

A return to arranged marriages?

By Richard Stengel

New York

Romantic love is a supreme fiction, marriage for love the consequence of that fiction and divorce the painful evidence of that initial delusion.

The history of romantic love is the continuing ironic testimony of the power of our minds to mesmerize our bodies, while romantic marriage is the most recent and least successful evolutionary stage in the history of matrimony.

Now that the Census Bureau has estimated that more than one in three marriages will end in divorce, it is apparent that the solution to the troubled state of matrimony is a return to the tradition of arranged marriages.

The sentimental sanctity of love was the invention of the Provencal poets of the 12th century, and they saw it as the exotic refinement of a bored aristocracy. Since then, however, love has democratized itself and is no longer the luxury of a courtly minority, but the expectation of every man and woman: indeed, the joys of romantic love are the birthright of every American, for the framers of the Declaration of Independence declared "the pursuit of happiness" to be the inalienable right of all men and women.

Love, though, is neither a right nor an instinct, but a learned form of behavior; it is not a spontaneous feeling, but an artificial ritual. It is a response that we have learned from literature, and its contemporary handmaidens, the news media.

As lovers, we are all actors — we imagine ourselves most spontaneous when we are most imitative. We learn how to love from movies, television, novels, magazines, and advertisements. We learn to adore love, to idolize love, to fall in love with love.

To most Americans, love is romantic love. It is a drive or state of tension induced by our prevailing romantic myths. The lover's nourishment is the expectation of bliss. Love is a competitive and covetous game: Competition for a mate brings out the best in an individual. To be alone is not considered a self-imposed choice, but evidence of failure in the contest of love.

During the Industrial Revolution, arranged romantic marriages succumbed to individual love matches. The monotony of work and the impersonality of the city led people to escape monotony in personal relations and retreat from impersonality to the "emotional fortress" of marriage. Urbanization caused the "privatization" of marriage so that the intimacy of wedlock became a sanctuary from a world where all intimacy was excluded.

Yet, romantic marriage was the cradle of its own demise. More and more pressure was forced on marriage to be "a haven in heartless world." As the temptations of the outside world were becoming more varied, the standards of marital fidelity became more exigent. Opportunity multiplies; morality declines. The pressure on marriage increased geometrically. Between 1870 and 1920 the number of divorces multiplied fifteenfold.

In the past, when society was more structured, married partners were externally oriented and did not have to rely exclusively on each other for emotional gratification. They could find that elsewhere. Romantic passion had always existed outside of marriage, but it had nothing to do with wedlock. Contemporary society forces couples to depend on each other for permanence and stability, functions that were formerly provided by a large familial and social network.

Today, marriage has not lost its function: it suffers from a surfeit of functions. The marriage partner must not only be a lover, but a friend, a col-

league, a therapist and a tennis partner. Indeed, the standards of romantic marriage — unquestioned fidelity, and undiminished passion — are merely an ideal to be approximated, not a universal precept to be obeyed.

Traditionally, the selection of mates has been determined by social, political and economic considerations directed either toward establishing new ties or reaffirming old ones. Every arranged marriage was the formation of a new society — a merger of a network of familial and social relationships.

Marriage was a duty. Its *raison d'être* was procreation. Children were best raised in a congenial home, and a congenial home was best created by a reasonable arrangement between congenial people. Marriage was contracted according to a principle other than the self-interest of the participants, and emotional satisfaction was neither the origin nor purpose of marriage.

The concept of arranged marriage is based on a positive view of human nature. Its guiding principle is that marriage requires a more durable foundation than romantic love, that wisdom is more important in the choosing of a partner than passion, and that everyone can find something to "love, honor and cherish" in anyone else.

Romantic love, however, is fundamentally narcissistic: we either choose someone who resembles ourselves, the self we'd like to be or think we are, or we choose someone who complements us. The former is incestuous, the latter entropic. If love means touching someone outside of ourselves, then romantic love is solipsistic while arranged marriage is altruistic.

Romantic love allows us the reverie of imagining what the other person is like, whereas arranged marriage forces us to acknowledge truly another human being. Instead of falling in love with an ideal-image, an arranged marriage teaches us how to live with an actual individual. The myths of romantic love teach us how to fall in love. Perhaps when marriages are arranged, we will learn how to love.

Richard Stengel is unmarried.

by Doug Snyder



→
Read both articles on the other side, too.

Chances, Wife of Bayle Gender Roles

There's more than one way to reform marriage

By William Safire
New York Times

SAN FRANCISCO — The institution of marriage has been put into play.

A couple of judges in Hawaii, tossing judicial restraint to the gentle breezes, have declared that marriage need no longer be construed as the legal union between a man and a woman. They have ruled that the denial of marriage licenses to homosexual couples is discrimination on the basis of sex, unconstitutional in that state.

What is upsetting Americans in the other 49 states (not to mention the great majority of Hawaiians) is the possible extension of this ruling throughout the nation by virtue of the "full faith and credit" clause of the U.S. Constitution. That says plainly that each state must recognize "public acts, records and judicial proceedings of every other state."

