

From: JOURNAL OF EXPLORING THE HUMAN CONDITION
Everyday LIFE: READING. 2013. SAGE PUB,
NEWMAN & O'Brien

The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love

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(2005)

The Real Traditional Marriage

To understand why the love-based marriage system was so unstable and how we ended up where we are today, we have to recognize that for most of history, marriage was not primarily about the individual needs and desires of a man and woman and the children they produced. Marriage had as much to do with getting good in-laws and increasing one's family labor force as it did with finding a lifetime companion and raising a beloved child.

Marriage, a History

Reviewing the role of marriage in different societies in the past and the theories of anthropologists and archaeologists about its origins, I came to reject two widespread, though diametrically opposed, theories about how marriage came into existence among our Stone Age ancestors: the idea that marriage was invented so men would protect women and the opposing idea that it was invented so men could exploit women. Instead, marriage spoke to the needs of the larger group. It converted strangers into relatives and extended cooperative relations beyond the immediate family or small band by creating far-flung networks of in-laws.

Certainly, people fell in love during those thousands of years, sometimes even with their own spouses. But marriage was not fundamentally about love. It was too vital an economic and political institution to be entered into solely on the basis of something as irrational as love. For thousands of years the theme song for most weddings could have been "What's Love Got to Do with It?" ...

For centuries, marriage did much of the work that markets and governments do today. It organized the production and distribution of goods and people. It set up political, economic, and military alliances. It coordinated the division of labor by gender and age. It orchestrated people's personal rights and obligations in everything from sexual relations to the inheritance of property. Most societies had very specific rules about how people should arrange their marriages to accomplish these tasks.

Of course there was always more to marriage than its institutional functions. At the end of the day—or at least in the middle of the night—marriage is also a face-to-face relationship between individuals. The actual experience of marriage for individuals or for particular couples seldom conforms exactly to the model of marriage codified in law, custom, and philosophy in any given period. But institutions do structure people's expectations, hopes, and constraints. For thousands of years, husbands had the right to beat their wives. Few men probably meted out anything more severe than a slap. But the law upheld the authority of husbands to punish their wives physically and to exercise forcibly their "marital right" to sex, and that structured the relations between men and women in *all* marriages, even loving ones.

The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love

George Bernard Shaw described marriage as an institution that brings together two people "under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of

passions. They are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition continuously until death do them part."¹

Shaw's comment was amusing when he wrote it at the beginning of the twentieth century, and it still makes us smile today, because it pokes fun at the unrealistic expectations that spring from a dearly held cultural ideal—that marriage should be based on intense, profound love and a couple should maintain their ardor until death do them part. But for thousands of years the joke would have fallen flat.

For most of history it was inconceivable that people would choose their mates on the basis of something as fragile and irrational as love and then focus all their sexual, intimate, and altruistic desires on the resulting marriage. In fact, many historians, sociologists, and anthropologists used to think romantic love was a recent Western invention. This is not true. People have always fallen in love, and throughout the ages many couples have loved each other deeply.²

But only rarely in history has love been seen as the main reason for getting married. When someone did advocate such a strange belief, it was no laughing matter. Instead, it was considered a serious threat to social order.

In some cultures and times, true love was actually thought to be incompatible with marriage. Plato believed love was a wonderful emotion that led men to behave honorably. But the Greek philosopher was referring not to the love of women, "such as the meaner men feel," but to the love of one man for another.³

Other societies considered it good if love developed after marriage or thought love should be factored in along with the more serious considerations involved in choosing a mate. But even when past societies did welcome or encourage married love, they kept it on a short leash. Couples were not to put their feelings for each other above more important commitments, such as their ties to parents, siblings, cousins, neighbors, or God.

In ancient India, falling in love before marriage was seen as a disruptive, almost anti-social act. The Greeks thought lovesickness

was a type of insanity, a view that was adopted by medieval commentators in Europe. In the Middle Ages the French defined love as a "derangement of the mind" that could be cured by sexual intercourse, either with the loved one or with a different partner.⁴ This cure assumed, as Oscar Wilde once put it, that the quickest way to conquer yearning and temptation was to yield immediately and move on to more important matters.

