

Why do americans
consider love to be a
prerequisite for
marriage term paper
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Foreword

There is no recipe that facilitates in the development of love in a relation named " marriage". George Bernard Shaw consider marriage is an affectionate mechanism that help two persons to live together with a sense of understanding. He defined marriage of two persons " under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions. They are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition continuously until death do them part." The subject of love and marriage is a very interesting one especially as it concerns the status quo of Americans. The general ideology of an average American is to marry someone she or he loves and have affection for each other. This is directionally opposite to the traditional idea of marriage handed down from the ancient time. Sociologists devoted less interest to the subject of love as its regards marriage up until the recent time when it became the order of the day.

Studies conducted by sociologists identified that the times between 1920s and 1930s marked the turning point in the ideology of young people with respect to love and marriage. Prior to this time, marriage was rather an institution bonded by commitment, obligation, and duty. Interestingly the dramatic turnaround of this time went a long way to change the prerequisite of marriage from that of obligation and duty to compatibility, understanding and affection (Henslin, 2013). As a matter of fact, this transformed the way marriage is seen today, and it also makes it to be less bonding. When the affection is less felt or the understanding appears not to be there, divorce becomes the case.

Concepts and Reasons for Love Being a Prerequisite for Marriage

Many concepts affect the way in which marriage is viewed by an average American today. These concepts and factors cut across every aspect of the average American society and affect the way things are done. However, before going into these concepts, the term "love" should be defined. What is love? Love is immaterial, and it does not have any single definition. A lot of sociologists have made effort to define love as it relates to marriage. To some sociologists, love is a deeper level of social behavior than friendship. Some others define it as a combination of friendship and sex. Furthermore, love is seen as a process in which human beings develop attraction with one another, and this is one of the prime social concepts that we have learned to do things in the modern time. A lot of sociological studies discussed the chemistry of love that talks about the actual process that takes place in the body when someone is experience love (Fowler, 2007). In other words, love can be seen as an experience rather than a state. Unlikely most of the people have the misconception about it today, and they consider that it is a state contrary to experience.

Religious Conception

One of the most imperative concepts to consider with respect to the subject is religious issues. Most religions encourage the idea of love as a prerequisite for marriage. The issue of divorce is now seen as one of the vital options in a marriage. Marriage is no longer a bond between two people established by obligation and duty, but intimacy and love. Most religions hold the idea of the "--- to death do us part." and insist that marriage should be based on a

profound love. A couple should maintain ardor until death does them apart (Coontz, 2005). However, as volatile as love is, this idea and concept have fallen flat over the years, and that is why high rate of divorce is prevailing today in the society. This is because the stress and tension in the homes become so high that the two parties can no longer stay and have to separate.

Emotional Issues

Everybody lives with his or her emotion, and one cannot be separated from it. Another concept to undertint the love is to consider it as a state of emotion. However, the challenge with emotion is that it is subject to change. In this circumstances, there is the probability of changing emotional behavior as per surrounding environment. A lot of marriages in America today are based entirely on emotion. As Fowler (2007) predicted that the marriage in western societies are entered into as a public manifestation of love. In late nineteenth century, love had won the battle along the entire line of the upper section of the middle class. This is the reason that love has been seen as the prerequisite for marriage among Americans.

Individual Happiness

People intend to be happy in life. The pursuit of individual happiness is one of the major reasons why people marry for love in America. This is simply because everyone wants to stay with someone who will make him happy all the days of his life. Irrespective of the fact that people get the exact opposite of this, the major reason, why most people enter into marriage with their mates is to get satisfied and happy. Individual happiness is a key concept

among Americans when it comes to marriage, and it is clearly supported by the law. This concept is based entirely on the fact that love is a prerequisite for marriage (Fowler, 2007). However, the question is: should marriage be separated from happiness? Why does the pursuit of happiness often end up in futility?