Remember the old days when unhappy spouses traveled to Nevada for a quick divorce, which had to be recognized as legal at home? Same principle: If the state judges get their way, the state judges get their way, a gay couple to claim all the legal and insurance protections of marriage anywhere in the United States.

Those of us who run our thumbs along the cutting edge of social change, however, are less interested in the pros and cons of "same-sex marriage" than in the possibility its acceptance would open up for a far larger segment of the population.

With the age-old institution of one-man, one-wife finally in play, the time has come to make the case for polyandry.

Allowing women to have two husbands would extend conjugal rights and tax advantages to millions.

For those who have not given the matter much thought, polyandry is the marriage of one woman to two or more men. (Do not confuse it with the discredited, sexist "polygamy," the marriage of one man to more than one woman.) Consider what the adoption of polyandry would do for the social fabric of families in America.

What is the reason for the divorce explosion, wedlock-free children, the loss of our traditional values, galloping anomie and rampant ennui? The root cause is the way some men have their way with women and then run out on them. "Deadbeat dads" are an alliterative blight.

But if just one judge in one state dared to strike a blow for polyandry, think of the positive repercussions:

➤ A woman's chance of being left alone would be cut in half overnight. If one man left, there would still be another standing by. Both the wife and the stay-behind spouse would, in their joint reflection, be drawn more closely together. Moreover, the search for a replacement second husband would be easier, conducted by two abandoned spouses, one of whom could work or stay home with the children while the other crisscrossed singles bars or followed up personal ads. Also, because women live longer, a backup husband reduces (all widows).

➤ The likelihood of the presence of a male role model in the home for children would be doubled. The era of the latchkey child would end abruptly, as one of the husbands would be at home at all times for rough-house and nurturing.

➤ Marital fidelity would be enhanced by internalizing the eternal triangle. The costs of living together could be cut sharply by eliminating the need for assignments. There can live as cheaply as two.

Who could oppose this modest proposal to extend conjugal rights, inheritance-tax advantages and benefits blessings to millions of lonely women and angry exes male?

Oh, we can expect to hear from feminists who fear to go too far, as well as male chauvinists who are not into sharing and caring. Traditionalists may mutter about the risks of fiddling with fundamentals, though research will show the origins of polyandry in Biblical times.

To the peroration: If you believe marriage to be indispensable to the upbringing of children; if you argue for the stability this institution brings to human relationships; if you sense the values inherent in the mutual love and loyalty of families; and if you believe, with our Federalist Fathers, in the "full faith and credit" clause — then how, in the name of all that virtuous men and women hold sacred, can you object to the expansion of this bulwark of civilization?

Ladies and gentlemen of the Platform Committee: If this polyandry plank is not included intact, I am marching my people right out of this convention.

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16 pages of prenuptial fine print



Ren and Teresa Legally say their 16-page agreement is a way to handle everyday issues — from who does the laundry to when they go to bed. "A lot of people say a prenuptial is something you do in case you get divorced." "The real deal," but we take it differently. This is the plan that we think will keep us married for 50 or 60 years."

'We think this will keep us married'

Associated Press
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Ren and Teresa Legally know what to expect from love and marriage. Their 16-page prenuptial agreement spells out the rules of their life together in excruciating detail, including how often they will have sex (three to five times a week), which gasoline to buy (Chevron supreme unleaded) and who does the laundry (Teresa).

"When you look at why people get divorced, the biggest reasons are money, sex, children or some peep peeve the other one just can't stand," Rex said. "This gives us a list we can live with."

The agreement, filed in court in July, also spells out how they are to handle their finances. It appears to leave little room for Valentine's Day improvisation.

On a recent trip to New York City, the Legallys — married for seven months — bought diamond-studded gold bracelets for each other. Rex called them Valentine's Day, birthday and anniversary gifts tacked into one.

"It was spontaneous, but it was something we had thought about for a long time," Teresa said Monday. "Any kind of big purchase we make is planned."

The Legallys say their past marriages — and their love of details — made their prenuptial agreement a natural. Rex, 39, a communications specialist at Sandia National Laboratories, is on his third marriage. Teresa, 31, a civilian computer engineer for the Air Force, is on her second.

A few months after they met while dancing at a bar two years ago, they started making lists and realized just how compatible they were.

"We were on a trip and we were hitting a lull in the conversation," Rex said. "So, I said, 'Let's try to create an ideal budget.' We came up with this incredible, livable budget that we both agreed on."

Eventually, they put together their prenuptial agreement, with the final 4½ pages of single-spaced type covering just about everything.

"We will engage in healthy sex three to five times a week. (No trouble complying with that one, they say.)"

"Nothing will be left on the floor overnight — unless packing for a trip."

"Lights out by 11:30 p.m. Wake up 6:30 a.m., Monday through Friday."