In China, excessive love between husband and wife was seen as a threat to the solidarity of the extended family. Parents could force a son to divorce his wife if her behavior or work habits didn't please them, whether or not he loved her. They could also require him take a concubine if his wife did not produce a son. If a son's romantic attachment to his wife rivaled his parents' claims on the couple's time and labor, the parents might even send her back to her parents. In the Chinese language the term *love* did not traditionally apply to feelings between husband and wife. It was used to describe an illicit, socially disapproved relationship. In the 1920s a group of intellectuals invented a new word for love between spouses because they thought such a radical new idea required its own special label.⁵

In Europe, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, adultery became idealized as the highest form of love among the aristocracy. According to the Countess of Champagne, it was impossible for true love to "exert its powers between two people who are married to each other."⁶

In twelfth-century France, Andreas Capellanus, chaplain to Countess Marie of Troyes, wrote a treatise on the principles of courtly love. The first rule was that "marriage is no real excuse for not loving." But he meant loving someone outside the marriage. As late as the eighteenth century the French essayist Montaigne wrote that any man who was in love with his wife was a man so dull that no one else could love him.⁷

Courtly love probably loomed larger in literature than in real life. But for centuries, noblemen and kings fell in love with courtesans rather than the wives they married for political

reasons. Queens and noblewomen had to be more discreet than their husbands, but they too looked beyond marriage for love and intimacy.

This sharp distinction between love and marriage was common among the lower and middle classes as well. Many of the songs and stories popular among peasants in medieval Europe mocked married love.

The most famous love affair of the Middle Ages was that of Peter Abelard, a well-known theologian in France, and Héloïse, the brilliant niece of a fellow churchman at Notre Dame. The two eloped without marrying, and she bore him a child. In an attempt to save his career but still placate Héloïse's furious uncle, Abelard proposed they marry in secret. This would mean that Héloïse would not be living in sin, while Abelard could still pursue his church ambitions. But Héloïse resisted the idea, arguing that marriage would not only harm his career but also undermine their love.⁸ . . .

"Happily Ever After"

Through most of the past, individuals hoped to find love, or at least "tranquil affection," in marriage.⁹ But nowhere did they have the same recipe for marital happiness that prevails in most contemporary Western countries. Today there is general agreement on what it takes for a couple to live "happily ever after." First, they must love each other deeply and choose each other unswayed by outside pressure. From then on, each must make the partner the top priority in life, putting that relationship above any and all competing ties. A husband and wife, we believe, owe their highest obligations and deepest loyalties to each other and the children they raise. Parents and in-laws should not be allowed to interfere in the marriage. Married couples should be best friends, sharing their most intimate feelings and secrets. They should express affection openly but also talk candidly about problems. And of course they should be sexually faithful to each other.

This package of expectations about love, marriage, and sex, however, is extremely

rare. When we look at the historical record around the world, the customs of modern America and Western Europe appear exotic and exceptional. . . .

About two centuries ago Western Europe and North America developed a whole set of new values about the way to organize marriage and sexuality, and many of these values are now spreading across the globe. In this Western model, people expect marriage to satisfy more of their psychological and social needs than ever before. Marriage is supposed to be free of the coercion, violence, and gender inequalities that were tolerated in the past. Individuals want marriage to meet most of their needs for intimacy and affection and all their needs for sex.

Never before in history had societies thought that such a set of high expectations about marriage was either realistic or desirable. Although many Europeans and Americans found tremendous joy in building their relationships around these values, the adoption of these unprecedented goals for marriage had unanticipated and revolutionary consequences that have since come to threaten the stability of the entire institution.

The Era of Ozzie and Harriet: The Long Decade of "Traditional" Marriage

The long decade of the 1950s, stretching from 1947 to the early 1960s in the United States and from 1952 to the late 1960s in Western Europe, was a unique moment in the history of marriage. Never before had so many people shared the experience of courting their own mates, getting married at will, and setting up their own households. Never had married couples been so independent of extended family ties and community groups. And never before had so many people agreed that only one kind of family was "normal."

The cultural consensus that everyone should marry and form a male breadwinner family was like a steamroller that crushed

every alternative view. By the end of the 1950s even people who had grown up in completely different family systems had come to believe that universal marriage at a young age into a male breadwinner family was the traditional and permanent form of marriage.

