceted and diverse among distinctive groups (Hall, 2006) and bear further study and refined conceptual understanding to move scholarship forward. With marriage in the cross-hairs of current cultural wars, sociocultural changes will continue to influence the meaning making of individuals' attitudes and beliefs about marriage. As scholars continue to conceptualize the developmental pathway for emerging adults and understand broader demographic trends, further use and understanding of a marital typology may clarify and guide thinking about this important emerging topic.

## References

- Amato, P.R., Booth, A., Johnson, D.R., & Rogers, S.J. (2007). *Alone together: How marriage in America is changing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Arnett, J. (2006). Emerging adulthood: Understanding the new way of coming of age. In J. Arnett, J. Tanner (Eds.), *Emerging adults in America: Coming of age in the 21st century* (pp. 3-19). Washington, DC US: American Psychological Association.
- Arnett, J.J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York, NY US: Oxford University Press.
- Bellah, R., Marsden, R., Sullivan, W.M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S.M. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Blankenhorn, D. (2007). *The future of marriage*. New York: Encounter Press.
- Blashfield, R. K. (1976). Mixture model tests of cluster analysis: Accuracy of four agglomerative hierarchical methods. *Psychological Bulletin*, 83(3), 377-388.
- Blume, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bumpass, L. & Lu, H. (2000). Trends in cohabitation and implications or children's family contexts in the United States. *Population Studies*, 54, 29-41.
- Busby, D. M., Holman, T. B., & Taniguchi, N. (2001). RELATE: Relationship evaluation of the individual, family, cultural, and couple contexts. *Family Relations*, 50(4), 308-316.
- Cancian, F.M. (1987). *Love in America: Gender and self-development*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Carroll, J.S., Willoughby, B., Badger, S., Nelson, L.J., Barry, C.M., & Madsen, S.D. (2007). So close, yet so far away: The impact of varying marital horizons on emerging adulthood. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 22*, 219-247.
- Carroll, J.S., Badger, S., Willoughby, B.J., Nelson, L.J., Madsen, S.D., & Barry, C.M. (2009). Ready or not? Criteria for marriage readiness among emerging adults. *Journal for Adolescent Research, 24*, 349-375.
- Cherlin, A.J. (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 848-861.
- Côté, J. E. (2006). Emerging adulthood as an institutionalized moratorium: Risks and benefits to identity formation. In J. Arnett, J. Tanner, J. Arnett, J. Tanner (Eds.) , *Emerging adults in America: Coming of age in the 21st century* (pp. 85-116). Washington, DC US: American Psychological Association.
- Dennison, R.P., & Koerner, S. S. (2006). Post-divorce interparental conflict and adolescents' attitudes about marriage: The influence of maternal disclosures and adolescent gender. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage, 45*, 31-49.
- Edin, K. & Kefalas, M. (2005). *Promises I can keep: Why poor women put motherhood before marriage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Goldstein, J.R., & Kenney, C.T. (2001). Marriage delayed or marriage foregone? New cohort forecasts of first marriage for U.S. women. *American Sociological Review, 66*, 506-519.
- Hall, S.S. (2006). Marital meaning: Exploring young adults' belief systems about marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67*, 1301-1312.
- Hetherington, E.M., & Kelly, J. (2002). *For better or for worse: Divorce reconsidered*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

- Kefalas, M. J., Furstenberg, F. F., Carr, P. J., & Napolitano, L. (2011). "Marriage is more than being together": The meaning of marriage for young adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 32(7), 845-875.
- Kennedy, S. & Bumpass, L. (2008). Cohabitation and children's living arrangements: New estimates from the United States. *Demographic Research*, 19, 1663-92.
- Rector, R. (2010). Marriage: America's greatest weapon against child poverty. *The Heritage Foundation*. Retrieved Feb. 1, 2010 from <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/09/marriage-america-s-greatest-weapon-against-child-poverty>.
- Regnerus, M. & Ueker, J. (2011). *Premarital sex in America: How young Americans meet, mate, and think about marrying*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Salts, C. J., Seismore, M. D., Lindholm, B. W., & Smith, T. A. (1994). Attitudes towards marriage and premarital sexual activity of college freshmen. *Adolescence*, 29, 775-779.
- Shalizi, C. (2009). Distances between clustering and hierarchical clustering. In *Data Mining* (pp. 2-3). Retrieved from <http://www.stat.cmu.edu/~cshalizi/350/lectures/08/lecture-08.pdf>.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010, November 10). *U.S. Census Bureau Reports Men and Women Wait Longer to Marry*. Washington, DC: Retrieved Feb. 1, 2012, from [http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/families\\_households/cb10-174.html](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/families_households/cb10-174.html).
- Thorton, A. & Young-DeMarco, L. (2001). Four decades of trends in attitudes toward family issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 1009-1037.

- Waite, L.J., & Gallagher, M. (2000). *The case for marriage: Why married people are happier, healthier, and better off financially*. New York: Doubleday.
- Whitehead, B. D., & Popenoe, D. (2001). *The state of our unions: The social health of marriage in America*. Retrieved April 2010 from [http://www.stateofourunions.org/past\\_issues.php](http://www.stateofourunions.org/past_issues.php)
- Wilcox, B. (2010). When marriage disappears: The retreat from marriage in middle America. *The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America*.
- Willoughby, B.J., & Dworkin, J. (2009). The relationships between emerging adults' expressed desire to marry and frequency of participation in risk-taking behaviors. *Youth and Society* 40 (3) 426-450.

