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Q&A#123 Sex Recession?

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Today's question: "Any thoughts on the recent research on decreased rates of sex among under 30s, especially men? I would particularly be interested in any thoughts you might have on what it suggests about relations between men and women in society today."

Within this episode, I discuss this recent research:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/03/29/share-americans-not-having-sex-has-reached-record-high/>. The statistics on age at first marriage I discuss can be seen here: <https://www.thespruce.com/estimated-median-age-marriage-2303878>. On women's earning more than men and the damaging effects this has on marriage see, for instance, this discussion: <https://spottedtoad.wordpress.com/2016/08/24/say-you-dont-need-no-diamond-ring/>. I mention this article I wrote on the 'bad sex' of Kristen Roupenian's essay 'Cat Person': <https://alastairadversaria.com/2017/12/21/cat-person-and-the-traumatic-encounter-with-the-others-desire/>. I also mention Mark Regnerus's book 'Cheap Sex': <https://amzn.to/2VqvWPs> (which I reviewed here: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/cheap-sex-mark-regnerus/>).

My blog for my podcasts and videos is found here: <https://adversariapodcast.com/>. You can see transcripts of my videos here: <https://adversariapodcast.com/list-of-videos-and-podcasts/>.

If you have any questions, you can leave them on my Curious Cat account: <https://curiouscat.me/zugzwanged>.

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adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2.

Transcript

Welcome back. Today's question is, any thoughts on the recent research on decreased rates of sex among under 30s, especially men? I would particularly be interested in any thoughts you might have on what it suggests about relations between men and women in society today. You've probably heard about the so-called sex recession.

This is research from the University of Chicago's General Social Survey, which found that the proportion of, percentage of men between 18 and 30 without sex in the past year rose from 10% to 28% between those years of 2008 to 2018. The percentage of women rose from 8% to 18%. So for women it's a 10% rise, for men it's an 18% rise.

So what we need to explain is why do both men and women seem to be having so much less sex now within that age demographic? And then also the question of why it seems to be hitting men so much harder. Within this survey it's worth looking back a bit further and considering just how much these things change. We need to consider if it's fluctuating significantly over periods of time, whether 2008 was a particularly low period of time, and then consider how we make sense of the statistics that we have.

The rates do fluctuate. In 1998 men were at 19%. They went down by 9% until in 2008.

But it's still a rapid increase that we've had, 18% in a period of 10 years. It's also a disproportionate rise for men, from a difference of about 2% between men and women in 2008 to one of 10%. This is all in a 10 year interval.

So this is a very significant and rapid change. And it does not appear to be within the normal range of the fluctuations of these figures. So it would invite some sort of analysis to question what exactly has changed.

First of all, should we care if anything has changed on this front and if so, why? First of all, a falling level of sex may not necessarily be a concern in itself. We could maybe put this down to just young people being more careful about hookups and not engaging in promiscuous sexual relations and that would be a good thing. And extramarital relations going down, all these sorts of things would be positives.

But yet, there are reasons I think for concern on a number of different fronts. First, it becomes a concern when men and women are at odds with each other and not effectively pairing off. And we do see that effect playing out and I'll get into that a bit more as I discuss this.

It's also a concern when a significant number of young men aren't having sex or marrying. And as a result of this, there will be a growing disaffected population of men and they will be less motivated, less engaged in society, less likely to be working, less

likely to be doing things that are productive and contributing to the well-being of society. They will have lower outcomes on most criteria in terms of income, in terms of health, in terms of all these different things that we tend to measure well-being by.

They will be less engaged in social context. They will be less committed to and invested in society and its well-being. They will be cut off.

There will be tensions between the generations. They'll be less invested in the next generation. They'll be less concerned about the well-being of women.

There will be less of a sense of a common good. This is not a good thing. We also have, when there are large numbers of disaffected young men, they can be ripe for radicalisation.

