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Images of Marriage in American Culture: An Analysis of Popular Music From the 1950s to the Early 1960s



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ABSTRACT

This research is intended to examine perspectives of marriage and love by examining mainstream music from 1952-1964 and is a small portion of a larger research in progress. The author will look at the history of rock-and-roll and the interacting role of culture and music. Songs were identified by random sampling, word searches, and Top 40 Billboard charts from 1952-1964. The research should note significant gender differences about how marriage is perceived and will examine changes between the periods concerning how marriage is portrayed. Overall, music lyrics perceived marriage positively.

Western society has valued marriage as a social institution throughout history for various reasons. Historically, people have married for religious beliefs, financial and economic support, and for romantic love. Although recent studies confirm that the divorce rate has climbed in the U.S. over the past years, there does not seem to be an overwhelming cry from society to do away with marriage. Some researchers have predicted that over 90 percent of American women and men will eventually marry (Fisher, 1992, p.65). In general, couples still want to marry despite studies reflecting high matrimonial failure rates.

The question "What is marriage for?" is often asked, yet has become increasingly more difficult to answer as time passes. Our definitions and attitudes toward marriage and love continue to change. Love and romantic longings appear to be a consistent theme within American culture; however, what was a norm in 1955 is not so now. As we move further into the 21st Century, the social transformation of marriage will continue. This study examines popular conceptions of marriage within the context of mainstream music. Unlike other studies that have examined marriage in an empirical and statistical manner, many have failed to look at how aspects of our culture, such as music, reflect beliefs about marriage. Studies about marriage often look at age, gender, class, and inequalities between married partners. Marriage is a social construction; created by humans to be used by humans. Thus, attitudes toward and about marriage will evolve, change and expand. Charts, data, bar graphs and other numerical means used to grasp changes in marriage do not fully encompass the cultural norms and beliefs about marriage. My study uses music as a reflection of cultural ideals.



Steve Tripp, Ph.D.
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Popular music is an example of mass culture and can be extracted to examine its relationship with current societal perspectives. Texas Tech Sociologist, David Whitt, in his study of popular music's impact on social behavior, found that such a parallel exists between music and behavior. Whitt examined music from the 1950s to the 1970s. His observations suggest that the lyrics of popular music during this period support the sociological perspectives and views of the day (1978). Academic, music journalist, and editor of the scholarly journal *Popular Music*, Simon Frith asks "Why Do Songs Have Words?" He proposes that certain forms of music can be a form of "ideological expression" (Frith, 1987, p 81). For example, in the 1960s music became a function of exposing false ideology (Frith, 1987, p 85). Frith's essay suggests that popular music reflects real social conditions (1987). Experts have even proposed that music can be used as a teaching tool. Sociologist Thomas Burns and professor at University of Utah, Theresa Martinez, argue that popular music can be used to "illuminate abstract concepts in social theory." They also state that music can be used to store relevant sociological theoretical concepts (1993, p 117). Burns and Martinez assert that popular culture is a living and breathing phenomenon and that it mirrors life "in its extremity, its mediocrity, its absurdity, its distortion and in its profundity" (1993, p 119). Society apparently is influenced by popular music. Songs and their lyrics have been suggested to work effectively as teaching tools to explore sociological and cultural concepts and are used to examine behaviors and expressions of human conditions during a specific period of time. Studies such as these contribute toward my study, confirming that music can be reflective of cultural ideology.

More specifically, music can be examined based on the content of the lyrics. While the studies previously mentioned touch on how music affects behavior and culture, Brent Shea, a social psychologist at Sweet Briar College, looks at content in the lyrics of American popular music. Shea's major findings included a steady decrease in the number of love songs from 1955 to 1970. Shea also found no increase in references to sexual relationships, but rather a decrease in songs dealing with romantic and long-term involvement (1971).