Ethical Issues

Ethics is a science that studies the morality of human behaviors. It is significant and fundamental philosophical arm which must guide our day to day actions. In consideration of the ethics of marriage and love, some questions often come to mind. Is it right to marry for love or obligation? What is love in a relationship with marriage? Is marrying out of obligation and ethical duty? What are the dangers of marrying for love? In answering these ethical questions, a number social factors will be addressed, and it will become obvious why the rate of divorce in the society is on the high side. If love is understood as a heightened state of emotion, then what happens when the emotion or better put “ chemistry” is no longer there? If this is the case, then marrying for love is simply being at the mercy of the other person. Again, what if one of the partners develops the same kind of emotion or even a stronger one for another person? It is morally wrong to hurt your partner but if marriage is only considered on the basis of feeling and emotion, then it becomes the order of the day as obvious today.

Economic Issues

Economic issues also contribute to the present ideology of marriage today. The state of marriage today is affected by the economics of the day. The

cost of an average wedding in the United States continues to increase as the day goes by, and this has contributed to the decline in the rate at which people marriage today. Most people marry today in order to fulfill certain financial goal. Friedman (1988) pointed out the assumption that marriage partners put considerable value on one another's welfare, but there is still room for some conflict of interest between them. He went further to argue that most marriages in the past were entered into as a political and economic arrangement so as to secure a good position for a person or his family.

Legal Issue

Marriage, particularly in the United States of America is greatly influenced by legal factors. The legal factors in consideration are laws and policies on marriage. For instance, in the mid-1900s, interracial marriage is proscribed in the United States of America. Although this law has been lifted today, it did have a significant effect on marriage in the country. Another policy of concern is same sex marriage which has undergone a lot of debate in the US Senate. Today, up to United States of America have same sex marriage legalized in them. This is due to the fact and assumption that marriage is a union of two grown-up persons who have affection for one another.

Therefore irrespective of their sexes, this idea of marriage welcomes the joining together of two people who have affection for one another and agrees to live together. Thus, the Republican Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas criticized same-sex marriage and opined that “ if marriage is to be viewed as the way two adults make their love known to each other, then

there is no reason of marrying before children are born instead of after. The question is what the reason for marriage is if it does not matter whether a couple should be married before the birth of a child."

Sexual Satisfaction

The original idea of marriage is for procreation. The study conducted by Fowler (2007) stated that the catholic religion procreation was seen as the major reason for marriage. However, he also pointed out that the modern day concept for marriage has taken a different perspective and sex before marriage has become the order of the day. Today, sex is not just seen as a mechanism for procreation, but it is accepted by the society. Worst of all, some people who get married simply choose not to have children. Thus, the original idea of procreation as the reason for marriage has been defeated. People now marry for love and affection and as a result of this, premarital sex is the norm. This is accepted by the society. It appears that the marriage in western countries including the United States of America remarkably emerges as a public manifestation of love and not that of duty.

The Social Institutions of Marriage

Marriage can be viewed from different angles as pointed out earlier in this paper. Friedman (1988) gives another useful way of viewing marriage. According to the report, marriage is a firm and can be considered as an exchange in which two parties agree to share sexual favors, income, and housing. They used to exchange a collection of other productive activities including rearing children and so forth. Marriage can be envisaged as a social institution, and because the social aspect of marriage is not understood, the

rate of divorce in the society continues to be on its high side. Here, some theoretical perspectives are presented as per the reason, why the rate of divorce continues to flourish in the United States.

Many important theoretical perspectives have to be identified in considering marriage and divorce today.

The first is symbolic interactionism, a theory that holds that symbols or things we attach meaning to, are important in understanding how we perceive the world and relate with one another. This also has a strong correlation with the way love is seen in the society. Relationship, as well as societies, relates on symbol. The symbols we attach to different forms of relationships also differ (Henslin, 2013). For instance, the symbol attached to family relationship is not the same with the symbol attached to romantic or marriage relationship. This symbolic interaction has a lot to do with what we call love. A swift shift in symbol immediately causes a swift shift in a relationship and the way we see each other changes as fast as the symbol representing them.

