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BETWEEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES**

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## **Political Similarity and Influence between Husbands and Wives**

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## Introduction

While it has long been recognized that primary groups are important in shaping, reinforcing, and modifying political beliefs, the formalization of these processes in terms of social context and social network theories is of more recent origins (e.g., Eulau 1986; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987; Weatherford 1982). Curiously absent from most of this literature until recently (Beck 1991; Kenney 1994; Straits 1991) is the context and mini-network that figures so prominently in the lives of most people--the family. Of course the family has been a focal point of attention in the study of political socialization; and various socio-economic traits of the familial household are used to help account for adult attitudes and behaviors. It is also true that an implicit interest in the family has accompanied study of the gender gap and more recently the so-called marriage gap (e.g. Plutzer and McBurnett 1991; Weisberg 1987). Nevertheless, there are few treatments of adult family members as sources of political information for each other, as instigators of change and preservers of the status quo, and as targets and recipients of political influence. If political communication networks built up of neighbors, co-workers, and volunteer organization co-members are important in helping us understand the dynamics of political attitudes, then surely the more intimate one of family is also.

In this paper we will be treating the central adult actors in the nuclear family, namely, marital (or cohabiting) partners. Despite the modification of the traditional nuclear family, a high divorce rate, and more single heads of households, the great majority of Americans will be married at least once in their lifetimes. Marriage constitutes for most adults the most intimate of environments and the marital partner the most intimate of conversation partners. It would be surprising if this intimacy was devoid of all political content, for the political, even in the narrow sense, penetrates into every home and affects every couple.

If we assume then that the two-person network formed by a couple is politically relevant, a number of questions follow. Our focus is on two interrelated issues having to do with political attitudes and attitude change. One is the degree to which the political homogeneity of a couple is affected by the length of the relationship. Although the expectation of at least moderate political similarity among spouses is well established (e.g., Niemi, Hedges, and Jennings 1977), that leaves unanswered the question of whether that similarity is heightened as their marriage progresses. The second question deals with whether, and under what circumstances, marital partners influence each other over the course of a marriage--whether the internal dynamics of the marriage produce shifts and accommodations in political attitudes over time. Inherent in this question are two others: a) whether influence is reciprocal or asymmetrical, and b) whether the influence patterns vary by attitudinal domain. Both of these topics have implications for our understanding of attitudinal formation and change over the life-course, as well as the interplay between marriage, gender, and politics.

To address these questions we will take advantage of the long-term study of political socialization, which began in 1965 with a national survey of high school seniors. Subsequent interviews were conducted in 1973, 1982, and 1997, yielding a four-wave panel of 935 individuals, who aged from 18 to 50 years old across the period.<sup>1</sup> In 1973, 1982, and 1997, data were also collected from the spouses of those primary respondents who were married or cohabiting with someone.<sup>2</sup> Spouses who were at home were asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire while the primary respondent was being interviewed; those not at home were requested to fill it out later and mail it in. The response rates were quite respectable: 60% (N=556) in 1973, 60% again in 1982 (n=515), and 65% in 1997 (n=469).

We combined these spouse data with the matching primary respondent data to form three cross-sectional couple-level datasets. Although these cross-sectional pair sets can be useful for addressing some questions about marriage and politics, longitudinal data are superior for addressing the questions at hand. Consequently, we constructed three longitudinal datasets involving husband-wife pairs from

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<sup>1</sup> The methodology involved at the core of these surveys is described in a number of places, including Jennings and Niemi, 1981; Jennings and Markus 1984; and Jennings and Stoker 1999.

whom we had gathered information in two or more waves. One dataset consisted of pairs from the 1973 and 1982 waves, a second involved pairs from 1982 and 1997 waves, and a third involved pairs from all three waves. After discarding pairs in which a remarriage had occurred during the panel period (thus involving data from at least two different spouses), we retained 257 intact pairs from the 1973-982 panel, 248 from the 1982-1997 panel, and 150 from the three-wave panel. Considering the varied ways in which attrition could have occurred in this special instance--separation, divorce, and widowhood in addition to the usual sources of nonresponse--these are very satisfactory response rates.

To check for bias in the cross-sectional pair samples we compared those primary respondents whose spouses completed the questionnaire with those whose spouses did not. Virtually no significant differences emerged with respect to the key attitudinal and behavioral variables of interest to us. We also checked the primary respondents' descriptions of spousal or marital pair attributes such as education, employment and occupational status, party identification, and length of marriage. Again, scarcely any differences appeared according to whether the spouse had or had not completed the questionnaire. Based on these two tests, the amount of bias appears to be negligible.

As noted above, two different forms of administration were used. The primary respondents were interviewed face to face (or by phone, in about ½ of the 1997 cases), whereas their spouses completed a self-administered questionnaire. The latter was considerably shorter and consisted primarily of closed-ended questions. Although mode of administration is known to generate some differences in the amount and quality of responses and to impose limitations on the types of questions than can be used (see, e.g. Bradburn 1983, Singer and Press 1989), these are not likely to be serious problems in the present case for two reasons. First, a comparison between modes of administration in terms of the amount of missing data produced, the distribution of the responses, and the degree of attitudinal constraint revealed only small differences, much in accord with evidence from other systematic investigations (e.g., De Leuw 1992, Hippler and Schwarz 1987). Second, whatever violence might be

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper we shall speak of marital partners and couples because there were only a handful of non-married couples in the sample.

done as a result of mode differences is eased by the fact that we are as much or more interested in the patterns and relative positioning of results rather than in the absolute values themselves.

### **Attitudinal Congruence and Length of Marriage**

There are three major reasons for hypothesizing that marital partners will resemble each other politically. Americans seldom use politics as a criterion for mate selection, but assortative mating based on factors related to politics (such as class, religion, and race) will inevitably produce some initial congruence and pave the way for further growth. After marriage each partner is exposed to an enormous number of common experiences, all the way from living in the same neighborhood, and sharing the same children, to being exposed to the same media entering the household. These similarities of exposure would be expected to push the partners closer together, other things being equal. Finally, the increasing volume of shared experiences and interactions with each other could be expected to elevate concordance. Marital partners talk to each other, often in fragments, side comments, and casual observations as well as in more sustained conversations. Spouses in fact tend to be the major discussion partner for matters in general (Marsden 1987) and for politics in particular (Beck 1991). Moreover, couples put some value on developing harmony. Politics is not usually uppermost in the everyday lives of individuals, and marital partners are subject to other influences that may work to push them apart. Nevertheless it is reasonable to expect that accommodation and influence processes would work to increase the level of political homogeneity among couples.<sup>3</sup>

We will employ a number of different methods by which to examine the hypothesis that length of marriage--and what that signifies--generates more political harmony among married couples. These different methods do not necessarily tell the same story. For most of what follows we shall be examining states of marital congruence based on comparing the responses of marital partners. The advantage of doing so is that projection and subjectivity are reduced inasmuch as the respondents were presumably making no effort to either make themselves match or differ from their spouses. On the other hand, the

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<sup>3</sup> In one of the very few empirical studies of couples focusing on socio-political topics it was found that length of marriage was positively related to consonance on Rokeach's instrumental values scale and basically unrelated to the

revealed states of attitudinal similarity may or may not be very relevant or salient to the couple. Simply because marital partners might on average barely resemble each other with respect to some particular attitude object does not mean, for example, that the object and disagreement over it is a matter of much concern to them. Accordingly, we also rely on how our respondents characterize the political dynamics within their marriages.

#### Perceived Disagreement.

At each time point the interviewed respondents first indicated whether any kind of political talk goes on between them and their spouses. Overwhelming majorities in each year passed that threshold, thereby signifying at least some minimal level of bilateral political conversation (top half, Table 1). They were then asked: "Do you and your [spouse] ever disagree about anything having to do with public affairs and politics?" Frequency of disagreement was obtained for those responding yes.

Among the discussants approximately one-fourth to one-third of the primary respondents claimed "never" to disagree. At the other extreme, only around one-tenth reported frequent disagreement (bottom half, Table 1). In terms of self-awareness in any event, few couples--not surprisingly--seem riven by political tension. On the other hand, around one-half of the discussants fell into the occasional or frequent categories. Consequently, we can conclude that political disagreements among couples are not necessarily exotic occurrences either.

It can also be concluded that the levels of discussion and disagreement are remarkably similar over time at the aggregate level. The slight hint of increasing disagreement in 1982 and 1997 is drowned out by the stability levels. This continuity occurs despite the aging of the sample from around 26 years of age to 50, the aging of the marriages (though clearly not in the lockstep fashion of the individuals), and the presence of large-scale social changes involving gender relations that have transpired since 1973.

Although intergenerational comparisons do not figure prominently in this paper, introducing findings from parallel questions addressed to the parents of the students in earlier waves proves instructive. Parental generation respondents reported a markedly lower rate of political disagreements than did those



in the younger generation, with over two-fifths in each year claiming to never disagree. A length of marriage explanation for the intergenerational difference does not suffice because not only does it fail to distinguish among the parental couples, whose data base admittedly begins well into the marriage, but it also fails to distinguish among the couples from the class of 1965, as we have seen. We suspect a "true" generational difference here, but will not explore that reasoning at this time.

### Revealed Disagreement

Notwithstanding the inherent appeal of analyzing subjective assessments of couples' political disagreements, they are prone to reporting biases of various sorts. In the present instance they are also weakened by being based on the perspective of only one member of the couple. A less subject-biased way to ascertain agreement levels among two or more parties is to compare their responses to the same queries. In what follows we utilize ten measures based on responses from each of the marriage partners, nine tapping political orientations and, for comparison, one concerning religious beliefs. The political measures range from the very general to the more specific, tap several different attitudinal domains, are based on varying question formats, are reasonably reliable, and are commonly judged to lie along a liberal-conservative continuum. Most of these utilize questions used in the national election studies (NES). Each is described in more detail in Appendix A.

