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Special Issue on Family Featuring:

“Why is Marriage Important & What are the Consequences of Redefining It?”
Ryan T. Anderson

“Fathers Don’t Mother & Mothers Don’t Father”
Jenet Erickson

“Marriage Makes the Man: How Marriage Makes Men Work Harder, Smarter, & More Successfully”
Brad Wilcox
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The Wheatley Institution recognizes student editors Adam Duncan and Nathan Leonhardt, and communications specialist Troy Tessem for their contributions to this issue.

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The mission of the Wheatley Institution is to enhance the academic climate and scholarly reputation of BYU, and to enrich faculty and student experiences, by contributing recognized scholarship that lifts society by preserving and strengthening its core institutions.
The Wheatley Initiative on Family, Richard Williams

We must reclaim and elevate the discourse about marriage, about human sexuality, and about children and parenting.

What is Marriage?, Sherif Girgis

Permanence, exclusivity, and sexual union is the connection to family life and the common good.

Why is Marriage Important and What Are the Consequences of Redefining it?, Ryan T. Anderson

Our understanding of marriage and the law will mutually reinforce each other, either for good or for the ill.

The Family Structure Study and the Challenges of Social Science, Mark Regnerus

The benefits of having grown up with a married biological mother and father who are still together - or they were until one of them passed away - were obvious.

Fathers Don’t Mother and Mothers Don’t Father, Jenet Erickson

The complementarity of fathering and mothering play a crucial role in optimal child development.
Where are All the Marriageable Men?, Kay S. Hymowitz

The boy problem is a woman problem, a child problem, and a huge social problem.

Sliding vs. Deciding: How Premarital Experiences Affect Future Marital Happiness, Galena K. Rhoades

If you are going to see a doctor, you probably want a doctor who has a lot of experience in what you are facing—but in terms of relationships, we are seeing the opposite being true. People with more experience look like they might end up having more trouble later on in their marriages.

Ready or Not? The Rise of Paradoxical Preparation for Marriage, Jason S. Carroll

Instead of the idea that couples who abstain are harmed by the lack of a test drive, we actually saw them better off in their relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, communication, and sexual quality reported in the relationship.

Is the Family at Risk?: Examining Demographic Trends in Family Decline, Sam Sturgeon

The traditional family has been called the fundamental unit of society.

Marriage Makes the Man: How Marriage Makes Men Work Harder, Smarter, and More Successfully, W. Bradford Wilcox

Marriage helps make men better, helps to transform men in ways that on average improve their performance and their perspective in the economic arena.

Sliding vs. Deciding: Cohabitation, Relationship Development, and Commitment, Scott Stanley

Cohabitation isn’t costless, but it is perceived that way relative to marriage.
What’s Wrong with Reproductive Technologies, *Melissa Moschella*

The gold standard for children’s well-being is to be raised by married, biological parents.
The goal of the Wheatley Institution’s scholarly initiative on the family is to generate, support, and disseminate high quality consequential scholarly work aimed at revitalizing what we might broadly refer to as a “culture of family.” This revitalization will require that we reclaim, or perhaps, recapture, both the academic discussion and the cultural discourse surrounding three important aspects of family and family life. We must reclaim and elevate the discourse about marriage, about human sexuality, and about children and parenting.

All three of these scholarly and cultural discourses are important if we are going preserve, or when necessary, recreate a viable and flourishing culture of marriage. Each of these aspects of the family, not to mention the family itself, must be defined and understood as, in the language of the natural law tradition,
“goods in themselves,” and not simply as means to other good ends that some person might desire. If we are not clear and careful in our ways of thinking and understanding, marriage, sexuality, children, and therefore, the family, will come to be regarded as merely instrumental, as a means to achieving other goals and purposes that some individual persons might regard as “good for them,” or perhaps as “not good for them,” and therefore not deserving any special status or respect.

If marriage, sexuality, and children all become only instrumental goods, aimed

_We must reclaim and elevate the discourse about marriage, about human sexuality, and about children and parenting._

at the accomplishment of something else, such as personal preference or pleasure, we will lose our grasp of their essential nature, and the other goods associated with them will be less apparent. The family, as a basic fundamental good, is not unrelated to other goods, but to understand it as just instrumental is to overlook or obscure its fundamental nature and its inherent goodness.

The family as a fundamental good is inextricably tied to our nature as the kinds of beings we are. Family is good for us in the sense of being perfective of our nature, not good for getting something else we want. Contemporary social science is implicated in the current decline of the marriage culture. To mere natural organisms, all goods can only be instrumental. Current social science, locked into scientism and naturalism, do not provide us with a self-understanding so that family can really be a good in itself. Empirical data on the benefits and efficacy of conjugal marriage and family are important to the support of the family, but lacking a proper understanding of our nature, they will be insufficient.

I want to set up the discussion of establishing a marriage and family culture by referring to what is often called the “tragedy of the commons.” This is sometimes also referred to as “overgrazing the commons.” The commons was a public resource or a public good as, for example, public land set aside for the use of
all. Sometimes an individual person might use that common good for a private benefit, as in bringing private livestock to graze on the commons. As more people use the commons for their personal purposes, it is overgrazed, and destroyed. What is at first a good in itself, when used for obtaining other private goods, ceases to be the good in itself it once was, and could be again, if not misused for private benefit. This destruction of the public good in itself happens even if no one really “means to” destroy it.

