

Essay on the radical idea of marrying for love

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



According to Stephanie Coontz, marriage based on love and affection is a new development that is gaining currency in the modern society. Indeed, this assertion by the author is effectively backed by a number of illustrations from historical accounts from the global divide. While her argument must be appreciated for its robust and candid approach on the factors incidental to marriage, one can still assert with authority that marriage for love is not as radical an idea. The parameters and line of thought that Stephanie adopts while proving that marriage during the past centuries was not singularly a consequence of love, does not effectively disprove the role love in marriage. Therefore, one ought to approach the issue of marriage more factually. As Stephanie quotes from George Bernard Shaw, “ marriage is an institution that essentially bounds two people together, under the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions”. Shaw’s argument was informed not only by the theoretical understanding of marriage, but also by the practical application. Incidentally, Stephanie does not delve any deeper in as far as Shaw’s arguments are concerned. She notes that Bernard Shaw’s quote was amusing. She then folds into her narrative as adduced evidence for her reaction to Bernard Shaw. It must be noted that she selectively quotes Bernard without adducing additional evidence on the context involved. This skews the narrative in favour of her arguments. In fact, from then on, she proceeds with giving a lot of verbiage on past marriage.

Interestingly, she by design selects communities whose traditions and lifestyles necessarily supports her argument. She conveniently overlooks the other communities with contrary evidence in the ways of life. This paints the

society as being against marriage on love. The audience is tempted into believing that the generalization applies across board. To further bolster her arguments and widespread generalization, she conveniently picks evidence from across the global divide. She revisits the Chinese, the Greek, and the Africans, among other traditions. However, a keen audience would be able to observe that her examples lack an analysis of the other side of the equation. She is biased and appears to be determined to prove her point. One wonders why Stephanie could not simply adduce her evidence and let her audience objectively reach a conclusion. Her obvious assertions that are made in complete oblivion of otherwise situation makes the audience cast doubts as to her objectivity.

One assertion that characterizes Coontz's narrative is that the decision to marry in most communities was not based singularly on love. In fact, she takes the trouble and adduces evidence that proves this assertion. However, from a wider spectrum one empathizes with the situations facing the individuals in the cases she presents. In the real sense, one can argue that with or without love some of the decisions would not be able to change and are, thereby, irreversible. Take, for instance, cases in which a father rapes his son's wife. As she rightly notes, communities found it wise and prudent to dispense with the marriage rather than threaten the father son relationship. Stephanie applies an opportunistic interpretation of this case and asserts that such communities did not appreciate the concept of love in the institution of marriage. A brief analysis of her reasoning exposes her deliberate deviation of facts. The community's decision to sever the marriage rather than threaten the father son relationship ought to be

divorced from love in marriage. It would constitute a factor under love in marriage had the decision was solely under charge of the son involved. However, credit must be given for Stephanie's ability to bring out the failures of marriage and how different communities have dealt with the shortcomings. She succinctly justifies the tradition of polygamy which, as she notes, plays a vital role in the cultures of the communities that have it entrenched. Indeed, Stephanie appears to prefer direct polygamy to the hypocrisy witnessed in monogamous societies. She argues thus, " in modern America, such practices are stuff of trash TV: I caught my sister in bed with my husband, My parents brought their lovers into our home". This narrative essentially puts a case forward for polygamous marriage.

On the other hand, this should not be interpreted as lack of love in marriage. Stephanie does not offer an explanation of her understanding of love. From her narrative, one would think she ties sexuality to love. She asserts that cheating in spouses is a direct consequence of lack of love in marriages. In fact, she even goes as far as mentioning the sexual escapades of noblemen, noblewomen, kings and queens as proof of absence of love in marriage. As she wants her audience to think, she claims marriages for this class of people were merely for political convenience . One needs to ask whether the presence of love in marriages would necessarily dispense with adultery among couples. Such reasoning is fallacious since adultery does not arise from the desire for love, rather, the motive in adultery lies in the pursuit of sexual satisfaction, which is entirely independent of love.

Overall, Coontz puts a strong case in support of the assertion that marriage for love is a radical idea. She fails to look at the matter from a wider

spectrum that would incorporate opposing opinions and ideas and leave let the audience objectively conceive the idea.

Works Cited

Coontz, Stephanie. The Radical Idea of Marrying for Love. 27 June 2005. 3 October 2012 .

Scarf, Maggie. Intimate Worlds: How Families Thrive and Why They Fail. revised. New York: Ballantine Books, 2006.