In Canada, says historian Doug Owsam, "every magazine, every marriage manual, every advertisement . . . assumed the family was based on the . . . male wage-earner and the child-rearing, home-managing housewife." In the United States, marriage was seen as the only culturally acceptable route to adulthood and independence. Men who chose to remain bachelors were branded "narcissistic," "deviant," "infantile," or "pathological." Family advice expert Pat Landes argued that practically everyone, "except for the sick, the badly crippled, the deformed, the emotionally warped and the mentally defective," ought to marry. French anthropologist Martine Segalen writes that in Europe the postwar period was characterized by the overwhelming "weight of a single family model." Any departure from this model—whether it was late marriage, nonmarriage, divorce, single motherhood, or even delayed childbearing—was considered deviant. Everywhere psychiatrists agreed and the mass media affirmed that if a woman did not find her ultimate fulfillment in homemaking, it was a sign of serious psychological problems.¹⁰

A 1957 survey in the United States reported that four out of five people believed that anyone who preferred to remain single was "sick," "neurotic" or "immoral." Even larger majorities agreed that once married, the husband should be the breadwinner and the wife should stay home. As late as 1962 one survey of young women found that almost all expected to be married by age twenty-two, most hoped to have four children, and all expected to quit work permanently when the first child was born.¹¹

During the 1950s even women who had once been political activists, labor radicals, or feminists—people like my own mother, still proud of her work to free the Scottsboro Boys from legal lynching in the 1930s and her job in

the shipyards during the 1940s—threw themselves into homemaking. It's hard for anyone under the age of sixty to realize how profoundly people's hunger for marriage and domesticity during the 1950s was shaped by their huge relief that two decades of depression and war were finally over and by their amazed delight at the benefits of the first real mass consumer economy in history. "It was like a miracle," my mother once told me, to see so many improvements, so quickly, in the quality of everyday life. . . .

This was the first chance many people had to try to live out the romanticized dream of a private family, happily ensconced in its own nest. They studied how the cheery husbands and wives on their favorite television programs organized their families (and where the crabby ones went wrong). They devoured articles and books on how to get the most out of marriage and their sex lives. They were even interested in advertisements that showed them how to use home appliances to make their family lives better. . . .

Today strong materialist aspirations often corrode family bonds. But in the 1950s, consumer aspirations were an integral part of constructing the postwar family. In its April 1954 issue, *McCall's* magazine heralded the era of "togetherness," in which men and women were constructing a "new and warmer way of life . . . as a family sharing a common experience." In women's magazines that togetherness was always pictured in a setting filled with modern appliances and other new consumer products. The essence of modern life, their women readers learned, was "abundance, emancipation, social progress, airy house, healthy children, the refrigerator, pasteurised milk, the washing-machine, comfort, quality and accessibility."¹² And of course marriage.

Television also equated consumer goods with family happiness. Ozzie and Harriet hugged each other in front of their Hotpoint appliances. A man who had been a young father in the 1950s told a student of mine that he had no clue how to cultivate the family "togetherness" that his wife kept talking about until he saw an episode of the sitcom *Leave It*

to *Beaver*, which gave him the idea of washing the car with his son to get in some "father-son" time.

When people could not make their lives conform to those of the "normal" families they saw on TV, they blamed themselves—or their parents. . . . "Why didn't she clean the house in high heels and shirtwaist dresses like they did on television?"¹³

At this early stage of the consumer revolution, people saw marriage as the gateway to the good life. Americans married with the idea of quickly buying their first home, with the wife working for a few years to help accumulate the down payment or furnish it with the conveniences she would use once she became a full-time housewife. People's newfound spending money went to outfit their homes and families. In the five years after World War II, spending on food in the United States rose by a modest 33 percent and clothing expenditures by only 20 percent, but purchases of household furnishings and appliances jumped by 240 percent. In 1961, Phyllis Rosenteur, the author of an American advice book for single women, proclaimed: "Merchandise plus Marriage equals our economy."¹⁴