There are some who do want to destabilize the family as it has come down to us throughout history, for any number of personal reasons. For others, attending only to their personal desires and preferences, it really is that phenomenon of “overgrazing the commons.” Fracturing and redefining marriage and the family, separating marriage, sexuality, and children by casting all of these things in individualistic terms has been a genuine problem in recent history.

The family is the fundamental unit of society because the multigenerational conjugal family is the universal, moral, crucible of humanity. No other structure or functional organization can adequately replace it. It alone has the inherent natural form and function to provide a crucial and adequate moral opportunity and moral test for everyone. This is the culture of family that we must teach, defend, preserve, and protect. It is crucial to the public good and as a public good, it is defensible and worthy of our best sustained efforts to do so.

Richard N. Williams is founding Director of the Wheatley Institution, serving since 2007. From 2001 to 2008, he served as an Associate Academic Vice President for Faculty at BYU. He is a Professor in the department of Psychology at Brigham Young University which he joined in 1981. His specialty areas include the philosophical, theoretical and historical foundations of psychology, with concentration on issues related to human agency, as well the science of psychology and research methods and statistics.

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Wheatley Institution’s Family Conference on October 20th, 2014. Click here to watch the full lecture.
There are two competing visions of marriage: the conjugal view of marriage and the revisionist view. Both sides make assumptions, but when you examine those assumptions, the conjugal view turns out to be much more cogent and coherent. The main argument in favor of redefining marriage has been one of equality. That is the slogan: marriage equality, equality for gays and lesbians. That argument will not get us one inch towards figuring out what the right marriage policy is. The reason is that everyone in the debate favors equality. The whole question is what marriage is.

The community of marriage is comprehensive. Most of us understand that friendships or other forms are a union of heart and mind. But the community of marriage is comprehensive; it’s a union of heart, mind, and body. Because we’re bodily beings, if you leave the body out, you don’t have a total union with the beloved. For the most part, people accept that total union with the beloved is part
of what makes it a marriage and not some other form of companionship. That bodily union requires a man and a woman.

It’s also comprehensive in the range of goods uniting it. But what makes that true? It’s the fact that marriage makes a family. As a family gets formed the parents form each other and the family in every dimension, intellectual, recreational, and so on. But what makes marriage oriented to family life and through family life a comprehensive range of goods? Only the conjugal view has any answer. The act

Permanence, exclusivity, and sexual union is the connection to family life and the common good.

that makes marital love comprehensive, that extends the union of heart and mind between the spouses into the bodily realm, is the very kind of act that also makes new life. Marriage itself, the relationship embodied by that act, is fulfilled, and extended, and enriched by family life.

The last point is that if it’s comprehensive in most senses, first, in the dimensions of the partners united heart, mind, and body; second, in the range of goods that unite them intellectually and recreationally; and finally, in every other respect that you need to develop whole new human beings; then it’s also got to be comprehensive in its commitment. Through time, it means permanence; at each time it means exclusivity. Permanence, exclusivity, and sexual union is the connection to family life and the common good. The things that the revisionist view would tear apart, this view explains and unifies. That broad vision of what makes a marriage, and the connection between marriage, family, and the common good is what’s at stake in the same-sex marriage debate, in the question of the coming apart of the marriage culture in the United States.
Sherif Girgis is a Yale Law School student and PhD candidate in philosophy at Princeton University. He is co-author, with Ryan T. Anderson and Robert P. George, of What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense. He majored in philosophy at Princeton, where he won several academic prizes. His senior thesis on sex ethics won the Princeton prizes for best thesis in ethics and best thesis in philosophy. He holds a B.A in philosophy, Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude, from Princeton and a master’s degree from Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar.

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Wheatley Institution’s Family Conference on October 20th, 2014. Click here to watch the full lecture.
Why is Marriage Important and What Are the Consequences of Redefining It?

Ryan Anderson
The Heritage Foundation

Why is the state in the marriage business? It’s not because the government is a sucker for romance. It’s not because the government cares about your love life or my love life, because it’s really concerned about the butterflies that we get in our stomachs when we fall in love. The government cares about marriage because it’s the institution that brings together a man and woman as husband and wife, to then be mother and father to any children that might be produced. Marriage is based on an anthropological truth that men and women are distinct and complementary.
The reason the government is in the marriage business is that the sexual union of a man and a woman can produce a child, and that child deserves the best shot of having a mother and a father raise them to maturity.

What are the consequences of redefining marriage? What’s the harm? Let me identify three consequences of redefining marriage. And all three fall under the general rubric of “ideas have consequences, and bad ideas have bad consequences.”

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Our understanding of marriage and the law will mutually reinforce each other, either for good or for the ill.

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There are two different visions of what marriage is and the law will teach that one or the other is the truth about marriage. The law will then shape our culture, the culture in which we and our children and our grandchildren live will then shape our beliefs, and then our beliefs will shape our actions.