In our society, and this is part of the picture that I'll be developing later on, there are a number of things that prevent men from being radicalised. They're just palliated in their disaffection and their detachment from society. So there's video games, there's entertainment, there's porn, there's all these sorts of things that mean that men don't really feel so keenly when they are not connected with society.

They feel a sense of ennui, a sense of listlessness, a sense of disconnection, a sense of resentment, but it's not necessarily going to ignite into revolution or anything like that, as we might have in a different sort of society, where we didn't have these forms of entertainment that would palliate people's disaffection. How should we determine causes? First of all, we should pay particular attention to things that have changed rapidly within the last 10 years. This isn't going to be explained by longer term effects necessarily.

Those will be contributing factors, but it's more likely to be things that are fairly recent changes, things that have changed within the last 10 years. So focus particularly upon those and then think about the longer trends alongside that. So for instance, could this be due to falling testosterone levels? Testosterone levels that have really significantly fallen in a couple of generations.

And we see sperm levels are 50% of what they were two generations ago, and testosterone levels have fallen a similar amount. That is probably a factor, that men are just less sexually motivated and driven than they were. They are less manly in that respect as well.

They don't have the same levels of testosterone. That's possibly a factor, but within the time frame, I don't think that that can be the major reason. I don't think that that really explains as much as we might think.

We also should be very wary of monocausal accounts. Accounts that would put everything down to one particular set of factors. It really is not that simple.

It's going to be a combination of different factors. It's an ecological change, and ecological changes can involve a trophic cascade throughout an ecosystem where certain things are removed or changed, and then the whole ecosystem reconfigures around that. There are a lot of different factors involved within this.

It's not just a single factor that changes everything. Or if it does change a lot of things, it changes things through reconfiguring all these other elements. We need to consider the multitude of different elements that contribute, and not just the immediate factors that might come to mind.

We should also focus upon description rather than judgment. It may be that millennials are more likely to be more sexually motivated than men, or that millennials and Generation Zs are just scared of commitment. But if they are, we need to consider why that is the case, rather than merely assuming that things are going wrong because people are lacking in character, and maybe failing in our specific virtues that we hold forth, or not following our ideals.

Many people believe that if people simply followed our ideals, it would all be far more straightforward. But we need to consider the many moving parts within these problems. These are a combination of different factors.

Monocausal approaches are often used in order to put the blame at one particular party's door, and to suggest also that if one particular party just got their act together, it would all change. It really is not that straightforward. There are many different parties playing a role in this, and there's an environment that encourages certain actions, that pushes us in certain directions, and it pushes people in a direction that has consequences for everyone.

It's not just a single group. It's not just men. It's not just women.

It's not just parents. It's not just the government. It's not just the messages that we're being given.

It's a lot of different things that come together. One of the most obvious things to point to is lower levels of marriages among the 18-30 demographic. This is partly just because people are marrying less nowadays.

That is a very important part of the picture. As people are marrying less, then there's less of a group that will be having regular sexual relations. Even people who would be open to sexual relations, there is a certain turnover period for relationships, and if you get out of one relationship, the time to get into another, and all these sorts of things, you might be having a year without sexual relations.

In these sorts of situations, where you're not having people in long-term, lifelong, committed relationships, levels of sex are going to be a lot lower, and that's fairly

predictable. I think the bigger factor, however, is not so much that people are getting married less, although that is the case. I think the far more significant factor is that people are getting married a lot later than they once did.

The 18-30 demographic would largely have been married in 1960. The majority of them would have been married, and now relatively few of them are. If you think about the 1950s or 60s, the average age of marriage for men was around 22-23.

The average age of marriage for women was around 20-21. Now, the median of first marriage, so this is not marriage every single marriage, because people get remarried later in life, so those aren't affecting the statistics here. This is just about first marriage.

It's not about the extreme cases, it's the median age. If you lined up all the ages at which people are getting married in this day and age, and then took the middle figure, that is the median. The median age for first marriage in the US is 29.8 for men now, and 27.8 for women.

