Episode 7

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**A'Milliana:** Hello. Welcome back to the Be Well MU Mental Health podcast with your co-host, A'Milliana and Yessenia and today we are talking about the societal pressures facing women in marriage and beauty, and most importantly in education. We have a special guest here today, Andrea Anaya and she can tell you a little bit more about he.

**Andrea:** Hi. My name's Andrea Anaya. I'm a junior here at Marymount University and I'm a politics major with the minor in sociology. Just happy to be here

**A'Milliana:** So I actually am very excited for this subject and topic because like it's something that we currently still face today in society I feel like predated traditions when it comes to like marriage and family and all that. Oh, you need to find a husband who's gonna support [00:01:00] you and you just be a stay-at-home mom and wife. So as women here, have you all personally ever experienced pressures of marriage and familial expectations within society or within your own lives?

**Andrea:** Yeah, for sure. I think it's really also a cultural thing. Like I think there's a lot of connection there. I think coming from a Hispanic like Latino background My parents, I'm a migrant as well. My family is all immigrants and I'm an immigrant. And back there like I'm from El Salvador, just Central America. It's very accustom for women to get married at a young age. My grandma got married at like 18 and my grandpa was like way older than her and my mom got married and then now I think it's changing because now my mom, like my family doesn't expect me to get married now, but to them. It's like, I'm going to get married eventually, but those aren't really exactly my [00:02:00] plans to be exact.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I know for me personally I'm, it was, it's kind of weird because from an Americanized perspective, because my family generated from West Indies, so I have that tradition, but I'm also Americanized the same thing, and it's like contradicts each other because typically I'll get married 18 in that tradition. But in America, I don't need to get married if I don't want to get married. It's like more towards my choice and not towards societal choices for me. But I also get the culture perspective too, because I'm dating a Salvadorian man and that's a big thing within you all's culture too. I love that the fact this society today is like trying to push back on that and try to like, you know, not that type of tradition or type of mindset when it concerns marriage and family and the roles that a woman should play within their family. [00:03:00] So I really like the fact that our society is a driving force and moving forward from that predated tradition and going more towards like a 50 50 type of thing and having more responsibilities and capabilities that women actually do have and always had. So that's my take on it. .

**Yessenia:** Yeah, I mean, echoing a lot of what you both have just said, I think, and as someone who was raised here in the United States, like working with that idea that you don't have to like follow the norms. Right? And then in the backdrop you have that cultural beliefs and pressure like from family in particular that you do and at the same time, like, I think it's important to recognize that even though more and more women openly choosing their own path that may divert away from gender norms. I think that the pressure is still there. [00:04:00] I mean, if we look at like the media and the kinds of stories that are told in movies and all that, like it's still echoed . And I think that makes it challenging because on the one hand you have people who are like voicing themselves more individually and in what feels right to them and on the other, , that pressure's still there.

**A'Milliana:** I think a lot of women face that type of pressure because of everything, and I like the fact that, I wanna say it does, it didn't start with Gen Zs, but I feel like we pushed the narrative in women having more stake within society and that moves me along to my next topic, which would be like beauty standards, because I know a lot of women on social media have, you know, pioneered with these beauty standards that we currently have in society and the culture of social media and influencer culture and everything like that has made a [00:05:00] universal image of what a woman should be. But there's been a lot of hashtag activism, like body positivity. And personally for me, in pageant culture, which is like widely viewed. As something negative when it comes towards a woman's body. But I know for me personally, that it's more about building confidence and you know, celebrating a woman's body rather than judging it.

but, I wanna know from you all, how do you think social media has taken towards what beauty. Standards are today?

**Andrea:** I think. When you're talking. About issues in general, like social media, it just all goes back to social media and any topic you talk about but with beauty in particular, I think in this generation you said Gen Z and I don't know if there's another generation or not feels like there is. It's just easier now to just get on your feed and then see all these different people, whether it's like your friends, but also like celebrities. . And so that celebrity culture of wanting to look like your favorite [00:06:00] celebrity. Or you know, for me, I remember the first time I ever felt like that was like I was in middle school. , I was watching the Kardashians . I was like, the first time I was like, oh, like, is that like, that's the definition of beauty.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah. The Kardashian boom.

