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## Advantages and disadvantages of trial marriage

*The phenomenon of trial marriage is examined. Approaches to its research are analyzed. There are described advantages and disadvantages of this kind of matrimony, for men and women, for parents of partners of trial marriage.*

**Key words:** *trial marriage, advantages and disadvantages of trial marriage.*

Researchers specify that from the middle of 70th years of XX century the number of trial marriages has increased [1]. Prevalence of not registered unions is especially great in the USA, Western and Northern Europe. At the same time the registered marriage remains the unique socially comprehensible form of matrimony in Southern Europe and East Asia [2].

In Russia till 2002 year they judged about prevalence of trial marriage according to indirect data: birth of illegitimate children registered under the application of both parents or children born from registered spouses if term between wedding and a birth of the child was less than 9 months. In 2002 year in forms of the Census of the population of Russia there have been included aspects of informal marriage for the first time. So, the question on a marriage status was accompanied by a variant of the answer "I consist in not registered marriage". Results of the Census have shown, that about 11 % of adult population consist in not registered marriage. Most intensively not registered marriage unions are formed at 16-20 years, by 26 years their quantity decreases, and the Census has fixed their least number in an interval between 30-33 years [1]. It is obvious, that the resulted data have direct relation to such form of informal marriage as trial.

Now it is marked the terminological mess in treatment of concepts "trial marriage" which they often use as synonymous to terms "cohabitation before marriage", "actual", "civil marriage" and oppose it to official marriage. After V.M. Medkov under the civil marriage authors understand the marriage officially registered in the registry office; under cohabitation they understand marriage relations existing outside of legally recognized, legitimate form; under actual marriage they understand real marriage relations irrespective of their legal form [3].

We understand the trial marriage as a stage of the family life cycle, consisting in joint residing of two adults of different sexes who are not connected by official matrimony or related attitudes, but who are connected by a generality of daily round, place of residing and budget, having emotional and sexual relations. At least one of partners of such marriage hopes for the further legalization of relations of matrimony or both partners still have not made the final decision of this matter; if both partners consider the informal marriage the absolute alternative to the official union, we don't consider similar relations as trial marriage.

Traditionally they distinguish two basic approaches to the trial marriage: psychological and socio-demographic. The second approach has long history, however, as a rule, its objects are not real married couples, but separate men and women in trial marriages that excludes an opportunity of comparison of reciprocity of parameters of spouses.



Within the limits of the socio-demographic approach the trial marriage is understood, more likely, as the negative phenomenon.

So, D. Popenoe and B. Defo Whitehead, referring to the review of sociological researches of 1987-1999 years, affirm that trial marriage negatively influences subsequent matrimonial relations in this pair: experience of trial marriage affects them, the risk of divorce raises due to less expressed determination of partners to continue relations, their greater orientation on personal independence [4]. Partners of the trial marriage are to a lesser degree happy and sexually satisfied, they suffer depressions more often, feel risk of physical and sexual violence, their relations with parents are worse than among partners of official marriage. It is observed that spouses not having experience of trial marriage have a higher level of general happiness, labour productivity, physical and mental health. Parents' cohabitation before marriage renders negative influence on children. Trial marriage is considered as involving serial cohabitation: the person repeats this experience in relations with other people.

The analysis of the literature has shown obvious unelaboration of the problem of trial marriage within the limits of the psychological approach: personalities of partners of the trial marriage are not studied; quality of their mutual relations (including conflicts), psychological characteristics of parents and children of partners of this union; psychological problems of all persons who are directly involved in the problematics of trial marriage; actual and potential advantages and disadvantages of this kind of matrimony. However in mass-media and on sites of the Internet it is possible to meet publications of practical psychologists on this problematics. These and similar publications are often based only on own conclusions of authors and, frequently appear opposite: they propagandize trial marriage, cautiously mark its negative and positive sides of this phenomenon, speak about it negatively.

We'll try to generalize and systematize this material.

To advantages of the trial marriage authors attribute that it is often based on love, freedom of partners, it gives some definiteness and stability to relations, it is a practical check of compatibility of spouses, in certain measure warns them from conflicts, initiates to mutual respect: in fact the partner can leave. It is considered, that in the trial marriage it is easier to agree about rules of formation of the budget, here there is no urgent necessity to give birth to children. In such trial unions the decision on the marriage conclusion is more often thought over and verified, in case of parting partners can use the experience of matrimonial life in the following union.

Authors mark, that psychologically and financially trial marriage is more favourable to men: it has all advantages of the official marriage (cordially and cosiness of home, constant feed and sex), feeling of own independence, sense of freedom, absence of responsibility, small charges (himself is the owner of the purse).

They mark advantages of the trial marriage for women much less: the woman can feel herself married, but free in the decision on these relations continuation.

Disadvantages of trial marriage for women are: all duties of the lawful wife and no rights, ambiguity of the status, reproaches of public opinion, absence of financial guarantees and



status security from household and social disorders. Uncertainty, vagueness, realized self-deception concerning absence of differences between trial and official marriage; all of these is often experienced hard by women and can provoke neurosis and depression.

As advantages to parents of spouses of the trial marriage they mark an opportunity to be prepared for wedding without haste or "to save" money on this traditional celebration; opportunity to learn better the elect of the child and new relatives; to allow children to check the material independence. Authors note, that there are not excluded cases when parents are initiators of the trial marriage of children. The most frequent reason in this case is the early age of children (15-17 years).

"Minuses" specific to parents of partners of trial marriage are the following: absence of precise definiteness in mutual relations of young spouses; experiences connected with discrepancy of their child's beginning of home life to traditional rules and, in this connection, fear to be condemned by public opinion. As the general for all parents, whose children create own family, following difficulties are called: increase in material charges including help to young family; redistribution of the responsibility between members of family; complexity of adjustment of relations with genetic family of the partner of the child; disagreement with own child's choice of the partner; reassessment of own physical opportunities, resources and quality of own matrimonial relations; difficulties of separation with the child; problems connected with a birth of children in young family. All the named typical difficulties in case of trial marriage get even more problematic character by virtue of absence of confidence in stability of young family among parents. Besides psychologically for parents of the young man it is easier to agree with decision of the son to enter in trial marriage, than to parents of the girl; more often parents of girls insist on termination of relations or on their registration.

At the same time, the factors listed above are specified as obvious, in opinion of authors, "minuses" of the trial marriage: freedom in relations can turn into freedom "to give up everything", high probability of spontaneous partings, absence of duties entails also absence of rights that conducts to mutual claims and conflicts.

Thus, studying of the trial marriage within the limits of the psychological approach is urgent and demanded.

### **The Literature**

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