

## Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution: Associations and Moderation

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**ABSTRACT.** The *Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution* (ITMI) framework distinguishes beliefs about how fixed or malleable marriage is, and might assist in investigating how such beliefs are formed and influence premarital and marital behavior. An initial study identified two distinct ITMI among a large, unmarried sample ( $n = 1,490$ ). The ITMI were differentially predicted by a variety of background factors and other marital beliefs, and also served to moderate association between parents' marital variables and young adults' perspectives on getting married. ITMI also moderated the association between positive beliefs about marriage and perspectives on getting married.

*Keywords:* marriage, cognition, family of origin, marital interaction

The institution of marriage has continued to undergo significant transformations in modern times. What it means to marry and its societal and relational functions have become more diverse and less institutionalized (Cherlin, 2004; Hall, 2006a), and it appears that fewer adults are marrying and remaining married than in times past (Lee & Payne, 2010). Though a variety of factors contribute to such trends, it is likely that the ways in which people think about marriage both influence and are affected by social change. A particular way in which people think about marriage includes the extent to which they view the institution as something that is rigidly established and universally defined or subject to personal interpretation and adaptation.

I previously proposed a framework that encompasses people's views on how changeable marriage can be, referred to as *Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution* (Author citation). This framework may contribute to explaining and predicting actions people take regarding marriage as they pertain to their assumptions about marriage itself. The current study is an initial effort to measure Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution (ITMI) and to explore potential correlates to and moderating functions of ITMI that could help explain their relevance in processes related to getting and staying married. If ITMI are influential in decisions people make regarding marriage, the understanding of such influence could be valuable to efforts that promote healthy and stabilizing marital beliefs for the sake of desirable marital outcomes. I will summarize the framework and review additional literature that would guide the selection of constructs potentially related to the endorsement and functions of ITMI.

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## Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution

In the social judgment literature, the concept of implicit theories refers to beliefs about the nature of people's attributes, such as intelligence (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995; Ross, 1989). They are responses to the question of whether attributes are stable/fixed characteristics or whether they can be developed or modified. Those who view them as fixed tend to feel more helpless, are more prone to giving up during difficult tasks, and have less faith in people's rehabilitation (Dweck et al., 1995; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Erdley & Dweck, 1993), compared to those who have a more incremental or malleable view of attributes. People are said to lean more toward either a fixed or incremental implicit theory about the characteristics of individuals, institutions, and the world in general.

Borrowing from the same framework, implicit theories have been applied to personal relationships. Knee (1998) argued that people hold implicit theories about the developmental nature of intimate relationships. The fixed theory (*destiny*) holds that relationships are destined to succeed or fail, and the signs of the eventual outcome are manifested in the beginning of a relationship. The incremental theory (*growth*) holds that successful relationship can develop slowly and can be cultivated to thrive despite initial challenges. The theory one holds can influence attitudes and behaviors related to the end result and maintenance of a relationship (Knee, 1998; Knee, Nanayakkara, Vietor, Neighbors, & Patrick, 2001). For example, the destiny theory coincides with ending relationships more quickly, usually at the first sign of trouble; the growth theory coincides with more active coping to prolong and strengthen a relationship.

Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution (author citation) function very similarly to the afore-mentioned applications of implicit theories. They refer to the extent to which people believe that marriage as an institution is predominantly fixed or malleable. A fixed theory would hold that marriage incorporates inherent characteristics that are relatively stable, the absence of which would disqualify a relationship from being considered a marriage (or an "appropriate" or "normal" marriage). What precisely those characteristics would be are not part of the theories themselves, though they might address issues of permanence, sexual fidelity, gender role complementarity, and so forth. However, a fixed theory does not presume that any particular characteristics must exist to consider something as marriage, only that marriage is made up of fixed—or unchangeable—characteristics. Conversely, a malleable theory would hold that marriage is subjective and need not have any (or at least many) inherent characteristics. One who endorses this theory would be prone to believe that each couple can define and create what marriage is, or that the institution appropriately and consistently adapts to a variety of circumstances over place or time. It is important to reiterate that ITMI are theories of marriage in an abstract sense, not about any particular marital relationship shared by specific individuals, though they may have implications for any given marriage. A more complete discussion of the possible implications of ITMI can be found elsewhere (Author citation).