Party identification, assessed in the conventional NES fashion, and presidential vote choice, based on votes cast in the two most recent elections, comprise the partisan measures. Self-location on the seven-point liberal conservative measure serves as a general marker of ideology. Policy preferences regarding several longstanding public policy issues were ascertained in several ways. One consisted of self-locations on seven-point scales devoted to the issues of legalizing marijuana, federal assistance with respect to ensuring jobs, and gender equality. Attitudes about abortion were based on making a choice among four alternative policies, and attitudes about racial policy were based on combining responses concerning school integration and federal aid to minorities. Attitudes toward two institutional rivals in American politics, big business and labor unions, were assessed by questions about their level of political influence. Finally, a religious beliefs measure combined responses to a question about prayers in school

and belief in the inerrancy of the Bible.

Gender comparisons. In order to provide a vital backdrop for the analysis of marital pairs, it will be useful to present the distribution of these measures over time for the husbands and wives in our sample. Doing so will convey some sense of the secular trends captured by the three surveys as well as differences by gender. Table 2 presents the findings for the intact three-wave couples as does Table 3 for the two sets of two-wave couples.

As demonstrated most forcefully by the three-wave pairs, a gender gap in attitudes emerged over time. With the exception of the marijuana issue, men and women in the aggregate did not differ at a statistically significant level in 1973. Compared with women, men became more conservative, so much so that by 1997 they differed from them on six of the nine political measures. In some ways the most striking example of that occurs with the marijuana issue, where significant differences exist at all three points but where the direction of the relationship changes. Note also the emerging gap on the two more global indicators of political attitudes--party identification and liberal/conservative ideology.

It might be argued that the husbands and wives making up the three-wave panel possess unique characteristics that heighten the appearance of gender differences. Assessing the results based on the two-wave panels, with their larger and more diverse number of cases, proves reassuring, however, and also helps pinpoint a probable critical time in the emergence of the gap (Table 3).<sup>4</sup> Looking first at the 1973-82 panel, we can see that husbands, compared with wives, became more conservative (or less liberal) on all the political measures and that a sizeable gap had opened up on most measures by 1982. A comparison with the results for the 1982-97 respondents implicates the 1973-1982 period as a critical one for the development of the gap. Most of the differences that had appeared by 1982 in the first panel set remain in place in the second panel. Adding more credence to this interpretation is the fact that the 1997 results resemble very much those of 1982. In this respect our findings, though derived from a single cohort, bear a distinct resemblance to findings based on larger, national samples (Chaney,

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<sup>4</sup> The three-wave couples make up about three-fifths of these two-wave couples.

Alvarez, and Nagler 1998; Shapiro and Mahajan 1986).<sup>5</sup>

Pair Similarities. Given the findings about emerging gender differences over time, a first thought projection would be one of increasing dissimilarity between marriage partners over time as well. After all, we are talking about the same respondents. Recall, however, that the foregoing analysis was based on aggregate trends among husbands and wives taken separately as the units of analysis. What happened at that level may or may not reflect developments when marital pairs become the units of analysis. Indeed, there is no necessary statistical relationship between what is transpiring at these two levels, as shall now be demonstrated.

Tables 4 and 5 present the longitudinal findings on couples, using the intraclass correlation coefficient to index similarity.<sup>6</sup> Table 4 contains the results for the 3-wave panel pairs, while Table 5 contains the results for the two 2-wave panels. Although our main focus is on the consequences of marital longevity, the range of couple concordance across attitude objects also merits attention. Couples are obviously much more alike than unlike, with substantial variation depending upon the nature of the attitude object. Longstanding, central, and salient objects such as the political parties and electoral choice command high consonance. The same tends to be true for attitude objects heavily charged with religious and moral content, such as opinions on abortion and marijuana control.

Considering the effects of marital duration, we should note that the column headings of years in Tables 4 and 5 represent, in effect, marital longevity.<sup>7</sup> Illustratively, in Table 4 couples had an average marriage length of 4 years in 1973, 13 years in 1982, and 28 years in 1997. If the duration hypothesis is

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<sup>5</sup> For the role played by feminism in distinguishing policy preferences between men and women and among women see, for example, Conover 1994 and Rinehart 1992.

<sup>6</sup> How best to express agreement between linked respondents is always a vexing problem. For an early and insightful discussion see Robinson (1957); and in a precursor to the present effort, see Niemi, Hedges, and Jennings (1977). We have compared our results with those based on the more commonly used product moment correlation and found virtually identical patterns. The more appropriate measure of homogeneity within dyads, however, is the intraclass correlation (Gonzales and Griffin 2000; McGraw and Wong 1996). Unlike the Pearson correlation between the spouse variables, the intraclass correlation does not assume that the relationship between the two variables is linear. As with the product moment correlation, an ICC of 0.0 indicates no within-couple homogeneity and an ICC of 1.0 indicates perfect within-couple agreement.

<sup>7</sup> Although the couples within each panel set had not been married for the same length of time, the elapsed time between surveys is obviously the same for all couples in each panel. Thus each marriage was aging at the same absolute rate.

to be supported, pair agreement should increase over time. At a bare minimum, agreement should not decrease. Evidence from the three-wave panel offers strong support for either continuity or increasing convergence over time. Only two of the measures, gender equality and legalization of marijuana, exhibit less similarity in 1997 than in 1973. Conversely the measures representing party identification, ideology, and racial policy show strong gains while the other measures show essentially no change.

The results based on the two-wave panels are a bit more complicated, involving as they do couples with considerable variation in length of marriage as well as two different political eras. In general the congruence increased substantially more in the second panel period than in the first. In fact more decreases than increases occurred in the first panel period, though most of these are not statistically significant changes. There are two likely explanations for the different patterns. One is that the marriages are on average considerably older by the end of the later panel (26 years) than for the earlier one (13 years), second and third marriages notwithstanding. Couples have had even more time to accommodate to each other through one or another mechanism—including interpersonal influence, as we will show below. A second explanation may rest in the social and political currents at work in the earlier period. Differential responses by men and women to Watergate and the aftermath of the Vietnam War are possible candidates. More likely would be differential responses to the cresting of the women's movement and the emergence of a gender gap in voting behavior.

On balance, then, marital longevity works to heighten pair concordance. Intriguingly, these results run against the finding of no differences in perceived disagreements according to length of marriage. Not that perceptions are unimportant, for it may be that recalled disagreements represent the more salient ones for the couple. Still, we would have seriously underestimated the role of longevity had we relied solely on subjective reporting. These results also run counter to what might have been expected based on the aggregate comparisons between husbands and wives. Long-term trends pointing toward growing differences, in general, between husbands and wives on a number of key political attitudes are not reflected in growing marital disharmony.

### Spousal Influence and Accommodation

As we have already pointed out, increased couple similarity over time may arise even if the marriage partners are not influencing each other; they may simply be reacting to common experiences and shared influences. Similarly, even if husbands and wives are not becoming more similar over time in the aggregate, it is quite possible that mutual socialization is nevertheless taking place within the marriage. Consequently, the results we have seen so far leave open the question of whether husbands and wives are influencing each other. Panel data on marital partners provide an excellent resource for addressing this issue.

#### A Subjective View

It will be instructive to first view the dynamics of influence and accommodation as seen through the eyes of the participants themselves, just as we earlier discussed the subjective frequency of disagreements. Our data sources are uniquely well-suited in this regard. Questions were asked of the 1973 youth generation which shed considerable light on the subjective experiencing of marital political conflict and its resolution. In addition to asking the interviewed respondents about the frequency and nature of current political disagreements, we also asked them to recount whether they had disagreements with their spouses when they were first married and, if so, the outcomes of these differences. The lead question directed the respondents to think back to when they were first married (a short time for most of them) and recall if they disagreed about public affairs and politics. About one-fourth allowed as how there were such disagreements.<sup>8</sup>

To no great surprise, the subject matter of early dissonance centered on two clusters: parties, elections, and politicians; and issues involving morality and civil rights. What are the outcomes of these early disagreements? According to their own perceptions, many young couples seemed to agree to disagree about politics. Disagreements remained in place for nearly one-half of the couples (44%). However, in the remaining 56% one partner yielded to the other. Accommodation and adjustment

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<sup>8</sup> The following few paragraphs are based on the full sample of 1973 respondents who were married at the time, not just those whose spouses completed the questionnaires. This is done to improve the estimates because of the

compete with resistance in the early years of a marriage.

Equally significant are the reports as to which partner yielded.<sup>9</sup> The more traditional rendering of how political conflict is resolved in the marriage is that the husband more often than not emerges as dominant, at least in the arena of partisanship (e.g., Beck and Jennings 1975). With the advent of the second women's movement and accompanying changes in gender roles, it has been speculated that these traditional influence relationships would erode. Nevertheless, the evidence at hand favors the traditional configurations as of 1973. A breakdown by sex of respondent shows that only 9% of the husbands acknowledged yielding to their wives, while 49% claimed that their wives capitulated. Nor does this impressive gap merely reflect a virile exercise of the male ego, for 58% of the wives admitted to moving in the husband's direction while only 14% said their husbands swung toward their way. The balance of responses, for both sexes, fell into the "both changed" category, instances where more than one divisive issue existed or where each partner conceded a bit on a given issue.

The same questioning was put to the respondents in 1997 but restricted to contemporary disagreements about public affairs and politics. A massive change has occurred since 1973, one which probably reflects the effects of marital duration as well as secular forces at work. Roughly twice as many respondents as in 1973 now opined that both partners changed their minds, an increase found among both men and women. Among those who said that one partner yielded, husbands now were about as likely to designate themselves as they were likely to designate their wives, though wives still designated themselves much more often. Traces of the earlier pronounced male advantage thus prevailed along with a strong movement toward mutual change. These changes in conflict resolution as seen by subjective appraisals presage those based on revealed changes, to which we now turn.