**Table 1: Demographic Statistics**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Gender		
Female	497	71.7
Male	196	28.3
Race or Ethnic Group		
African (Black)	103	14.8
Asian	43	6.2
Caucasian (White)	477	68.7
Native American	5	0.7
Latino	26	3.7
Mixed/Biracial	23	3.3
Other	16	2.3
Religious Affiliation		
Catholic	180	25.9
Protestant	268	38.6
Jewish	11	1.6
Islamic	10	1.4
Mormon	67	9.6
None	159	22.7
Education		
High school degree or less	22	3.2
Some College (Undergrad)	554	79.6
Graduate Degree	120	17.2
Dating Status		
Not dating at all	256	36.6
Casual/Occasional dating	351	50.1
In serious relationship	60	8.6
Engaged	33	4.7
Age (Mean, SD)	22.98	4.25

**Table 2: Marital Attitude Scale Item Scores (Chronbach's Alpha)**

<b>Importance of Marriage (.76)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Being married is among the one or two most important things in life.	3.57	1.19
If I had an unhappy marriage and neither counseling nor other actions helped, my spouse and I would be better off if we divorced.*	2.73	1.11
Living together is an acceptable alternative to marriage.*	3.48	1.30
I'm confident that my marriage will last a lifetime.	3.99	.91
<b>Religious vs. Secular Orientation (.91)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Marriage involves a covenant with God, not just a legal contract recognized by the law.	3.64	1.44
To me, marriage is a sacred institution.	4.02	1.12
My religious beliefs have a strong influence on my attitudes about marriage.	3.18	1.55
My faith influences my decisions about romantic relationships.	3.10	1.43
I plan to marry someone of the same religious faith.	3.40	1.28
<b>Marital Pessimism (.67)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I worry I will lose independence when I marry.	2.41	1.12
I would rather hold on to my independence than get married.	2.45	.99
The idea of a life-long commitment scares me.	2.47	1.18
I think there are more advantages to being married than being single.*	2.39	.93
The fear of divorce makes me nervous about getting married.	2.96	1.34
<b>Romantic Relationship Initiation (.56)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I am likely to fall in love almost immediately if I meet the right person.	3.14	1.06
I tend to emphasize careful thinking over strong feelings in relationships*	2.69	1.02
Even if the timing is not right, when I fall in love the relationship should become the top priority.	3.07	.98
I am a romantic person	3.90	.87
I fall in love easily.	2.62	1.10
It is important to consider a relationship from all angles before I get emotionally attached to someone. *	2.23	.91
<b>Single vs. Married Stage (.79)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I don't really worry about marriage right now; I am mainly focused on enjoying being single.	2.92	1.19
It's important to fully experience the single life before you marry and settle down.	3.62	1.01
It's important to me to fully enjoy the single life before I get married.	3.42	1.09
Right now, I'm just dating for fun.	2.64	1.18
Currently I would rather be married *	3.40	1.27
<b>Autonomy in Marriage (.63)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
In marriage, having time alone is more important than togetherness.	2.35	.83
I worry I will lose independence when I marry.	2.41	1.12
I would rather hold on to my independence than get married.	2.45	.99

I don't care what others think; I do my own thing.	3.42	1.01
I really love my personal freedom.	3.77	.81
<b>Relational Readiness (.86)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I feel emotionally ready to be in a close, committed relationship.	3.70	1.03
With regard to sexual intimacy, I feel ready to be in a close, committed relationship.	3.65	1.16
With regard to communicating with others, I feel ready to be in a close relationship.	3.92	.92
I feel financially ready to be in a close, committed relationship.	3.01	1.17
All things considered, I feel ready to be in a close, committed relationship.	3.83	1.03

\* Indicates reverse scoring for item

**Table 3: Marital Attitude Mean Scale Scores**

	<i>Mean (SD)</i>	<i>Male (SD)</i>	<i>Female (SD)</i>
<b>Marital Attitude Scales</b>			
Importance of Marriage	3.48 (0.85)	3.53 (0.91)	3.47 (0.83)
Religious vs. Secular Orientation	3.47 (1.18)	3.42 (1.27)	3.50 (1.14)
Marital Pessimism vs. Optimism	2.53 (0.74)	2.51 (0.73)	2.54 (0.74)
Romantic Relationship Initiation*	2.94 (0.56)	3.04 (0.53)	2.90 (0.56)
Single vs. Married Stage	3.20 (0.85)	3.13 (0.88)	3.22 (0.83)
Autonomy in Marriage	2.88 (0.61)	2.91 (0.62)	2.87 (0.61)
Relational Readiness*	3.62 (0.86)	3.47 (0.85)	3.68 (0.85)

*Note: Scale for Marital Attitude Scales: 1=Strongly Disagree, 3=Depends, 5= Strongly Agree. \* Signifies Mean difference between genders is significant at the .05 level*

Figure 1. Marital Typology Cluster Graph

