



Psychology of family

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Empirical studies of the content of the representations about marriage partner among students of pedagogical Universities

The article examines the methodology and results of research carried out to study the particularities of students' representations about their marriage partner.

The authors have studied content and structural particularities of these representations. The choice of sampling, psycho diagnostic instruments and processing methods of empirical data are well justified. The images and characteristics revealed are used as an empirical material. We applied the method of semantic differential. The received data were also exposed to factor analysis that let discover three semantic lines in respondents' representation structure of the marriage partner: personality traits, business qualities and appearance. It was ascertained that the students of pedagogical university have difficulties to build the adequate image of the marriage partner, the parameters of father's image are similar to image characteristics of the marriage partner.

The young girls from complete families, creating the image of the marriage partner set semantic accents with reference to qualities, reflecting interpersonal contacts, but the girls from single-parent family do it with reference to business qualities of the partner and ignore the qualities reflecting positive attitudes to the wife. The indices of deficient representations about the marriage partner typical for the students from incomplete families were discovered. We also examined their negative impact upon marriage relations. We suggest a model of psychological support to young girls who suffer from difficulties and can't achieve self-realization in the field of marriage relations.

Key words: *marriage relations, interpersonal relationship, marriage partner, matrimony, image, role expectations, aspirations, marriage self-realization, subjective experience, value judgment; semantic volume, personal attachment, visual appeal.*

The image of the future partner is the necessary element of marital scenario, which plays a considerable role in the planning of marriage relations. The importance of this group of representations is caused by the fact that the representations of the future partner are able to play the leading role in building the marriage scenario.

The main source of drawing subjective experience that is embodied in the system of representations about the future marriage partner, is the images, ideas and feelings that are reflected in the situations of interpersonal relations. The prospects of



these interesting leads of the further research are explained by the functional role of representations in organization of human mental life. The representations do not only form a kind of connection between external and internal reality, but are the bases of forecasts and future plans.

The experimental part of the research was directed to find out students' representations discovering features of the future marriage partner. We set up the hypothesis that representations of the marriage partner are deficient and do not let to build an integral marital scenario.

General experimental hypothesis was concretized as follows: representations of the marriage partner are complicated psychological phenomena, including a series of value characteristics of the marriage partner that are the most necessary elements at the personality level; these representations can be divided into three lines: personal qualities, business qualities, appearance; the deficient representations about marriage partner can manifest themselves in several forms: a small inventory of value judgments; the incompatibility of ascribed individual characteristics; the extreme dominance of one semantic group at the expense of ignorance or depreciation of others. The young girls from incomplete families who have no brothers show the most deficient representations of the marriage partner. The representations of the young girls with a well-formed image of the marriage partner coincide with the traits of their father and brother. The special programme, including psychological enlightenment in the sphere of marriage relationship was elaborated to stimulate the development of interpersonal skills with the opposite sex.

According to this hypothesis we have formulated the following experimental tasks:

- 1) to find out individual characteristics of young girls' representations which form marriage partner's image.
- 2) to discover the main semantic lines of structure of representations of marriage partner among female students at subjective level;
- 3) to reveal the features of representations about marriage partner of female students studying at the Pedagogical Universities;
- 4) to study the particularities of the representations about marriage partner of the students from incomplete families and families with one child;
- 5) to create a programme to develop representations about marriage partner, including psychological enlightenment in the field of marriage relations and psychotherapeutic sessions stimulating development of skills of social interrelations.

The experimental work comprised several stages. At the first stage we used the method of free associations. The respondents (n=480) were asked to give all the associations, that occur to them in response to stimulus statement "The marriage partner-what kind of person he is?" According to the results of free associations, 40 words-reactions of respondents were selected to a given stimulus, (table 1) that were the main elements of method of semantic differential. We added to the list received ten characteristics called to enlarge the semantic space of psychological portrait of the marriage partner: gentle, smart, blue-eyed, faithful, impressive, well-educated, well-groomed, experienced, careful, approachable.