So we're talking about the levels of sexual relations in the 18-30 demographic, particularly for men. When you consider that the median age of marriage for men is 29.8, that's just 0.2 away from the threshold of that demographic, 0.2 years. It doesn't really give you much time to have regular sex.

If you're not married within that period, then it's unlikely that you'll be having regular sexual relations. And so the delay of marriage, although there is cohabitation before that, marriage is put off, it's not just a matter of people not having any relations before that, so there is that to take into account, but the delaying of marriage is a hugely significant factor. And the fact that men are getting married so much later, we need to consider why that is the case.

In the UK this is even more pronounced. The average bride in the UK is 35 years old. Only 4 in 10 brides are under 30.

That is quite a dramatic statistic when you consider just how much that has changed. Over 7 years for both men and women, it's gone up within the last 50 years. It's a huge rise and that rise helps to explain part of this lack of sex for people within this age range.

The fact it's gone up 2.3 years between 2008 and 2018, again that's part of the picture. In 2008, the average man would be getting married at 27.5 years and the average woman at 25.5 years. That's again a big difference.

And so the delay of marriage, the lower levels of marriage among that demographic, and the lower rates of marriage, all of those things. So the fewer people that are getting married than got married in the past are now getting married at a much later age. But yet this pushes back to some extent the problem of explanation a further step.

How are we to explain the fact that people are getting married less often and so much later? I think one of the basic things to think about is why these particular years, why 2008 to 2018? What might have been a big effect within that period? Well I'd say the recession. One of the big effects of the recession has been to make people a lot more cautious about getting into, about their economic future. And since so many things are hanging upon their economic future, their job security, about their house, buying a house, all these sorts of things.

And their being able to start a family, then they're a lot warier about getting into marriage. And relationships outside of marriage are far more likely to occur in a more casual or less committed way. There's less of a sense of throwing in your lot completely with each other.

Because there's a point at which you just don't know how it's going to turn out. And the recession was I think a hugely formative experience for millennials. And that experience has changed the way that they approach marriage from previous generations.

I think also that marriage is not the sort of sure thing that it might have been in the past. And millennials may be particularly aware of this from their parents' marriages, the way that they have grown up. They may be less inclined to pursue marriage in the first place because they've grown up in divorced families, things like that.

And they're far more risk averse when it comes to relationships. They don't want to risk divorce and the costs in emotional, social and economic terms that that involves. They also want to secure their independence because marriage can't be trusted.

When you think about the way that young people approach their lives today, they have to prepare a basis for their independence before they will consider getting married. And so they need to have an independent career. They need to have savings.

They need to have whatever they need to buy a house before they consider marriage. Now, each one of those things is considerably harder than it used to be. Education no longer gives you the same degree of a foot up than it once did.

House buying, houses are a lot more expensive. You also have the fact that job security isn't what it used to be. And in each of these respects, people just do not feel as prepared for marriage as they once would have been.

And now they have to feel that they need to secure their independence in order to consider that step because they need to make sure that there is a way to escape marriage. If something goes wrong, then marriage is no longer a source of security and you don't want to put all your eggs in that basket. As a result, marriage can be significantly delayed in an economy and society that just is not geared towards it.

Marriage is built then upon a foundation of mutual independence rather than throwing in

one's lot with each other. In the 50s and 60s, if you're getting married at 20, if the woman was getting married at 20, she wouldn't have secured independence at that point. Because marriage was not about independence.

Marriage was about throwing in your lot with each other and forging a life together and depending upon each other to make it work. In a society where people are a lot more suspicious of marriage, a lot more associate those sorts of relationships of mutual dependence with the possibility of abuse, with the possibility of feeling trapped and all these sorts of things without having a scope to exercise your gifts, whatever it is. It's just not an attractive prospect and so you need to secure your independence and you don't want to put too much weight upon marriage.

This is also one of the reasons for lowering birth rates. These are important factors. Women are encouraged a lot more to achieve financial and career independence and men are less committed when sex is cheaper.

