

Marriage is in decline due to changing social attitudes

This essay will be discussing why marriages are in decline and how social attitudes affect people's decisions. It will be looking at how people have changed their ideas about marriage due to different opinions, media and religion.

Marriage has been declining steadily since the 1970's this may be due to more people preferring low key weddings, rather than a traditional white church wedding. People's perceptions of weddings have changed too, more than half of all weddings do not take place in a church. More couples choose to have civil marriages in place of a religious ceremony, more than 15,000 couples married in stately homes, castles, hotels etc in 1996. Generations are slowly losing touch with religion, therefore seeing marriage as less important. Catholic weddings can be a burden, bringing too much hassle for the family. It can be very costly and couples are waiting until they have enough money to tie the knot. As people are getting less religious, cohabitation is becoming more popular.

Cohabitation is where a couple are living together but not yet husband and wife. Cohabiting is an easier option; hence this is why more people choosing to do it. At one point cohabitating was unacceptable and was seen as 'living in sin'. Any child that wasn't born in wedlock was in some ways, parted from society and was treated as inferior.

However, things soon changed. More single women were opting to cohabitate. The public's perception has also changed. In the mid-1960s, only five per cent of single women lived with a man before getting married. By the 1990s, about 70 per cent did so. Cohabiting is seemed as a lead up to marriage, although many cohabitations break up, it is seen as an alternative to marriage. Living with someone without having to have such a commitment as marriage is what young people are favoring. In this way, less money is spent and is easier to break up rather than going through the process of divorce. In Britain trialing a relationship is most popular. This is when couples live together and test their relationship to see if they can live like that permanently. This way of cohabitation usually leads up to marriage. Another type is when a couple are literally married but haven't exchanged vows, instead they have had private promises to each other.

The public's social attitudes with cohabiting are more popular than marriage. From the media's negative image about marriage, people are put off. This includes the scares of divorce. As the years go on, more people are divorcing. Relationships are more fragile so cohabiting is seen as safer than divorcing and going through stress. Also violence in marriage has scared some people off the idea of tying the knot.

The rise of cohabitation has gone alongside a continuing decline in marriage, the report from the Office for National Statistics said. As the number of marriages declining, the number of cohabiting couples are increasing. Although cohabitation is an alternative to marriage, most cohabiting relationships lead to marriage, so marriage isn't exactly in decline, but people are putting more thought into getting married and just delaying it.

Nowadays women are getting more independent, therefore knowing they don't need a male supporting them. Females are doing academically better, equally going onto higher education. This doesn't give women time to think about marriage or being economically financed. Work opportunities are more widespread and females are realizing that there being exploited in the nuclear family. Rather than being the stereotypical housewife, women are becoming more socially active and leaving the stigma behind. Feminists are fulfilling other desires rather than tying themselves down to one man, instead they are getting more upper class jobs. However, while women are putting off marriage, more than one in five have lived with a man before the age of 25. In the 1970s, only one in 100 women did so.

Marriages are also in decline as more babies are born outside wedlock, therefore the mothers not wanting to marry again. About a third of all babies are born without their parents being married. Also 40% of births outside marriage are to parents who do not live together. Most of the mothers are young, and in some cases too young to live on their own or with the father. It has become easier to live as a lone parent family, so more people are opting to it.

Marriages are slowly in decline, as there are more couples choosing to cohabit and the stigma attached to being married is negative. It looks smarter not marrying. This way a person can save up money, have education, and be more emotionally stable. The public's social attitudes towards marriage is that cohabiting is easier and less expensive, although the government are persuading couples to get married, people prefer to trial their relationship rather than saying 'I do' in a hurry.