Table 1
Master table of respondents' reaction assignment to stimulus *

Word-reaction	Frequency	Range
Rich	0,93	1
Intelligent	0,90	2
Attractive	0,89	3,5
Kind	0,89	3,5
Interesting	0,86	5
Loving	0,85	6
Generous	0,81	7
Gentle	0,78	8
Skilful	0,76	9
Successful	0,71	10
Practical	0,70	11
Tall	0,68	12,5
Nondrinker	0,68	12,5
Business-like	0,67	14,5
Considerate	0,67	14,5
Strong	0,66	16
Reliable	0,64	17
Calm	0,62	18,5
Energetic	0,62	18,5
Well-proportioned	0,60	20
Responsible	0,59	21
Lively	0,56	23
Sensible	0,56	23
Successful	0,56	23
Blond/Dark-haired	0,51	25
Persistent	0,49	26
Compassioning	0,41	27
Professional	0,34	28
Sincere	0,31	29
Bold	0,30	30,5
Respectful	0,30	30,5
Perspective	0,28	32
Patient	0,26	33,5
Healthy	0,26	33,5
Competent	0,25	35
A good father	0,24	36
Fashionable	0,22	37
Sociable	0,21	38,5
Stylish	0,21	38,5
Economical	0,20	40

*This table contains associations with frequency not less than 0,20.



As role positions are absolutely necessary for stimulus material of semantic differential method, we have pre-assigned the following roles: 1) ideal marriage partner; 2) the most probable marriage partner, 3) typical marriage partner; 4) mother's husband; 5) the real man; 6) the man who attracts successful women; 7) the marriage partner who is usually divorced with; 8) the typical marriage partner of the last century; 9) the marriage partner of the future; 10) the marriage partner of my best friend; 11) the unusual marriage partner; 12) the marriage partner who no one wants to have; 13) the marriage partner of my boss; 14) the marriage partner of my favorite actress; 15) the unreal marriage partner.

As a result of experiment we have received individual matrices of appraisals ($n=480$), the characteristics corresponding to established roles were summed and the final matrix was analyzed; eventually we have found 4 factors. The most ponderable factor among them was factor 2, explaining 16, 56% of general variance. The pole considered has the following scales: Sensible .857790, gentle.771458, kind .739729; loving .727072, lively .712303, successful .705315.

These scales have close values: considerate .691634 and compassioning .686389.

Examining the semantic sense of discovered statistically significant scales, we specified this unipolar factor as "Personality in the interrelation with the marriage partner". It was found that creating the image of the marriage partner, the female students concentrate on the qualities which are very important for interpersonal relations of the husband and wife. This part of the marriage partner's image is the most powerful.

In the opposition to this pole they place the pole, containing the description of the typical partner, the frequent partner who no one wants to deal with and who is likely to be quickly divorced with. It is feared that the most probable marriage partner is on the same pole.

Negative characteristics of interpersonal interaction are ascribed to the best friend's marriage partner that let us suggest a kind of jealousy towards this man. The second by volume within the explained variance is the factor-1 (14,42 %), that is unipolar by its structure. The following scales which are statistically significant, are concentrated on its positive pole: practical .906838; perspective .871316; rich .855428; responsible .827609; business like .750962. The three scales: strong .632518; experienced .627516; professional .579980 have the same significance.