Mark Regnerus's book *Cheap Sex* deals with this theme at length and I would highly recommend reading it. I've done a review of it. I might link to that in the show notes below.

It changes the economy of sexual relations. So sex does not come with the same cost for men. Now sex may be difficult for certain men to find and we'll get into that in a moment.

But where sex is available, women aren't putting the same price on it. They're not expecting the same level of commitment. And as a result, that's largely a result of birth control primarily.

It's also a result of changing sexual mores, the changing of the dating scene, the changing of a number of other factors. Pornography, other things like that. Sex is cheap compared to what it once was.

And sex with women and sex just sex by yourself with porn, I think both of those have changed things significantly. The gains of marriage may also be much less apparent. Women may want marriage more, but they have a much lower threshold of commitment within marriage and they initiate divorce at significantly higher rates than men.

Nearly 70 percent of divorces are initiated by women. That's a huge difference. And this isn't just about the way that men are treating women.

Women initiate divorces, divorces, even the rate of divorce is even higher in lesbian relationships, which suggests that it's something about women's satisfaction with those sorts of unions that they're just not as satisfied. They're not giving them the same sorts of things. Men can be significantly disadvantaged in divorce situations as well.

So men can be wary of getting themselves into that sort of commitment. Other things, rising levels of college attendance. Could that be a factor? I'm not sure.

I don't think there's a high enough rise within the time interval we're talking about here. Although in the longer term, it is definitely a factor. It's a huge factor that leads to the delay of marriage.

The fact that people are spending more and more time or more and more likely to go to college and are spending even more time in college. And so much of your 20s is spent as a sort of preparatory time. It's not actually doing anything.

It's preparing for things. And so you're on the threshold of adult life. That threshold of adult life is extended out further and further and further.

And so people are much less likely to get married. And then the more weight that is placed upon that preparatory period, the less likely people are to engage in just casual relationships. And so at a certain point, if there are great economic pressures and other social pressures that make it difficult for people to take risks and fail and still achieve in the long term, they will be less likely to fool around, less likely to explore things and take chances.

They just will be far more goal oriented and they will be far more conformist. They won't take risks. They won't go off the beaten track.

They'll be far more concerned with playing to people's expectations, ticking the boxes and landing a good job at the end. Because it's far more competitive than it used to be. If you're going to stand a chance of getting a good job and buying a house, starting a family, you really have to have your head down for that decade.

And in the past, you didn't have to do that. Houses were a lot cheaper. Life was a lot cheaper.

You could support a family on a single salary. These sorts of things aren't possible in the same way anymore. And as a result, I think there is a change in people's attitude in those years of people's 20s.

They don't see themselves as fully fledged adults. They haven't entered into the full level of responsibility. And there's also this reticence to take risks, to experiment, to fool around in the way that they would have done in the past.

And that can be a good thing in many respects. But it's not a good thing that that period is so extended. And the other factor of college attendance that has risen significantly is the rise of college debt and these economic situations that people have.

The fact that they do not have good economic factors in their lives, it will mean that they

are less likely to enter into those long term commitments. They're more wary of relationships and they're more likely to be cautious about getting involved with other people in that sort of situation. Birth control, I've mentioned already, it changed the character of the market for sex.

It made sex considerably cheaper and put less requirements upon men to get it. It made women far more willing to have sex without considering the quality of the person that they were having relations with. And that is another problem.

It's changed the way that people approach sexual relations. And it also changes the way that people view marriage. That marriage is far, although you're more likely to have regular sex there, there are costs to that that there would not have been considered before.

Because you're getting sex outside of marriage. Why should you commit yourself to marriage? For many people that's the case. The dating market was always tipped in favour of women.

But I think it's become much more so in the contemporary context. Men have always achieved lower sexual results than women. If you look through history, you'll see that the vast majority of women have passed on their genetic heritage.

That's not the case for men. In some statistics, the majority of men did not succeed and pass on their genetic heritage. That's a dramatically surprising statistic.