In retrospect, it's astonishing how confident most marriage and family experts of the 1950s were that they were witnessing a new stabilization of family life and marriage. The idea that marriage should provide both partners with sexual gratification, personal intimacy, and self-fulfillment was taken to new heights in that decade. Marriage was the place not only where people expected to find the deepest meaning in their lives but also where they would have the most fun. Sociologists noted that a new "fun morality," very different "from the older 'goodness morality,'" pervaded society. "Instead of feeling guilty for having too much fun, one is inclined to feel ashamed if one does not have enough." A leading motivational researcher of the day argued that the challenge for a consumer society was "to demonstrate that the hedonistic approach to life is a moral, not an immoral, one."¹⁵

But these trends did not cause social commentators the same worries about the neglect of societal duties that milder ideas about the pleasure principle had triggered in the 1920s. Most 1950s sociologists weren't even troubled by the fact that divorce rates were *higher* than they had been in the 1920s, when such rates had been said to threaten the very existence of marriage. The influential sociologists Ernest Burgess and Harvey Locke wrote matter-of-factly that "the companionship family relies upon divorce as a means of rectifying a mistake in mate selection." They expressed none of the panic that earlier social scientists had felt when they first realized divorce was a permanent feature of the love-based marital landscape. Burgess and Locke saw a small amount of divorce as a safety valve for the "companionate" marriage and expected divorce rates to stabilize or decrease in the coming decades as "the services of family-life education and marriage counseling" became more widely available.¹⁶

The marriage counseling industry was happy to step up to the plate. By the 1950s Paul Popenoe's American Institute of Family Relations employed thirty-seven counselors and claimed to have helped twenty thousand people become "happily adjusted" in their marriages. "It doesn't require supermen or superwomen to succeed in marriage," wrote Popenoe in a 1960 book on saving marriages. "Success can be attained by almost anyone."¹⁷

There were a few dissenting voices. American sociologist Robert Nisbet warned in 1953 that people were loading too many "psychological and symbolic functions" on the nuclear family, an institution too fragile to bear such weight. In the same year, Mirra Komarovsky decried the overspecialization of gender roles in American marriage and its corrosive effects on women's self confidence.¹⁸

But even when marriage and family experts acknowledged that the male breadwinner family created stresses for women, they seldom supported any change in its division of labor. The world-renowned American sociologist Talcott Parsons recognized that because most women were not able to forge careers, they

might feel a need to attain status in other ways. He suggested that they had two alternatives. The first was to be a "glamour girl" and exert sexual sway over men. The second was to develop special expertise in "humanistic" fields, such as the arts or community volunteer work. The latter, Parsons thought, was socially preferable, posing less of a threat to society's moral standards and to a woman's own self-image as she aged. He never considered the third alternative: that women might actually win access to careers. Even Komarovsky advocated nothing more radical than expanding part-time occupations to give women work that didn't interfere with their primary role as wives and mothers.¹⁹

Marriage counselors took a different tack in dealing with housewives' unhappiness. Popenoe wrote dozens of marital advice books, pamphlets, and syndicated newspaper columns, and he pioneered the *Ladies' Home Journal* feature "Can This Marriage Be Saved?," which was based on case histories from his Institute of Family Relations. The answer was almost always yes, so long as the natural division of labor between husbands and wives was maintained or restored. . . .

In retrospect, the confidence these experts expressed in the stability of 1950s marriage and gender roles seems hopelessly myopic. Not only did divorce rates during the 1950s never drop below the highs reached in 1929, but as early as 1947 the number of women entering the labor force in the United States had begun to surpass the number of women leaving it.²⁰ Why were the experts so optimistic about the future of marriage and the demise of feminism?

Some were probably unconsciously soothed into complacency by the mass media, especially the new television shows that delivered nightly images of happy female homemakers in stable male breadwinner families. . . .

When divorce did occur, it was seen as a failure of individuals rather than of marriage. One reason people didn't find fault with the 1950s model of marriage and gender roles was that it was still so new that they weren't sure they were doing it right. Millions of people in

Europe and America were looking for a crash course on how to attain the modern marriage. Confident that "science" could solve their problems, couples turned not just to popular culture and the mass media but also to marriage experts and advice columnists for help. If the advice didn't work, they blamed their own inadequacy.²¹ . . .