#### A Dynamic Analysis

If, when political disagreements exist, one or more marriage partners successfully exert influence upon the other, this should be evident in the patterning of change we see in the attitudes of each marital

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shrinking Ns produced by the winnowing process embedded in the question sequence.

<sup>9</sup> Our Ns at this point are smaller, but still rather reliable. Of the 163 respondents who reported an early marriage disagreement, 71 said that one person had changed his or her mind; all of these 71 designated the changer.

partner. In this section we develop and estimate a dynamic model to trace these influence flows.

Some studies of interdependence and influence among married couples have applied lagged dependence models to cross-time data on marital partners (e.g., Allison and Liker 1982; Wampold 1984).

To illustrate what these models entail, consider a single couple, data on each partner at two points in time, and the question of whether the husband is influenced by the wife. The lagged dependent model views the husband as reconsidering his  $T_1$  opinion in light of his wife's  $T_1$  opinion, and then arriving at a subsequent ( $T_2$ ) opinion. If his wife is influential, he will be likely to maintain his prior opinion if she shares that opinion, likely to alter his opinion to correspond to her view if she does not. A conservative husband will be more likely to retain his conservative views if his wife shares them than if she expresses more liberal leanings; a moderate husband will be more likely to shift to the right than to the left if his wife expresses conservative views.

Following this logic, the lagged dependence model conceives of wives' influence upon their husbands as revealed by the extent to which the husbands'  $T_2$  responses can be predicted by the wives'  $T_1$  responses, given the husbands'  $T_1$  baseline. Husbands' influence upon their wives is conceptualized in a parallel fashion. Husband or wife dominance is then indicated by a difference in the extent to which one partner's response renders the other's more predictable:

In a dyad, if B's future behavior is more predictable from A's past behavior than conversely, then A is said to be dominant. (Gottman 1980, 71; quoted in Allison and Liker 1982.)

The lagged dependence model is clearly appropriate in circumstances where repeated observations on each partner are observed over closely spaced intervals of time.

Because of the long time period between surveys in the socialization study, however, the lagged dependence model is inappropriate for our analyses, and a model of simultaneous and reciprocal influence is preferable.<sup>10</sup> The key difference between a simultaneous influence model and the lagged dependence model arises when we expect response changes to have occurred between the  $T_1$  and  $T_2$  observation points that are not themselves driven by a process of interpersonal influence. Under such

circumstances the question of interest is whether one or both partners are influenced by their spouse's current (rather than prior) opinion, after taking into account the factors that might otherwise have generated continuity or change in each partners' opinion over time. Influence is revealed by the contingency of one partner's  $T_2$  opinion on the  $T_2$  opinion held by his or her spouse. Dominance is revealed by an asymmetry in this contingency.

Figure 1 depicts the two-wave model of reciprocal influence that we employ here. The model first takes into account the opinion each respondent expressed at  $T_1$ --paths  $B_1$  (for beta) and  $B_2$ . As such, it controls for those background factors that explain differences of opinion at  $T_1$ , as well as any husband/wife similarity already in place at that point in time. The remaining set of variables are introduced to help account for the change in respondents' political orientations that took place between  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ . For present purposes, the most important of these explanatory variables is the opinion of the spouse as expressed at  $T_2$ --paths  $G_1$  (for gamma) and  $G_2$ . The other variables in this model, while of less interest to us, help guard against the possibility that the reciprocal influence effects we observe are not driven by other circumstances and experiences producing change. These other variables can be grouped into four separate categories, as follows.

(1) *Shared experiences*. Some of the changes in the life circumstances of these respondents between waves are changes that occurred to each member of the couple, experiences that were shared by virtue of the marital relationship. This would include the birth of a child, for example, or changes in the couple's family income. Such experiences may have political consequences, and those consequences may be different for wives and husbands, but they are shared experiences among married couples nonetheless. If such experiences do affect each marital partner similarly, we would expect to observe a consonant pattern of change in the political attitudes of the husbands and wives. This husband-wife similarity would not, however, reflect a process of interpersonal influence. Rather, it would be driven by shared experiences that themselves have political consequences. Our model includes a number of such "couple-level" variables in order to help guard against the possibility that our estimates of reciprocal

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<sup>10</sup> On this issue see the discussion in Hanushek and Jackson 1977, chapter 9.



influence will be inflated in this fashion:  $T_1$ - $T_2$  change in family income,  $T_1$ - $T_2$  change in home-owner status, and whether or not the couple had a child between  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ .

(2) *Individual experiences.* Though much of their lives are shared, each partner to the marriage will also undergo unique experiences of direct consequence for his or her political outlook. One partner may go back to school in order to achieve an advanced degree, for example, or become more religiously involved. Though such experience may directly affect one's own political views, any impact on one's spouse should be indirect, operating through the exchange of information and opinion to which those experiences give rise.<sup>11</sup> In this category of explanatory variables, our model incorporates the respondent's change in educational attainment, change in frequency of church attendance, and change in ideological outlook.<sup>12</sup>

(3) *Experiences that are both individual and shared.* Some changes experienced by one partner will appreciably alter the circumstances of the couple's shared life, and thus are appropriately classified neither as simply "shared" nor as simply "individual." An exemplar in this respect is movement into or out of the workforce on the part of either partner, most typically the wife. When a working wife becomes a homemaker, or vice versa, the couple's daily routines and interactions usually undergo substantial change. These changing circumstances may have direct effects on the political orientations of each of the partners, quite apart from any indirect effects that may arise as a result of interpersonal influence. At the same time, only one member of the couple is actually changing his or her work status; he or she is undergoing changes that transcend those arising within the context of the marital relationship. While we might expect changes in one partner's labor force participation to directly affect the political outlook of

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<sup>11</sup> That given, it is also the case that by excluding such variables we would face the risk of biasing the reciprocal influence coefficients. Spurious similarity in the attitude change of each partner might arise if each partner experiences similar changes in religiosity, for example.

<sup>12</sup> We think of change in ideological outlook as summarizing unmodeled experiences that serve to instigate change in the specific attitudes we are examining in these models. The actual variable employed is change in liberal/conservative identification from  $T_1$  to  $T_2$  for all analyses except those explaining religious beliefs (where no ideological outlook predictor was used), vote choice (where both change in ideology and change in party identification were used), and liberal/conservative identification itself (where change in party identification was used). Although the causal flows between ideology and some of the other variables may be reciprocal, we were much less worried about this than about insuring that the spousal influence coefficients weren't inflated by excluding important predictors of change.

each marriage partner, we would also expect those effects to be different because of the different set of experiences that this variable summarizes. Our model incorporates changes in the wife's labor force participation,<sup>13</sup> conceiving of this as having direct effects upon the political attitudes of each marital partner. For the 1982-1997 analysis, we also include whether the primary respondents reported being physically attacked, robbed or burglarized. This experience is clearly both individual and shared.

(4) *Prior characteristics mediating change.* All of the potential change-inducing factors that we have discussed thus far refer to the respondents' changing circumstances or experiences between  $T_1$  and  $T_2$ . Yet at least one prior personal characteristic, degree of political attentiveness, must be included in any model of attitude change. Contemporary learning arguments emphasize the key role of political awareness or attentiveness in mediating attitude change in response to external events and elite opinion (McClosky, Zaller, and Chong 1985; Zaller 1992). The most politically aware are most likely to respond to the dominant political messages of the day, evidencing greater change than those whose lives are less attuned to contemporary political events and messages. As such, our model includes an indicator of the respondent's  $T_1$  level of political attentiveness to take into account this potentially differential responsiveness to secular forces.

In sum, the model we employ to assess interpersonal influence in the marital context allows for continuity in political orientations over time, as well as changes arising either from shared or from individual experiences, experiences that in either case might have gender-specific effects. It explicitly recognizes the possibility that, quite apart from any mutual socialization that might be taking place, partners to a marriage are subject to many forces promoting change throughout their lifespan. We then place the question of spousal influence within this larger perspective on political continuity and change.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This specification reflects the life circumstances of the men and women in these age groups. A significant number of women moved into or out of the workforce over the years we are studying, while changes in work status were very rare among the men.

<sup>14</sup> Other work on social influence processes in politics, including some work on husbands and wives, has used characteristics of one partner to predict change in the other partner's views. For example, Kenny (1994) explains change in vote preference over time by taking into account the spouse's party identification. In such models, only one partner's position, or change in position, is treated as a dependent variable. The process is not modeled as one that may involve mutual influence. Further, because the spouse attribute serving as an explanatory variable is treated as a static attribute, questions concerning when that attribute is measured are not confronted. The spouse's party

For any given political issue, one of three different patterns of influence results might emerge.

First, we might find no signs of interpersonal influence, no evidence that married people are adjusting their views in light of the positions taken by their spouses ( $G_1$  and  $G_2$  zero). This would accord with the view that husband/wife similarity first arises from a process of assortative mating that tends to produce politically like-minded couples. Any similarity in their patterns of change across time is driven not by a process of interpersonal influence, but by the changing life circumstances and experiences that they share.

Second, we might find a pattern of mutual influence where men and women are equally responsive to the opinions expressed by their spouses ( $G_1$  and  $G_2$  positive and equal). Such findings would suggest that spouses exert significant influence upon each other through the course of their marriage, quite apart from the similarities or differences that are intact when their marriage begins, and quite apart from the other forces that generate continuity and change over time. Accommodation and adjustment are taking place within the marriage, with each partner contributing to the resolution of differences.