**Andrea:** Yeah, because, I grew up watching like old Disney shows where like mm-hmm. they would always have like those moral lessons of like, dont just be yourself.

**A'Milliana:** I love that. So Raven,

**Andrea:** So, that was my stuff and so I grew up with that. But then like, you know, I guess as social media moved forward and evolved more you know, those kind of concepts went away and it was more about these filters who looks better, like your caption, the what you wear on social media. , you can't just post it, post whatever. Now you gotta like, think strategically what you're gonna post. Who's gonna like it, whether you look good or not. And that translates into like your day-to-day life as well. Like whether it's makeup or fashion. But it's hard. It's hard Cause you, I feel like as humans, we compare ourselves a lot to everybody. [00:07:00] And you know, I think that mentality can really destroy you. In your confidence.

**Yessenia:** I definitely am a believer that these standards have always been there and what like these social media outlets have done is like make it so much more easier to access all the time and that's what makes it almost feel like we're exposed all the time to the same like toxic ideals like we're talking about diet culture, we're talking about gender norms, like and a lot of these beauty standards, they shift throughout history. That's for sure. And at the same time, they always kind of like echo the same message of like, if you're not meeting this standard, then something's wrong with you and that's where we kind of like fall into this path of like toxic diet culture. Yep. And you know, all of that. So, . It is interesting how much more easily accessible it is to us on a day-to-day basis. Like even like thinking about like the images of celebrities we get through like [00:08:00] social media, especially if you follow celebrities, right?

And the standards we're receiving from those images that tell us like, okay, that's what beautiful is.

**Andrea:** Yeah. But you know, I feel like lately there's been like a new wave of celebrities who are kind of define that. And are being more transparent and honest. Yeah. I point to like Liz, a lesbian being one who like just embraces who she is and is so proud of her body and what she does. And I just admire her so much. But she's not the only one. There's a lot of celebrities now who are like disgusting or eating disorders. This is the kind of stuff that you just didn't see before. . So I think the more we talk about it, the more we have conversations about it.

Yeah. The more people will come around and be like, the level

**A'Milliana:** of transparency and vulnerability now, and I feel, I, I thank God the fact that it's being awarded instead of being shown as a weakness or something bad or you know, just negative overall. I feel that because of figures like that, within today's culture specifically, [00:09:00] a lot of people are coming out being like, okay, you know what?

This is the actual a reality of this. This is not what I am, this is marketable. This is how much marketable it is for me. And like what people told me that is desirable. But in all actuality, I'm seeing a lot of public figures talk about a lot of real world things, which aids in, you know, debunking all of these beauty standards that we've been taught throughout literally all of our lives and like, and through it stands a test of time too.

This is the same stuff that was back in the nineties, eighties, seventies. You can even go back to like 15 hundreds. So yeah, I definitely think this is like really important right now that a lot of public figures are doing what they are doing.

**Yessenia:** Yeah, like redefining this idea of beauty, right? Because even when we're talking about toxic diet culture and fatphobia inherently this, this old antiquated belief that fatness equals [00:10:00] ugly. Right. And so I think there are a lot of people who are embracing this idea of body positivity and health at every size and at the center is that beauty has nothing to do with weight which is actually that beauty standard that's being set from long ago and, and similarly to that, like I would also pin on that gender norms around femininity. Right and I think everyone in gender expression and as women, I think we're pressured to display femininity either in the clothes we wear or the makeup we wear and not every woman is the same in terms of like what they, how they wanna express their gender. And that's an important thing to add too. Cause that is part of. Female experience.