At every turn, popular culture and intellectual elites alike discouraged women from seeing themselves as productive members of society. In 1956 a *Life* magazine article commented that women "have minds and should use them . . . so long as their primary interest is in the home." . . . Adlai Stevenson, the two-term Democratic Party candidate for president of the United States, told the all-female graduating class of Smith College that "most of you are going to assume 'the humble role of housewife,' and 'whether you like the idea or not just now,' later on 'you'll like it.'"²²

Under these circumstances, women tried their best to "like it." By the mid-1950s *American* advertisers reported that wives were using housework as a way to express their individuality. It appeared that Talcott Parsons was right: Women were compensating for their lack of occupational status by expanding their role as consumer experts and arbiters of taste and style. First Lady Jackie Kennedy was the supreme exemplar of this role in the early 1960s.²³

Youth in the 1950s saw nothing to rebel against in the dismissal of female aspiration for independence. The number of American high school students agreeing that it would be good "if girls could be as free as boys in asking for dates" fell from 37 percent in 1950 to 2 percent in 1961, while the percentage of those who thought it would be good for girls to share the expenses of dates declined from 25 percent to 18 percent. The popular image was that only hopeless losers would engage in such egalitarian behavior. A 1954 Philip Morris ad in the *Massachusetts Collegian* made fun of poor Finster, a boy who finally found a girl who shared his belief in "the equity of Dutch treat." As a result, the punch line ran, "today Finster goes everywhere and shares expenses fifty-fifty."

Mothers Little Helga

with Mary Alice Hematoma, a lovely three-legged girl with side-burns."²⁴

No wonder so many social scientists and marriage counselors in the 1950s thought that the instabilities associated with the love-based "near-equality" revolution in gender roles and marriage had been successfully contained. Married women were working outside the home more often than in the past, but they still identified themselves primarily as housewives. Men seemed willing to support women financially even in the absence of their older patriarchal rights, as long as their meals were on the table and their wives kept themselves attractive. Moreover, although men and women aspired to personal fulfillment in marriage, most were willing to stay together even if they did not get it. Sociologist Mirra Komarovsky interviewed working-class couples at the end of the 1950s and found that "slightly less than one-third [were] happily or very happily married." In 1957, a study of a cross section of all social classes found that only 47 percent of U.S. married couples described themselves as "very happy." Although the proportion of "very happy" marriages was lower in 1957 than it was to be in 1976, the divorce rate was also lower.²⁵

What the experts failed to notice was that this stability was the result of a unique moment of equilibrium in the expansion of economic, political, and personal options. Ironically, this one twenty-year period in the history of the love-based "near-equality" marriage when people stopped predicting disaster turned out to be the final lull before the long-predicted storm.

The seeming stability of marriage in the 1950s was due in part to the thrill of exploring the new possibilities of married life and the size of the rewards that men and women received for playing by the rules of the postwar economic boom. But it was also due to the incomplete development of the "fun morality" and the consumer revolution. There were still many ways of penalizing nonconformity, tamping down aspirations, and containing discontent in the 1950s.

One source of containment was the economic and legal dependence of women.

Postwar societies continued the century-long trend toward increasing women's legal and political rights outside the home and restraining husbands from exercising heavy-handed patriarchal power, but they stopped short of giving wives equal authority with their husbands. Legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon points out that right up until the 1960s, "nearly every legislative attempt to regulate the family decision-making process gave the husband and father the dominant role."²⁶

Most American states retained their "head and master" laws, giving husbands the final say over questions like whether or not the family should move. Married women couldn't take out loans or credit cards in their own names. Everywhere in Europe and North America it was perfectly legal to pay women less than men for the same work. Nowhere was it illegal for a man to force his wife to have sex. One legal scholar argues that marriage law in the 1950s had more in common with the legal codes of the 1890s than the 1990s.²⁷

Writers in the 1950s generally believed that the old-style husband and father was disappearing and that this was a good thing. The new-style husband, said one American commentator, was now "partner in the family firm, part-time man, part-time mother and part-time maid." Family experts and marital advice columnists advocated a "fifty-fifty design for living," emphasizing that a husband should "help out" with child rearing and make sure that sex with his wife was "mutually satisfying."²⁸

But the 1950s definition of fifty-fifty would satisfy few modern couples. Dr. Benjamin Spock, the famous parenting advice expert, called for men to get more involved in parenting but added that he wasn't suggesting equal involvement. "Of course I don't mean that the father has to give just as many bottles, or change just as many diapers as the mother," he explained in a 1950s edition of his perennial bestseller *Baby and Child Care*. "But it's fine for him to do these things occasionally. He might make the formula on Sunday."²⁹

The family therapist Paul Popenoe was equally cautious in his definition of what

modern marriage required from the wife. A wife should be "sympathetic with her husband's work and a good listener," he wrote. But she must never consider herself "enough of an expert to criticize him."³⁰ . . .