As is the case for other applications of implicit theories, often the theories act to moderate associations between an attitude or action and an outcome. For example, implicit theories about negotiation skills moderated associations between perceived ability and actual performance

outcomes in negotiation tasks (Kray & Haselhuhn, 2007). One's perceptions of one's negotiation abilities predicted outcomes only for individuals who endorsed a fixed theory of personal attributes (negotiating skills)—perhaps believing they could not improve their upon past performance. Other research demonstrated that people who viewed the world positively and who held fixed theories of how the world works were more likely to self-stereotype than those who saw the world more negatively—whereas this propensity did not vary for those with a more malleable theory regarding the nature of the world (Yang & Hong, 2010). Research on relationships found that more discrepancy between an ideal partner and one's actual partner was linked to less relationship satisfaction, significantly more so for those who viewed relationship destiny as fixed than those who held a growth or incremental theory of relationships (Knee et al., 2001). Thus, ITMI especially may be relevant in combination with other variables that associate with marital outcomes.

The decision or intention to marry, for example, is often influenced by a variety of factors that include social pressures, government policies, and expectations of personal fulfillment (Lauer & Yodanis, 2010). Some deliberately avoid marrying, however, because of their perceptions of what marriage represents, or because of concerns they have about role expectations once married (Smock, 2000). While having a negative attitude about marriage would be expected to lessen the likelihood of deciding to marry (Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010), the link between such an attitude and intention might be stronger for those who view marriage in a more fixed manner. One who worries about the lack of freedom or individuality in marriage, and who believes that marriage is inherently a very precise and narrow institution, carries a potent combination of perceptions that would lessen the likelihood of marrying. One with similar worries but who views marriage as more flexible and malleable may believe that one's negative perceptions of marriage need not apply to one's own potential marriage, which may somehow be exceptional or purposefully shaped to avoid undesirable characteristics (e.g., restrictiveness to autonomy and identity). A combination of negative attitudes and fixed ITMI would likely contribute to an especially low likelihood of marriage, while a combination of positive attitudes and fixed ITMI would likely contribute to an especially high likelihood of marriage—or at least a strong desire to marry. In short, ITMI may moderate the link between attitudes or cognitions about marriage and marital intentions or decisions. In contrast to Knee's implicit theories about intimate relationships, which could arguably moderate associations between perceptions about the nature or stability of one's current relationship and the decision to marry one's current partner, ITMI would arguably moderate the associations between perceptions of marriage itself and the decision to embrace marriage as a relationship form.

ITMI are likely related to other processes associated with forming attitudes and beliefs. Research has indicated that cognitions related to marriage have implications for marital processes and outcomes, including satisfaction, longevity, and negativity (Bradbury & Fincham, 1993; Foran & Slep, 2007; Hamamci, 2005; Neff & Karney, 2005). Additionally, marital beliefs and attitudes can be influenced by one's family of origin, including childhood abuse and intimidation in the home, parental divorce, parents' levels of marital affection and cooperation, and parental alcoholism (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Dostal & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 1997; Hall, 2006b; Larson & Lamont, 2005; Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). It is possible that ITMI are similarly influenced by family relationship modeling and experiences.

In that the decision to marry is heavily influenced by one's attitude toward marriage, and that ITMI may moderate the association between that attitude and decisions about marrying, associations between family-of origin experience and one's intentions toward marriage may also be moderated by ITMI. Specifically, what a child witnesses regarding the parents' marriage (or lack thereof) may heavily influence the child's conclusions about marriage if the child holds a fixed ITMI. A child with a malleable ITMI may hold to certain marital attitudes and expectations regardless of one's parents' experiences because marriage would be interpreted as not necessarily inherently containing the same characteristics modeled in one's parents' marriage. Marriage can be reinvented by that child to suit the needs of that child.

Finally, ITMI may interact with particular marital beliefs to predict marital outcomes. Studies of marital beliefs often include beliefs along five distinct themes of marital meaning (Hall, 2006a). The dimensions include beliefs about the special status of marriage, the self-fulfilling function of marriage, romanticism, mutuality, and roles. Along with family of origin experience, attitudes and experience regarding a variety of premarital or nonmarital processes—often related to sexuality, relationship status, cohabitation, and religiousness—tend to correspond to intentions and beliefs about marriage (Carroll et al. 2007; Crissey, 2005; Pearce & Thornton, 2007; Willoughby & Carroll, 2010). It is possible that such attitudes and experiences similarly relate to beliefs about the changeability of marriage, or ITMI. ITMI might also moderate associations between marriage-related beliefs or attitudes and marital intentions and other outcomes, and therefore such constructs will be included in the current study.