Current Research: Themes and Methods

The purpose of my study is to compare the popular conceptions about marriage and love beginning with the 1950s. This paper explores a small part of my research, focusing on the time period from 1952 thorough 1964. My analysis of the 1950s and early 1960s are divided into two parts. The 1950s section includes 1952 through 1959. The early 1960s are the years from 1960-1964. This research uses musical lyrics as a window into past society norms and beliefs. I also explore the interacting role between society and popular music. This study primarily looks at American popular contemporary music.

The method for this study consists of a literature review of American popular music and marriage trends for background information. Songs and lyrics from 1952 through 1964 are analyzed, in order to make connections and illuminate the changing patterns of the contemporary American view on marriage and romantic relationships. Songs are identified by a thorough review of chart data compiled from Joel Whitburn's *Pop Annual: 1955-1999*. Portions of chart data from Whitburn's book were constructed from *Billboard Magazine* from information provided by

the Broadcast Data Systems, which electronically monitors radio play and collects points of sale information from music retail outlets. Billboard charts have been widely used and have maintained a long history of data analysis of popular tunes. I examine who wrote the song, when the song was written, what peak position it reached, and what the author's message and intent was. I specifically studied the context of how marriage was used in song lyrics. I focused on lyrics that contain words having reference to marriage, such as: marry, married, marriage, wedding, bride, ring, bells, Mr. and Mrs., and other such descriptives. Most of the songs I studied were in the Top 10 charts.

Several themes emerged within the music in the 1950s and early 1960s. Music in the 1950s was overwhelmingly about courtship and dating, containing themes such as an emphasis on ownership, the belief that marriage is a natural progression after finding "true love," and that marriage is the solution to urges and sexual feelings. Songs recognize sex, but it is only acceptable in marital relationships. All the songs examined in the sample only pertained to heterosexual relationships. Belief in longevity and monogamy were prevalent in songs examined. During the early 1960s, changes occurred in how females perceived courtship and marriage. These changes are significant in demonstrating a change in thought. For instance, during the early 1960s, female vocalists began to sing about marriage, how to attract a guy, how to keep him, and how to behave in a relationship. Overall, popular music during the 1950s and early 1960s portrayed marriage positively, encouraging men and women to find their "one and only" and to remain together forever.

History of Rock-and-Roll

The history of rock-and-roll is important to consider when scrutinizing the role of how music impacts society and its members. Sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959, p 3) wrote "neither the life of an individual nor the history of society can be understood without understanding both." He argued that broader social processes couldn't be disconnected from individual events. This is true in regard to the interaction between music and society. In the 1950s, rock-and-roll changed many youth in America. Record promoters and marketers were credited with the growth of mass media programming which helped lead to the invasion of rock-and-roll into almost every American teenagers' radio. Rock-and-roll epitomized everything middle class parents feared most for their children. Even the term "rock-and-roll" was originally alluded to a sex act (Tame, 1984, p 192). The rise of rock-and-roll music in the teenage rebel culture challenged many of the social norms that once isolated the white middle class (Palladino, 1996, p 152). Rock-and-roll lyrics dripped with sexuality and were considered by some a threat to society (Palladino, p 155).

Teenage consumers were spending nearly \$50 million a year on records in the 1950s. Despite the initial fear of rock-and-roll impacting youth negatively, some popular youth magazines admitted that rock-and-roll wasn't "all junk" (Palladino, p155). In 1958, a *Seventeen* magazine columnist explained that teenagers all share a host of problems and interests and that it is no surprise that they created their "own special brand of music" (Palladino, p 155). In 1944, researcher Peatman reported that a considerable number of popular tunes fell into three categories. Songs were attributed to either "happy in love," "sad in love," or "novelty songs with sex interest." This trend continued into the late 1950s. Again in 1957, a

researcher and scholar Donald Horton concluded that music lyrics had changed very little since the earlier study. Horton's other finding was that nearly 87 percent of popular song lyrics pertained to the "drama of courtship" (Hirsch, 1971, p 372). Music from the 1950s filled homes and airwaves with songs about love, courtship, and sex.