Many 1950s men did not view male breadwinning as a source of power but as a burdensome responsibility made worthwhile by their love for their families. A man who worked three jobs to support his family told interviewers, "Although I am somewhat tired at the moment, I get pleasure out of thinking the family is dependent on me for their income." Another described how anxious he had been to finish college and "get to . . . acting as a husband and father should, namely, supporting my family." Men also remarked on how wonderful it felt to be able to give their children things their families had been unable to afford when they were young.³¹

A constant theme of men and women looking back on the 1950s was how much better their family lives were in that decade than during the Depression and World War II. But in assessing their situation against a backdrop of such turmoil and privation, they had modest expectations of comfort and happiness, so they were more inclined to count their blessings than to measure the distance between their dreams and their real lives.

Modest expectations are not necessarily a bad thing. Anyone who expects that marriage will always be joyous, that the division of labor will always be fair, and that the earth will move whenever you have sex is going to be often disappointed. Yet it is clear that in many 1950s marriages, low expectations could lead people to put up with truly terrible family lives.

Historian Elaine Tyler May comments that in the 1950s "the idea of 'working marriage' was one that often included constant day-to-day misery for one or both partners." Jessica Weiss recounts interviews conducted over many years in the Berkeley study with a woman whose husband beat her and their children. The wife often threw her body between her husband and the young ones, taking the brunt of the violence on herself because "I can take it much easier than the kids can." Her assessment

of the marriage strikes the modern observer as a masterpiece of understatement: "We're really not as happy as we should be." She was not even indignant that her neighbors rebuffed her children when they fled the house to summon help. "I can't say I blame the neighbors," she commented. "They didn't want to get involved." Despite two decades of such violence, this woman did not divorce until the late 1960s.³²

A 1950s family that looked well functioning to the outside world could hide terrible secrets. Both movie star Sandra Dee and Miss America of 1958, Marilyn Van Derbur, kept silent about their fathers' incestuous abuse until many years had passed. If they had gone public in the 1950s or early 1960s, they might not even have been believed. Family "experts" of the day described incest as a "one-in-a-million occurrence," and many psychiatrists claimed that women who reported incest were simply expressing their own oedipal fantasies.³³

In many states and countries a nonvirgin could not bring a charge of rape, and everywhere the idea that a man could rape his own wife was still considered absurd. Wife beating was hardly ever treated seriously. The trivialization of family violence was epitomized in a 1954 report of a Scotland Yard commander that "there are only about twenty murders a year in London and not all are serious—some are just husbands killing their wives."³⁴ . . .

Still, these signs of unhappiness did not ripple the placid waters of 1950s complacency. The male breadwinner marriage seemed so pervasive and popular that social scientists decided it was a necessary and inevitable result of modernization. Industrial societies, they argued, needed the division of labor embodied in the male breadwinner nuclear family to compensate for their personal demands of the modern workplace. The ideal family—or what Talcott Parsons called "the normal" family—consisted of a man who specialized in the practical, individualistic activities needed for subsistence and a woman who took care of the emotional needs of her husband and children.³⁵

The close fit that most social scientists saw between the love-based male breadwinner

family and the needs of industrial society led them to anticipate that this form of marriage would accompany the spread of industrialization across the globe and replace the wide array of other marriage and family systems in traditional societies. This view was articulated in a vastly influential 1963 book titled *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, by American sociologist William F. Goode. Goode's work became the basis for almost all high school and college classes on family life in the 1960s, and his ideas were popularized by journalists throughout the industrial world.³⁶

Goode surveyed the most up-to-date family data in Europe and the United States, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, India, China, and Japan and concluded that countries everywhere were evolving toward a conjugal family system characterized by the "love pattern" in mate selection. The new international marriage system, he said, focused people's material and psychic investments on the nuclear family and increased the "emotional demands which each spouse can legitimately make upon each other," elevating loyalty to spouse above obligations to parents. Goode argued that such ideals would inevitably eclipse other forms of marriage, such as polygamy. Monogamous marriage would become the norm all around the world.

