

# History and developments of western marriages



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **Introduction**

Evidence shows that marriage has existed for about 4,361 years, approximately 1250 – 1300 CE (Common Era). Marriage is defined differently based on cultural, religious and personal beliefs. In Western societies, the formal definition of marriage is “the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions specifically a union between a man and a woman).” (Merriam-Webster, n. d.) Yet the definition is always changing and varies by different cultures and religions. In modern society, the definition of marriage has evolved to recognize same-sex marriage as being legally married. In the United States, there are two common recognitions for marriage: legal marriage and common law marriage, although most states are no longer recognizing common law marriage. Is love really essential to marriage? Historically, marriage was regarded religiously “as a necessary, pragmatic solution to unhealthy sexual emotions, and not something to be done for pleasure, romance or affection.” (Crabtree, 2004)

### Theoretical Perspective on Human Sexuality

The idea of love in marriage only became prevalent about 200 years ago. In some cultures, marriage with love was not a reason to get married but rather a necessity. “Rarely in history has love been seen as the main reason for getting married.” (Ben-Zeev Ph. D., 2014) Falling in love was secondary and rather a bonus, if it occurred. However, studies have begun to show that while marriage is declining, and divorce rates are increasing, love in

marriage has added to the value of marriage, however it has also added to the increasing numbers of

“ volatile and uncertain” relationships. When love was brought into the equation, love brought along uncertainty, jealousy and a need that was not previously a requirement of marriage.

### Sexology Research: History, Methods, and Ethics

While love in marriage and sexual desire has only been prevalent for the past 200 years or so, prior to that, the primary purpose of marriage was “ to procreate and to fulfill financial, political, or social expectations.” (Gadoua L. C. S. W., 2015) Marriage was a way to make alliances and expand the family’s labor force. (Ghose, 2013) In some cultures, Polygamy (a man having several wives) was preferred, and men could take another wife, if his current wife was infertile. Between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Centuries, monogamy was a fundamental part of Western Marriages. Monogamy wasn’t important because people married out of duty rather than love and marriages were sustained. Today with marriage based on love, sexual fulfillment and happiness in a relationship are much more important. Studies show that monogamy in a marriage is important because adultery will destroy the marriage but also that what is “ natural for us, and how we operate best in relationships, marriage and relationships continue to change, and rapidly.”

### Human Sexual Anatomy

Evidence suggests that marriage dates back some 4, 361 years. The primary purpose of marriage was to bind a woman to a man and therefore

guaranteeing that the children born to that woman would be the man's biological heir. Women were a man's property and their body belonged to the man, resulting in women having little to no rights and who were not able to

inherit property or represent themselves legally. Men were able to freely satisfy their sexual urges with other women and discipline their wives physically. If a woman was unable to bare

children, the man could "give them back" and marry someone else. When marriage started to be based on love and sexual desire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Century, marriage began to evolve. Women began to have more rights, giving them power over their bodies. Women no longer existed to serve men and eventually became equal partners in the relationship. (The Origins of Marriage, 2007)

### Human Sexual Response: Understanding Arousal and Orgasm

The history of sex and how it has changed over time. Sex stems from biological urges and cultural norms and how the mind interprets how society will accept those urges. Anatomically, humans have been the same for approximately 100,000 years. Dating back to the "cave man" ancestral days. Experts suggest that if we enjoy sex now, our ancestors likely did as well. Our bodies tell us what we desire and the pleasure that we seek. However, cultural restraints have a large effect on how we portray sex, with biological and social conditioning. Cultural variations have long determined when, where and how many partners one may have in their lifetime. It

wasn't until the 1960's that social attitudes towards sex became more liberal based. The 1960's had a huge impact on societies idea of sex and allowed women to partake for pure sexual pleasure, rather than for the need to procreate. (Whipps, 2006)

### Gender and Gender Identity

Gender roles in marriage have vastly changed over the years. The social attitudes and cultural norms of traditional marriage are quite different now compared to the beginning of

marriage. Until the 1960's, marriage was still seen as a requirement and women were expected to be the home makers; care for the children and take care of their husband's needs. Men were expected to be the bread winners and provide for their families. " The increasing flexibility in

marriage due to a rise in educational opportunities for women, the passing of multiple laws, and the acceptance of non-traditional marriages have all contributed to a change in gender roles." (Stefania, 2016) These day, the roles of men and women have vastly shifted. While men are still more likely to be the main source of income and women still tend to take care of the household and children, as marriage becomes more based on love, there is starting to be more of a balance between married couples. In modern society, is has become acceptable for a man to assume the household duties and the women to be the breadwinner. Married couples are beginning to individualize themselves and decide which role or roles they will assume in the marriage. In fact, approximately 60% of men and women now work outside of the house. (Stefania, 2016)

