

The Changing Landscape of Love and Marriage

Directions: Read the following statistics and statements about the state of relationships in the U.S. today from the article "The Changing Landscape of Love and Marriage" by Kathleen E. Hull, Ann Meier, and Timothy Ortyl. After reading each statement, decide if you think it is a problem or not. Circle "Yes" or "No." In the space below each statement, briefly describe your reasoning.

Do you believe that these changes in love and marriage present a problem to our society?

1) Nearly half of all marriages end in divorce.

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

2) People are getting married later than they used to; the median age at first marriage is now 28 for men and 26 for women, compared to 23 and 20 in 1960.

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

3) The proportion of adults who never marry remains low but is climbing; in 2006, 19% of men and 13% of women aged 40-44 had never married.

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

4) Unmarried cohabitation has gone from a socially stigmatized practice to a normal stage in the adult life course (more than half of all American marriages now begin as cohabitations).

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

5) Roughly one-third of all births are to unmarried parents.

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

6) Today, people feel freer to marry later, to end unhappy marriages, and to forego marriage altogether.

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

7) Americans have established a pattern of high marriage and remarriage rates, frequent divorce and separation, and more short-lived cohabitations.

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

8) Straight women are more likely to rate faithfulness and lifelong commitment as extremely important compared to straight men and sexual minorities.

Problem? Yes or No

Why? _____

Based on your responses above, which position described in the article do you most agree with? Circle one.

The marital decline position, which argues that changes in intimacy are a significant cause for concern.

OR

The marital resilience perspective, which argues that changes in family life have actually strengthened the quality of intimate relationships, including marriages.

Explain briefly:

“How important do you think each of the following elements is for a successful marriage or serious committed relationship?” (using a 1=“not important” to 10=“extremely important” scale)

- _____ 1) Love
 - _____ 2) Faithfulness
 - _____ 3) Life-long commitment
 - _____ 4) Financial security
 - _____ 5) Being of the same race
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The article talks broadly about **romantic v. confluent love**.

Which of these two models do you think is more relevant today?

Which pieces of each model do you like/don't like? Why?

For the **romantic love model**, Swidler's four features (or myths) could be discussed:

- 1) one true love
- 2) love at first sight
- 3) love conquers all
- 4) happily ever after

For **confluent model**, Giddens's ideas include these features:

- 1) relationship contingent on satisfaction of both partners
- 2) lots of communication/negotiation
- 3) overarching goal of self-development

Response:

Rate the importance of the following characteristics in a mate, using a four-point scale as follows:

A=indispensable; B=important; C=desirable, but not very important; and D=irrelevant or unimportant.

- _____ 1. good cook and housekeeper
- _____ 2. pleasing disposition
- _____ 3. sociability
- _____ 4. similar educational background
- _____ 5. refinement and neatness
- _____ 6. good financial prospect
- _____ 7. chastity (no previous experience in sexual intercourse)
- _____ 8. dependable character
- _____ 9. emotional stability and maturity
- _____ 10. desire for home and children
- _____ 11. favorable social status or rating
- _____ 12. good looks
- _____ 13. similar religious background
- _____ 14. ambition and industriousness
- _____ 15. similar political background
- _____ 16. mutual attraction and love
- _____ 17. good health
- _____ 18. education and intelligence

