

The Effects of Men in Power on Women

Throughout the history of the Western world more often than not positions of power have been given to men. Time after time they have abused the power they have over other people for their own gain. More specifically these men have often used their power and status to abuse and exploit women.

For a very long time men have had the notion that they are superior to women stuck in their heads and it has generally been accepted by our societies for most of history. Granted because of this notion that men are superior to women what we consider our society was mostly created by men. This make it very hard for women to meet “the impossible male standards”(Mustafa) and ideals of a society that was created by men.

Because of the environment created by these ideals, if a woman wasn't obedient to her “superior” male counterparts she would be considered crazy and out of line (commentary). Historically we can see these messages were very prevalent in media during the Elizabethan time such as William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Even in this play's introduction, the message that women must be submissive to men is present. Such as when the Page, who is pretending to be the wife of Sly in an elaborate prank says: “I am your wife in all obedience” (Induction, ii, 103). The important part of this line is that the character who saying it is man pretending to be a women furthermore enforcing the fact that these are expectations that were created and enforced by men for women.

The idea that a woman should speak out or just have their own voice in general is a very new and only recently accepted idea. Throughout time you can see that speaking out often was not an option because of how the society would react. Notably the premise of *The Taming of the Shrew* is that Kate is a shrew. A shrew was a popular term in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A women was called a shrew often because they were very outspoken and sometimes treated men how they treated women. There could be many harsh punishments for a shrew (Commentary). Another example of this can be seen in an article from 1808 called “Advice to the Newly Married Lady.” In the article, the writer states “...should home become tiresome or disagreeable. But your house is your only refuge, your husband your only companion” (Jennings). This enforces the expectation that if you were a women and were not happy in your marriage you had nowhere to go and because at the time a women's life's purpose was considered to be; get married and have kids, there was really no other options.

This stigma that has been created, that women must not speak out, has only recently begun to be broken down. With movements like the Me Too movement that finally encouraged women to speak out and gave them a platform to do so. The Me Too movement originated in 2006 and was popularized in 2017 when several actresses opened up about their experiences with sexual assault, many many involving well known film producer Harvey Weinstein (Me Too).

Unfortunately, because these powerful men often abuse their power this leads to their tendency to abuse other people, commonly by sexually abuse. Once again because of the lower status of women over time the victims generally become women.

For the longest time, society accepted this type of behaviour. We would now classify this as abuse but was not always considered a bad thing. In Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* when Petruchio who is newly married to Kate does such actions as "[Kate] ate no meat today, nor none shall eat" (IV, i, 174) or "Last night [Kate] slept not, nor tonight she shall not" (IV, i, 175) he is starving and depriving her of sleep. In the world we live in today doing this would be considered abusive and unexpected but in the Elizabethan times of Shakespeare they considered this "taming" hence the name of the play. The Elizabethans would have thought that he was just getting rid of the shrew inside of her and making her into a woman that would be accepted in their society.

Often times when someone has power they will do anything to keep that power and to gain more; this is usually done by exploiting the people they have power over. Whoever it is could be doing it for anything from sex to monetary gain. To demonstrate this you could use the ending of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* when Petruchio uses Kate to win a wager and get money. For the wager he makes a bet with Hortensio and Lucentio saying that "Let's each one send unto his wife, and he whose wife is most obedient... Shall win the wager which we will propose"(V, ii, 68-71). In the play Petruchio wins the wager of course because he had abused Kate until she was so submissive that she would do whatever he said. After Kate's show of new found mannerism Kate's father, Baptista promises Petruchio "Another dowry to another daughter,"(V, ii, 126) showing that her former outspoken behaviour was so unacceptable that even her own father is happy to see her changed.

A modern example of women being used for monetary gain could be music videos in which you will quite often see many hyper sexualized women. The idea behind this objectification of women's bodies is that more people in particular men are expected to click and watch it. One video that emphasizes this is "Cherry Pie" by: Warrant. In the Music video the model is very scantily dressed while multiple sexual innuendos are made. This not only objectifies women but also pushes a hyper sexual attitude onto the audience (Warrant).

As you can see, in a society that gives power much more easily to men than it does women, the men who receive that power have consistently throughout history abused that power for their own gain. Only recently have these issues and barriers started to be conquered and there is still a very long way to go to reach true equality.

Work Cited:

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