<https://assignbuster.com/history-and-developments-of-western-marriages/>

## Sexual Orientation

What is the difference in sexual orientation and how it relates to relationships/marriage. Is there a difference in stability compared to same-sex or heterosexual relationships/marriage? Historically and in some jurisdictions, marriage was specifically a union between a man and a woman. However, the social attitudes towards same-sex couples (female same-sex couples, and male same-sex couples) are becoming more stable, compared to society's attitude in the past. Does being legally married make a relationship more stable than those who live together? Research shows that same-sex couples who cohabit together, have a higher rate of the relationship deteriorating than traditional couples. " Micro-aggressions, violence, discrimination, harassment, and lack of approval from friends and family are all forms of minority stress that can adversely affect relationship stability." (DiDonato, 2017) Marriage is shown to create stability in a relationship through trust and time invested. Until recently, same-sex couples did not have access to legal marriage and likely has an influence on the deterioration rates amongst same-sex couples. As society has become more favorable to same-sex couples, the differences in relationships are becoming more minimal.

## The Laws of Attraction

The origination of the Law of Attraction is believed to have been taught by Buddha. The law of attraction is simply " the belief that by focusing on positive negative thoughts a person brings positive or negative experiences

into their life.” Simply put, the term means Karma, what you give out to the world, is what you will receive from it. The law of attraction will attract ideas, people and different situations to your life. Both men and women tend to be drawn to a partner by youth, physical characteristics, health, financial stability and education. The law of Attraction is used in society to find love, seek money or wealth, improve a person’s mental and physical health, increase self-confidence, lose weight, and obtain success. (Paris, 2017) (Dillard-Wright Ph. D., 2017)

### Intimate Relationship: Sex, Love and Commitment

What effect does children have on relationships? Children can provide pleasure and meaning to a relationship, however the financial and physical burden can take a toll on even the best of relationships. Romantic love and sex can suffer as a result. Research shows that

couples with strong relationships have less dissatisfaction in their marriage once children are born compared to those with less than stellar relationships. Couples will need to find different ways to keep their relationship going; rebuild, intensify or improve the quality of their relationship. A study published in 2011, in the journal *Social and Affective Neuroscience* discusses how the brain effects relationships and facts related to attachment and sexuality. The

study showed that “ love can last”. Couples who were in relationships for longer than 20 years, appeared to have a unique and lasting romantic love, similar to those participants who were in newer relationships. (Greenburg Ph. D., 2012)

<https://assignbuster.com/history-and-developments-of-western-marriages/>

## Sexual Behaviors

Intimacy is important part of any relationship. Sex and intimacy in a relationship is almost always determined from the first sexual experience with a partner. The experience of that encounter will determine the quality and intimacy of that relationship. Sexuality is experienced by the sexual arousal, feelings, quality, goals and different types of intimacy.

Communication is also an important part of sexual behavior. It is important to know what you and your partners sexual interest and behaviors are.

Couples who have a lack of communication about their sexual desires, wants and needs and who are not aware of their partners body language will have a breakdown in the relationship that can result in the ultimate destruction of the relationship. (Moghazy, 2018)

## Sex Education, Contraception and Pregnancy

According to research from *Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*, couples who use contraception are having more sex than those couples who do not. Women who are

married and who are of age to bear children, who use contraception tend to have regular sex compared to those who are not using contraction because they have been able to separate sex from pregnancy. There are a variety of reasons why women may choose not to use contraception. These reasons may be due to religious beliefs, side effects or health issues or access to medical care. Some women have the misconception that contraception will somehow make them infertile or may cause cancer. Studies find that those women who choose not to use

<https://assignbuster.com/history-and-developments-of-western-marriages/>



contraception, tend to have less sex, to prevent pregnancy or aren't using contraceptives because they aren't having sex on a regular basis. While a healthy sex life is good for any marriage or relationship, communication regarding contraception and family planning is essential to any relationship. Family planning can lead to a more valuable sex life for married couples. (Health, 2016)

### Sexually Transmitted Infections and Safer-Sex Practices

Whether you are single or married, sexually transmitted infections can be passed to a partner during sexual contact. Often, the infection does not cause any symptoms. An infection can be transmitted asymptotically and could take months or years for the infection to present itself. There is no 100% safe sex practice. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) can be spread by skin contact, even with the use of a condom. In fact, it is recommended that even when a couple is in a monogamous relationship, they should continue to use protection such as condoms to prevent the potential of spreading infections that they may not be aware of. Also, even when a couple believe they may be in a monogamous relationship, there is still the potential for infidelity and therefore a possibility of receiving a sexually transmitted infection.