Finally, we might find a pattern of dominance by husbands or by wives, of asymmetry in influence ( $G_1 > G_2$  or  $G_1 < G_2$ ). Such findings would again weigh in favor the thesis that socialization within the marriage is taking place over time. But one partner would be dominant in exerting influence upon the other, accommodation being a relatively one-sided affair. Our findings about perceptions concerning the resolution of disagreements, taken together with conventional wisdom and the scant other research on this subject (Beck and Jennings 1975, De Graaf and Heath 1992, Kritzer 1976, Rabinowitz 1971), suggests that any asymmetry in influence would be to the husband's advantage. Even at the 20<sup>th</sup> century's end, we may find husbands exerting more influence upon their wives than vice versa.

We estimated the two-wave model for both the 73-82 panel pairs and the 82-97 panel pairs, using full-information Maximum Likelihood.<sup>15</sup> We also estimated a 3-wave version of the model for the 73-82-

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identification is the spouse's party identification, whether gauged at T1 or T2. The model we employ here tries to overcome both of these limitations.

<sup>15</sup> The models were estimated using the structural equation modeling program known as AMOS. Full-information maximum-likelihood estimation has desirable statistical properties, particularly when one is working with samples that have missing data limitations (Arbuckle and Wothke 1999). Because so many variables are involved in our models,

97 panel pairs. Since the 3-wave results are so similar to the results obtained from the two 2-wave panels, we focus on the 2-wave results here and provide the 3-wave results in Appendix B. Further, because our interest is in obtaining a sense of how the influence patterns vary across political attitudes and across time, we report and focus on the findings pertaining to reciprocal influence rather than those for the entire model of change. Table 6 contains these results. The coefficients indicate the extent to which the respondent's  $T_2$  attitude was contingent on his or her spouse's  $T_2$  attitude, net of the other explanatory variables in the model.

To illustrate, consider the 1973-1982 findings for party identification. Each party identification variable was coded on a 0-1 scale. Anchoring one end was the strong Democratic position (score 0) and anchoring the other end was the strong Republican position (score 1). The coefficient representing the husband's influence on his wife, .39, indicates the extent of adjustment made by the wife, from her  $T_1$  position, in light of a complete discrepancy between that position and the  $T_2$  position taken by her husband. In other words, if the wife was a strong Democrat at time 1, and her husband was a strong Republican at time 2, she is predicted to have moved .39 units in her husband's direction from time 1 to time 2. Another way to think about this is to compare what would happen to our strong Democrat ( $T_1$ ) wife if her husband was a strong Democrat at  $T_2$ , which is that her predicted  $T_2$  score would be unaffected (.39 x husband score of 0), with what would happen if her husband was a strong Republican at  $T_2$ , which is that her predicted  $T_2$  score would increase by .39 (.39 x husband score of 1). The coefficient representing the wife's influence on the husband has a comparable interpretation, as do the coefficients on the rest of the variables in the table. Each of these other variables were scored so that 0 represents the most extreme liberal position available, and 1 represents the most extreme conservative (or religious) position available.<sup>16</sup>

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this is particularly important. In the 2-wave models, we allowed the following correlations: (1) between the husband's and the wife's error terms, (2) between each partner's political awareness and his or her  $T_1$  attitude (since they were measured at the same wave), (3) between the husband's and the wife's change in frequency of church attendance, (4) between the husband's and the wife's change in ideological outlook (and change in partisan identification, when it was included), and (5) between change in income and change in home ownership status. Details concerning the 3-wave models are given in Appendix B.

<sup>16</sup> Although the dependent variables in our model are  $T_2$  scores, not  $T_1$ - $T_2$  change scores, the model is a model of

As we have already suggested, these results bear on two partially separable questions: (1) How much influence are husbands and wives exerting on each other? (2) Is the influence process reciprocal or asymmetric, with either husbands or wives tending to dominate? The answers to these questions may vary across political attitudes and across time. To manage this complexity we will take each question up in turn, while also trying to address some of the nuances that escape this way of parsing the problem. To address the question of spousal influence levels, we averaged the coefficients for males and females found in Table 6, which are summarized under the "Direct Effects" heading in Table 7.

The short answer to the question of how much spousal influence occurs is: a lot! At least one influence coefficient was substantively and statistically significant in 19 of the 20 models estimated (the exception being race policy attitudes in the first panel period, 1973-1982). There is some, but not a great deal, of variation across political attitudes. Taking into account both the coefficient magnitudes and their reliability (as indexed by the t-statistics), and the results across both panel periods, spousal influence appears, not surprisingly, to be most powerful with respect to parity identification, vote choice, and religious beliefs. The relative assessment of business vs. labor, which captures a central dimension of partisan conflict in the United States also shows strong traces of spousal influence, as do issues with a strong moral component--abortion and the legalization of marijuana.

Differences across time are more pronounced. In general much more influence appears in the second panel period than in the first. For vote choice, ideology, race policy, marijuana legalization, and religious beliefs, the average coefficient size increases substantially (Table 7), and it only decreases noticeably--and not very reliably--on the one topic of government job assistance.<sup>17</sup> These increases are even more noticeable when considering total effects instead of the direct effects that are reported in Table 6 and summarized in the first two columns of Table 7. Total effect estimates take into account the feedback loops entailed by the reciprocal model. When influence flows increase, and especially when

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change between T1 and T2 by virtue of the fact that the T1 score is included as a predictor. Indeed, the findings are identical to what one would observe if a change score dependent variable were used, as long as the T1 score was still included as a predictor -- as it must be, to account for floor and ceiling effects. Only the coefficient on the T1 variable would change, in that now the T1 variable is predicting T1-T2 change whereas before it was predicting the T2 level. All of the remaining variables in the model are predicting T1-T2 change under either setup.

they rise for both partners, mutual reinforcement takes place and total effects can rise quite dramatically. For the issues just named, not only did the influence flows rise in the second period but they also tended to rise for both partners and hence to spur the process of mutual reinforcement. For example, while the direct effects for legalization of marijuana went from an average of .29 (.34 and .19) to an average of .49 (.48 and .49), the total effects went from an average of .31 to an average of .63.

Why would these influence flows be increasing over time? One likely explanation involves marital duration. The average length of the marriage in the first panel is 13 years compared with 26 years for the second panel. As the marriage moves on, spouses could become more influential for three distinct reasons. First, they could assume more importance simply by default, as the couple enters the more settled period of middle-age and is subject to fewer new external influences. At the same time, interactions with the spouse continue and accumulate over the years. Second, spouses could become more influential because the attitudes they hold are mature political views, more meaningful than the views they articulated in young adulthood.. As we have demonstrated elsewhere with this sample, attitudinal stability increases substantially between the mid-twenties and mid-thirties (Jennings and Stoker 1999). Consistent cue-giving and more successful influence attempts could be one outcome of those gains in stability. Third, spouses could exert more political influence later in the marriage life because they have become personally more important in the lives of their partner. Individuals in marriages of this duration are obviously in them for the long haul. Even though politics is not of paramount concern in most marriages, political accommodation and compromise may increase in long-lived marriage as a way of maintaining marital harmony

A second explanation focuses on compositional changes. Rather than spouses becoming more important later relative to early in the marriage, it could be that spouses are always important but only in marriages destined to survive. Conceivably, the lower levels of influence found in the first panel period could be due to weaknesses in the marriages of those couples found in the first panel. Based on the reports of the primary respondents from the 73-82 panel pairs who made it into the 1997 wave, one-fifth

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<sup>17</sup> The decrease is not very reliable as judged by the low t-statistics involved at each wave.

of those marriages later failed. Some portion of the marriages in the second panel may yet fail, but with an average of 26 years, the prospects for continuation are high. If marital mortality plays a role in the gains the first and second panels, then the over-time increases in the 3-wave analyses should be less visible than those found in the two 2-wave analyses because marital failure is by definition not included. That turns out to be the case, thereby providing indirect evidence in support of the compositional explanation. In any event, it should be emphasized that any rise in the influence flows due to compositional change is not a methodological artifact. Compositional change goes hand-in-hand with change in marital duration.

Turning to the question of dominance requires focusing attention on the relative size of the husbands' and wives' influence coefficients. To assist in this comparison, we have summarized the coefficient differences in Tables 8.<sup>18</sup> Several general patterns are evident in these results. First, and most generally, husbands appear to exert more influence on their wives than vice versa. In the first panel period, for example, asymmetries in influence are evident in six cases, and husbands are more influential in four of them.<sup>19</sup> Second, even so, male dominance is more pronounced in the first panel period than in the second panel period. Of the four attitudes where husbands tend to dominate in the first period --vote, gender equality, business vs. labor, and religious beliefs -- only one, business vs. labor, shows clear husband dominance in the later period. On the other three, the husbands' influence coefficients average .48 in the first period, compared to .15 for the wives, while those averages are .46 and .42 in the second panel period. Still, in the second period husbands do signs of being more influential than their wives on ideology and abortion, in addition to business vs. labor.

Wives, on the other hand, exert more influence than their husbands on ideology and government job assistance, in the first, period, and on party identification and government job assistance in the second

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<sup>18</sup> We only present difference in the direct effect estimates since differences in the total effect estimates are so similar.

<sup>19</sup> Only one of these differences, business vs. labor, is statistically significant at conventional levels, but the others all have t-ratios greater than 1.0 and are substantively significant in magnitude. We are inclined to take these seriously despite the relatively large p-values, given the low statistical power of these analyses--low both because of the small Ns we are working with and because of the inefficiencies entailed when estimating reciprocal effects.

period. The job assistance finding is particularly intriguing. A typical husband is substantially affected by his wife's opinion on this issue; a typical wife is utterly unaffected by her husband's point of view. While male dominance on the business vs. labor issue makes sense given the work histories of men and women in the United States, female dominance in job assistance case requires a different sort of explanation. The reason almost surely lies in the more problematic nature of employment status for women as compared with men, politicized by the emphasis of the women's movement on the gender gap in earnings. These aspects would make the topic more salient for women in the context of the marriage and would, in turn, facilitate dominance.