The ideology of the love-based marriage, according to Goode, "is a radical one, destructive of the older traditions in almost every society." It "proclaims the right of the individual to choose his or her own spouse. . . . It asserts the worth of the *individual* as against the inherited elements of wealth or ethnic group." As such, it especially appealed "to intellectuals, young people, women, and the disadvantaged." . . .

Despite women's legal gains and the "radical" appeal of the love ideology to women and youth, Goode concluded that a destabilizing "full equality" was not in the cards. Women had not become more "career-minded" between 1900 and the early 1960s, he said. In his 380-page survey of world trends, Goode did not record even one piece of evidence to suggest that women might become more career-minded in the future.

Most social scientists agreed with Goode that the 1950s family represented the wave of the future. They thought that the history of marriage had in effect reached its culmination in Europe and North America and that the rest of the world would soon catch up. As late as 1963 nothing seemed more obvious to most family experts and to the general public than the preeminence of marriage in people's lives and the permanence of the male breadwinner family.

But clouds were already gathering on the horizon.

When sustained prosperity turned people's attention from gratitude for survival to a desire for greater personal satisfaction . . .

When the expanding economy of the 1960s needed women enough to offer them a living wage . . .

When the prepared foods and drip-dry shirts that had eased the work of homemakers also made it possible for men to live comfortable, if sloppy bachelor lives . . .

When the invention of the birth control pill allowed the sexualization of love to spill over the walls of marriage . . .

When the inflation of the 1970s made it harder for a man to be the sole breadwinner for a family . . .

When all these currents converged, the love-based male-provider marriage would find itself buffeted from all sides.

Notes

1. Quoted in John Jacobs, *All You Need Is Love and Other Lies About Marriage* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), p. 9.

2. William Jankowiak and Edward Fischer, "A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Romantic Love," *Ethnology* 31 (1992).

3. Ira Reiss and Gary Lee, *Family Systems in America* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988), pp. 91–93.

4. Karen Dion and Kenneth Dion, "Cultural Perspectives on Romantic Love," *Personal Relationships* 3 (1996); Vern Bullough, "On Being a Male in the Middle Ages," in Clare Less, ed., *Medieval*

Masculinities (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Hans-Werner Goetz, *Life in the Middle Ages, from the Seventh to the Thirteenth Century* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

5. Francis Hsu, "Kinship and Ways of Life," in Hsu, ed., *Psychological Anthropology* (Cambridge, U.K.: Schenkman, 1972), and *Americans and Chinese: Passage to Differences* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1981); G. Robina Quale, *A History of Marriage Systems* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1988); Marilyn Yalom, "Biblical Models," in Yalom and Laura Carstensen, eds., *Inside the American Couple* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

6. Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 106-07.

7. Ibid., pp. 106-07, 184. On the social context of courtly love, see Theodore Evergates, ed., *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Montaigne, quoted in Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), p. 148.

8. Betty Radice, trans., *Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1974).

9. The phrase is from Chiara Saraceno, who argues that until the end of the nineteenth century, Italian families defined love as the development of such feelings over the course of a marriage. Saraceno, "The Italian Family," in Antoine Prost and Gerard Vincent, eds., *A History of Private Life: Riddles of Identity in Modern Times* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1991), p. 487.

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36. The quotations and figures in this and the following paragraphs are from Goode, *World Revolution*.

Bids For Attention

intellectual

advent

interest

propose

THINKING ABOUT THE READING

According to Coontz, if not for romance, what are some of the common reasons throughout history that people marry? What are the characteristics of the "male breadwinner, love-based marriage"? What social conditions are necessary for this kind of family arrangement to prevail? Does Coontz think this family form is viable in the long-term future? Do you?

would have been the death of marriage - destabilizing aspect

- "love" & spouses
marriages had little to do with it

- turning strangers into family
- connected in laws

endogamy
exogamy

strengthen clans
biz all. / v. ram laon
force.