Our understanding of marriage and the law will mutually reinforce each other, either for the good or for the ill. Right now 40% of all Americans, 50% of all Hispanics, and over 70% of African Americans are born to single mothers. This is what has inspired Obama to speak out about the importance of fathers. But how will we as a society insist that those fathers are essential when the law has redefined marriage to make fathers optional? That’s the first consequence of redefining marriage.

The second consequence is that redefining marriage won’t stop here. If you really think marriage is just about the person you love, why would any of the three traditional western marital norms be retained? We’re now seeing that there are activists who are now challenging those three marital norms of monogamy, exclusivity, and permanency, and that there’s a certain logic to what they’re doing. Once you say the male-female aspect of the relationship is irrational and arbitrary and bigoted, what’s magical about the number two? What’s our principle basis for
retaining marriage as the union of couples rather than of throuples or quartets, once you’ve said the male-female aspect is irrational, arbitrary, and bigoted?

The third consequence is the consequence for religious liberty. This is the consequence that we’re living with most immediately. Redefining marriage has consequences for marriage, but the one that we will experience first and foremost is whether or not we even have the freedom to live out and witness to the truth about marriage because the law will teach something about marriage. The law will either teach that people who believe that marriage is between a man and a woman are rational, reasonable, good citizens, or the law will teach that people and institutions who believe that marriage is a unit of a man and a woman are irrational haters who deserve to be marginalized from society and who deserve to be treated like bigots.

Ryan T. Anderson researches and writes about marriage and religious liberty as the William E. Simon Fellow at The Heritage Foundation. He also focuses on justice and moral principles in economic thought, health care and education, and has expertise in bioethics and natural law theory. He is the co-author with Princeton’s Robert P. George and Sherif Girgis of the acclaimed book What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense.

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Wheatley Institution’s Family Conference on October 20th, 2014. Click here to watch the full lecture.
The Family Structure Study and the Challenges of Social Science

Mark Regnerus
University of Texas at Austin

It should be obvious to us that the family—and marriage in particular—is under a great deal of popular and political scrutiny of late, more than we might have imagined ten or fifteen years ago. But while scholarly norms, language, and state and federal family law can shift with remarkable speed, as they have in the West over a short few decades, the data collected from thousands of regular people who are living or have lived in all manner of household structures and family experiences has not changed nearly as fast as the law.

Prior to 2010, very few population-based data analyses of same-sex households with children were available. Several studies, however, have emerged since then. But what the data say about same-sex households with children and how exactly such data ought to be analyzed has been the subject of significant emotional and
political contest. The publication of my 2012 journal article on the comparative outcomes of adult children who report having had a parent who had a same-sex relationship stirred a hornet’s nest. I used data from nearly 3,000 people, 248 of whom reported their parent having had a same-sex relationship sometime during their growing up years. I documented that those for whom that was the case were more likely to have endured a more difficult childhood and a more difficult adulthood than kids who grew up with a stable, married mother and father. My purpose in doing that study was to evaluate the basic scholarly claim that there are “no differences” in outcomes between kids who grew up in same-sex households and kids who grew up with a married mother and father. Now, not everything is different between those who grow up in a stable and intact household and those who don’t; that’s to be expected. Across different types of measures, however, the benefits of having grown up with a married biological mother and father who are still together - or they were until one of them passed away - were obvious.

I didn’t have the numbers of stably coupled female households to assess them in a very large, nationally representative study. It raises the question, though, whether the average experience within such households is something quite different from the ideal experience. In reality, I suspect every scholar who works with population-based data about same-sex couples, persons, parents, and households knows that the underlying story varies little between nationally represented data sets. What varies widely is the manner in which different scholars, myself included, have chosen to analyze and interpret that data.
Mark Regnerus is associate professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, a research associate of the university’s Population Research Center, and a senior fellow at the Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture. He is the author of the Family Structures Study, published in Social Science Research in 2012 and has written about data collection and polling on same-sex parenting, as well as ways same-sex marriage may shape the wider mating market.

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Wheatley Institution’s Family Conference on October 20th, 2014. Click here to watch the full lecture.
The development of children in biological, social-emotional, and psychological well-being is really important. There are a lot of ways that mothers and fathers look the same and can do the same kinds of things, but the ways that mothers and fathers distinguish themselves are critical for the well-being and development of children. What we come to in the end is that mothers do not father, and fathers do not mother.

BIOLICAL:
The biological factors that influence mothers and fathers differently are a very interesting and growing body of research. Hormones express themselves in behaviors that help to bond. Those hormones for both the mother and the father are oriented towards a particular responsiveness and a connection to that child. What’s remarkable is that the same hormones invite different behaviors in fathers
and mothers. Oxytocin in a mother increases the likelihood that she will gaze at her child, positively express emotion, engage in motherese (cooing with the child, talking in a way that only mothers talk to babies), and affectionate touch. That same hormone in a father expresses itself differently. He is more likely to use stimulating touch, that’s tickling, touching in certain ways, changing the position of the body; turning them upside down, throwing them up in the air, and using an object to engage with them. Both types of behaviors are oriented around connecting and bonding with that child, but in unique ways.