**A'Milliana:** I love the fact that we are taking what's inside instead of what's outside more seriously now in terms of personality and character and expression. And going into my next topic. I've seen within like the workplace and education and everything like that, [00:11:00] there's women trendsetters and there's pioneers within those fields that are unapologetic about who they are and express how they are going to be in this society. So in terms of like the education and workplace, I've seen like a lot of progress when it comes to women and being in the man's world. Twice as hard to get the same type of success men do. So I wanted to hear, do you think that our society is to the steps of stop focusing on how to control women? Or do you think that women are starting to liberate themselves from these types of pressures?

**Andrea:** To be honest with, in my own personal experience, I think because I've had different barriers and struggles when I associate. my success and like those barriers, it never links back to my gender. I would think of other things first. Like my race. My culture, my [00:12:00] status as an immigrant. You know, like my background in general, like where I came from. More than, more so than women just cause I don't think I've ever been, felt like as a woman, I can't do this and can't do that. In terms of like job opportunities. And maybe that's just because I'm in this generation where, it's like slowly not disappearing, but like we're starting to like stand up against it and fight back more.

Whereas I think like my grandma and my mom would've different perspectives on that, but in the field that I am going towards, like it's very male dominated. So at times I definitely have seen like what do they call it? The, A boys playground or like the boys club , especially in politics, very male dominated. I think we really are starting to, you know, free our social media standards, especially with the women's rights movement. Mm-hmm. and being more inclusive. You know, from the beginning of time, like the suffrage movement, the beginning was really just to advocate for white women. And now we're seeing a lot of like, people of color, women of [00:13:00] color standing up and being like, yo, I'm here. Like, my voice is equally as important. And to find those Alexs and having these new role models to look up. , yeah.

**Yessenia:** I think one of the most empowering things I've seen in my short lifetime, is that there's just more individual awareness of these things. And there's language around it. And I think when I was younger, there wasn't really language around it for me. But now I hear people talking about this. throwing words out like gender norms, and I think that just even recognizing that when it's at play helps you actively as a woman, as an individual, be mindful of like how it might be impacting you in your environment and take it a notch above that.

And you'll see like different women in different spaces speaking out and calling out these things when they're happening. I obviously think there's a lot of work to be done, so there's a lot of systems that we're talking about, and [00:14:00] you just brought up intersectionality, which is also very much heavily woven into the experience of a woman and so it, it is like a long path, but I think on an individual basis, the more we're mindful of these things, the more we're like naming them and calling them out the closer we are to us ourselves like feeling liberated from these toxic ideas. .

**A'Milliana:** So. Like you've referenced just now that you're a woman in politics and it's a male dominated field, and you touched on how not only it's not only being a woman, it's also because of your race and your background and all of that. How do you feel like you personally maneuvered through that field?

**Andrea:** Thats hard one I think my first time that I ever experienced some sort of like, I don't know what to say, discrimination or like bias or microaggression.. would be like, when I, my first internship at politics was interning [00:15:00] with Congressman Jimmy Raskin from District eight in Maryland. I interned going to my senior year of high school during the summer. and I was very scared, very nervous. Turns out I was the only high schooler in the office. They're all college students and like majority of them were like Ivy League students and they were men and it wasn't just them, like most of the interns there were like white men, or if they were a woman, they would come from like very like high socio-economic background. So as a Latino coming from a low income background, an immigrant, all that was very intimidating to me and I felt like I couldn't relate. A lot of the language they were using was the language that I was accustomed to. Their experiences weren't the same. I felt like my value wasn't enough for me to be there.

Like I wasn't putting enough, I wasn't an asset to that team and it took a lot for me to realize that I because my perspective and my experiences are just as valuable because [00:16:00] there's things that I know and understand that they don't and vice versa. And I don't know, the, the way I defy that, I would say, would just be being open about it like, I think I, you know, I started having conversations with him and being like, you know, I'm proud of where I come from. This is my background and I'm here so clearly, like we both have the potential to be here. . And you're gonna respect me and you. I'm gonna take up space and you're just gonna have to deal with it.