The purpose of the current study is to explore 1) how certain beliefs about marriage can be thought of as implicit theories about the marital institution, 2) how some background and attitudinal factors may be related to certain implicit theories, and 3) how the implicit theories might moderate links between perceptions of and experiences related to marriage and marital intentions. Such an exploration is a means toward further developing the conceptualization of ITMI.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were sought among students at a relatively large Midwestern university. Individuals in this life stage are typically old enough to have formed or adopted beliefs about marriage that would be based to a significant degree on more than just abstract, distal ideas that children and adolescents would be more prone to subscribe to. They are typically involved in meaningful romantic relationships—some of which may turn into marriages—and are old enough for marriage to be a salient issue in their lives (for most young adults). They are also young enough for their family-of-origin experiences to still be relatively fresh in their recollection and arguably significantly influential in their outlooks and behaviors relevant to marriage. An email announcement was sent to students that explained the focus of the research and included a link to an online survey. A total of 1,729 students completed the survey. A subsample was selected that would be most appropriate for the purposes of this study; namely, unmarried students younger than 31 were retained to create a sample of single young adults not especially far removed from their childhood experiences. The final sample consisted of 1,490

(400 male, 1,090 female) students. Participants ranged from 18 to 30 years old ( $M = 21.14$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ). The sample was 93% white, 2% African American, 1.5% Latin/Hispanic American, and smaller percentages from several other ethnic groups.

## Measures

**Background characteristics.** Items were used to gather information about participants' age, gender, ethnicity, mothers' and fathers' education levels, and religiousness. A "parental education" variable was adopted that averaged the mother's and father's education levels (two 5-point Likert-type scales) into a single 5-point Likert-type scale ( $\alpha = .67$ ). Because of limited racial diversity within the sample, a dichotomous variable was constructed to represent White (1) and Nonwhite (0) participants. Age was transformed (squared) to create a more normally-distributed variable. Religiousness was measured by the following 5-point Likert-type scale: How religious are you (ranging from "not at all" to "very")? Current relationship status consisted of a dummy variable in which a "1" was assigned to those who were dating or in a relationship ("Seeing anyone") and a "0" otherwise.

**Perceived parents' relationship characteristics.** A measure to capture young adults' recollections of their parents' relationship was adapted from similar scales used in previous research that contained several descriptors of the relationship (Carnelley & Janoff-Bulman, 1992). The items included a range of types of treatment from one parent to another; namely, with respect, with affection, and respectfully. Each item was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from "not well at all" to "very well" regarding how well each descriptor described the relationship. The scores of each set of the items were averaged to create a *marital quality* scale ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = .99$ ,  $\alpha = .92$ ). Parents' marital status was coded as a dummy variable with "1" assigned to those whose biological or adoptive parents were currently married and a "0" when that was not the case (67% of those whose parents weren't currently married had divorced).

**Marriage perceptions.** How students perceived marriage and marriage-related concepts or relationships were measured with multiple instruments. *The Marital Meaning Inventory* (Hall, 2006a) includes a variety of belief statements regarding marriage that are divided into five dimensions of marital meaning: *special status of marriage vs. neutral alternative*, *self-fulfillment vs. obligation*, *mutuality vs. individuality*, *romanticism vs. pragmatism*, *role hierarchy vs. role parallelism*. Respondents evaluated how true each statement was for "what [they thought] marriage is like" on a 5-point scale ranging from "not true at all" to "very true." Items for each scale were added together and then divided by the number of respective items. All scales range from one to five. Higher scores represent greater endorsement of the fist-written term for each dimension name. Model items for the dimensions include, "Marriage is the highest commitment couples can make to each other" for *special status* (four items,  $\alpha = .79$ ); "The personal happiness of an individual is more important than putting up with a bad marriage" for *self-fulfillment* (three items,  $\alpha = .78$ ); "After marriage, a spouse is all you need to meet your needs for companionship" for *mutuality* (seven items,  $\alpha = .71$ ); "Maintaining romantic love is the key to lasting marital happiness" for *romanticism* (seven items,  $\alpha = .64$ ), and "One spouse should have the final say on how the couple spends money" for *role hierarchy* (3 items,  $\alpha = .74$ ).