The complementarity of fathering and mothering play a crucial role in optimal child development.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL:
As we look at mothers, we recognize they seem to have a unique capacity to match their infant’s intellectual and emotional state, and then to provide the right amount of stimulation needed for the brain to develop. Women seem to have a superior ability in both recognizing and being attuned to emotions that makes them uniquely able to strengthen the nurturing bonding that’s necessary for that child’s well-being. Across all stages of development, we see that mothers are the preferred source of comfort for children.

Fathers also play a key role in social emotional development and they influence that domain through different processes that have different effects. A father’s nurturing, his way of being responsive, his closeness to that child also affects their security of attachment. And that expresses itself in the way children as infants interact with their environment. Closeness to fathers has been repeatedly tied to the behaviors of adolescents in terms of anti-social or delinquent behaviors, particularly with sons. The presence of a father seems to be a very important factor in boys’ likelihood of engaging in delinquent or anti-social behaviors.
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT:

Girls who are not reared by their fathers are much more likely to engage in sexual relations at an early age and become pregnant as teenagers. An absent father, in fact, is the single greatest risk factor in teen pregnancy for girls. Physical and emotional closeness to fathers seems to set the reproductive strategy girls use throughout their lives.

But what about boys’ sexual identity? “Without the closeness and modeling of a father,” David Popenoe says, “boys appear to engage in ‘compensatory masculinity,’ rejecting and denigrating anything feminine while seeking to prove masculinity through violent and aggressive domination.”i In other words, they seem maladjusted in terms of what it means to be male.

We know that mothers are key to infant survival, but fathers are key to protection from danger and opportunities to thrive. When we look at victims of abuse, they are much more likely to not have a father present in their lives as a protection. Fathers appear to be more successful in keeping predators and bad influence away from their sons and daughters, due to their size, strength, or aggressive public presence.ii A CDC report from 2014 found that 70% of children living with both their biological parents never experienced adverse childhood events, while 78% of those living with just one biological parent had experienced at least one adverse event, along with 80% of those living without either biological parent.iii

The complementarity of fathering and mothering play a crucial role in optimal child development. What an exciting time to understand this natural design where children have a mother and a father who both gave them life.

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Jenet Jacob Erickson is a former assistant professor in the School of Family Life at BYU and a researcher specializing in maternal and child well-being in the intersection of work and family life. She received her PhD in family social science from the University of Minnesota. She was a Social Science Research Fellow for the Heritage Foundation where she completed research analyses on non-maternal care for policy makers. She has been a presenter for the Love and Fidelity Network and Ruth Institute and is a columnist on family issues for the Deseret News National Edition.

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Wheatley Institution’s Family Conference on October 20th, 2014. Click here to watch the full lecture.
A lot of experts and researchers posit that one of the reasons that we have seen a big decline of marriage is because the men are out of work and don’t have jobs, so they are not marriageable. They are not going to be decent husbands. Actually, you may be surprised to hear that, in this case, some of the experts may be right.

What I have begun to believe as a result of doing research is that what we actually have in this country is a boy problem. Let’s start with how boys are doing in school. Boys have far more behavioral problems in school: their reading scores are lower than girls from a very young age and the gap widens as they get older. In the United States, they are three to five times more likely to be diagnosed with a learning disability. Eighty-three percent of those labeled ADD are, you guessed it, boys. They make up 70% of special education students and these, of course, are the classes for kids with disabilities. They are 50% more likely to be
held back a grade in school. They have lower grades and test scores than girls in just about every subject. It is true that they do score higher in math tests—but that advantage isn’t working for them since their math grades are actually lower than girls’.

The market is demanding that future employees get themselves some education. Why aren’t men paying attention? I am going to propose one possible answer and that answer is the growth in fatherlessness. We have considerable research that fatherlessness has an especially harsh impact on boys. Let me cite one example here. Professors Marianne Bertrand and Jessica Pan from the University of Chicago found that by 5th grade, fatherless boys were more disruptive in class than their peers from two-parent families. By 8th grade, they had a substantially greater likelihood of being suspended. They controlled for income, race and various things like that. Their conclusion is that bad behavior in class in 5th grade and suspension in 8th grade is smallest in intact families, and all other family structures appear detrimental to boys.¹

Boys without a reliable residential father grow up to become men who are unmarrriageable, ensuring us a future generation of husbandless women and fatherless sons who go on to become unreliable into the future.

What we know is that the children in these families don’t do anywhere near as well as the children who are born to and grow up with married parents. Controlling for race, income, and mother’s education, children growing up with a single parent are at greater risk of a host of problems. They are more likely to do drugs, to abuse alcohol, to have early sexual activity. They are less likely to go

to college, and they are more likely to become single parents themselves, and the list goes on. Thirty-six percent of children living with a single mother are poor versus 6% of those living with married parents. Only 20% of those children in households making under $15,000 are living with both parents. Almost all of the rest are living with single mothers.ii

The boy problem is a woman problem, a child problem, and a huge social problem. Women tend to marry men who are at least their equals in terms of education, motivation, and earnings—and they are not finding them.