**A'Milliana:** Exactly. Break your glass ceiling, .

**Andrea:** You know what I'm saying? Like, and that's hard to do. But I think I've always been the type of person that's like, I'm gonna stand my ground. But yeah. . That's been my experience.

**A'Milliana:** I've had experiences being a fact, so being a communications major, there's a lot of different types of communications and I did branch into the realm of sports communications, which is very male dominated, and I've found within my exploration of that field that a lot of women's [00:17:00] opinions surrounding male dominated sports like basketball and you know, lacrosse and all that, you're not taking us seriously because you're not really the gender that's known for that sport. So it was, for me, it was a little difficult being the fact that one I'm an opinionated woman and I'm gonna say what I feel. I'm gonna say what's like, needs to be said. , it was a way that I needed to talk about it and like make them feel uncomfortable for them to actually get the message which is like very, it's very hard at times. Cause you inherently don't wanna make people feel uncomfortable about things but at the same time, how are you going to change? How are you gonna enact change if. , you're not going to say something or do something.

But for you personally, women in politics are there any resources or anything that you felt that was like, great for women that were going into politics?

**Andrea:** For sure. I mean, I [00:18:00] think a lot of it is mentorship, networking. . So when I was on the hill, That's what they call it, . You know, I guess said a very male dominated field, even when it comes to staff. But there are women in politics especially. You know, it's, it's breaking in today's society, there are women in politics and there's starting to be a lot of women of color in politics , which is as equally as important. So when I was interning there, there was like one Latina that was a staff member, and I remember the first thing I did was like, set up a coffee time with her. Just to like talk. Get to know her networking and be like, yo, like how did you, you know, get into this field? Like, what's your background? Like, well, you know, How did you do this? So guiding those networks and then building like that sort of mentorship relationship takes you a long way because then you know, they know who you are and then if opportunities come there with it, they'll be like, oh, I know a person, they'll come back to you and honestly, that's how I've gotten a lot of like different opportunities. reach out to people [00:19:00] who I look up to who I feel have similar experiences at me and have already gone through the thing and like, you know, overcame those barriers and now in that position, so I'm looking at them like, I want be where you are.

So I'm gonna talk to you to see what you did. So again, a lot of that's not working.

**A'Milliana:** Yeah. Definitely. Never really, I, you always think like networking is so like, it's like, oh yeah, that's one of the main things to do, but you never really know how important networking is until like, you see people's lives change just from meeting somebody.

What are some methods that you found in the past that helped you and. Women in gaining that voice that they have within themselves.

**Yessenia:** I think one of the things that quickly comes to mind is just working on really feeling and establishing a firm sense of who you are and it may be that as if you are a woman and you identified such, that's a salient identity, but sometimes it's [00:20:00] not the most salient identity and so even like being mindful, like Andrea was mentioning, like that's like second tertiary for her. . But there are other identities that are more salient for you, that you are more mindful of in your day-to-day. But even so, like, I think just giving yourself that time and space to really feel firm and like, these are the things that matter to me. This is the person I am and then as we're navigating the world, we are kind of already working off that base of like, okay, this is my sense of myself.

So then when all these different beautiful things come at us and tell us that we're not we already know, but this is who I am. Right. And so what I'm talking about is building self-esteem . And that is a lifetime journey. Right. arrive and you're done. It is continuous work of just recognizing when you feel insecure, recognizing when there are spaces you're in are making you feel like you're not enough or you don't belong. And then actively finding a way to [00:21:00] take up that space and or find the space that suits you more. So I think that the biggest thing I can think of right now,

**A'Milliana:** yeah, no, I definitely agree with you and I, I definitely thank you every time for this because you bring valuable resources and just knowledge in general to a lot of the topics that you know are current relevant in our current society. I think we can end it on that great note. Thank you so much, Andrea, for coming and spreading your knowledge and your experiences with us. I will always

forever Thank you Yessenia, for being a co-host of the Be Well MU podcast. She's vital vital in this and yeah, you can find the full transcript on marymount.edu and yeah, that's it. Bye.

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