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View of young people of the modern Russian society on predominant values of partnership in marriage (on the basis of survey)

Lubov Ivankina ^{a*}, Olga Berestneva ^b, Igor Shelekhov ^c

^{a,b}National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Tomsk, Russia,

^cTomsk State Pedagogical University, Tomsk, Russia

Abstract

The results of the survey carried out by the authors and devoted to studying ideal and real image of a partner in the view of young people of the modern Russian society are given and analyzed. The objective of the article is to analyze the view of young people on an ideal partner and to find to what extent an ideal image matches a real one. The issues of images of an ideal and real partner correspondence, similarities and differences in choosing a partner by young men and women are analyzed, social and role expectations in family relationship are found. The conclusions about young people marriage intentions are made on the basis of young men and women opinions about an ideal partner. The main methods used in research are survey, content analysis and mathematical statistics approaches.

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1. Introduction

What are the predominant values of partnership for men and women within marriage in the view of young people of the modern Russian society? To answer this question it is necessary to find existing opinions about an ideal and a real partner.

The necessity of studying this problem is caused by the fact that the choice of a future partner is a very important stage which, to a great extent, defines the quality of relationships inside a family and the perspectives of founding a family. Pre-adult age is a period of forming personal ideals and values of a maturing person, which happens under the influence of various institutes of socialization that this person is involved in. An ability to recognize the influence of an ideal image on relationships with a real partner is a very important skill, which allows to avoid disagreement caused by the discrepancy of an ideal and real images of a partner.

Ideal (translated from Greek – “form”, “idea”) in relation to an image-conception of an ideal marriage partner reflects the requirements to a person, who is a living embodiment of the most valuable qualities. An ideal image being developed under the influence of various sources and the groups of a reference opinion contains the attributes (from Latin “attribuo” – “add, give”) of a desirable image.

The process of forming an ideal is idealization as a “cognitive forming of opinions about objects, processes and events, which do not exist in reality, but the opinions which have prototypes in real world” (The Soviet encyclopedic dictionary, 1979). An ideal image reflects the most valuable and attractive personal qualities of people (Merlin, 2009). So, the ideal anticipating the reflection of what a person is looking forward to attains a personal meaning for this person. Everything appearing miraculously and being intimate in an ideal is represented in its structure containing a standard mark (object), which is acknowledged to be perfection, a pattern of interaction with a standard and the extrapolation field of the knowledge about this standard (Kartashova, 2011).

There is a set of models describing the sequence of steps required for choosing a marriage partner. During the research we have applied the theory “stimulus-value-role” (the author of the theory is B.Moorstein), according to which the process of choosing a partner has three filter levels: the filter of attraction, motives, the filter of merits, advantages

* Lubov Ivankina Tel: +7-903-953-7182
E-mail address: ivankinali@sibmail.com

and the filter of roles. A motive is initialized by the first impression, where a potential partner visual appeal is of major importance. The filter of merits directs people towards the search of the common ground (similarity of interests, preferences, values, characters, etc.). If the difference is essential, risks are assessed, i.e. it is analyzed whether it is possible to compensate the found differences for the partner's merits. If the decision is favorable, the chances of being interested in having a greater intimacy with a partner arise, which is characterized by spending more time together and allows to check the role compatibility (where "role" is a set of requirements for fulfilling definite functions in relationships).

The purpose of the conducted research was to find out what characteristics an ideal partner should obtain, in the opinion of young people, and how an ideal image corresponds to the real qualities of a partner. An ideal image of a partner is a set of desirable qualities; a real image of a partner corresponds to the current opinion about him/her made on the basis of estimating a certain person.

One more task of the research was the reconstruction of the content matching the opinions about an ideal partner and a real one. The aspect of social framing of the relationship between an "ideal" and a "real" partner in the process of choosing a future spouse was studied.

The object of research is represented by students, which is justified by the fact that during the period of life connected with studying at a university sociogenic potentials of a person are very actively developed (Ananiev, 1968).