"A lot of people say a prenuptial is something you do in case you get divorced," Teresa said. "But we take it differently. This is the plan that we think will keep us married for 50 or 60 years."

Gender Roles

Dave Weinelick joked he'd tie the knot June 13, 1998. But the idea grew on him. So he's seeking nominees, and his friends will vote to pick his bride. No joke.

There's no doubt, ladies: he's the marrying kind

By Maria Elena Baca
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Dave Weinelick is good-looking, well-groomed, polite, well-educated. He enjoys romance, good conversation, coffee, learning and teaching. He wants an egalitarian, stable — yet spontaneous — committed relationship. He's open to moving or staying in the Twin Cities; he's open to having children. He has a clean record

and good credit. Are you single, about 30, looking for same? If you'd like to date Weinelick, forget it. If you'd like to marry him, however, you might have a shot. A week from today, Weinelick, 28, of Minneapolis, will be married. He has a minister, musicians, rings, a tuxedo. The location and food are arranged. He still is looking for a bride.

Turn to MARRIAGE on B2



Star Tribune photo by Cheryl Diaz Meyer
Tessa Schwanekamp called Dave Weinelick's bride search "completely insane" — but she's considering becoming a candidate.

Groom to let mixer, vote decide fate at 'democratic wedding'

Saturday's event will be a "democratic wedding." Potential brides are welcome to attend a "bridal candidate mixer," where Weinlick's friends will screen them, and their friends will screen Weinlick. There will be a vote, and he will marry the winner.

About four years ago, Weinlick, tired of people asking him when he was going to get married, started to answer, "June 13, 1998." It became part of his shtick. At first he thought he might have a party to celebrate the idea of being in a committed, monogamous relationship, whether he was in one or not. Then his friend Steve Fletcher suggested that he run a campaign and have a democratic wedding. As the date approached, the idea grew on him, and the campaign got into full swing about two months ago.

"The fact that this is not the norm is actually on my side," he said Friday over an iced coffee at the Urban Bean Uptown in Minneapolis. "Somebody who is less likely to go with the flow is someone I'll be compatible with."

Weinlick, a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Minnesota, said that while it's important to him to follow up on his word, he really does want to get married. He's idealistic and optimistic about love and marriage.

"I like the idea of being committed to someone and really making the relationship work," he said. "I think love develops. It's not just here. . . . If people don't work at it, it's not going to be there."

He is unfazed by people who ask him how he can marry without love. "I don't think this is marrying without love any more than people who get married after dating for years do it because they think they should."

Weinlick sent out nine candidate packets Thursday, and he hopes that there will be new candidates through the wedding day. Most of the candidates are people he knows, but there are a few he hasn't met face to face.

Weinlick's father, Herman, who lives in Bethlehem, Pa., isn't planning to attend the wedding.

"I wish him well, and I admire his independence in many things, including this," he said Friday. "But I am not particularly happy with his event, which I think makes light of something which, to me,

should be taken more seriously."

Matt Gundlach, who has a marriage and family counseling practice in Minnetonka, says that while Weinlick's plan sounds like a great way to meet people, it doesn't sound like a good bet to start a marriage.

"There's a high probability he's going to get the wrong person," he said. "I think usually with our friends, we pick who would be good for us, rather than what would be good for the other person. No matter how good of friends you are, you don't know what's best for them."

After the coffee, Weinlick walked up Hennepin Avenue to Calhoun Square to pass out invitations to the wedding, in hopes of getting people to talk about a different way of approaching marriage, and perhaps to find new candidates. He was on his own. Fletcher, the politicker, was away at the DFL state convention in St. Cloud. Weinlick never had passed out leaflets before. While he wasn't shy about talking to people, he said he felt a little silly standing on a street corner.

Then there was the problem of whom to approach. Should he only give them to women? Single women? He didn't want it to appear that he was targeting women

for their looks. So he gave or everybody who made eye contact. Many people sidled away from him, or shook their heads when offered the mottled gray leaflet but lots of people accepted invitations. Some of those were women. A few of those came back to ask questions.

Roseanne Lloyd, of St. Paul, Jim Smith, of Minneapolis, were among the latter group. "I think it's a great idea," said Lloyd, who is a friend she might send to the wedding. "All of my weddings I try to find the right person and it doesn't work out."

Tessa Schwanekamp was surprised to see Weinlick there on the corner. They had worked together years ago at Nora's on Lake Street. "I think it's outrageous," she said, giggling a little and glancing back over at Weinlick. "It's completely insane."

Still, Schwanekamp is single and she admits that she'd thought about Weinlick sometimes. She's thinking about going to the wedding — as a candidate. "It's a weird idea. I like weird men . . . and strange men, and it intrigues me basically."

The bridal candidate mixer starts at noon next Saturday at Minnehaha Park, with a vote at 7 p.m. The wedding ceremony will take place after the votes are tallied. For more information, check Weinlick's Web site at <http://www.geocities.com/athens/2383/nominations.html> or call him at 377-0055.

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