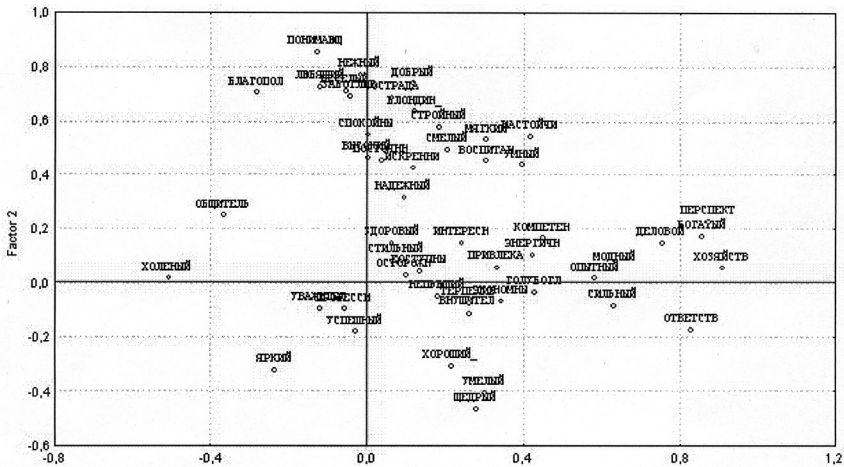
According to the scales distinguished this factor can be marked as "Business qualities of the marriage partner." It unites two groups of business qualities: the qualities that facilitate matrimonial way of life (practical, rich, responsible, strong, experienced) and "supporting" professional career (perspective, responsible, business like, professional). Creating the image of the marriage partner, female students take into consideration business qualities that let organize everyday life and make a career, that will give a necessary financial support.

The analysis of dispersion of role positions show that high business qualities are attributed to the image of a marriage partner of women, who are important for the respondents,- a favourite actress, a female chief, a successful woman or a best friend.



The marriage partner, having no business qualities, identified with those men who no one wants to have as a marriage partner and who quickly divorce with.

We would like to underline that there is certain pessimism in building up a marriage partner's image, because the absence of business qualities is considered as a male typical trait.



Picture. 1. The dispersion of scales according to factor 1 «Business qualities of marriage partner» and factor 2 «Personality in the interrelation with a marriage partner»

The analysis of geometrical dispersion of scales according to the factors (pic. 1) let us see that the most negative characteristic of the marriage partner is

“bright” in accordance to both factors. This characteristic is related to a greater extent to the man's appearance and in female students' representations it points out a person who is unable to deep interpersonal relations, to be compassionate, gentle, kind and other positive personal qualities. Such a marriage partner won't help the wife about the house and can't be successful at work. This characteristic in representations of female students' is an attribute of an egoistic type of the man. This idea is “supported” by some rapprochement of characteristics “bright” and “successful”. Some female students believe that the brighter and more handsome man will have a better career. However it doesn't add more attraction to the whole image of the marriage partner.

In the female students' representations there are erroneous connections between such qualities like “rich” and “generous”, “business like” and “gentle”, “perspective” and “sensible” and etc. The incompatibility between business and personal qualities in a real family can lead to disappointment in the marriage partner and then to destroy matrimonial relations.

The third factor, explaining 13,71% of the general variance is also unipolar. The significant scales on his pole are the following: healthy .957698; attractive .866803;



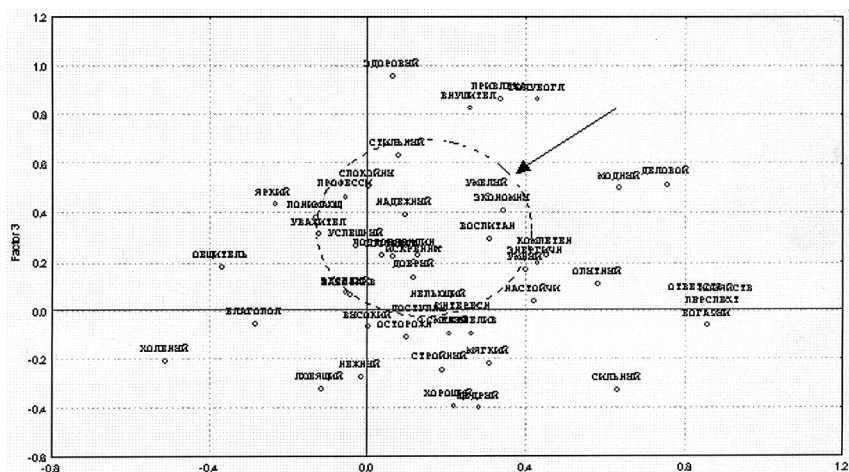
blue-eyed .863016; impressive .830090. The scale "stylish" .637315 is very close to statistically significant scales.