Several items were adapted or created to capture an overall sense of enthusiasm toward or salience of marriage in their lives. Several items scaled together ( $\alpha = .74$ ) to form a *marriage salience* variable. The first item was adapted from Axinn and Thornton (1992): “Think about your future goals. How much would it bother you if you did not get married” (5-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “very much”)?” The second and third items focused on dating intentions related to marriage: “I try to date people whom I can see myself marrying someday” and the reverse of “I date mostly just to have a good time, not to find a future spouse” (5-point scales ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). The remaining three items consisted of issues of confidence regarding marriage: “Think about you being married someday (even if you are not sure you will marry). How confident are you a) in your ability to have a successful marriage? b) in your ability to be committed to a marriage? and c) that you are the type of person whom someone would want to marry?” (5-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “very confident”).

As mentioned in the review, other constructs related to dating and sexuality are often associated with beliefs and intentions regarding marriage that might similarly be related to ITMI. *Cohabitation Intent* was measured by the following statement created for this study, “I will probably live with a romantic partner to whom I am not married.” Possible responses for each of these items ranged from “not true at all” (or “not at all” for the first item) to “very true” (or “very much” for the first item) on a 5-point scale (higher scores connote greater agreement). A *virginity* variable was created from an item that focused on various aspects of one’s sexual history (whether experienced intercourse, number of partners) and was recoded to create a dichotomous variable representing one’s intention to save sex for marriage (virginity = 1) versus having already had sex or planning to have sex in a non-marital relationship (virginity = 0).

**Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution (ITMI).** Similar to the procedures used by Knee (1998), eight items were created to represent implicit theories about the institution of marriage with the intent that both fixed and malleable dimensions be represented by the items. Each item was a statement about what the participant “believe[s] about marriage,” along a 5-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” A principle-components factor analysis with varimax rotation indicated two factors among the items. Seven of the items loaded on either one (but only one) of the factors with a score of .60 or greater. The *fixed* factor consisted of the following items: (a) When you marry, you pretty much agree to become a certain kind of person (like others who are married), (b) All happy marriages are pretty much the same, (c) All long-term marriages have the same general characteristics, and (d) There is a best way for married couples to organize their marriages. The *malleable* factor consisted of the following items: (a) It is up to the individuals who get married to decide what marriage should require of them, (b) A marriage is whatever a particular couple decides marriage should be like for them, and (c) Marriage can be whatever I want it to be. Items for each factor were averaged to create a Fixed scale ( $M = 8.32$ ,  $SD = 2.54$ ,  $\alpha = .63$ ) and a Malleable scale ( $M = 11.91$ ,  $SD = 2.6$ ,  $\alpha = .76$ ). The two scales were modestly correlated ( $r = -.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## Results

### Correlates of ITMI

Bivariate correlations are presented in Table 1. The ITMI variables were significantly correlated with most of the variables. Multiple regression analyses were conducted, one for each of the ITMI scales (the race and parents' education variables were not correlated to the ITMI variables and thus not included in the regression models for the sake of parsimony). Results (Table 2) indicated that while controlling for respondent age, gender, religiousness, and relationship status, having married parents and holding marital beliefs about marriage (marital meaning) that endorse marital dimensions toward mutuality, romanticism, and role hierarchy predicted greater levels of the Fixed scale. With the same controls, holding beliefs about marriage (marital meaning) that endorse marital dimensions toward self-fulfillment and role parallelism, and less intent to save sex for marriage, predicted greater levels of the Malleable scale. These findings suggest some independent connections for each ITMI scale and a variety of background factors and marital beliefs, and that ITMI appear relevant to such constructs.

### Moderating Effects of ITMI

As noted earlier, implicit theories can moderate associations between relational perceptions and outcomes. I proposed earlier that ITMI may act to moderate associations between childhood family experiences related to marriage and one's own disposition toward the marital institution. A multiple regressions analyses was conducted with *marital salience* as the outcome variable that included the control variables, parents' relationship variables (marital status and relationship quality), and the ITMI scales. Four interaction variables were created by multiplying the *Married Parents* variable by each ITMI scale and by multiplying the *Parents' Marital Quality* variable by each ITMI scale. Additionally, the *Special Status* (Marital Meaning) variable was also included in the model and multiplied by each ITMI scale to create two more interaction variables. More than any other marital belief variable, this one has a clear favorable value bias toward the institution of marriage, and thus arguably prone to being moderated by an implicit theory about marriage. That is, if marriage is perceived as both special and fixed, then one who holds this combination of beliefs should have a very positive outlook toward getting married (marital salience), whereas one who sees marriage as malleable should generalize less their belief about the special status of marriage to one's own outlook toward getting married.