I've heard less dramatic versions of those claims. But more generally, there are significant differences between the rates at which men and women have sexual relations within the broader historical framework. Now that is largely tamed by marriage.

When you have a marriage culture, people tend to pair off. And there's no longer, particularly when it's monogamous, it's not a matter of certain people, men who are particularly successful having a large number of women. And that can be serial monogamy within our society.

Rather it's a situation where marriage partners are spread out fairly evenly. And there aren't a large number of men or women who are left out of that market. However, when a market, marriage market collapses and you end up increasingly, increasingly with a sex market, that situation is one in which it will be far more of a struggle for survival, far more of a survival of the fittest for men in particular.

Women are far more likely to find partners in that situation. Men are much less likely to. And so a significant number of men that do not have partners is what you'd expect.

And I think partly this is a result of the changing of the dating context. Whereas in the past, dating would have been mostly local within local contexts like your church, your

other contexts of life that in your neighbourhood, people that you meet in your local community environment. Now, increasingly, dating is taking place in contexts that are detached from that, that are detached from the deep fabric of local life.

And that leads to problems on a number of fronts. First of all, for instance, if you think about online dating, online dating has become increasingly focused upon appearance. And that is something that particularly disadvantages men.

On the online dating statistics, what you see is if you look at men rating women from most to least attractive, it's a pretty much a typical bell curve. It's what you'd expect in a regular distribution. Whereas when it's women rating men, there's a huge cluster around the least attractive and then it really tails off.

And there are just a very few people at the most attractive. So women are far harsher in their judgments. And online dating, you'll have a lot of attention given to women by a lot of men that just don't receive any attention in return.

It becomes an increasingly hostile environment for those men who are less likely to achieve, who do not have the same advantages. And in that sort of environment, you'll have a lot of those men just checking out that they're not actually going to engage in the same way as they used to. And why do they need to? They've got porn, they've got video games, they've got all these things that will palliate their sense of discomfort, their sense of social isolation.

And there's also a lot of context online where they can share their sense of being disaffected and this sense of antagonism against women, whatever it is. And this is not a healthy context, but yet it leads to a situation where a lot more people can check out without that being a deeply uncomfortable situation. I think other factors, you have this greater emphasis upon appearance, this greater emphasis upon status and other things like that, and a far more competitive environment around dating.

That just makes things tip towards a certain group of people that are very successful. So it's not necessarily a matter of, it may not necessarily be a matter of less sex being had overall in many contexts, but it will be a fact of the winners get a lot and then the losers get very little. And so the winners, there's a lot more, the women are more likely to cluster towards the most successful men because those men aren't being focused, it's not pairing off men.

And so the most successful men are not bound to a single wife and as a result they have many women to choose from. And it leads to a different sort of economy where many women will match up with those sorts of men, they won't necessarily be satisfied by the results and those men can move around from woman to woman. Part of this is the tendency of women to marry up, what some have called hypergamy, this tendency to select for social status.

Now if you look at men and women and study their differences in attraction, other things like that, you'll notice that men are far more likely to be willing to sleep with a random woman or to sleep with a woman who's less conventionally attractive than women are to do the same for men. There is an imbalance in the situation here and that imbalance, the way that we manage social status is an important thing within this debate and we've not considered this enough I think within our society. Women are much more likely to initiate divorce when their husband earns less than them.

Marriage rates decline significantly when women start to earn more than men. The contexts in which marriage rates are highest are those contexts where men earn more than women. The best predictor of divorce is a man's working status.

A few years ago there was a paper suggesting that 29% of the fall in the marriage rate can be attributed to this factor alone. Now this is partly because of the way that the modern economy is ordered. I think part of this is also that women are just less attracted, women's form of attraction is very different from the form of attraction of men for the most part.

And we see more research coming forward on this. I think you can tell this even just in the sort of material that is directed towards men and women. Men have porn.