2. Research methods

During conducting the research the methods of free composing and survey have been applied. Free composing is a projective method; a composition is written on the topic concerned with the given purpose and the research tasks; the composition length is not regulated. Using a projective method allows to detect the feelings and thoughts, which really exist in the subjective experience of a respondent and are connected with his/her opinions about an ideal image of the future spouse.

The survey has been conducted on the basis of the questionnaire made by the authors of the article. It includes a list of qualities for being chosen by respondents as inherent to an ideal image of a partner and to a real image of a partner. The method of making choice on the ground of the list given in advance activate the respondent's ability to form the scale of preferences, correlate them with each other by setting priorities. The list of qualities for the respondents to be assessed is represented in Table 1.

Along with the fixed list of qualities the respondents were asked to add some qualities if they could not find in the list those ones which they thought to be important for a partner to have.

Table 1. Questionnaire "Images of an ideal and a real partner"

#	Qualities	Images	
		An ideal partner	A real partner
1	Light-Heartedness		
2	Wealth		
3	Fidelity		
4	Kindness		
5	Cruelty		
6	Intelligence		
7	Beauty		
8	Resourcefulness		
9	Charm		
10	Optimism		
11	Responsibility		
12	Sympathy		
13	Honesty		
14	Practicality		
15	Adherence to principles		
16	Resoluteness		
17	Sexuality		
18	Strength		
19	Courage		
20	Industry		
21	Purposefulness		
22	Cynicism		

3. Sampling

The research was conducted on the basis of the Department of Psychology of Tomsk State Pedagogical University (TSPU) from January to April, 2012. The research comprised the respondents being the students of the 2nd and 3rd years, 80 people in all, including 40 male and 40 female respondents. The age of respondents was 18-19 years. Sampling was an area one, based on the criteria of the future profession. The sampling comprised the students from two-parent families only.

It was found out that all students had an intention to make their own families. All students who took part in the survey answered the question about the desire to create a family positively, 22% of these respondents were ready to do

it right away, the left 78% of respondents planned to do it in the future, after graduating from the university and achieving success in career development.

It was also found out that the respondents already had the experience of having relationship with the people of the opposite sex. During the time the survey was being conducted 67% of female respondents (27 representatives) and 72% of male respondents (28 representatives) were involved in the relationships with the opposite sex, 24% of female respondents (9 representatives) and 31% of male respondents (12 representatives) developed the relationships created long ago.

4. Survey results analysis

The image of an ideal partner, described by female respondents in their compositions, is represented by 28 qualities (in the order of decreasing – first go the most preferable, later - the least preferable qualities): purposefulness, fidelity, sexuality, intelligence, kindness, courage, honesty, sympathy, resoluteness, industry, strength, charm, beauty, optimism, resourcefulness, practicality, wealth, cunning, adherence to principles, sense of humor, cynicism, cruelty, light-heartedness, romanticism, courteousness, love to children, thoughtfulness, ability to do the cooking.

Expectations of female respondents concerning a future partner are represented, according to the theory of B. Moorstein, by the filter of merits and are connected with purposefulness (n=35), fidelity (n=35), intelligence (n=33), kindness (n=32), courage (n=32), honesty (n=31). The choice of such quality as partner's sexuality (n=33) is grounded not only on the filter of attraction but also on the desire to have relationships with this partner, which was ascertained on the basis of the conducted analysis of the compositions written by respondents. Such qualities of a partner as love to children (n=1), thoughtfulness (n=1), ability to do the cooking (n=1), romanticism (n=2) were unclaimed.

Here are the typical examples of female respondents' statements about an ideal partner: "a purposeful, handsome guy with the main requirement – he must love and respect me"; "he must, first of all, love his girlfriend even in case if something terrible happens to her (becomes invalid) and be with her till the last breath"; "the most important factor – he must not humble me but must respect me and consider my opinion, he must be able to endow himself and me, have large life experience and social status, must be 4-7 years my senior"; "will always support me, love me despite everything, comfort me with his strength, can poetize, will condemn but remain fair, a person who really loves will love a person like me", etc.