Results indicated that in addition to several other variables, four of the possible six interaction coefficients were statistically significant (see Table 3). Subsequent regression analyses (separate for those with married and with unmarried parents, and separate for those with low and high levels of parents' marital quality—based on a median split) revealed that a greater endorsement of a *malleable* implicit theory predicted less marital salience, but only for participants with unmarried parents. A greater endorsement of a *fixed* implicit theory predicted more marital salience, but only for those who reported higher levels of parents' marital quality. A greater endorsement of a *malleable* implicit theory was significantly more predictive of less marital salience for those who reported lower levels of parents' marital quality than those who reported higher levels of parents' marital quality (though the coefficient in each separate regression was not statistically significant). Finally, a greater endorsement of a *fixed* implicit

theory was negatively related to marital salience, but only for those who were less prone to believe the special status of marriage (median split). In general, the ITMI moderated associations between parents' marital variables—as well as beliefs about the special status of marriage—and the salience of marriage in one's life.

### Discussion

Though this research is limited by a non-random sample of college students, it is a first step in measuring and investigating the proposed conceptualization of Implicit Theories of the Marital Institution (ITMI). As was eventually the case with Knee's *implicit theories of relationships*, further refinement to measure ITMI can strengthen the reliability and validity of the scales (Knee et al., 2003). Results of this initial research suggest that young adults varied on the degrees to which they endorsed implicit theories about the institution of marriage along two dimensions—the extent to which it's characteristics are *fixed* and whether they are *malleable*. These dimensions or theories were generally predicted by key beliefs about marriage, with generally more conventional perspectives of marriage (mutuality, romantic, role hierarchy) being associated with a more fixed theory of marriage. Seeing marriage as fixed is arguably a more traditional or conventional way of viewing marriage, whereas contemporary social perspectives are more open to pluralistic interpretations of relationships (Cherlin, 2004). Thus, a fixed implicit theory is perhaps a facet of a larger sense of traditionalism to which a person can subscribe. However, it is possible that some traditional people view marriage as malleable yet believe that more conventional approaches to being married are more ideal for themselves and perhaps for society as a whole. More explicit measures of traditionalism can further investigate potential links with ITMI.

The ITMI scales themselves were fairly independent from participants' parents' marriage circumstances—especially perceptions of marital quality. Perceiving parents as having a high-quality marriage might not relate to how changeable one would believe marriage to be since such beliefs about the institution of marriage are largely neutral—not necessarily a positive or negative perception of marriage. ITMI are possibly influenced more by direct comment or teaching about the nature of marriage from parents and other influential individuals—and perhaps by exposure to a variety of marriages outside of one's own parents' marriage. A very slight connection between having married parents and believing marriage to be fixed (Table 2) may be a proxy for what parents teach about marriage—especially in terms of marital commitment and permanence. Data gathered about specific socialization processes related to parental teaching, religious tenets (religiousness was related to a less malleable theory—but there is likely great variation among diverse religious influences), messages in the media, and so forth can be helpful in exploring socialization sources and processes that shape ITMI. In that other types of implicit theories have correlated with personality types (Knee, 1998), future research that incorporates personality measures may also be useful in determining the origins of ITMI.

As was suspected, parents' marital circumstances were relevant to ITMI in that the ITMI appeared to moderate associations between those circumstances and one's general disposition toward getting married (marital salience). The most clear cut interaction effect was the finding that the perception of higher parental marital quality was associated with more marital salience for those who endorsed a fixed theory of the marital institution. Consistent with my prior