Mass promoting led American popular music to be almost entirely drowned with teen idols (Carlin, 1988, p 77). Researchers began to examine this new youth subculture. In 1968, researcher Sebald expressed that American teenagers "exhibit special admiration for recording stars." Sebald also concluded that youth in the early 1960s related and identified with recording artists (Cole, 1971, p 389). By 1966, a change in American popular music occurred. Studies suggested that only 70 percent of popular hits concerned the stages of courtship (Hirsch, 1971, p 373). This was a 17 percent drop from 1957. The prevailing song lyrics revealed more specific concerns such as the role of the individual in a conventional world (Hirsch, p 373). By the mid 1960s and early 1970s, music took another twist. Music critic Richard Carlin argues that music from the late 1950s to the late 1960s brought new standards to music in the United States. Carlin proposes that rock music was far more "lyrically, melodically, and instrumentally," complex and interesting than the sounds that preceded it (Carlin, p 104). The "Woodstock Nation" began to show the country how the youth could behave. Music was the youth's own secret world.

The Relationship of Music and Culture

Music and society have an interacting relationship. Music influences culture and culture influences the genre of music. In the 1950s, teenagers were the largest age group to purchase records. The popular record is indeed a cultural

reflection of the youth subculture and often transmits views and ideas between the youth (Cole, 1971, p 389). American teenagers exhibited much admiration for recording artists, many of whom they identified with. Music for the youth in the 1950s through the early 1960s became their voice and now can be used as a window into their views on marriage, dating, and romance. Horton concluded in his report that popular music was "conventional language for the use of dating" (Firth, 1987, p 101). From this perspective, lyrics become a form of dialect for couples and allow for endless emotional and expressional possibilities. When people lack the words to describe their feelings, songs become a vessel to transport those emotions. Firth argues that songs give the audience the romantic terms to articulate their feelings and experiences, but do not give their emotions to rationalize with (1987, p 102).

Popular music has been criticized for its exclusion of reality. Nevertheless, popular music is a form of mainstream culture that interacts with its recipients as well as aids in creating the recipients' ideology and social norms. However, it is important to note that teenagers do not always interpret the same meaning as intended by the songwriters, and social scholars and researchers will also interpret a different meaning from songs (Hirsch, 1971, p 377). Teenagers tend to be attracted to the song's overall sound, rather than the lyrics. However, youth will likely remember catchy songs from their past into adulthood and future relationships. Their exposure to particular songs will be remembered throughout their lifetime. An example of this is reflected in the importance and significance of selecting a "first dance song" at wedding receptions. Many mainstream tunes from the 1950s and mid 1960s still remain popular songs to express their love in the "first dance" song. Music not only impacts the youth,

but also adults. Not all music is exclusive of reality, especially when it helps mold their reality of romantic love.

The 1960s are considered by many experts and historians to be a time of great transformation in the United States. The youth of the 1960s began to stop accepting traditional views. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, social psychologists from the University of Lund in Sweden, researched American social movements and cultural transformation in 1960s popular music. Eyerman and Jamison extended the 'cognitive approach' to their study. This approach primarily views social movements as the producers of knowledge (Eyerman & Jamison, 1995, p 450). In other words, music is influenced by the social events and conditions that are occurring at a particular time. Social movements articulate the visions, the knowledge, and voices from history.

Analysis of Lyrics from 1952-1959

Many songs of the 1950s were about courtship and dating. Songs such as "A Boy Without A Girl" (1959), "Young Love" (1957), "Honeycomb" (1957) "Born To be With You" (1956), "Sincerely" (1955), and "True Love" (1956) were reflective of romantic love and dating. Marriage was also a popular topic in songs and often sung in a hopeful and enduring manner. Not only were songs specifically about love and dating, but songs about getting married or proposing to be married dominated music from the 1950s. Songs such as "Hawaiian Wedding Song" (1959), "I Am Gonna Get Married" (1959), "Marianne" (1957), "The Bus Stop Song" (1956), "Love and Marriage" (1955) and "Band of Gold" (1956) all were top hit tunes that spoke about marriage and love.

