



# Marriage in Men's Lives

*Steven L. Nock*

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There are two marriages in every marital union, his and hers. Men and women live in worlds that are organized around gender, and their marriages reflect differing realities. As life companions, they respond to each other; but they also respond to the cultural definitions of what it means to be a husband and a wife. What has fascinated social and behavioral scientists for several years, however, is not only that husbands' and wives' experiences are different, but also that 'his' marriage is better than 'hers'. Numerous findings have reported that married men are better off than married women on measures of both physical and mental health, but the reasons are not yet fully understood. In *Marriage in Men's Lives* Dr. Nock proposes an explanation to this issue. He focuses on marriage as a system of rules, customs, and expectations. The book shows that marriage changes men on basic dimensions of achievement, participation in public social life, and philanthropy because marriage reinforces such behaviors as part of adult masculinity. Men in modern society crave well-being, comfort, luxury, and prestige, and marriage affords a means of achieving these things within circumscribed legitimate boundaries. Using a huge data base of over 6,000 interviews with men the author has studied since 1979, Nock draws some interesting and far-reaching conclusions about the nature of marriage, and predicts that marriage is definitely here to stay.

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