In sum, both mutual socialization and parity in influence become more evident in longer-lasting marriages. Support for this conclusion comes not only from the results based on the dynamic analysis, but from the respondents' own portrayals of political conflict, and its resolution, within their marriages. Yet even in this generation, whose members came of age in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there are signs that wives do more to go along with their husbands than vice versa. Early asymmetry may later turn into balance, but its effects will still be felt. At the same time, it would be wrong to characterize the husband's influence advantage too starkly. As our results have revealed, women clearly do have their say as well.<sup>20</sup>

### **Spousal Influence, Couple Homogeneity, and the Gender Gap**

It is now clear that spousal influence is, at least in part, responsible for the increasing couple homogeneity we reported in Tables 4 and 5. Indeed, both the levels of homogeneity, and the over-time increases in homogeneity, parallel the levels and over-time increases in influence. Thus, for example, the highest levels of couple homogeneity are found for vote choice and religious beliefs, precisely where spousal influence is most powerful. The sharp increase in couple concordance on partisanship across the 1973-1982 period reflects the level of influence husbands and wives were exerting upon each other in this period, just as the 1982-1992 increase in concordance on ideology and race policy opinions

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<sup>20</sup> For a similar conclusion found among Australian couples but based on cross-sectional data see Hays and Bean 1992, 1994. See also Miller, Wilfor, and Donoghue 1999.



coincides with an up tick in the level of spousal influence. Interpersonal influence among married partners can produce this kind of similarity as long as it is not overridden by other forces working to push the partners apart. If we think of individuals as less susceptible to outside influences as they age, while remaining vulnerable to their spouses, the levels of similarity we see in Tables 3 and 4 are likely to rise even higher as these couples grow old.

These findings also have great significance for the presence and magnitude of any gender gap in political attitudes or voting behavior. The implication is straightforward: spousal influence will work to reduce or eliminate any gap. We illustrate this process, schematically, in Figure 2. In that illustration, we assume that, on average, there is very little difference between men and women at Time 1 (labeled "at beginning") -- a gap of .02. Some external force or "shock" then produces a gender gap. We have depicted men as moving in a conservative direction and women moving in a liberal direction, producing a gap of .40.<sup>21</sup> The remaining three situations simulate the opinions that would result, on average, after the operation of spousal influence. In the case of "male dominance," the coefficient for male influence was set to .5, with the coefficient for females set to 0. In the case of "female dominance," the influence coefficients were 0 and .5 for males and females, respectively. And in the case of "parity", both coefficients were set to .5. As the figure shows, when males dominate the gap is reduced, with women reversing somewhat, and moving in the conservative direction toward their husbands. When females dominate, the gap is also reduced, while this time it is the men who move closer to their relatively more liberal wives. And in the case of parity in influence, the gap is most strongly reduced -- indeed, cut in half.<sup>22</sup>

We have seen that a gender gap has, in fact, emerged among the married couples we have studied (Tables 2 and 3), as in the United States more generally over the past 20 or so years. Assuming our reasoning is correct, we would expect that gap to be greatly diminished relative to the gap that would

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<sup>21</sup> This is the simplest example to depict, but does not represent the rise of the gender gap in partisanship and voting in the U.S., where it was men moving in the conservative/Republican direction that gave rise to the gap.

<sup>22</sup> This actually underestimates the reduction in the gap because it does not take feedback loops into account. With a pair of direct effect coefficients equal to .5, the total effect coefficients are in the .7 range, which means the gap would be reduced from .40 to .12.

exist were men and women not married to each other and not exerting influence upon each other.

Evidence in support of this counterfactual claim appears in Table 9, which depicts the 1997 gender gap in opinion for two sets of respondents: (1) those who have been single across their adult lives thus far, and (2) those who were married to the same person for most of their adult lives, 25 years or more.<sup>23</sup> The former group represents our counterfactual world, where women and men developed and changed their attitudes without the operation of spousal influence. In the latter group, by contrast, spousal influence processes have been working for decades. Importantly, both represent the same cohort, identical in age, and identical in the larger political environment that characterized their coming-of-age.<sup>24</sup>

The results are striking. With one exception (government job assistance), there is a marked gender gap among the unmarried group and almost none among the married group. Among those who remained unmarried across their early and middle-age years, men were substantially more Republican than were women, more conservative ideologically, and more conservative in terms of matters concerning race and gender. The gender gap in voting is most dramatic. The single men were 37% more likely to vote Republican than were the single women. In the married comparison group, all of these differences are worn away to almost nothing.<sup>25</sup>

As these results make plain, the gender gap that has emerged among married men and women in our data, and in the U.S. more generally, has been narrowed by ongoing processes of spousal influence.<sup>26</sup> To the extent that marriage mutes gender differences that would otherwise be present, it means that conflicts are being resolved within the family rather than in the broader political realm. Perhaps this is something to applaud, perhaps it provides more harmony and stability in society than one would otherwise find. Yet to the degree that the political power of each gender is linked to its political

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<sup>23</sup> The "unmarried" group includes 62 people who were never married across the period and 20 additional people who were unmarried at each wave but nevertheless experienced a very brief marriage or living arrangement with a partner at one point in their lives.

<sup>24</sup> Although these crucial markers are constants across the two groups, there could be politically relevant selection effects accompanying their married, unmarried states.

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, single men are noticeably less conservative than the single women on abortion and marijuana, and less religious than single women as well. These differences, too, disappear among those in long-lived marriages.

<sup>26</sup> At the same time, perhaps the gap's emergence in the 1970s and 1980s was enhanced by marriage-unfriendly changes taking place in the U.S., such as increases in the divorce rate and the age at first marriage.

distinctiveness, the institution of marriage cannot be judged empowering either to women or to men. Empowerment can be particularly problematic for women in the instance of asymmetrical influence. For in those situations differences still tend to be resolved more often in the husband's direction.<sup>27</sup>

### Conclusion

Not only does the practice of marriage shape the everyday lives of most Americans, but it also shapes the way that their political attitudes develop and change. Spouses tend toward like-mindedness because of the selection processes that bring them together in the first place. After marriage, mutual socialization also works to produce commonalities in political outlook over time. Because of this process, and in both a relative and an absolute sense, husbands and wives really do begin to look more alike as the marriage ages, most especially so if the marriage survives the early years. Over the past few decades divorces and remarriages and delayed age of first marriages have all worked to lower the expected duration of marriages, *ceteris paribus*. That being so, it is possible that the net influence of this intimate environment may diminish. For now, however, it remains an important interpersonal source of attitudinal change and stability, a unique dyadic network.

Because reciprocal influence among husbands and wives works to erase their political differences, it has important implications for how gender becomes politicized in the electoral arena. Among married men and women, aggregate gender gaps in political preferences surface only when the forces working outside the marriage to produce them overwhelm the strong forces operating within marriage to reduce them. While these external forces may be sufficient to produce at least some aggregate gender divisions among the married, as they were within the couples we studied, they are likely to be dwarfed by the divisions found among men and women less embedded, so to speak, in marriage. In the society as a whole there will inevitably be divisions within each gender according to marital history.

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<sup>27</sup> Although we have seen evidence of male dominance in the spousal influence analyses, there is other evidence in the data producing the gender gap comparisons in Table 9. If males dominate the influence process, then the difference between single and married males should be small relative to the difference between single and married females. The logic here is as outlined in Figure 2. Married women are more likely to move toward their (relatively conservative) husbands than married men are to move toward their (relatively liberal) wives. This is precisely what the corresponding analysis revealed (not shown). Inferentially, the spousal influence process is intimately wrapped up with the structure of the gender gap and the marriage gap. A full treatment of these issues is beyond the scope of

How these influence processes play out in the aggregate should depend both upon the degree to which husbands and wives are successfully influencing each other and upon the presence or absence of gender asymmetries in influence. When husbands are more influential, opinions in the aggregate should drift one way, whereas when women are more influential, opinions in the aggregate should drift the other way. As shown by an analysis of the class of 1965, men and women do not appear to exert political equal influence within the family. Although both marital partners were influential, husbands nevertheless had the edge. Whether asymmetry in influence characterizes American couples more generally, and how that asymmetry shapes public opinion over time and across genders, has yet to be demonstrated .

In light of the substantial variations in influence patterns that we have seen in these results--variation by issue domain, by gender, and across time--the question of whether influence is taking place must be succeeded by questions about the circumstances which facilitate or inhibit spousal influence, and those under which the husband or the wife come to dominate. Any number of factors might be at work here. They include patently political features such as the levels of political engagement by each partner and the centrality or salience of particular issues for each partner; such marriage-related factors as marital satisfaction, power differentials within the couple, and partner differences in nonpolitical arenas; and such social structure characteristics as class, religion, and race and ethnicity. Our further understanding of how couples navigate their way through political waters will be enriched by including these sorts of features in our investigations.

Table 1

## Political Discussion and Disagreement between Husbands and Wives

<u>Frequency of Political Discussion:</u>	1973	1982	1997
Never	12%	09%	10%
Seldom	33%	35%	33%
Occasionally	42%	41%	41%
Frequently	14%	15%	15%
(N)	(765)	(859)	(719)

<u>Frequency of Political Disagreement:</u>	1973	1982	1997
Never	32%	26%	23%
Seldom	20%	22%	24%
Occasionally	40%	43%	44%
Frequently	08%	10%	09%
(N)	(675)	(655)	(643)

Note: Based on reports of all primary respondents who were married in the given wave.