Regular testing is essential to prevent the spread of any infection and to allow for treatment. While some sexually transmitted infections are curable, and some can be controlled, others, such as the Human Immunodeficiency (HIV) cannot. (Sexually Transmitted Infections: What You Need To Know, n. d.)

## Sexual Dysfunction and Sex Therapy

Many couples may experience problems in their relationship with sex. Often, difficulties with problems outside the relation can cause couples to drift apart. Unresolved conflicts can

often be reflected in their love life or lack of love life. Evidence suggests that there is a much higher distinction between sexual dysfunction and marital problems for men than for women. Male impotence and premature ejaculation have a much bigger role in marital problems than women who suffer from anorgasmia and vaginismus. Sex Therapy is psychotherapy intended to help couples and individual resolve difficulties they may be having sexually, where couples can meet with a therapist, psychiatrist, psychologist or a social worker, either together or alone, to discuss their sexual difficulties and learn how to maintain a healthy a fulfilled sex life. Sex Therapy may be a good way for couples to overcome conflicts and sexual difficulties and put sex back into their relationship. (Karson, 2014)

## Variations in Sexual Behavior

Studies have shown that age and gender shape the experiences of sexual behavior. An article in *PMC, US National Library of Medicine* discusses the gender and life course of 17 long term married couples; (34 individuals), aged 50 – 86. The article discusses how each couple's sexual experiences have changed over time and how gender and age shape these changes. In

Middle life (ages 50 – 69) couples were distressed over gender changes, such as their appearances and changes in their sex lives. Their sex lives were

<https://assignbuster.com/history-and-developments-of-western-marriages/>

likely to conflict due to their incompatible experiences. Later life couples (ages 70 - 86) tended to emphasize more on their emotional connection rather than age and appearance. Prior research shows that later life couples “ tend to stop all sexual activity when men are unable to maintain erections sufficient for vaginal sex (Waite, 2010); deeming this the only “ real” and appropriate type of sexual activity for married couples.” (Blank, 2000) (Lodge, 2013)

### Sex Laws, Sexual Victimization, and the Sexual Marketplace

Historically, marital rape was not considered a crime. In the United States, rape was considered to be forced sexual conduct if committed by someone other than the victims spouse. It was presumed that marriage was the consent of the wife to engage in sexual activity with her husband. Even though 52 countries have now made marital rape a criminal offense, cultural norms and social humiliation, prevent many women from reporting the incident and the law is rarely enforced and when the crime is prosecuted, it is the victim who is left with the burden of proving that marital rape occurred. Many states within the Unites States have shorter statute of limitations for women to report marital rape and the “ restricted time frames for reporting marital rape rest on the premise that wives will fabricate rape charges in order to advantage themselves in divorce proceedings if not legally prevented from doing so.” (Marital and Intimate Partner Sexual Assault, 2013) Research has found that police often fail to respond to calls of marital rape, refuse to take women to the hospital and to file a complaint against the husband due to the stigma that a husband and wife are already involved in an intimate

relationship. However, “ according to the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN), marital rape may result in more damage than stranger rape because victims are pressured to stay with their abusive partner, victims may have difficulty identifying the act as a crime or their partner as a criminal, there are potential negative impacts on children living in the home, and there is a higher likelihood of repeat assault. (Marital and Intimate Partner Sexual Assault, 2013)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, marriage is a bond that is meant to last a lifetime. In modern society, the institution of marriage; historically, socially and economically is stronger. When each partner’s well-being is cared for and encouraged to grow, the strength of the marriage will grow, and the couple will be happier. The original intention of marriage, procreation, is no longer the key to marriage. Marriage has evolved over the last several hundred years. In modern society, people come together, fall in love, decide to cohabit and marriage comes secondary. Couples no longer marry to solely procreate and build the familial labor force that was once required. In my opinion, without love, marriage should not exist. Love is a fundamental part of any relationship and marriage.