Most of the songs implied heterosexual relationships. My study had no variation on sexual preference

between 1952 through the mid 1960s. The song "A Boy Without A Girl," sung by Frankie Avalon in 1959 and peaked at No. 10 illustrates this notion:

A boy without a girl is a song
without a tune.
Is a year without June, my love.

A boy without a girl is a day
without a night.
Is a star without light, my love

In Tab Hunter's No. 1 song in 1957, "Young Love," two themes emerged. One reflects the assumption that only heterosexuals could develop long-lasting, monogamous and romantic relationships in the music from the 1950s:

They say for every boy and girl,
There's just one love in this whole
world.

My analysis demonstrates other notable patterns within the song lyrics from 1952 to the mid 1960s. I found similar findings to Richard Cole, from the University of Minnesota, who determined that music from the first half of the 1960s demonstrated a dramatic shift from a single vocalist, usually male, to group vocalists. Cole's study also concludes that single male vocalists sang 53 percent of the lyrics from 1960-1964 (1971, p 391). Likewise, selected songs from my study during the late 1950s and early 1960s support Cole's research, concluding that there was an increase in group vocalists and a decline in single vocalists.

Unlike previous studies that examined gender differences between song artists, this study also takes a look at the different messages that are being portrayed by the musicians. For instance, male singers from the 1950s and early 1960s tended to give advice about how to obtain a bride or how to

get married and/or asked for promises and vows from his partner. Males often made mention of caring for their bride or future bride through financial support, thus playing the protector role. My study reflects that females sang very little about marriage specifically. When females would sing about marriage, they were often the protectors of virtue, were waiting to be asked to get married, were longing for marriage, or preparing for the role of being married. Until the 1960s, males sang about marriage more often than female vocalists; however, by the mid 1960s, the ratio began to even out.

The other theme in Tab Hunter's song "Young Love," is that marriage follows true love. The singer states that he knows what love is and because of that, he is confident that their love is reflective of a "deep emotion." However, his feelings must be verified from his lover and in doing so, their vow to one another will signify love for eternity. The singer is suggesting that true love leads to marriage. The song reads:

Young love, first love.
Filled with true devotion.
Young love, our love.
We share with deep emotion.

Just one kiss from your sweet lips,
Will tell me that your love is real.
And I can feel that it's true.
We will vow to one another,
There will never be another,
Love for you or for me.

Hunter's lyrics describe a popular conception that appears within music during the era of the 1950s, which is that true love equals marriage. "First love" is meaningful enough to enter into a marriage. Not only does "Young Love" reflect the cultural ideals about true love and matrimony, but the song also assumes an appreciation and acceptance of monogamy. The belief that love and

marriage involve one person forever, a soul mate, the “only one” is another prevailing perception in many songs from the late 1950s. Donnie Brooks touches on this observation in “Mission Bell” that peaked at No. 7 in 1960:

My love is higher than a mission bell.

Deeper than a wishin’ well
Stronger than a magic spell.
Wider than the widest sea
Longer than a memory.

Give me your heart of gold
Your heavenly magic touch
To cherish, have, and hold.

Donnie Brooks demonstrates with this song the importance of his love being deep, true and enduring. In order to “have and to hold,” the singer suggests that he must first have the female’s “heart of gold,” otherwise known as a solid and true love. Andy Williams’ “Hawaiian Wedding Song,” which peaked at No. 11 in 1959, also shows this:

Here and now, dear.
All my love I vow, dear.
Promise me that you will never
leave me,
I will love you longer than forever.

Now that we are one,
Clouds won’t hide the sun.
Blue skies of Hawaii smile,
On this, our wedding day.

Williams expresses a need for a monogamous partner. Indeed, he expects a partnership for eternity. In asking for her vow, the result will be “we are one,” perpetuating their love for each other.