I want to give you another way of thinking of what has happened to the child man (a young man stuck between childhood and adulthood). Boys and young men find themselves facing a predicament that is really unique in human history. In the past, a boy grew up knowing he had a crucial role to play in society and in raising the next generation. He knew he had to become a hunter, or a farmer, or a shoe maker, or a plumber, or a lawyer because it was the only way for both him and his family to survive. That is no longer the case. “I can support myself,” say the women. “I always have.” Today’s young men, instead of knowing they have a vital place in society, grow up with the distinct impression that men are optional and possibly even superfluous players in family life. The boy has to wonder, where does he fit in? Who needs him, anyway? And you might forgive him for shrugging his shoulders, quitting his job or refusing to look for one in the first place, having another beer, and letting women handle things.

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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Home Truth’s conference cosponsored by the Wheatley Institution and the Institute for Family Studies on January 24, 2014.
Sliding vs. Deciding: How Premarital Experiences Affect Future Marital Happiness

Galena K. Rhoades
University of Denver

Pre-marital experiences that people have are related to later marital quality. My colleague Scott Stanley and I put out a report in the summertime that was called Before “I Do” and it was sponsored by the National Marriage Project out of the University of Virginia. We were interested in the way that dating and commitment sequences have changed over the years. Things seem different than they did a generation or two ago in terms of how people form relationships and make commitments.

One of the theories and perspectives that Scott Stanley and I have been working on is this idea of sliding versus deciding. The biggest difference about dating today instead of a generation or two ago is that people have many more choices, not just in the partners that they choose but also in the paths that might lead them to marriage or not lead them to marriage. Our general premise is that
we can expect better outcomes if people make conscious decisions rather than sliding into new circumstances.

The way relationships progressed a generation or two ago was that you felt love toward another person, and you decided to be more committed to that person. Regardless of whether this natural process occurs, commitment and constraints tend to be built together. Constraints are built when you have a child together, you move in together, or you buy a house together. These extra constraints are things that might lead to sliding into a committed relationship rather than making an active decision to form that relationship. When the natural process is followed and people decide to increase commitment, it doesn’t really matter that you have taken on those extra constraints because you already feel dedicated to this person. But when you slide through new circumstances or relationship transitions, like moving in together or having sex in a relationship, all of these constraints start to build without really developing that sense of dedication to that relationship. However, despite the lack of dedication, you are still on track towards staying together because of those constraints. They make it harder to end the relationship. When people slide into relationship transitions, they may start building constraints before they start getting a chance to think about whether they want to be committed or dedicated to this person and this relationship which can cause some problems later on.

To look at some of these questions about experiences and sequences before marriage, we used the Relationship Development Study. We had about 1,300 people who started this study initially. They were recruited nationally and represented...
unmarried, English-speaking people in the U.S. Everybody was unmarried when they started the study, and we were interested in looking at these unmarried experiences and following these people over time to see what happened.

People who only had sex with their future spouse and no one else reported higher marital quality later on. That was true for about 23% of this sample; they only had sex with the person that they went on to marry. Almost 40% of the sample had lived with a prior partner before they got together with a person they wound up marrying, and having had other cohabiting partners was associated with lower marital quality later on.

One of the most interesting things about these findings is that experience in relationship really matters in a somewhat counter-intuitive way. If you are hiring an architect, you want to hire someone who has a lot of experience. If you are going to see a doctor, you probably want a doctor who has a lot of experience in what you are facing—but in terms of relationships, we are seeing the opposite being true. People with more experience look like they might end up having more trouble later on in their marriages. There are a couple of potential explanations for that. One is that if you have a lot of experience, you also have a greater sense of what the alternatives are, and you have more comparisons to make to other people than if you had fewer prior partners. The messages that I think young people tend to hear about relationship experience are things like, “Don’t settle down too soon. Get everything out of your system. Those things shouldn’t affect your future marital quality or outcomes.” In fact, what we are seeing here seems to be slightly the opposite of that. Those experiences do impact us in some important ways and may lead to us having a more difficult time later on in marriages. The more relationships you have, the harder it may be to really commit to or stick to another partner going forward.

So what does this mean for educating people about relationships? We see that there are lots of things that young people have some control over that may be related to later marital quality and outcomes. So we really need to start thinking about ways that we can impact people and help them make good relationship decisions earlier on. I think we could have a much greater impact if we helped people think about their relationship experiences before they have them.
Galena Rhoades, Ph.D., is a Research Associate Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Denver. Her research is on romantic relationship development and functioning, and the related implications for children and adults. Her research projects and collaborations include 1) basic science studies on commitment, cohabitation, aggression, infidelity, family background, relationship processes and psychopathology, military families, and adolescent and child adjustment as well as 2) studies on the effectiveness of preventive relationship interventions for couples and individuals (including gene-environment interactions).

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Home Truth’s conference cosponsored by the Wheatley Institution and the Institute for Family Studies on January 24, 2015. Click here to watch the full lecture.
We live in a culture where we receive a lot of scripts about marriage. Many of today’s scripts are best seen through the lens of a myth: inadequate, insufficient, and in some cases just downright incongruent and inharmonious with the true nature of things, both of individuals and relationships. A reason for these inadequate scripts can be traced to key fragmentations occurring in our cultural understandings of marriage. These fragmentations are changing how we view—and changing how we believe we should get ready for—a successful, loving, and lasting marriage relationship.

