Does Love Play A Key Role When Choosing A Marriage Partner? Essay, Research Paper

A famous quote by John Lennon saying that “love is the answer and only you know that for sure” was not entirely truthful the fact not realised was that, for the many people in today’s contemporary “dating” grouping, truly knowing what the answer actually is in regards to dating is often easier said than done. Therefore, the answer certainly is not love. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1974), love is defined as a “strong affection, a warm attachment, attraction based on sexual desire, cherish, to feel passion, devotion or tenderness for ~, caress and to take pleasure in ~ “ (p.417). In the modern-day world where the preferences and choices of human mate selection has become a topic of broad exploration, it is highly questionable as to whether or not “love” is the principal influence that leads an individual’s decision of choosing a life-long partner.

The choosing of a marriage partner today seems to be a crucial aspect of life decisions that makes all other choices in one’s life seem to be more or less trivial when comparing accordingly. When you come to a decision as to who you want to marry, share the rest of your life with and become one with, you are changing every aspect of your once single and independent life. For the reason that life changes so significantly when a marriage partner has been chosen, there are countless factors that have an effect on the choices that individuals make.

Firstly, Botwin et al. (1997) insist that “personality plays a critical role in mate selection and marital happiness” (p.128) but many other attributes such as the many dating processes, the many problems that often occur in relationships, and individual preferences all highly motivate, aspire and aim to encourage people in today’s society toward finding their preferred marriage partner.

Society often questions the difficulty involved for an average person to simply decide “who” they desire to marry. What’s more is the reality that many people also criticize the individuals who have no idea who they want to marry. Research by Doosje et al. (1999) shows that “both men and women value most in their partner that she/he is kind and considerate, socially exciting, creative and intellectually stimulating” (p.46) which goes to prove that couples want their marriages to work and do not even consider them to eventually fail.

Buying a car or buying a house is a difficult task in comparable to choosing a life long partner, the decision to buy a house and car seems to be insignificant. When someone buys a home, they plan their strategy to pay for the home, they acquire a mortgage for the home and they plan their methods in order to utilize the home for years to come. Comparing dating to the mortgaging of a home, once an individual signs his or her name on the mortgage paper, their stuck with that mortgage for a lengthy amount of time therefore the effort put forth into choosing and buying a home is considerably large. So, the effort and time required in choosing a lifelong partner should be just as thoughtfully planned out as buying a home. Just like buying a home, we are required to choose a partner whom we are suitable with at the present moment just as we will be suitable with the same person in ten, twenty, thirty and fifty years from now. It’s shopping around for the house months on end just as it is shopping around for your life long partner for years on end. People know what they’re looking for but according to Botwin et al. (1997), “not all individuals succeed in getting what they want. Some end up with dating partners or spouses who deviate from their ideals and display personality characteristics that are not desired.” (p.133) and it’s a matter of finding the preferred partner with all the desirable vicinities and with all the preferred costs as well as rewards. People “tend to select mates who are similar to themselves and who embody their ideals” (Botwin et al., 1997, p.134) therefore people set standards of their desired partners even before they meet their marriage partner.

Meeting someone used to be a wonderful, intriguing and exciting experience; now days, there’s no such thing as just “casually” meeting someone. Being set up by a family member or friends with someone whom they think would be a good match for has become nothing out of the ordinary. You are set up on blind dates by family and friends, there are dating services available universally anywhere you go from newspaper ads to telephone personals and the Internet. Males are continuously seeking females and females are continuously seeking males. The dating game never ends and the thought of accidentally bumping into a complete stranger while running about you everyday life tasks and falling instantly in love has become unfashionable, out of date and just plain boring. People are devoting more time to the actual encountering and according to Doosje et al. (1999), “with regard to the importance of physical attractiveness in the preferred partner, the results of our study show that men value physical attractiveness more than women do” (p.57) and therefore less time is being devoted to the actual dating or courtship of the potential marriage partner. It is beyond doubt that not enough time is devoted into deciding just what it is an individual is actually looking for in a their marriage partner.

In contemporary societies, modern mate selection processes do not seem to be working favourably. There are so many different ways to meet people and Nock (1995) believes that it is “the marriage market that unites unmarried people today includes many people whose values and views of marriage are informed by the experience itself” (p.92) and with increased technologies and increased communications, it is often very easy for people to simply choose the wrong marriage partner. This fact is relevant to the idea that today; marital breakdown is often too common of an experience. Marriages are constantly failing in today’s society with the divorce rate being so high yet couples are still making the same mistakes incessantly and Nock strongly insists that “divorce and cohabitation, in short, are not simply the endings and alternatives to conventional marriages. Instead, theses experiences are aspects of individuals’ biographies that are part of what they bring with them to the marriage market” (p.106).

