

# Sex and Society: What History Tells Us About the Effects of Sexual Freedom

I had a nagging thought while on my way to work this morning. It never quite coalesced until I read an article in *The Guardian* entitled "[Happy ever after: why writers are falling out of love with marriage](#)." Author Mia Levitin put into words what I had been pondering, namely the fact that modern stories avoid the cliché of "boy-meets-girl-falls-in-love-gets-married-lives-happily-ever-after."

I should clarify. The "boy-meets-girl-falls-in-love" part of the cliché is still alive, it's just the "gets-married" part that is going extinct. As Levitin explains, modern stories and movies emphasize the feminist side of life in which the woman achieves great heights and saves the world, fulfilling her dreams. She may opt for a male-female relationship, but only as an add-on – like a side of broccoli or Brussels sprouts – in which she can enjoy the benefits of intimacy and companionship while pursuing her dreams without the hindrance of marriage.

In one sense, I get it. Writers are always looking for something fresh, so the idea of ditching the happily ever after storyline is appealing.

On the other hand, there seems to be more at play than simply the quest for an original plot. The message these stories offer is that while sex is desirable, the constraints of marriage and family on either gender are not. Supposedly, the more the public can be convinced that intimate delights can be enjoyed absent the responsibilities that accompany them, the better it is for women and society in general.

A look into the rise and fall of cultures through the ages

demonstrates that this thought is much more of a staid line than we'd like to believe. In a recent [article](#), Dr. Kirk Durston unpacks [Sex and Culture](#), a 1934 book which looks at the rise and fall of societies in relation to their attitudes on sexual freedom. His analysis offers the following observations:

1. **Effect of sexual constraints:** *Increased sexual constraints, either pre or post-nuptial, always led to increased flourishing of a culture. Conversely, increased sexual freedom always led to the collapse of a culture three generations later.*
2. **Single most influential factor:** *Surprisingly, the data revealed that the single most important correlation with the flourishing of a culture was whether pre-nuptial chastity was required or not. It had a very significant effect either way.*
3. **Highest flourishing of culture:** *The most powerful combination was pre-nuptial chastity coupled with 'absolute monogamy'. Rationalist cultures that retained this combination for at least three generations exceeded all other cultures in every area, including literature, art, science, furniture, architecture, engineering, and agriculture. Only three out of the eighty-six cultures ever attained this level.*

In essence, history demonstrates that the type of society our books, movies, and everyday life promote – the society in which marriage and family are second thoughts and where ambitions, dreams, and “friendship with benefits” reign supreme – is not one which enables a flourishing of culture.

Instead, a society such as ours which “embraces total sexual

freedom” soon comes to ruin:

*If total sexual freedom was embraced by a culture, that culture collapsed within three generations to the lowest state of flourishing – which Unwin describes as ‘inert’ and at a ‘dead level of conception’ and is characterized by people who have little interest in much else other than their own wants and needs. At this level, the culture is usually conquered or taken over by another culture with greater social energy.*

For several decades now, our culture has embraced sexual freedom as a form of liberation for women. But could this freedom, instead of helping us achieve greater happiness, eventually topple our society?

It’s a troubling thought that we should seriously consider.

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