Functional analysis is another concept of great importance in order to understand the nature of marriage and relationships in the society. This is backed by the principle that the society is a comprehensive unit made up of components related to one another. Thus, the traditional functions of the family determine urbanization and industrialization. In earlier concept of marriage, families form an economic team as the husband and wife have their various economic responsibilities in the home which they must cater for. The change in today's society has resulted to a change in the function and also it has changed the idea of marriage and family today (Henslin,

2013).

The conflict theory encompasses interesting sociological concepts which is tagged to Karl Max, an early thinker. This theory simply holds that a society is made up of small groups competing for resources. Of course, this theory relates to marriage and the family, and it explains the reason, why man-woman relationship in the society today has greatly changed. Men dominated women in the past and therefore women were subject to them (Henslin, 2013). However, with today's civilization and development, women have equal access to education, job and so forth as men do. Thus, women have the capacity of refusing the burdens that were originally placed on them and can stay without marriage. This is also a considerable reason for the high rate of divorce in the society because of the level of independence people enjoy. Marriage is mostly considered as a union for love, but this shatters when the sensation that we often call " love" is found wanting. The concept of the Social Exchange Theory may also be interpreted to understand and evaluate prevailing behaviors of two persons involved in love. This theory encompasses the mutual benefits and interaction. As per George Homans, a renowned sociologist, cohesiveness facilitate in strengthening the bonding of behaviors exhibited by the two concerned persons (Fowler, 2007).

Loving behavior reflects the way in which one person express his emotions for his/her fiancé. Moreover, according to Peter Blau, " Social attraction is the force that induces human beings to establish social associations in their initiative and to expand the scope of those associations once they have been formed." (Fowler, 2007). He believed that the establishment of a consistent

relationship is based on rewards that a person perceive from his/her life partner. They used to feel pleasure in each other company that leads to developing such love that is termed as "romantic love". These materialized characteristics pave a path for love before marriage in Americans.

This is a way of thinking about legal marriage; the notion of intrinsic love, like so much else in US politics, is an image of sentimental privacy. I would say that love is beyond criticism and beyond the rulings of the law. Where law arbitrates conflict and competing claims, love speaks an inner truth in the space without politics and conflict. This is of the human heartiest feeling rather than ideology. Its intents are pure and have no subconscious.

Some sociologists have of opinion that these developments respond in important ways to the longstanding concerns and issues by feminists of the relationship between marriage loving and caring. The prime targets of this critique include the inequality and division of caring labor in the family. Its negative ramifications for females that are greatly strained by social company and unsupported claims that make them greatly in charge of looking after spouses, children, as well as old age parents (Osterlund, 2009). There is provision in present modern societies, offering ways to a feeling of purposiveness, mutuality, as well as deep affective connections. This can also be observed as a burnout, self-annihilation, and inequality having never-ending and often unrecognized labor. This is imperative to challenge both the sacredness, as well as benevolence of love. For instance, feminists have made considerable effort to challenge the worthless and violent relations that frequently persist for love among males and females in traditional culture. Other feminist scholars have employed the real personal privacy of

this exclusive world of love as well as family members by considering government efforts aimed at ethical policy as well as nation-building operating in and with households. In a different viewpoint, psychoanalytic have expressed it ingrained uncertainty that is unique of love connections. This is the ego that might make us believe about concerns regarding love and it constantly bears with associated further problem. It is important then, to adopt a cynicism in relation to love. Love is and also is not each one of these points depending upon its location in diffused and social relations. Love is multivalent, expressed and mobilized within diffuse and shifting social relations of power. Consequently, it is neglected in the new sociological and political discourse of marriage and love (Osterlund, 2009).

Conclusion

The paper considered the term “ love” as a hydra-headed concept, whose meaning is quite subjective. In addition, marriage was defined, and sociological concepts of marriage were also considered. Americans and lots of other people consider love as a prerequisite for marriage. This is due many factors that were extensively reviewed in this paper. These include legal factors, sex, the economic factor, ethical issues, social issues and so forth. However, it is imperative to consider that the rate of divorce in the society is on the high side, and the study opined that the idea of marriage today is largely responsible for it.

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