There's not porn, men, porn is particularly focused on men and porn is not about sleeping with billionaires. That's not really what it's focused upon. Rather it's just focused upon appearance and that's about it.

Appearance and sexual openness. Whereas for women, when you look at romance literature, constantly you see this focus upon the man who has really high status. He's a billionaire, he's a chic, he's someone who has this exotic or this great social status and that is attractive to women in a way that it is not for men.

Men have always been willing to marry down the social classes and focus more upon appearance and things like that. Whereas for women, there's been a significant focus upon marrying men who are higher earners, who have more wealth, who have more social status for various reasons. And it's not just about wealth, it can be whatever sort of social status is on offer.

And that is a difficulty within a society where you're constantly pushing for men and women to be evened out. It just leads to less of an appetite for sexual relations, less of a sense of attraction. It diminishes that.

It also leads to less commitment because if a man is going to earn less, he's at risk of divorce and a woman can move on to someone else. And this dynamic, I think, is a very important part of the picture. It's controversial because the wrong sort of people are talking about it.

But there has been some important research that's been done on this that has been more mainstream and we need to pay attention to it as a factor. If you think that growing equality in society is going to lead to more marriage, think again. All the research seems to point in the opposite direction.

Rather, it leads to a very different model of marriage, far more fragile and there is less of a sense of women's desire to get married. There are also, I mentioned, the modern economy makes a number of significant changes in this area. It reduces the function of the husband and father as provider and protector and these sorts of things that would formally have given dignity to that role and a sense of social importance to that role.

And as a result, I think there is much less weight put upon that and there's much more of a sense of frustration with men. What are you offering? What exactly are men giving? I mean, is it just emotional attachment? And really, it can seem a bit pathetic after a while that if men are not really earning much more, if men aren't really providing much more for their families, if they're not really needed to protect their families, all these sorts of things. And if the state is increasingly displacing these things and providing for people so that they, women, so that they can raise children without needing a husband in the picture, there's a lot more pressure upon men to, I mean, what do they really have on offer? And that changes things as well.

I think it's interesting to observe the way that many Christians talk about these things, as if the husband existed overwhelmingly in order to serve the wife and had no real dignity in calling of his own. This is one of the things that is interesting in many Christian accounts today, that there is this increasing shift that the man is constantly on some sort of continual audition and it's just not a healthy situation. The sense of the man constantly having to, he has lots and lots of responsibility and that is what it means to be the head.

There's less of a sense of dignity, less of a sense of calling, less of a sense of something that, I mean, in scripture, it was the dynamic is very different in character, that the woman is supposed to honour the man in a way that we often don't see, that there's less of a sense of the man very much is existing within this domestic space, having to feed into that, having to make himself achieve some sense of worth by the way that he serves the woman within that. But there's less of a sense of his dominion, his calling in the world as something that gives a space in which she can thrive. And when that's lost, men will just be less attractive and being a husband and a father may be less attractive to many men as well.

They may think that that's just emasculating. There's little dignity to be found in that. There's lots and lots of responsibility, but that responsibility tends to be approached in the form of blame, the way that you fail to match up.

And that's just not a healthy situation. Other things to notice, there's a much lower

quality of sex outside of marriage and people are a lot more aware of this now. So not just the Me Too movement, but more generally, when we consider the way that people talk a lot about bad sex nowadays, this sex that is just not so good.

I mean, no one's, the women aren't finding it very satisfying. The situation here is partly, I think, a result of porn and the influences of porn inflected habits upon those sorts of relationships, the habits and kinks and other things like that that men are bringing into them. That's part of it.

But I think there's also a sense of hooking up just does not satisfy. I mean, why bother? What is there to gain from this? You have so many forms of bad sexual relations. Why would you, why would you play that game? You read an article like Cat Person by Christian Rupennian.

I wrote an article upon this a while back. I'll give a link to it in the comments, in the show notes. That, again, presents a situation where many women resonated with that.

