

There are many pressures that society places on individuals like what to look like, how to act, and certain values, but an additional pressure that society places on us is to marry. However, the pressure to marry is embedded into our western civilization society, therefore noticing the subtle pressure is difficult. Unknowingly, the pressure to marry starts at a very young age watching Disney movies, reading children books, and understanding mommy and daddy relationships. As an individual grows and matures, the pressure to marry begins to emerge more to the foresight, but the definition and purpose of marriage is already construed to the fairytale setting from younger influences.

According to the American Heritage dictionary, marriage is defined as “the legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife, and in some jurisdictions, between two persons of the same sex, usually entailing legal obligations of each person to the other.”(Heritage, 2006) No where within this literal definition does it express anything about “love”, which is the basis for the early definition of marriage we learn early in life. According to the majority of Disney movie storylines, like “Sleeping Beauty”, “Aladdin”, “Beauty and the Beast”, they all are based on “love” and the helpless woman that gets rescued by the valiant man. However, the historical purpose for marriage is nothing portrayed from these modern fairytale examples.

The history of marriage in most western civilizations, according to the studies of Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) a German physician and founding sexologist, was not a mere personal matter concerning husband and wife, but rather the business of two families which brought them together. (Hirschfeld, unknown) Therefore, most marriages were established by their families and pre-arranged leaving either husband or wife limited to no choice on who to marry. The pressures of marriage were applied directly to those involved by their families to better the relationship between the two families. There was little room for romantic love, and even simple

affection was not considered essential. (Hirschfeld, unknown) Procreation and cooperation were the main marital duties. (Hirshfeld, unknown) Additional research within our textbook by Hendrick and Hendrick agrees, "...economic and social reasons were more important than love in choosing a mate. In many parts of the world, love and romance are not significant parts of marriage; business opportunities, the furtherance of family, and tradition override love as motivations for marrying. (Gender, pg245, 2008) However, during this time period, the "marital duties" were not dispersed evenly or fairly.

Historical arranged marriages were slanted to give males more control over the marital relationship. Moreover, the wife usually had much fewer rights than her husband and was expected to be subservient to him. (Hirschfeld, unknown) Since then, Western society has made many strides for equality between men and women. Therefore, one may think marriage roles and pressures for marrying are equal between men and women as well, but that is not the case. Interesting enough, our textbook also states from a 2003 article by Blakemore, Lawton and Vartanian, "women generally feel more pressure to marry than men and they report a willingness to make more sacrifices in order to marry." (Gender, pg245, 2008) From this statement, the word "sacrifices" does not uphold the previous thought of equality between men and women in a marriage, but rather implies that women still maintain more pressure to be married than men.

Historical and modern pressure for being married all have a recurring source; society. In historical marriages, society was mainly your family or families involved. In modern marriages, society consists of more people like family, friends, and even strangers, media, and government. However, the pressure to marry is still present within society in both eras, and will be in future eras as well.

Although in current Western society, divorce within a marriage is common, there still remains significant pressure to engage in marriage. Some of these pressures include, but are not limited to, economical reasons (tax breaks), well-being of children, and perceivable social stability. In clarification, not all social pressures are negative and may have positive outcomes depending on contexts and personal perception. Contrary, previous illustration of sacrifice may not outweigh these pressures and individual values may show more importance. Either way, societal pressure to marry still exists in everyday life and has existed for many years.

In conclusion, the pressure to marry is still strong within society. However, it has become more subtle and embedded within our Western society. The pressure to marry is learned at a young age and grows as we grow. Although, the motives for marriage learned in modern society have changed to love from economics, the pressure to marry still exists. Overall, the pressures society places on individuals to marry is absolutely prominent in today's Western society and past Western societies and doubtfully changing anytime soon.

References

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