speculation, it appeared that the relevance of one's parents' marriage as a means for generalizing to the marital institution as a whole was related to the extent to which one believed marriage itself is fixed. Additionally, those whose parents were no longer married (or had never been married to each other) and who had a more malleable implicit theory reported less marital salience. As prior research has shown links between having divorced parents and demonstrating a lesser commitment toward marriage (Amato & DeBoer, 2001), the interaction effect identified in the current study suggests that these links may exist especially for those who believe marriage is more malleable. Though this pattern is contrary to my earlier speculation, perhaps such individuals are quicker to dismiss marriage because it can be anything anyone wants it to be (e.g., "only a piece of paper"), or may have less confidence in marriage to deliver desirable outcomes—a more difficult assessment to make if marriage itself is thought to be less concrete and prescriptive. The intergenerational transmission of marital quality and divorce appears to be of continued interest among scholars and the general public alike; potential moderating effects of ITMI may add to a growing sophistication of analysis and understanding of these processes, especially as the ITMI conceptualization becomes further refined.

Marital beliefs, values, and attitudes may also interact with one another in ways to distinguish dispositions toward marriage. In the current study, those who were less convinced that marriage was particularly special (*special status*) and who endorsed a more fixed ITMI had less marital salience. It would appear that the combination of less positive beliefs about marriage and believing marriage is largely a fixed type of relationship was more related to the salience of getting married than less positive marital beliefs alone. The special status variable was not related to marital salience in the regression, though they are strongly correlated at the bivariate level ( $r = .47, p < .001$ ) as well as in the regression without the interaction variables ( $\beta = .37, p < .001$ ). Given that conceptually these variables would seem to be related, and given the significance of interaction effect in the model, these findings suggest that some assumptions and attitudes toward marriage may only be related to particular marital outcomes when other assumptions about marriage are taken into account—such as ITMI. Again, moderating effects of ITMI on attitudes and beliefs about marriage may enhance the ever growing exploration on the role of cognition in intimate relationships (Fincham, Brewer, & Hewstone, 2004; McNulty, O'Mara, & Karney, 2008; Neff & Karney, 2005; Wilcox & Dew, 2010).

A major limitation of the current study is its cross-sectional nature. The actual order in which experiences and perceptions occur in relation to one another may be established better by a longitudinal design, though an emphasis of the conceptualization is on current perceptions of past events or of marriage, which may be of greater influence despite the actual nature of events. Nevertheless, being able to account for the development of certain attitudes, perceptions, and decisions related to marriage could be invaluable to understanding how the constructs work together. For example, ITMI might not only moderate attitudes and decisions/behaviors, they might shape attitudes. One who endorses a static ITMI might develop a more negative attitude toward marriage as one observes personally undesirable aspects of peoples' marriages, instead of dismissing the observations as simply idiosyncratic to circumstances and not inherent in marriage. More sophisticated research methodologies might be able to analyze this potentially reciprocal relationship between ITMI and attitudes, as well as associations between ITMI and actual decisions people make in regard to getting and being married.

As noted, there is room for refinement of the proposed ITMI conceptualization. In addition to improving issues of measurement, more understanding is needed about the nature of the interrelationship of the two theories. Similar to Knee and the implicit theories of relationships, two distinct dimensions emerged in the factor analysis instead of a single continuum. Though Knee et. al. (2003) noted that people can endorse both fixed and malleable theories (or neither of them), it is not completely clear what the difference is between endorsing one theory and rejecting the other (e.g., the difference between scoring high on a fixed scale and low on a malleable scale). The current research demonstrates that each theory (scale) had distinct associations with the same set of predictor variables, again suggesting a substantive level of independence between the two scales. Perhaps people who endorse both theories to the same degree can think of instances or characteristics of marriage that fit each theory and think less about an institutional perspective on the nature of marriage. Only 25 (1.7%) respondents had a score of two or lower on both scales simultaneously (out of five points each), only seven (.5%) had a score of either four or five on both scales simultaneously, and 290 (19.5%) had a midrange score on both scales simultaneously. Various combinations in which people endorse these theories can be investigated further, and qualitative investigations of people's thinking regarding the changeable nature of marriage can conceptually enhance ITMI.