Too often, couples rush the position of their relationship and decide too fast and too soon to get married. Couples “jump into” the relationship and the relationship becomes serious way too fast and way too soon. In order for two people to make an evaluation of how good the match is between them, a tremendous amount of information must be shared and processed. The sharing of this information takes a great deal of time therefore dating and finding your marriage partner becomes a time consuming, intricate and complicated aspect of one’s life. Too often, this is an aspect of someone’s life that they feel they do not have enough time for. This reason portraying toward marriage failure is somewhat of a selfish act because the couple is not fully thoughtfully and emotionally involved with one another before making the most important decision about the future of their potential family life.

In today’s times, the “dating game” is commencing way too early and therefore people are beginning to date younger, get serious younger and therefore marry younger. A person needs to develop emotionally, spiritually and mentally in order to launch a decision about long-term life forecasts and life long partners. Society talks about teenage mothers as “babies having babies”, when relating the topic toward young married couples, society may refer to them as “children tying the knot”. At such young ages, as early as their 20’s, it is challenging for an individual to decide how well they fit with someone now and how well they will fit with that same person twenty, thirty, forty, fifty and even seventy years down the road.

The era of romanticism with all sorts of movies, books and television shows that focus so highly on romantic love, it is often difficult for young lovers to be persuaded into the unrealistic grounds of romantic love. The media inflicts on society that the idea of romantic love is all that’s necessary for building a long lasting relationship. This Romanticism theory is distasteful and according to Botwin et al. (1997), “one is propinquity, the notion that one tends to marry those that are near at hand. Regardless of conceptions of romantic love, the ‘one and only’ typically lives within driving distance.” (p.109) forcing individuals to live as though they are in a perfect “bubble” and settling for a partner within reasonable distance is part of the norm. It occurs too often that young couple trust that marriage is the next step and that once they are married, things will not be so complicated. The reality behind this often-occurring myth is that marriage is more complicated today than it has ever been before. There’s nothing wrong with love but riding a married relationship on only love is riding all your money on one bet and hoping for the best possible outcome. Couples need to take the initial passion and love whilst building far deeper emotional, mental and spiritual long-lasting realities because once the passion fades, there has to be something left to make the marriage succeed. Love is a great way to initiate a relationship but love does not establish agreeable grounds to base a lifetime decision about a particular marriage partner. Indeed, it is not love that makes the world go ‘round.

In a time that is often referred to as the era of communication, in respects to relationships, communication is inadequately developed between couples, which accounts for countless problems in a relationship. Being able to tell your partner just how it is that you are feeling without fearing what your partner will say or do in return is a huge factor. Also, sharing negative feelings about the relationship without feeling that the relationship will crumble is crucial to communication and a long lasting relationship. Being able to express personal concerns or yet another common occurrence in present-day relationships is not listening to your partner and not understanding how the partner is feeling. Lack of communication in today’s society has become a major problem due to increased technology and this communication problem could cause all kinds of troubles amongst couples.

With all of these common problems that exist in today’s modern day dating game, it is difficult for individuals to make the right choice and feel one hundred percent good about their choice. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1974) defines the word right as “something that is correct, just, proper or honourable” (p.603) and therefore making the right decision in regards to choosing a marriage partner is something that needs to “feel right“ in order for the marriage selection to be successful. Qualities such as having the ”right fit”, having a solid commitment and good communication skills are all key to successfully long lasting marriages with the realness of finding that “right” person being the most difficult. Oprah Winfrey once said that `Mr. Right is in Africa, and he’s walking`, which is somewhat true to the aim that everyone may potentially have his or her right fit somewhere in the world but it just takes some people longer than others to find one another.

Another factor in the dating market is dealing with personal preferences in order to find the “right fit”; men and women differ greatly in their marriage partner preferences. Simpson and Gangestara (1992) did a study and found that “men tend to place greater emphasis on physical attractiveness, whereas women tend to stress personal characteristics such as kindness, considerateness, and earning capacity” (p.32) which proves that men place greater emphasis on physical characteristics and women place greater emphasis on emotional characteristics. Along with men’s preference for physical traits when searching for a potential marriage partner Townsend and Levy (1990) found that “Men, however, become more cautious and selective, and their emphasis on socio-economic status is greater when a relationship possesses marital potential” (p.159) therefore illustrating that men do indeed place greater emphasis on physical appearances and social rankings. To the contrary women are more concerned about being treated well and having her future children treated well.

It is highly questionable as to whether or not marriage and choosing a life-long partner is worth the pain and risks considering the fact that majority of marriages today are such a great disappointment. Due to the fact that failed marriages bring so much pain and agony to so many people every day, individuals may seriously question that perhaps it is much less time consuming and less painful to remain single.

The idea that men and women belong together is an idea that comes from the bible in the I Corinthians when the apostle Paul reflected upon marriage and said “But remember that in God’s plan men and women need each other” (p.1239). It is not necessarily crucial that all men and all women get married and spend the rest of their lives living in married bliss but for the people who do chose that particular way of life; it is crucial that a far better job at choosing their preferred made be conceived somewhere down the line. This matter of helping young people select the “right” marriage partner is one of the most significant challenges that young adults face in today’s society but even more importantly, it is the largest challenge that the future of the family life will be facing for years to come.

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