Table 2  
Gender Gap in Political Orientations, Over Time  
Three-Wave Panel Pairs

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1997</u>
Party Identification			
Husband	.47	.50	.54
Wife	.45	.47	.46
Gap	.02	.03	.08***
Vote Choice			
Husband	.64	.61	.53
Wife	.64	.50	.44
Gap	.00	.11***	.09**
Ideology			
Husband	.47	.56	.61
Wife	.48	.54	.55
Gap	-.01	.02	.06***
Race Policy			
Husband	.54	.67	.59
Wife	.50	.63	.57
Gap	.04	.04	.02
Gender Equality			
Husband	.57	.48	.46
Wife	.52	.39	.38
Gap	.05	.09**	.08*
Business vs. Labor			
Husband	.44	.45	.34
Wife	.40	.40	.34
Gap	.04	.06*	.00
Government Job Assistance			
Husband	.60	.69	.67
Wife	.57	.62	.60
Gap	.03	.07**	.07***
Abortion			
Husband		.32	.28
Wife	na	.34	.32
Gap		-.02	-.04
Legalization of Marijuana			
Husband	.50	.60	.60
Wife	.60	.65	.55
Gap	-.10**	-.05*	.05*
Religious Beliefs			
Husband	.71	.68	.68
Wife	.70	.73	.70
Gap	.01	-.05*	-.02

Note: Entries are averages. Each variable was scored to range from 0 to 1. All variables were scored so that the more Republican or conservative responses received higher scores. Base n=150. \*\*\*p < .001, \*\* p< .01, \* p< .05.

Table 3  
Gender Gap in Political Orientations, Over Time  
Two-Wave Panel Pairs

	1973-1982 Panel Pairs		1982-1997 Panel Pairs	
	<u>1973</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1997</u>
Party Identification				
Husband	.46	.50	.52	.53
Wife	.47	.48	.47	.46
Gap	-.01	.02	.05**	.07***
Vote Choice				
Husband	.65	.62	.59	.51
Wife	.65	.53	.49	.43
Gap	.00	.09***	.10***	.08***
Ideology				
Husband	.48	.57	.58	.60
Wife	.48	.54	.53	.54
Gap	.00	.03**	.05***	.06***
Race Policy				
Husband	.55	.68	.66	.60
Wife	.51	.62	.62	.57
Gap	.04	.06**	.04*	.03
Gender Equality				
Husband	.59	.48	.47	.47
Wife	.54	.41	.40	.37
Gap	.05*	.07**	.07**	.10***
Business vs. Labor				
Husband	.43	.45	.47	.35
Wife	.40	.40	.41	.33
Gap	.03	.05*	.06**	.02
Government Job Assistance				
Husband	.61	.70	.69	.65
Wife	.57	.63	.62	.59
Gap	.04*	.07***	.07**	.06***
Abortion				
Husband		.34	.32	.30
Wife	na	.36	.31	.32
Gap		-.02	.01	-.02
Legalization of Marijuana				
Husband	.53	.60	.58	.56
Wife	.62	.65	.62	.55
Gap	-.09***	-.05*	-.04*	.01
Religious Beliefs				
Husband	.70	.70	.67	.67
Wife	.72	.74	.71	.70
Gap	-.02	-.04*	-.04*	-.03

Note: Entries are averages. Each variable was scored to range from 0 (liberal) to 1 (conservative). Base 1973-82 n=257. Base 1982-97 n=248. \*\*\* p<.001, \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05

Table 4  
Husband-Wife Similarity Over Time

Three-Wave Panel Pairs

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1997</u>
Party Identification	.34	.47	.54
Vote Choice	.62	.56	.65
Ideology	.27	.32	.43
Race Policy	.24	.23	.39
Gender Equality	.27	.34	.15
Business vs. Labor	.33	.31	.31
Government Job Assistance	.13	.20	.21
Abortion	na	.51	.50
Legalization of Marijuana	.44	.34	.36
Religious Beliefs	.51	.51	.50

Note: Entries are intraclass correlation coefficients. Base n=150. All coefficients but two are statistically different from 0 at  $p < .01$  or less. The exceptions are government job assistance in 1973 ( $p = .05$ ) and gender equality in 1997 ( $p = .04$ ).



Table 5  
Husband-Wife Similarity Over Time

Two-Wave Panel Pairs

	<u>1973-1982 Panel Pairs</u>		<u>1982-1997 Panel Pairs</u>	
	<u>1973</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1997</u>
Party Identification	.33	.49	.43	.54
Vote Choice	.63	.52	.49	.66
Ideology	.32	.30	.33	.49
Race Policy	.25	.22	.28	.35
Gender Equality	.32	.26	.30	.24
Business vs. Labor	.30	.32	.30	.24
Government Job Assistance	.25	.19	.21	.28
Abortion	na	.44	.54	.52
Legalization of Marijuana	.47	.40	.43	.46
Religious Beliefs	.44	.50	.46	.56

Note: Entries are intraclass correlation coefficients. The 73-82 panel n=257. The 82-97 panel n=248. All coefficients are statistically different from 0 at  $p < .001$ .

Table 6  
 Husband-Wife Interpersonal Influence  
 Two-Wave Panel Analysis

	1982 Estimates (1973-1982 Panel)		1997 Estimates (1982-1997 Panel)	
	Husband's Influence on Wife	Wife's Influence on Husband	Husband's Influence on Wife	Wife's Influence on Husband
Party Identification	.39*** (5.4)	.32** (3.6)	.21** (2.9)	.34*** (4.4)
Vote Choice	.53*** (4.4)	.19 (.9)	.53*** (5.5)	.55*** (6.5)
Ideology	.09 (.8)	.31** (2.5)	.42*** (4.6)	.27** (2.8)
Race Policy	.16 (1.0)	.18 (1.4)	.46*** (4.1)	.33** (2.7)
Gender Equality	.56*** (3.7)	.08 (.6)	.36* (2.2)	.23* (2.1)
Business vs. Labor	.69*** (4.9)	.38 (1.6)	.87*** (4.0)	.18 (.6)
Government Job Assistance	.08 (.7)	.61* (2.1)	-.05 (-.4)	.34** (2.7)
Abortion	na	na	.41*** (4.0)	.21* (2.3)
Legalization of Marijuana	.25** (2.6)	.33** (2.7)	.48*** (4.7)	.49*** (3.6)
Religious Beliefs	.34*** (4.6)	.19* (2.1)	.45*** (5.2)	.48*** (5.7)

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with t-ratios in parenthesis below. See text for further details. The 73-82 panel n=257. The 82-97 panel n=248.

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

Table 7  
How Much Spousal Influence?

	Direct Effects <sup>a</sup>		Total Effects <sup>b</sup>	
	1982	1997	1982	1997
Party Identification	.36	.29	.42	.30
Vote Choice	.36	.54	.40	.76
Ideology	.20	.35	.21	.39
Race Policy	.17	.40	.18	.47
Gender Equality	.32	.30	.34	.32
Business vs. Labor	.54	.53	.73	.61
Government Job Assistance	.35	.15	.37	.14
Abortion	na	.31	na	.34
Legalization of Marijuana	.29	.49	.31	.63
Religious Beliefs	.27	.47	.29	.59

Note: <sup>a</sup> Entries are the average of the spousal influence coefficients given in Table 6.

<sup>b</sup> Entries are the average of (a) the total effect of the husband's position on the wife's position, and (b) the total effect of the wife's position on the husband's position. These are drawn from the same analyses producing the direct effects, and differ from the direct effects because of the feedback loops involved in the non-recursive model.

Table 8  
Who Dominates?

	Direct Effects	
	1982	1997
Party Identification	.07 (.7)	-.13 (-1.3)
Vote Choice	.34 (1.5)	-.02 (-.2)
Ideology	-.22 (-1.4)	.15 (1.3)
Race Policy	-.02 (-.1)	.13 (.8)
Gender Equality	.48** (2.6)	.13 (.7)
Business vs. Labor	.31 (1.2)	.69* (2.2)
Government Job Assistance	-.53* (-1.7)	-.39* (-2.0)
Abortion	na	.20 (1.6)
Legalization of Marijuana	.08 (.6)	-.01 (-.1)
Religious Beliefs	.15 (1.3)	-.03 (-.3)

Note: Entries are the (husband-wife) differences in the spousal influence coefficients given in Table 6. A positive score indicates husband dominance, a negative score indicates wife dominance, and 0 indicates parity in influence. T-ratios for testing whether the difference is statistically significant are given below each coefficient, and significance levels are starred. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

Table 9  
The Gender Gap in 1997  
by Marital History

	Unmarried 1973-1997 (n=82)	Married 1973-1997 (n=391)
Party Identification	.21***	.05*
Vote Choice	.37***	.06
Ideology	.12**	.03*
Race Policy	.21***	.00
Gender Equality	.12	.04
Business vs. Labor	.05	-.03
Government Job Assistance	-.04	.05**
Abortion	-.07	-.02
Legalization of Marijuana	-.08	.00
Religious Beliefs	-.12*	-.01

Note: Entries are the average gender difference on the row variable for the subgroup of respondents named in the column. Positive scores indicate that males were more conservative than females, on average. Negative scores indicate that females were relatively more conservative. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$