I would like to emphasize three key fragmentations. First, we clearly see in the marriage context, in the rising culture, a fragmentation of marriage from the
sacred. Second, we see marriage being separated from sex and sexuality. Finally, we see a fragmentation and ultimately a separation of the married couple from children and the fragmentation of the meaning of marriage as a child-centered institution and part of our culture.

I believe one of the greatest evidences of and causes of this marriage fragmentation is the growing pattern of marriage preparation paradoxes. These paradoxes are behaviors that young people are engaging in. We will define "paradox" as: "a proposition that despite ... apparently sound reasoning ... leads to a conclusion that is senseless, logically unacceptable, and self-contradictory."

Despite the apparently sound reasoning, which largely comes from buying into a script, we come to consequences that are the opposite of what we intend. These paradoxes are behaviors that are believed to increase one’s chances of marital success, but actually, on average, diminish the chances of having a loving and lasting marriage.

A key paradox is what I have called the “sexual chemistry paradox.” The conventional wisdom—and it has reached that point in our society today—is that two people should test their sexual compatibility before they commit to each other. People claim that married couples who stand by a purity ethic are the ones clearly at risk are going to have some buyer’s remorse because they didn’t test this part of the relationship.

\[\text{Instead of the idea that couples who abstain are harmed by the lack of a test drive, we actually saw them better off in their relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, communication, and sexual quality reported in the relationship.}\]

“paradox” as: “a proposition that despite ... apparently sound reasoning ... leads to a conclusion that is senseless, logically unacceptable, and self-contradictory.”

Despite the apparently sound reasoning, which largely comes from buying into a script, we come to consequences that are the opposite of what we intend. These paradoxes are behaviors that are believed to increase one’s chances of marital success, but actually, on average, diminish the chances of having a loving and lasting marriage.

A key paradox is what I have called the “sexual chemistry paradox.” The conventional wisdom—and it has reached that point in our society today—is that two people should test their sexual compatibility before they commit to each other. People claim that married couples who stand by a purity ethic are the ones clearly at risk are going to have some buyer’s remorse because they didn’t test this part of the relationship.

In a study by Dean Busby, Brian Willoughby and myself, instead of the idea that couples who abstain are harmed by the lack of a test drive, we actually saw them better off in their relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, communication, and sexual quality reported in the relationship. Maybe they were preparing after all. Maybe the types of preparation our culture is saying are needed aren’t really the types of preparation that are needed. Maybe if our hearts and our bodies are meant to work together, the preparation of the heart is far more critical to the quality of the relationship, even the sexual union, than simply the body itself.

Another key paradox is “the older is better” paradox. We have a generation that largely understands that teenage marriages have higher risks and don’t do as well. We have assumed that since that is the case, older is always better. Every added year will give you the same amount of benefit in return. However, the evidence shows us quite the contrary. The evidence is now pointing in the direction of a curvilinear pattern, particularly when we look at full marital quality. Now we are beginning a conversation not just about the risks of early marriage, in the teenage years, but also about the increasingly identified risks of later marriages (which at their core are more demographically relevant for us as the number of people marrying in their teens is decreasing).

We have a great opportunity and great possibility to help others see that there can be new and different patterns, that there can be cultural trends that can restore the fragmented marriage and family culture that we have. Such trends can reconnect marriage with the sacred, bring back the sexual meaning and power that is in chastity and purity both before and after marriage. At its core, marriage has to be a child-centered relationship and institution, part of our culture and part of our society.
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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture given at the Wheatley Institution’s Roundtable on Family on March 20, 2015. Click here to watch the full lecture.
Traditionally or historically, the traditional family has been called the fundamental unit of society. You hear that a lot, and there is a reason for that. Families perform several societal responsibilities and functions, though I think we would have to argue that in modern times, the role of the family and society has changed. I like to think of the family as this giant redwood tree. It is this pillar that you can see from far off. It provides stability, but there are also a lot of branches to that tree, and each of these branches represents something that the family does.

What has happened is that slowly over time a lot of these roles have changed or been diminished, and that is something that is important to think about. For example, defining kinship. We have weakened kinship ties, but I am grateful that
I am not going to inherit my uncle’s debts as I may have in the past, because he has had some struggles. Also if you look at, for example, educating and socializing children, we now have the public schools that have largely taken over that responsibility, for good and bad. [Another example is] producing the necessities of life. We are not an agrarian society where families are working on farms and producing their own food. That has been changed with the modern economy, but that is a fundamental shift. So when you look at these roles, just think about how they have changed over time. These are things that families used to do that they don’t necessarily do [anymore] due to technology, due to our modern economy, due to a hundred other reasons. There is a reason the family has always been the fundamental unit of society. They took care of these things, but that has diminished over time.