It's just not a healthy situation. No one's really finding themselves very satisfied by this, maybe for a night or two. But beyond that, everyone feels a bit more scarred, a bit more disillusioned and a bit more alienated from the other sex.

And that sense of alienation between the sexes is a growing one, I think. And this, these bad sexual relations, the influence of porn, all these sorts of things are part of that picture. The rise of the Internet, I think, is another significant factor.

Internet and social media in particular. Social media undermines so much of our social ability, our ability to connect with other people in a very natural human way in concrete contexts. Increasingly, things are taking place in online, artificial contexts that just undermine our ability to connect in a very natural way with people.

I think this is particularly difficult for dating and other things like that, where we don't... so much of our social life has migrated to the Internet. And the Internet just is not a healthy environment for that sort of matching up. And when people are spending a lot more time online, and that's their form of connection, again, there is a sort of palliating effect that people who would otherwise feel lonely and disconnected, you have the palliating effect of the Internet that makes them feel less disconnected.

But it isn't really feeding the fundamental need for human connection and belonging in community. It's just dulling the sense of pain and discomfort. And so the rise of the Internet is an important factor and the diminishing of our social ability, the rise of the Internet, mobile devices, other things like that, that mean that increasingly we are detached from human environments of contact.

And it just makes it more difficult for us to interact in a very human and natural way. Other things, the loss of matchmaking contexts. Our contexts have to enable us to... this

is one of the factors about the greater gender integration of modern society and the equalisation of contexts.

Our contexts now have to enable us to gain social capital, to earn a wage, belong to a high class group, to become part of a context of work, whatever it is. But they also have to match us up because these are the contexts we're living in. But when they're supposed to do both of those things, they don't do either of those things very well and they're at odds with each other.

And they'll often push against each other in ways that undermine their capacity. So the desire, for instance, for women within the workplace alongside men, workplaces are not natural places for forming relationships when the sexes are very much within the same context. It just makes it difficult.

It doesn't work very naturally. When you have divisions within the workplace, people working in one office and then secretaries or women in another office, that creates some sort of context where that can happen. The former situations that used to occur in the 60s and 70s, for instance, that's not an ideal.

It's not a good situation, but it's more effective at matching people up than our situations today. And the traits that people value in those activities aren't the same. It's interesting to see the difference between what women say they want in men and what they actually demonstrate that they want in other situations.

Women are more likely to initiate divorce and women are more likely to initiate divorce when their husbands earn less than them. Women want that men with a greater social status. So there's a sort of mating, mating with people on the same social level, but also wanting to be with a man who has strong, high social status, who has a sense of greater status in society.

And that is something that is not going to go away very quickly. It's something about the dynamics of women's desire and the tendencies in women's desire. And as a result, I think you have context where on the one hand, women want men who are inclusive, men who step back and push them forward, men who are very obliging and things like that in the workplace.

That's not necessarily the man that you are attracted to, to have as a husband. That man may be very obliging, but those sorts of men, the idea of, for instance, of men in the friend zone. It's a bit of a trope, which is not necessarily a positive one in many of the ways that it's used.

But there's a difference and an imbalance in those sorts of friend relationships that is not often observed. And that's, and we talk about the same thing in the Billy Graham rule or the Mike Pence rule. When we're talking about those things, it's important to recognise

the imbalance in those relationships.

It's about women wanting relationships or access to men with social power. And it's very much about the men giving something to them. But what do the men get in return? One of the reasons those sorts of relationships can be concerning is because of precisely that question.

In many of these contexts, why would a man invest so much in that woman within a situation where there's not intergenerational male sociality? It's not about that. What is the man getting out of this? And often we've seen that within the Me Too movement and elsewhere, that those relationships can often have a sexual component to them. That men are expecting or getting some sort of gratification out of those sorts of relationships with younger, attractive women.

But what they, there's an imbalance in those situations and it's not entirely healthy. And when we're talking about the workplace, the traits that we want in other people are not necessarily the same thing. What women want in a co-worker then is not the same as what they want in a partner.