Figure 1

## Two-Wave Model of Spousal Influence

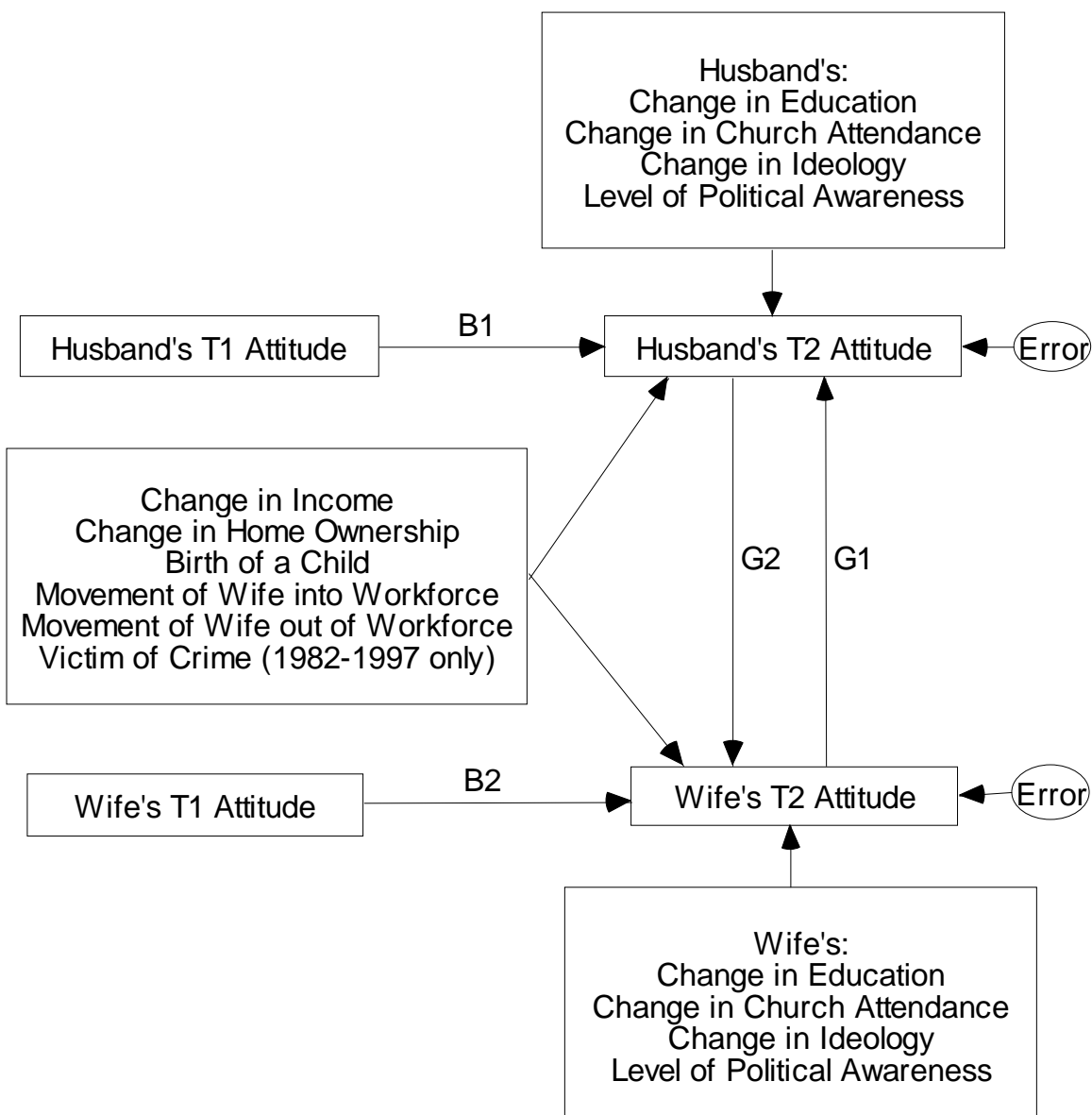
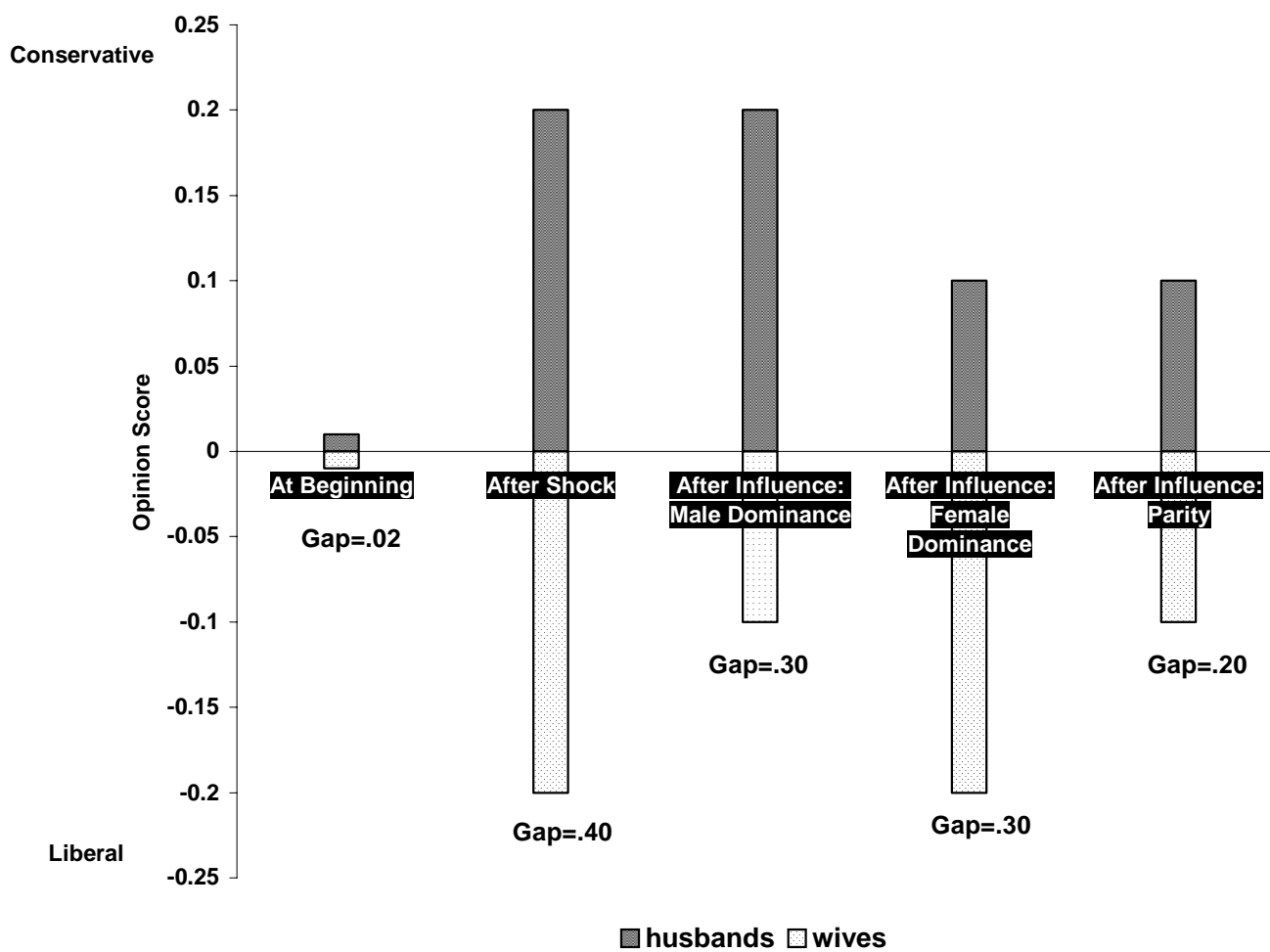


Figure 2

## Spousal Influence and the Gender Gap: A Simulation



## Appendix A Question Wording and Index Construction

The majority of the measures used in this paper are found in the National Election Studies (NES) series and are reasonably familiar. The exact wordings can be readily located in the codebooks provided by the ICPSR. Consequently, we present abbreviated descriptions except for those not ordinarily found in the NES studies. All variables were ultimately coded to range from 0 to 1, where 0 represented the most liberal/Democratic position and 1 represented the most conservative/Republican position.

Party Identification--The traditional 7-point subjective identification measure, restricted to 5 points because the spouse questionnaire did not differentiate between leaning independents and pure independents.

Presidential vote--Averaged the reported vote or vote preference (for non-voters) for the two Presidential elections preceding each wave of interviews. Valid responses on both variables were required. In the 1968 election, Wallace voters were coded with Nixon voters. In the 1980 election, John Anderson voters were coded in between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan voters. In the 1992 and 1996 elections, Perot voters were coded in the middle. In the 1972 and 1976 elections, only votes or preferences for the major party nominees were coded as valid. The pairwise correlation for the two components going into each variable, averaged across waves and across genders, was .48 for the 3-wave panel pairs, .38 for the 73-82 panel pairs, and .50 for the 82-97 panel pairs.

Ideology--Self-location on the traditional 7-point scale, anchored at one end by "extremely liberal" and at the other by "extremely conservative." People who selected the "haven't thought about it" or "don't know" options were coded to the midpoint.

Race Policy--Averaged responses to two component variables, School Integration and Aid to Minorities, described below. Each variable was first coded on a 0-1 scale before averaging, and valid responses on both variables were required. The pairwise correlation for the two components going into each variable, averaged across waves and across genders, was .35 for the 3-wave panel pairs, .26 for the 73-82 panel pairs, and .34 for the 82-97 panel pairs.

School integration--Forced choice response to: "Some people say that the government in Washington should see to it that white and black children are allowed to go the same schools. Others claim that this is not the government's business. Do you think [alternatives repeated]?" People who selected the "haven't thought about it" or "don't know" options were coded to the midpoint.

Aid to Blacks--Self-location on a seven point scale anchored by polar alternatives: "the government in Washington should make every possible effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks and other minority groups" versus "the government should not make any special effort to help minorities because they should help themselves." People who selected the "haven't thought about it" or "don't know" options were coded to the midpoint.

Gender Equality--Averaged responses to two component variables, Gender Roles and Women's Influence, described below. Each variable was first coded on a 0-1 scale before averaging, and valid responses on both variables were required. The pairwise correlation for the two components going into each variable, averaged across waves and across genders, was .33 for the 3-wave panel pairs, .39 for the 73-82 panel pairs, and .32 for the 82-97 panel pairs.

Gender Roles--Self-location on a seven point scale anchored by polar alternatives: "women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government" versus "women's place is in



the home." People who selected the "haven't thought about it" or "don't know" options were coded to the midpoint.