So what are the causes of family decline? Well, there are multiple causes. We have had some social causes that we have talked about. We have had this huge growth in individualism, where life is all about me. Are my needs being met? Am I satisfied? Am I happy? Obviously, you would expect that that would have some negative effects on family. Families engender sacrifice; families engender putting the needs of the group over the needs of the individual. We have had this sexual revolution where the norms regarding sexuality have totally changed. We have had the redefinition of gender. This is largely a very recent event. It just didn’t come up 30 years ago for most of America, but now it is in all of our popular media. I find it fascinating that surveys will ask, “What percent of the population would you think is LGBT?” Some studies have shown that the median answer is 20%–25%. So you have a good share of America thinking that is 20%–25% of America. It has never been more than about 3%–4%, but you wouldn’t guess that

The Wheatley Observer

The traditional family has been called the fundamental unit of society.
looking at popular media.

I want to end with a few reasons for optimism. The first is there is a group monitoring the future. They do a survey every year for high school seniors and they ask them, “Which of these is important to you?” One of the items they ask about is having a good marriage and family life. Eighty percent of the female high school seniors are saying, “This is extremely important to me to have a good marriage and family life.” It is still more than 70% for these high school men. That hasn’t changed despite all these other negative trends with regard to the family. Another reason for optimism is that the teen birth rate in America is at a historic low and it keeps going down. This is fantastic. We are doing very well at limiting teen births. We keep bringing these teen births down and we are lowering, at least for that age group, the percentage of women that have children out of wedlock. So again, this is good news. We have this decline in teen births that coincides with a decline in the teen pregnancy rate and a decline in the teen abortion rate. In fact, of teens that get pregnant, a lower percentage are determining to end that pregnancy with abortion than in the past. So that statistic is going down as well. Again, if you want to promote family, this is some good news we are sharing. Not all is bad, and there are reasons for optimism.

Dr. Sturgeon received his Ph.D. in Human Development and Families Studies and Demography from the Pennsylvania State University. He is currently a Senior Research Manager with Bonneville Communications and the President of Demographic Intelligence (a statistical and demographic consulting firm). His work has been mentioned in USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, the Deseret News and other national publications.

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Marriage Makes the Man: How Marriage Makes Men Work Harder, Smarter, and More Successfully

W. Bradford Wilcox
University of Virginia

When I was conducting interviews in NYC back in 2005-2006 I heard over and over again from a lot of young adults, “[A marriage certificate] is just a piece of paper. It doesn’t really matter.” What they didn’t realize is that the science is telling us a very different story about how marriage affects women and especially men. Men are transformed in a number of ways. When men get married, they spend less time with their friends, and they spend more time with kin. They attend bars and taverns less and they attend church more in the wake of getting married and having a family. Marriage, even today in America, helps
Marriage helps make men better, helps to transform men in ways that on average improve their performance and their perspective in the economic arena.

Despite the benefits that I have articulated, marriage is in retreat. Fewer men are getting married and staying married. We are seeing a class divide in American life where those with means are getting and staying married and those without means are much less likely to get and stay married. How does this affect kids? We see a growing number of kids who are being raised in single parent families.
We also see growing family instability. Kids who are raised in intact families are more likely to flourish educationally, less likely to be dropouts, and less likely to have a teen pregnancy or, for guys, end up in prison or in jail. Boys are paying a particularly heavy price. Boys in low income communities who are most likely to be separated from their fathers are doing poorly on educational outcomes, on criminal outcomes, and in ways that affect their economic future. Thus, a defining feature of our age is that fewer men are married which means that fewer men experience the transformative power of marriage, and that our society is bearing serious economic and social costs for this state of affairs.

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People want lasting love, but that requires a foundation. It requires a strong sense of commitment. Yet, as we all know, a growing number of children in our country are born into what we consider a low-commitment context. Parents haven’t really decided to be parents together long term, and the odds go dramatically down for children to be able to experience parental involvement in their lives.

One of the fundamental things about cohabitation is that it is relatively non-informative about commitment. There are a lot of cohabiting couples that are very committed, and there are a lot of cohabiting couples that are doing
The Wheatley Observer

what they now call “cohabidating,” which does not reflect anything particularly strong about the commitment. This is opposed to if somebody says to you, “We are engaged to be married,” and they have just delivered a massive amount of information about commitment and the relationship. Cohabitation doesn’t tell you a lot. People perceive all the cost as being loaded up with marriage, and they perceive cohabitation as costless. Cohabitation isn’t costless, but it is perceived that way relative to marriage. Because of this perception, we must be raising

Cohabitation isn’t costless, but it is perceived that way relative to marriage.

the greatest number of people ever in the history of the United States who have built-in deep insecurities about attachment. And if you think about this, it is the greatest ambiguity ever in terms of the loss of mechanisms to clarify commitment. This loss and the loss of steps and stages and sequence in terms of how things develop are colliding in a perfect storm.

We find that among those who were married that had cohabited before marriage that sliding was associated with lower marital quality. When you are making a commitment you are making a decision. You are making a choice to give up other choices. If commitment is a choice to give up other choices, then that definition says a ton about why commitment is in such a crisis in American culture because we are encouraged to not give up anything. We are encouraged to hang on to everything and hold on to the idea that we shouldn’t have to give up anything. You can’t have a deeper, better life on any path without being willing to make a choice that gives up other options you could have chosen.