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Table 1  
*Bivariate Correlations (N=1,490)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	1									
2. White	-.110**	1								
3. Parents' Ed.	.017	.071**	1							
4. Male	.071**	-.016	-.034	1						
5. Seeing anyone	.031	.003	-.013	-.110**	1					
6. Religious	-.109**	.009	.101**	-.104**	-.081**	1				
7. Married Parents	-.038	.108**	.174**	-.041	-.016	.114**	1			
8. Parents' M. Qual	-.126**	.133**	.205**	-.006	.025	.163**	.445**	1		
9. Special Status	-.119**	.060*	.028	-.033	-.013	.461**	.096**	.161**	1	
10. Self Fulfillment	.030	-.068**	-.065*	-.042	.051*	-.467**	-.106**	-.069**	-.421**	1
11. Mutuality	-.153**	.054*	-.057*	.153**	-.007	.251**	.099**	.139**	.483**	-.343**
12. Romanticism	-.178**	-.002	-.046	.119**	-.031	.060*	.068**	.054*	.264**	-.049
13. Role Hierarchy	-.039	-.013	-.028	.183**	-.135**	.271**	.045	.028	.291**	-.377**
14. Marriage Salience	-.057*	.034	.023	-.090**	.151**	.325**	.136**	.224**	.465**	-.305**
15. Cohab Intent	.146**	-.028	-.082**	.052*	.157**	-.503**	-.143**	-.142**	-.418**	.417**
16. Virginity	-.116**	.048	.060*	-.027	-.236**	.375**	.116**	.082**	.226**	-.329**
17. Fixed	-.016	-.045	-.001	.104**	-.089**	.132**	.094**	.036	.204**	-.170**
18. Malleable	.090**	.024	-.036	-.074**	.122**	-.317**	-.065*	-.070**	-.246**	.396**

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

Table 1 Continued  
*Bivariate Correlations (N=1,490)*

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
11. Mutuality	1						
12. Romanticism	.653**	1					
13. Role Hierarchy	.369**	.269**	1				
14. Marriage Salience	.358**	.154**	.168**	1			
15. Cohab Intent	-.244**	-.091**	-.283**	-.250**	1		
16. Virginit	.161**	.036	.224**	.118**	-.374**	1	
17. Fixed	.351**	.342**	.440**	.092**	-.155**	.103**	1
18. Malleable	-.165**	-.022	-.305**	-.138**	.284**	-.293**	-.220**

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

Table 2

*Regression Coefficients for the Predictor Variables of the ITMI Scales (N=1,490)*

	Fixed			Malleable		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Age	0.56	0.26	0.05*	0.67	0.27	0.06*
Male	-0.03	0.14	0.00	-0.37	0.14	-0.06**
Religious	0.00	0.06	0.00	-0.20	0.06	-0.09**
Seeing anyone	-0.16	0.13	-0.03	0.23	0.13	0.04
Married Parents	0.35	0.13	0.07**	0.00	0.14	0.00
Parents' M. Qual	-0.05	0.07	-0.02	-0.04	0.07	-0.02
Special Status	0.07	0.10	0.02	-0.15	0.11	-0.04
Self Fulfillment	0.05	0.07	0.02	0.61	0.08	0.23***
Mutuality	0.48	0.14	0.12**	0.08	0.15	0.02
Romanticism	0.76	0.13	0.17***	0.26	0.14	0.06
Role Hierarchy	1.15	0.09	0.35***	-0.50	0.09	-0.15***
Marriage Salience	-0.17	0.10	-0.04	0.04	0.11	0.01
Cohab Intent	-0.03	0.05	-0.02	0.06	0.05	0.04
Virginity	-0.07	0.20	-0.01	-0.90	0.20	-0.12***
R Square		0.26			0.23	

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$



Table 3

*Regression Coefficients for the Predictor Variables on Marriage Salience Moderated by ITMI Scales  
(N=1,490)*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$
Age	0.06	0.06	0.02
Parents' Ed	-0.03	0.02	-0.05*
Male	-0.05	0.03	-0.03
Religious	0.06	0.03	0.08**
Seeing Anyone	0.21	0.03	0.15***
Married Parents	-0.33	0.19	-0.25
Parents' M. Qual	0.04	0.02	0.06*
Special Status	-0.02	0.15	-0.00
Fixed	-0.16	0.04	-0.62***
Malleable	-0.09	0.04	-0.34*
Married x Fixed	0.01	0.01	0.06
Married x Malleable	0.03	0.01	0.23*
M. Qual. x Fixed	0.01	0.00	0.15***
M. Qual. x Malleable	0.01	0.00	0.12***
Special Status x Fixed	0.03	0.01	0.61**
Special Status x Malleable	0.01	0.01	0.04
$R^2$			0.31

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$