Women's Influence--Forced choice response to a question asking whether women have "too much influence in American life and politics," "just about the right amount of influence," or "not as much influence as they deserve." People who selected the "don't know" option were coded to the midpoint.

Business vs. Labor--Built from two component variables, Labor Union Influence and Big Business Influence, described below. At one end (code 1) are those who feel that labor has too much influence relative to big business; these people had higher scores on the labor component variable than on the big business component variable. At the other end (code 0) are those who feel that labor has too little influence relative to big business; these people had lower scores on the labor component variable than on the big business component variable. Other respondents are coded at the midpoint.

Labor Union Influence--Forced choice response to a question asking whether labor unions have "too much influence in American life and politics," "just about the right amount of influence," or "not as much influence as they deserve." People who selected "too much" were coded 1, while the "right amount" and "not as much as they deserve" categories were coded 0. These categories were collapsed because of the tiny number of respondents selecting the latter option. DKs were also coded 0.

Big Business Influence--Forced choice response to a question asking whether labor unions have "too much influence in American life and politics," "just about the right amount of influence," or "not as much influence as they deserve." People who selected "too much" were coded 1, while the "right amount" and "not as much as they deserve" categories were coded 0. These categories were collapsed because of the tiny number of respondents selecting the latter option. DKs were also coded 0.

Government Job Assistance--Self-location on a seven point scale anchored by polar alternatives: "the government in Washington should see to it that every person has a job and a good standard of living" versus "the government should let each person get ahead on his or her own." People who selected the "haven't thought about it" or "don't know" options were coded to the midpoint.

Abortion--Forced choice response given these four alternatives: "By law, abortion should never be permitted;" "The law should permit abortion only in the case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger;" "The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the mother's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established;" "By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice."

Legalization of Marijuana--Self-location on a seven point scale anchored by polar alternatives: "the use of marijuana should be made legal" versus "the penalties for using marijuana should be set higher than they are now." People who selected the "haven't thought about it" or "don't know" options were coded to the midpoint.

Religious Beliefs--Averaged responses to two component variables, Bible Beliefs and Prayer in Schools, described below. Each variable was first coded on a 0-1 scale before averaging, and valid responses on both variables were required. The pairwise correlation for the two components going into each variable, averaged across waves and across genders, was .40 for the 3-wave panel pairs, .39 for the 73-82 panel pairs, and .40 for the 82-97 panel pairs.

Bible Beliefs--Forced choice response given these four options: "The bible is God's word and all it says is true;" "the bible was written by men inspired by God it contains some human errors;" "the bible is a good

book because it was written by wise men, but God had nothing to do with it;" "the bible was written by men who lived so long ago that it is worth very little today."

Prayers in School--Forced choice response to: "Some people think it is all right for public schools to start each day with a prayer. Others feel that religion does not belong in the schools but should be taken care of by the family and church. Which do you think [alternatives repeated]?" People who selected the "haven't thought about it" or "don't know" options were coded to the midpoint.

Change in Education--Education level was coded into a three-point scale, distinguishing those with a high school degree only, those with some college education, and those with a college degree. Change in education was the simple difference score across waves.

Change in Church Attendance--Church attendance was coded into four categories, ranging from "every week or almost every week" to "never." Change in church attendance was the simple difference score across waves.

Change in Ideology--A simple difference score using the ideology variable described above.

Change in Partisan Identification--A simple difference score using the partisan identification variable described above.

Political Attentiveness--This index averaged responses to a general question about the respondent's level of interest in public affairs and those to a question about the extent to which the respondent followed public affairs in the newspaper. The core of the general political interest question read: "Would you say you follow what's going on in government most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?" The newspaper usage question read: "We're interest in finding out whether people ordinarily pay much attention to current events, public affairs, and politics. Take newspapers for instance -- do you read about public affairs and politics in any newspaper?" The follow question ascertained the frequency of use -- from "only a few times a year" to "almost daily" -- such that this component ranged from "never" to "almost daily." Each component variable was scaled on the same interval prior to averaging. Although it is well known that political information questions yield a better measure of political awareness than do items involving interest and attention such as these (Zaller 1992), we were not able to gauge political information levels for the spouses due to the SAQ mode of interview.

Change in Income--At each wave, income was coded into twenty or so categories. The codes varied across waves, as inflation changed Americans' income levels. The change in income variable was the simple difference between income variables at each wave, each first recoded on a 0-1 interval. This measure captures relative, but not absolute, income change.

Change in Home Ownership--At each wave we recorded whether or not the respondent owned his or her own home. Change in home ownership is the simple difference score across waves.

Birth of a Child—At each wave we ascertained whether or not the couple had had a child since the previous wave. In 1982, most of those saying yes had their first child during the 1973-1982 period. In 1997, most of those saying yes were expanding their family. Each variable was coded in dummy variable fashion.

Movement of the Wife Into and Out of the Workforce--Two dummy variables representing change in work status between waves.

Victim of Crime--In 1997 (only), primary respondents were asked whether they had been the object of a crime of property or of person since they were last interviewed. Those who responded yes were coded 1 on this

dummy variable.

### Appendix B 3-Wave Spousal Influence Model

The 3-wave panel model is essentially an extension of the 2-wave panel model. Instead of two endogenous variables, there are four, as depicted below. In estimating this model, we allowed the errors to be correlated across spouses and across time, but set the cross-time correlation to be the same for husbands and wives, and set the cross-spouse correlations to be the same at both points in time. As with the two-wave models, we allowed a correlation between each partner's 1973 political awareness and his or her 1973 attitude while we also allowed a correlation between the 1973 and 1982 political awareness levels (the only level explanatory variables in the model). At both time points in the model, we allowed a correlation between the husband's and the wife's change in frequency of church attendance, between the husband's and the wife's change in ideological outlook (and change in partisan identification, when it was included), and between change in income and change in home ownership status. None of the other explanatory variables were intercorrelated to more than a negligible extent. The basic spousal influence results are given in Table B1, which follows.

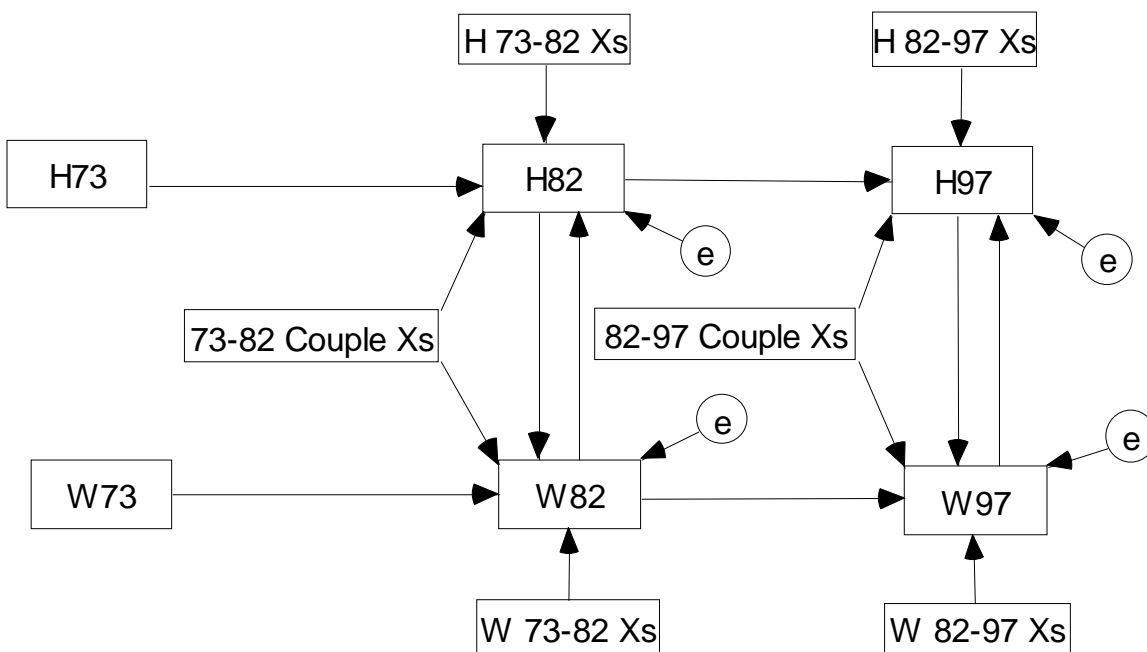


Table B1  
Husband-Wife Interpersonal Influence

Three-Wave Panel Analysis

	1982 Estimates		1997 Estimates	
	Husband's Influence on Wife	Wife's Influence on Husband	Husband's Influence on Wife	Wife's Influence on Husband
Party Identification	.34*** (4.6)	.09 (1.0)	.17* (2.1)	.26** (2.9)
Vote Choice	.53*** (5.1)	.33*** (3.8)	.44*** (4.3)	.46*** (5.0)
Ideology	.10 (1.1)	.20* (2.1)	.33*** (3.1)	.05 (.4)
Race Policy	.23* (1.8)	.19* (1.7)	.24* (1.9)	.31** (2.6)
Gender Equality	.58*** (3.8)	-.01 (-.1)	-.22 (-1.0)	.24* (1.9)
Business vs. Labor	.18* (1.9)	.02 (.1)	.61*** (3.4)	-.51* (-2.1)
Government Job Assistance	.15 (1.2)	.31* (1.9)	.04 (.3)	.44** (2.8)
Abortion	na	na	.39*** (3.1)	.22* (1.7)
Legalization of Marijuana	.08 (.7)	.57** (4.5)	.40*** (3.8)	.31* (2.1)
Religious Beliefs	.48*** (5.1)	.23* (2.0)	.34*** (3.3)	.34*** (3.4)

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with t-ratios in parenthesis below.  
n=150. \*\*\* p<.001, \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05

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