The belief that marriage is a natural progression in life and is one to expect is prevalent throughout songs. Both “Young Love” and “A Boy Without A

Girl” touch on this notion. Dean Martin explains how love inevitably evolves into marriage in his song “Memories Are Made of This.” Martin gives a recipe for how true love should result in marriage. His song was a No. 1 hit in 1956:

Take one fresh and tender kiss,
Add one stolen night of bliss,
One girl, one boy, some grief, some joy
Memories are made of this...
Then add the wedding bells
One house where lovers dwell
Three little kids for flavor.
Stir carefully thru the days
See how the flavor stays.
These are the dreams you will savor.

Frank Sinatra’s “Love and Marriage,” peaked at No. 5 in 1955. Sinatra expresses that love and marriage are not interchangeable. Marriage is viewed as a social institution that is not to be belittled. In essence, Sinatra is saying that marriage needs love and both “can’t have one without the other.” He emphasizes the emotional context of marriage:

Love and marriage, love and marriage.
Go together like a horse and carriage.
This I tell you brother,
You can’t have one without the other.

Love and marriage, love and marriage
It’s an institution you can’t disparage.

Don Cherry’s 1956 No. 4 hit in 1956 “Band of Gold” also shows that true love should result in marriage:

I’ve never wanted wealth untold.
My life has one design.
A simple little band of gold,
To prove that you are mine.

While Don Cherry supports the common theme in lyrics from the 1950s, that true love evolves eventually into marriage, he also comments on the

importance of having the wedding ring to prove that he found true love. Coinciding with the various lyrical themes about marriage and courtship, another larger trend in music from the 1950s is the prevalent use of matrimony language, such as bells, rings, chapel, and other such words. This trend appears to be reflective of a kind of public material obsession, thus love becomes manifested in material items such as large diamond rings. A large engagement ring for example, also signifies the male role of providing for his new bride. Perry Como’s No. 1 hit in 1957 “Round and Round” is also reflecting on the significance of finding true love and the importance of finding the right ring to put on his true love’s hand:

Find a ring and put it round,
round, round.
And with ties so strong that two
hearts are bound.
Put it on the one you’ve found,
found, found.
For you know that this is really love.

Again, when music from the 1950s made mention of marriage, the lyrics contained common symbols that carried specific meanings that listeners understood. The symbolism of the wedding ring in the 1950s was a reflection of ownership and a display of accomplishment. Elaborate weddings in the 1950s were physical manifestations of love. The significance of singing about the ring in 1950s music could mark the importance and seriousness of the belief in marriage. Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps demonstrates in their 1956 hit song:

Those wedding bells are breaking
up that old gang of mine.
Well, there goes Jack, there goes Jim
Strollin’ down lovers’ lane.
But they don’t seem the same.
Life gets that lonesome feeling.
Then I hear the church bells ring.

Andy William "Hawaiian Wedding Song" is another example of common use of symbols in songs about marriage:

This is the moment I've waited for.
I can hear my heart singing.
Soon bells will be ringing.

Out of the 20 songs from the late 1950s that I examined, only three carried a negative slant. For instance, Patti Page sang, "I Went to Your Wedding" which was No. 1 for 10 weeks in 1952. In this song, the singer is heartbroken; however, she does not criticize the institution of marriage. In "I Went to Your Wedding," Page sings about losing her old flame who married another woman:

I went to your wedding,
Although I was dreading the
thought of losing you.
The organ was playing,
My poor heart kept saying, "Your
dreams, your dreams are through."

She came down the aisle, wearing a
smile.
A vision of loveliness.
I uttered a sigh, whispering
goodbye.
Goodbye to my happiness.

Oh your mother was crying.
Your father was crying.
And I was crying too.
Teardrops were falling,
Because we were losing you.