## References

- Ben-Zeev Ph. D., A. (2014, April 7). *Psychology Today* . Retrieved from Is Love Really Essential to Marriage?: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-name-love/201404/is-love-really-essential-marriage>

- Blank, J. (2000). *Still doing it: Women and men over sixty write about their sexuality* . Retrieved from San Francisco Down There Press.
- Boboltz, S. (2017, December 6). *8 Laws To Keep Women In Line That Are Somehow Still On The Books*, . Retrieved from Huffpost:  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/14/state-laws-women\\_n\\_4937387.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/14/state-laws-women_n_4937387.html) (Links to an external site.)
- Crabtree, V. (2004). *Marriage: Its Diversity and Character* . Retrieved from The Human Truth Foundation: [http://www.humantruth.info/marriage.html#WM\\_History](http://www.humantruth.info/marriage.html#WM_History)
- DiDonato, P. T. (2017, October 11). *Are Same-Sex or Heterosexual Relationships More Stable?* Retrieved from Psychology Today:  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/meet-catch-and-keep/201710/are-same-sex-or-heterosexual-relationships-more-stable>
- Dillard-Wright Ph. D., D. (2017, June 7). *The Law of Attraction* . Retrieved from Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/boundless/201706/the-law-attraction>
- Gadoua L. C. S. W., S. P. (2015, December 6). *Psychology Today* . Retrieved from This Is Why Many Couples Struggle With Sex:  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/contemplating-divorce/201512/is-why-many-couples-struggle-sex>
- Ghose, T. (2013, June 26). *History of Marriage: 13 Surprising Facts* . Retrieved from Live Science: <https://www.livescience.com/37777-history-of-marriage.html>

- Greenburg Ph. D., M. (2012, October 18). *Love, Sex, Relationships and the Brain* . Retrieved from Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-mindful-self-express/201210/love-sex-relationships-and-the-brain>
- Health, J. H. (2016, January 26). *Better access to contraception means more sex for married couples* . Retrieved from Science Daily: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/01/160126091436.htm>
- Karson, P. M. (2014, October 12). *6 Common Problems Couples Have With Sex* . Retrieved from Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/feeling-our-way/201410/6-common-problems-couples-have-sex>
- Lodge, A. C. (2013, June 1). *All Shook Up: Sexuality of Mid- to Later Life Married Couples* . Retrieved from National Center for Biotechnology Information: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3418692/>
- *Marital and Intimate Partner Sexual Assault* . (2013, August). Retrieved from The Advocates Human Rights: [http://www.stopvaw.org/marital\\_and\\_intimate\\_partner\\_sexual\\_assault](http://www.stopvaw.org/marital_and_intimate_partner_sexual_assault)
- *Merriam-Webster* . (n. d.). Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/marriage>
- Moghazy, E. (2018, May 21). *Intimacy and the Relationships – Understanding Sexual Behaviour* . Retrieved from Marriage.com: <https://www.marriage.com/advice/intimacy/intimacy-and-the-relationships/>

- Paris, W. (2017, July 4). *Why We Want Who We Want* . Retrieved from Psychology Today: [https://www. psychologytoday. com/us/articles/201707/why-we-want-who-we-want](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201707/why-we-want-who-we-want)
- *Sexually Transmitted Infections: What You Need To Know* . (n. d.). Retrieved from Northwestern medicine: [http://www. nmbreakthroughs. org/health-library/sexually-transmitted-infections-what-you-need-to-know](http://www.nmbreakthroughs.org/health-library/sexually-transmitted-infections-what-you-need-to-know)
- Stefania. (2016, November 3). *Changes in the Flexibility of Gender Roles in Marriage* . Retrieved from Stefania's RCL Blog: [https://sites. psu. edu/stefaniarcl/2016/11/03/changes-in-the-flexibility-of-gender-roles-in-marriage/](https://sites.psu.edu/stefaniarcl/2016/11/03/changes-in-the-flexibility-of-gender-roles-in-marriage/)
- *The Origins of Marriage* . (2007, January 1). Retrieved from The Week: [https://theweek. com/articles/528746/origins-marriage](https://theweek.com/articles/528746/origins-marriage)
- Waite, L. D. (2010). *Families, social life, and well being at older ages* . Retrieved from National Center for Biotechnology Information: [https://www. ncbi. nlm. nih. gov/pmc/articles/PMC5870610/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5870610/)
- Whipps, H. (2006, July 27). *Live Science* . Retrieved from A Brief History of Human Sex: [https://www. livescience. com/7088-history-human-sex. html](https://www.livescience.com/7088-history-human-sex.html)