I believe that one of the great transformations in romantic relations in our country in the last 40 years is that people now routinely slide into having sex; they slide into living together, and they slide into having children. Not everybody, but vastly greater numbers than what you would have seen 30 or 40 years ago are doing this. What I want you to recognize about these transitions is they are
all life-altering. Think about that. If people are routinely sliding through things that are potentially life-altering, that is a big problem in how we are doing relationships in America. If we were really being careful, you would be getting information. Is this a safe relationship? Is there compatibility? Is there mutual commitment? As opposed to “I am just working hard to make this happen, and I don’t care if I am really not noticing all the evidence that this person couldn’t care less about me.” So I get information, I make a decision, I make a choice, I make a commitment, then the transition happens and these transitions decrease options in life. Constraints increase after these transitions, but in this way, just from a decision and risk model, this is a lower risk path. Get information, make a decision, the transition happens, and then constraints increase.

When commitment is clearly formed, and there is a sense that, “I have chosen you. I have chosen a future. I have made this decision,” people are going to own that. It is not always going to be fun. Sometimes things get really tough, but there is this sense that “I chose you and I chose this path.” Imagine how much more difficult it is for so many couples today, even in marriage, who slide all the way up into some really difficult time in life, for example something with the children or something financial—and one or both is actually sitting there, and because of all the sliding is thinking, “I never really chose this.” The paradigm we have now of sliding instead of deciding has put many people further away from their dreams and their ability to reach them than they even realize because they don’t get the nature of how that impacts commitment.
Scott Stanley, Ph.D., is a research professor and co-director of the Center for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver, and he is a senior fellow at the Institute for Family Studies. Along with Dr. Howard Markman and colleagues, he has been involved in the research, development, and refinement of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), including various studies funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Stanley and colleague Galena Rhoades have been engaged in a systematic line of research on relationship development before marriage. Stanley has co-authored or authored various books, including Fighting for Your Marriage, A Lasting Promise, and The Power of Commitment.

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I am talking about reproductive technologies and asking, “What is wrong with them?” After all, these technologies seem to be a great gift for the many couples who suffer from infertility. Technologies like artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization have also made it possible for those in a same-sex relationship to have children of their own through the use of donor eggs and sperm. Over 5 million babies have been born through in vitro fertilization since the first so-called test tube baby born in 1978. The use of the technique has become increasingly common over the past decade, but despite the fact that now these techniques have gained widespread societal acceptance, there are still a number of ethical problems with their use. Here I want to focus primarily on the ways in which the technologies fail to respect the dignity and rights of the children who are conceived through them.
I am going to talk about the ethical problems with these technologies from a child-centered perspective, the sense in which these technologies commodify procreation, make the having of children into the manufacturing of a product. Then secondly, in the case where a donor sperm or egg are used, the problem of separating children from one or both of their biological parents.

First, the commodification of procreation. The testimonies of donor conceived children express that they are bothered by the way the logic of the market is involved. This particular donor-conceived child writes on Anonymousus.org,

I was carefully planned, my traits were picked out of a catalogue…. My mother never fails to remind me how much time and money she spent to bring me into the world, as most any mother wanted to some degree. She doesn’t know it, but I feel deeply indebted to her as though I owe it to her to live up to her expectations and vicarious whims because my life is not mine to lead as I please—she purchased it from the Build-a-Baby workshop.

What about the ideal case? Even if you did in vitro fertilization with two committed spouses, the egg and sperm coming from husband and wife, you only produced one or two embryos, and you planted both and were willing to have as many children as resulted—is there still a problem with this? There is still an inherent treatment of the child as a product in the process, even when done in ideal circumstances.

In donor conception, there is a further ethical complication: it alienates the child from biological parents. Studies of adults who were donor conceived show that this intentional alienation from one of their biological parents results in real harms. One of the largest studies conducted on donor conceived children published several years ago for the Institute for American Values with the title

The gold standard for children’s well-being is to be raised by married, biological parents

The Wheatley Observer
“My Daddy’s Name is Donor” found that donor-conceived adults were on average more confused about their identity and more isolated from the families that are raising them than those raised by their biological parents or even than those raised by adoptive parents. Donor-conceived adults see the absence of knowledge about their biological father as an impediment to understanding their own identity. Nearly two-thirds of the study participants agreed with the statement, “My sperm donor is half of who I am.” And on objective outcomes like delinquency or substance abuse and so on, they fared significantly worse than their peers raised by their biological parents and also worse than their peers raised by adoptive parents. Again, this echoes the conclusions of many studies that show that the gold standard for children’s well-being is to be raised by married, biological parents.

These conclusions about the importance of being raised by married, biological parents further reinforce the conjugal definition of marriage as a comprehensive, sexually complementary union that would be fulfilled by procreation. Upholding that definition of marriage and law shapes culture and behavior in ways that help to foster the having and rearing of children within an intact biological family, which is the only setting that ideally meets children’s developmental needs.

Melissa Moschella is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at The Catholic University of America, where her teaching and research is focused on natural law, bioethics, and the moral and political status of the family. This year, as the Myser Fellow at the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture, she is revising a book manuscript with the tentative title: To Whom Do Children Belong? Parental Rights, Civic Education, and Children’s Autonomy. She graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College and received her Ph.D. in Political Philosophy from Princeton University.

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