Lloyd Price sang a song titled "Where Were You (On Our Wedding Day)?" It peaked at No. 23 in 1959. The song portrays a man who is very distraught because his bride left him at the altar. While bemoaning his personal experience, he remains committed to the institution of marriage, but cannot imagine marrying anyone but his first love. Price agrees with Sinatra and

others, that marriage was something that was reserved for his first love, except his first love left him. Thus, he now feels he has a life of loneliness.

It's been ten years or maybe more.
I never got married and that's for sure.
You broke my heart and now I know
I've been a fool for you so here I go...
Whoa oh-give me my ring back-
whoa oh...

For Page and Price, being single spoiled their belief in what true love was supposed to be like. Singlehood meant a life of loneliness and failed dreams. The third negative song was "I Got a Wife," sung by The Mark IV. This song establishes a protocol for what happens when a wife puts too many demands on her husband; he'll run away. This song breaks social trends that music from the 1950s has established thus far, in that it paints a picture of a less than perfect marriage. However, the artists do not criticize the institution of marriage per se, but rather express discontentment about a particular relationship a husband has with his wife:

I got a wife at home
I got a wife; she's the apple of my life
But I wish she would leave me alone

When I hear
Hang your clothes up
Wipe your feet off
Goodness sakes don't slam the door
Fix the socks and dry the dishes

He don't love her anymore
There he goes right out the door
He'll be back 'bout half past ten
And then she'll start right in again.

As music rolled into the early 1960s, a gender difference about how music portrays marriage emerges. Female vocalists sang about marriage and dating in a recipe format, containing hints on

how to find a man to marry, how to keep him, and how to behave once a man is yours. I am not suggesting that "I Got a Wife" solely changed the course of how female vocalists portrayed marriage in the 1960s, but it certainly added to the new discourse. In the next section, I will discuss this point in more depth.

Analysis of Lyrics from 1960-1964

In the early 1960s, a subtle shift in musical lyrics occurred. Beginning in the early 1960s, there was a significantly larger population of female vocalists who sing about courtship, love, and marriage; an increase from the 1950s. Females and males still portray marriage in a different manner. Females by and large, sang fewer songs specifically geared toward marriage, focusing on courtship, dating, and romance. However, if the songs are about marriage, they are in a recipe format of how to find a man to marry, how to keep him, and what to do to when she has the man. Females often express in their lyrics the waiting for and dreaming of getting married. Females in the 1950s were expected to marry. Young adolescents were expected to protect their innocence and preserve a good name for themselves if they expected to marry well (Palladino, 1996, p 18). These social norms seem to have carried into the music of the early 1960s. In the No. 5 hit in 1963, "One Fine Day," the Chiffons demonstrated how females did not sing about marriage explicitly and also defines the female's role of waiting for her lover to "settle down" with her. The vocalists in the Chiffons remained the keeper of virtue in the context of marriage and courtship:

One fine day, you'll look at me.
And you will know our love was
meant to be.
One fine day, you're gonna want me
for your girl.

The arms I long for will open wide.
And you'll be proud to have me,
right by your side.
One fine day, you're gonna want me
for your girl.

Though I know you're the kind of
boy
Who will want to run around
I'll keep waiting and someday,
darling,
You'll come to me when you want
to settle down.

Dusty Springfield, in her 1964 No. 6 hit, "Wishin' and Hopin'" gives another recipe for females to follow in order to keep a man. Songs in the late 1950s and early 1960s, like Springfield's, described how females need to have a man and how to ensure his satisfaction:

Wishin' and Hopin' and thinkin'
and prayin'.
Plannin' and dreamin' each night of
his charms,
Won't get you into his arms.

So, if you're lookin' to find love
(you can share)
All you gotta do is
Hold him and kiss him and love
him
And show him that you care.

Show him that you care just for
him.
Do the things he likes to do.
Wear your hair just for him, 'cause
You won't get him by
Thinkin' and a-prayin' wishin' and
a-hopin.'