In terms of these extracts which are typical for female respondents it can be said that their expectations are preferably connected with a man-partner. That is why girls do not care about bad habits of a partner. Only 5 representatives of all female respondents mentioned they did not want their future partner to have bad habits.

The word "family" was used in the compositions of only 9 respondents. Here is a typical statement used by female respondents who used the word "family" in their compositions and stated the qualities important for creating a family and building long-term relationships. "I want to have a big family, not an ordinary husband but a great one, who is self-reliant, purposeful, tall, it is desirable for him to be Russian, not red-haired, with a charming smile and long eyelashes". As you can see, expectations of this girl connected with a partner are not realistic and contradictory.

The qualities of an ideal female partner according to the choice of male respondents are based on the following 30 qualities mentioned in the compositions (in the order of decreasing – first go the most preferable, later - the least preferable qualities): beauty, honesty, intelligence, fidelity, kindness, sympathy, sexuality, charm, optimism, purposefulness, resourcefulness, industry, practicality, courage, resoluteness, wealth, cunning, strength, ability to do the cooking, adherence to principles, cynicism, light-heartedness, understanding, ability to keep order at home, sense of humor, brutality, cruelty, peculiarity, adequacy, irregularity.

The preferable qualities correspond to the filter of attraction and the filter of merits: beauty (n=36), honesty (n=36), intelligence (n=35), kindness (n=33), fidelity (n=33), sympathy (n=31), sexuality (n=30). Ability to do the cooking being traditionally inherent for a woman in family life was chosen only by 10 respondents (16% of all respondents). Only for 6 respondents (10%) it was important for a partner not to have bad habits and the word "family" is used in the compositions of only 5 male respondents.

Here are the examples of typical male respondents' statements about an ideal female partner: "it is a little princess, who you do not mention the outer world with but enjoy the moment here and now"; "wants to lead a healthy lifestyle without drinking alcohol, smoking, has a desire to go in for sport, loves to be kind, sympathetic, loyal, charming, is taller than me, could love me and my parents, cares much about her close people, is happy with me"; "has a good sense of humor, loves me, is sexual, the most important factor is my love to her, everything else is not important"; "is able to control me, but I have not met such a woman for the present" and etc.

On the basis of expectations fixed in the description of an ideal partner image made by male respondents it can be said that the role of a woman is associated by them with the role of a mother, which indicates the infantilism of their attitude, lack of willingness and initiative to build family relationship. The responsibility for the quality of relationships and initiative in gaining distinctness in interaction with the others is posed on a woman. The described behavior does not meet women expectations oriented towards an active and enterprising partner.

5. Research conclusions

Lack of orientation towards the family relationships proved by the absence of the terminology connected with the roles of men and women in a family in respondents' compositions, key notions in marriage relationships – "family", "husband", "wife", "parents", "children" – is the indicator of roles of men and women as members of the family not

being formed. Women expect to have the relationships on equal terms (partnership), while men want to have relationships based on mother-like care and patronage.

On the basis of comparing general qualities chosen by male and female respondents, a set of similarities and differences in the expectations from the future family relationships combined in the image of an ideal partner was made. The number of choices in both groups coincided in 22 qualities and is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Qualities of an ideal partner (n=80)

#	Quality	Number of choices		Rate (%)	
		Female respondents	Male respondents	Female respondents	Male respondents
1	Purposefulness	35	23	21,5	13
2	Fidelity	35	33	21,5	18,5
3	Sexuality	33	30	19,5	15,5
4	Intelligence	33	35	19,5	20
5	Kindness	32	33	17,5	18,5
6	Courage	32	16	17,5	9
7	Honesty	31	36	16	21,5
8	Sympathy	30	31	14,5	17
9	Resoluteness	30	14	14,5	8
10	Industry	29	22	13	11,5
11	Strength	29	10	11,5	5,5
12	Charm	29	30	11,5	15,5
13	Beauty	28	36	10	21,5
14	Optimism	27	27	9	14
15	Resourcefulness	25	22	8	11,5
16	Practicality	16	17	7	10
17	Wealth	14	12	6	7
18	Cunning	11	10	5	5,5
19	Adherence to principles	8	8	4	4
20	Sense of humour	5	1	3	1,5
21	Cynicism	4	6	2	3
22	Cruelty	3	1	1	1,5