And there's also within these contexts, there's a loss of a sense of difference between the sexes. Within the past, often you'd have dedicated contexts of matchmaking that would be fairly broad. Contexts where the sexes were brought together, but they spent much of their time apart in their own workplaces, in their own contexts of work alongside other people of the same sex.

Then when they came together, it made more sense for them to pair off. Now we have increasingly as we're collapsing into largely undifferentiated spaces, you have pairing off, but you have it in really awkward ways. So the merging of friends and sexual relations, friends with benefits, and this blurring of the lines between sociality and sexual relations, it's just a messy situation that is not ordered well.

It's a situation where men can't really be with men and women can't be with women in terms of their sociality. And then when they come together, there's less of a sense of what is the script here? Are we allowed to pair off? Is it a situation where we just have to be more inclusive for women? Or is it a case where women have to play the status games of men? Either way, it does not tend to create situations that are really apt for the forms of relationships that men and women usually form, the healthy forms of relationships. And this is a huge problem within our society that again, because it pushes against the egalitarian lines of what men and women should desire, men and women should desire the same thing.

It's just regressive that women want to feel attracted, particularly to people with more status. And it's regressive that men don't feel as don't have a similar sort of pattern of desire and all these sorts of things. They may just be the way that we are.

We need to work with that. And that's a problem that you have. I've mentioned the rise of Internet porn and gaming and the diminishing of the psychological and social pressure to get married.

I think this is one of the huge factors because there's this discomfort in the position of being in the loser's position, that you've not actually had a relationship, that you've not actually had employment, career, all these sorts of things. But if you compaliate that, then it doesn't feel so bad and you don't really care about it so much. It's more tolerable.

I think other things alongside this, the rising cost of housing, lower job security, it leads to people more likely to live with their parents. And that's not a really good situation conducive to having sexual relations. Many of these factors just make the other sex less desirable, make men less desirable to women and women less desirable to men.

Women who earn higher wages are not necessarily more desirable to men. It doesn't work out that way. Many women would like that if it would work out that way, but that's just not how it tends to go.

And this is partly because of men's desire, but it's also because of women's desire, probably far more because of women's desire. Because women just do not, in the way that they behave, manifest that preference for men who earn less than they do. And in a relationship where that situation is the case, it's far more likely to end in divorce.

Other factors, I think a far greater level of self-consciousness and insecurity in millennials and Generation Zs. I think that's a factor. If you look online, you'll see the degree to which we are constantly projecting images of ourselves.

And we're a lot more self-conscious. There's higher levels of obesity as well and things like that. We're a lot more uncertain about our identities.

We're a lot more preoccupied with our identities. A lot more concerned with how other people are viewing us. And that's not going to give you the confidence to go out and relate to people.

And that, along with all these other factors, I think helps to explain to some extent why in the last 10 years there has been such a dramatic change in the rates of both men and women having sex. In that particular age demographic. I think the main factor is the lower level of marriage that's contributed to by rise.

I think it's the economic factors then that really explain that particularly. I think the social factors, the way that men and women relate within the workplace, relate in social groups more generally, that explains a lot of things. We're not effective at matching people up.

And when you do not have, when every context is more and more unisex, you end up

losing the sort of gendered performance that is not just performativity trying to live out this identity of being a male or female. But where you have men and women in their separate groups developing manliness and womanliness and a sense of their otherness from each other. And then when they come together, there's far more of a mating display, far more openness and far more exploration of that place as a realm of connecting with the other sex.

We don't have those sorts of realms to the same degree now. It's where most of the time we're around each other. There's less of a context in which we can develop our different strengths and tendencies and become more masculine and feminine in ways that might make us more attractive to each other.

And in these and other ways, I think the form of modern society, the form of the modern economy, all these things are just not conducive to the way that we relate as organic human beings. So much more that could be said about this. If you have any questions about this or anything else, please leave them in my Curious Cat account.

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