- ____ 19. There's been a lot of discussion about the way morals and attitudes about sex are changing in this country. If a man and a woman have sexual relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?
- A. Always wrong
 - B. Almost always wrong
 - C. Wrong only sometimes
 - D. Not wrong at all
- ____ 20. What if they are in their early teens, say 14 to 16 years old? In that case, do you think sex relations before marriage are always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?
- A. Always wrong
 - B. Almost always wrong
 - C. Wrong only sometimes
 - D. Not wrong at all
- ____ 21. What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex – you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?
- A. Always wrong
 - B. Almost always wrong
 - C. Wrong only sometimes
 - D. Not wrong at all
- ____ 22. Do you think being homosexual is something people choose to be, or do you think it is something they cannot change?
- A. Something people choose to be
 - B. Something they cannot change
 - C. Don't know
- ____ 23. What is your opinion about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than the marriage partner – is it always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?
- A. Always wrong
 - B. Almost always wrong
 - C. Wrong only sometimes
 - D. Not wrong at all
- ____ 24. Are you for or against sex education in the public schools?
- A. For
 - B. Against
 - C. Don't know
- ____ 25. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: There is nothing inherently wrong with prostitution, so long as the health risks can be minimized. If consenting adults agree to exchange money for sex, that is their business.
- A. Agree strongly
 - B. Agree somewhat
 - C. Disagree somewhat
 - D. Disagree strongly
 - E. Don't know
- ____ 26. Who do you think usually enjoys sex more – men, women, or do they both enjoy it the same amount?
- A. Men
 - B. Women
 - C. Both the same amount
 - D. Don't know

Rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements using this 5-point scale:

A=Strongly agree, B=Agree, C=Neither agree nor disagree, D=Disagree, E=Strongly disagree.

- ____ 27. Same-sex couples should have the right to marry one another.
- ____ 28. It is all right for a couple to live together without getting married.
- ____ 29. It's a good idea for a couple who intend to get married to live together first.

The following questions are about pornography – books, movies, magazines, and photographs that show or describe sex activities. Indicate whether you think sexual materials do or do not have the following effects:

- ____ 30. Sexual materials provide information about sex.
- A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. Don't know

- ____ 31. Sexual materials lead to breakdown of morals.
A. Yes B. No C. Don't know
- ____ 32. Sexual materials lead people to commit rape.
A. Yes B. No C. Don't know
- ____ 33. Sexual materials provide an outlet for bottled-up impulses.
A. Yes B. No C. Don't know
- ____ 34. Which of the following statements comes closest to your feelings about pornography laws?
A. There should be laws against the distribution of pornography whatever the age
B. There should be laws against the distribution of pornography to persons under 18
C. There should be no laws forbidding the distribution of pornography
D. Don't know

Finally, a few more questions about your attitudes on various subjects. Please rate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

- ____ 35. Men have greater sexual needs than women.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- ____ 36. Any kind of sexual activity between adults is OK as long as both persons freely agree to it.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- ____ 37. I would not have sex with someone unless I was in love with them.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- ____ 38. My religious beliefs have shaped and guided my sexual behavior.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

Think about your expectations of what your immediate family will be like someday. What are your plans for the future? Think of each of the possibilities from the list below. You must suppose you will fall in love with this person within five years and plan to form a family with them. Think about the following questions:

* How will your future plans be affected by this selection?

* What will your other family members think?

* Where will you live?

* What about kids?

* What is the likelihood that you would actually consider marrying this person?

- A middle-class, white man who travels three weeks each month for his job and has three kids from a previous marriage of whom he has custody. Currently, he has a live-in nanny but would rather have a full-time parent in the home for his kids.
- A wealthy, African-American woman who owns a publishing business in Chicago.
- A working class, Latino man from Costa Rica who wishes to live near his family in his home country.
- An upwardly-mobile white woman who wishes never to have kids or at least not to care for them herself. (If you want kids, you will have to be the sole parent.)
- A female, Presbyterian minister whose first job assignment is in central Kansas.
- An African-American male professor who has tenure at Harvard.
- A English man who wishes to live in the US but cannot get residency for 3-4 years as a result of the immigration waiting list for English citizens into this country.
- A white, male Floridian whose family has owned a fishing business in Everglades City for two generations. He plans to adopt the business in five years and needs to continue working for the business until that time.
- Martha Stewart's sister, a middle-class, white woman who plans to be a homemaker.
- An Indian woman (US resident) whose parents are planning to arrange a marriage for her with someone other than you.