The results of choices made by male and female respondents concerning 22 qualities presented in Table 2 showed that the considerable male and female respondents' opinions differ only in the following qualities: purposefulness ($p < 0,001$), courage ($p < 0,001$), resoluteness ($p < 0,001$), strength ($p < 0,001$). All these qualities are typical for the choices made by female respondents. Such quality as "beauty" ($p < 0,01$) is of great importance for male respondents.

Assessment of the interconnection between the rankings of qualities (Table 2) with the application of the rank correlation coefficient ($r_s = 0,724$, $p < 0,01$) leads to the conclusion that the opinions of male and female respondents about the desirable qualities of a marriage partner do not have significant contradictions and are consistent.

To make the analysis, which can show to what extent an ideal image of a partner corresponds to the qualities, available in a real partner, the number of matching qualities of an ideal image and the qualities inherent to the real partner was estimated. The coincidence rate of the participants' images of ideal and real partners is, on the average, 55.0%. The level of coincidence among male respondents appeared to be slightly higher than that of female ones and is, on the average, 5.0%.

On the basis of the data obtained we can identify a recognized discrepancy of an ideal image with its real perception stated by respondents as being dissatisfaction with a real partner.

Having compared the results of free compositions and questionnaires "Images of ideal and real partners" differences between the selected qualities stated in the questionnaire and those ones which were given by respondents additionally were stated. Such quality as "responsibility" stated in the list of qualities to be evaluated in questionnaire, which is of great significance for the establishment and proper functioning of a family has not been allocated in the expectations of neither female nor male respondents; on the basis of which we can conclude that the given quality is not in the area of their conscious perception.

6. Conclusion

The results obtained by the application of the research methodology revealed a pronounced tendency of young men and women to see personality in a partner. It is proved by the potential image of a partner that respondents connect with the individuality and reliability of interaction with a partner as a person. It is very important for a partner to obtain such qualities as fidelity, justice, compassion, intelligence, which also have a pronounced individualistic nature, but not reciprocity of feelings and actions. Financial position of a future partner does not affect the choice as well.

These results can be largely dependent on the age of respondents, when the idealized notions of a partner prevail over the realities of living together with all the ensuing consequences.

The study also found that young people nowadays have a certain set of conscious values and expectations concerning a future partner, which are characterized by egocentrism, an expressed dominant trend, shown in using a partner to the own benefit. The main requirement for the relationships is the fact that these relationships should satisfy the person who chooses a partner but not be mutual.

If the filters of attractiveness and merits are basically the same in both groups of respondents choices, the filter of roles is not consistent with the concept of what a partner as a husband and a wife in their mutual relations. According to the widespread social norms, long-term partnerships presuppose official registration of partners and the birth of children. The qualities, included in the set of features inherent in an ideal and real partner, which are associated with the positions of partners' roles in family relationships, are not represented neither in female nor in male respondents choices. This is indicative of immaturity of respondents who had a not identified skill of taking responsibility for their decisions and their own actions.

Behavior of women in family relationships does not meet expectations of young men focused on a partner who is industrious and dependent on men's desires. The revealed inconsistency of role functions suggests that there is a conceptions transformation of the view on male and female behavior in family relationships in contemporary Russian society. Social-role expectations of women are associated with a man-partner, the young men's expectations – with a woman-mother. The stated discrepancy indicates the mismatch of gender expectations. On the basis of young women and men images on what qualities and norms of behavior a partner should obtain, it can be concluded that their marriage intentions will not be justified.

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