In her No. 10 hit in 1963, "Just One Look," Doris Troy sustains the female's perspective of courtship and dating. Note that the singer's role is fairly passive, for she is just thinking to herself. However, she has taken the incentive of scheming to get the guy:

Say you will, will be mine
Forever and always, oh-oh, oh-oh.
Just one look and I knew
That you were my only one.

I thought I was dreaming, but I was
wrong, yeah, yeah, yeah.
Oh, but I'm gonna keep on schemin'
Till I can make you, make you my
own!

For Doris Troy, falling in love just took one look. She fell in love at first sight and was determined to convince the person she was infatuated with to want her too. The notion that one must find their "true and only love" in order to marry seems to have changed in the 1960s. Now, love can be determined by mere physical attraction.

However, the importance of keeping the guy still remains prevalent in female vocalist songs in the 1960s. Mary Wells in her number one hit, "My Guy," released in 1964, expresses the role that she will maintain in order to keep her "guy," which primarily means that she will be faithful and monogamous:

I'm telling you from the start I can't
be torn apart from my guy.
Nothing you could do could make
me be untrue to my guy.
Nothing you could buy could make
me tell a lie to my guy.
I gave my guy my word of honor,
To be faithful and I'm gonna.

Mary Wells' perspective of true love is still maintained through monogamy and faithfulness of her partner's needs. Even though marriage is not explicitly stated, the singer does use language reflective of marriage to explain her devotion.

Darlene Love in her 1963 No. 39 hit, "Today I Met The Boy I'm Gonna Marry," also shows that love can be at first sight, and that she immediately knows she is going to marry this person:

Today I met the boy I'm gonna
marry.
He's all I wanted all my life and
even more.
"Here comes the bride" when he
walked through the door.
Today, I met the boy I'm gonna
marry.

The boy who's life and dreams and
love I wanna share.
The boy whose on my hand a band
of gold I bear.
The band of gold I always dreamed
I'd wear.

Marriage from the artist's perspective was a life long dream, something that she longed for. She imagines her love developing into marriage and she sees marriage as dreamy and enduring. Female vocalists, The Dixie Cups, sing about the happiness and longevity of marriage in the No. 1 hit in 1963, "Going to The Chapel."

Bells will ring
The sun will shine.
I'll be his and he'll be mine.
We'll love until the end of time.
And we'll never be lonely anymore,
Because we're...
Goin' to the chapel and we're gonna
get married.

From these females' perspective, marriage is seen as a blissful and wondrous event for a girl to wait for. Marriage is portrayed as long lasting and fulfilling until the end.

Conclusion

Overall, songs within the first period of music from 1952-1959 were overwhelmingly about courtship, love and romance and had the instilled belief that once "true love" was achieved, the next natural progression was to get married. Music also was reflective of the belief that marriage and romantic

relationships were reserved for heterosexual couples, with no variation existing within the lyrics examined from 1952 through 1964. Male vocalists dominated music in this sample until the 1960s when more female singers appeared. When males sang about marriage and courtship, they were giving advice or asking for advice. Female vocalists tended to sing about love and romance. When females sang about marriage, they were waiting, longing, and preparing for marriage.

In the second period, consisting of songs from 1960 through 1964, female vocalists sang about marriage, more than in the previous years. When marriage was specifically addressed in lyrics, females sang about it in the context of how to get a man, how to keep him, and how to behave in a relationship. Again, marriage remained a dreamy aspiration and often craved by females. Female vocalists portrayed marriage as an ambition, an event that they hoped for and dreamed of. Female singers and music groups of the early 1960s characterized marriage as an institution to preserve, protect and participate in. There were very few female critics of marriage as a negative institution. In general, from 1952 through the early 1960s, marriage was seen as a positive institution for couples to engage in and music rarely advised listeners to not engage in marriage.

Music remains a cultural tool to assist us in examining aspects of culture. It is therefore not just a form of entertainment. Music and culture work together, influencing, reflecting and commenting on new ideas and patterns in marriage, love and romance. Rock-and-roll music has stood the test of time, remaining as an accessible historical artifact of the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of matrimonial relationships.

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