This factor content let us call it "Physical abilities of the marriage partner". This factor is not homogenous, combining qualities from different spheres: somatic (healthy, blue-eyed), subjective (attractive, impressive) and social (stylish). It is well is clearly defined through non-verbal behavior.

The analysis of the dispersion of the objects let us make a conclusion that ideal physical abilities of the marriage partner are considered as something unachievable (the best friend's husband or the female chief's husband) and impossible (it can not happen now, the future partner, unusual partner).

The respondents' pessimistic attitude is reflected by the fact that they place in opposition to this pole the scale "the most likely partner for me". Admiring handsome men, they believe that the beauty as a quality is not compatible with the image of "the real man".

Graphic dispersion of scales in accordance with two factors (pic.2) let us see where their biggest part, making a kind of a core, is raised up- in the semiplane of positive values of the factor "Physical abilities of the partner". In the semiplane of negative values there are such factors as "well-groomed," "good", "strong" and some other physical characteristics. The female students think that the health, attractiveness, impressive view of the potential marriage partner, stylish and fashionable clothes are not only positive indices of physical data, but they attribute them to favorable business qualities.

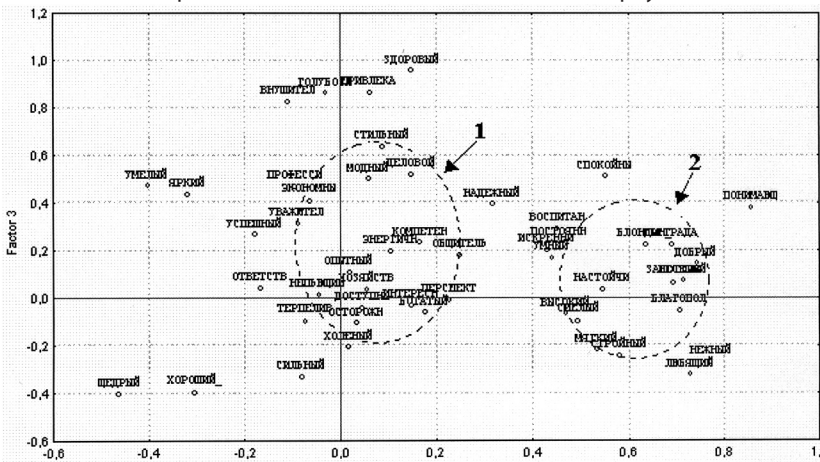


Picture. 2. Dispersion of scales in accordance to the factor 1 «Business qualities of the marriage partner» and factor 3 «Physical abilities of the marriage partner»

In the structure of representations about the marriage partner, examined through the business and physical qualities, personal characteristics, reflecting the relation of the partner to the marriage are placed into the zone of negative values.

For example, qualities like “loving” and “gentle” form a sort of semantic opposition to business qualities and outward appearance of the marriage partner; the qualities like “good”, “generous”, “strong” do not correspond to students’ representations about necessary physical data for the marriage partner.

Graphic dispersion of the scales in the plane of the factors 2 and 3 (pic.3) displays certain diffusion in female students’ representations about marriage partner from the point of view interpersonal matrimonial contacts and outward physical actions.



Picture. 3. Dispersion of scales in accordance with factor 2 «Personality in the interaction with the marriage partner» and factor 3 «Physical abilities of the marriage partner»

The first group of scales, placed on the average values of the factor 2 look like more massive. The absence of feeling outpouring in respondents’ representations in this case is compensated by business qualities of the marriage partner: competence, experience, energy, practical skills and others, and respect towards the wife. The marriage partner according to received data, is nondrinker and rather perspective at work.

The second sphere of scales reflects the female students’ completed image of the marriage partner having a soul closeness with the wife: he is gentle, loving, kind, kind-hearted, well-educated, faithful, compassioning. He has an attractive outward appearance-blond\dark-haired, tall, slim, bold. However this image is practically deprived of business qualities he has only intellect and brings a well-being that are not necessary connected to career achievements of the business partner.

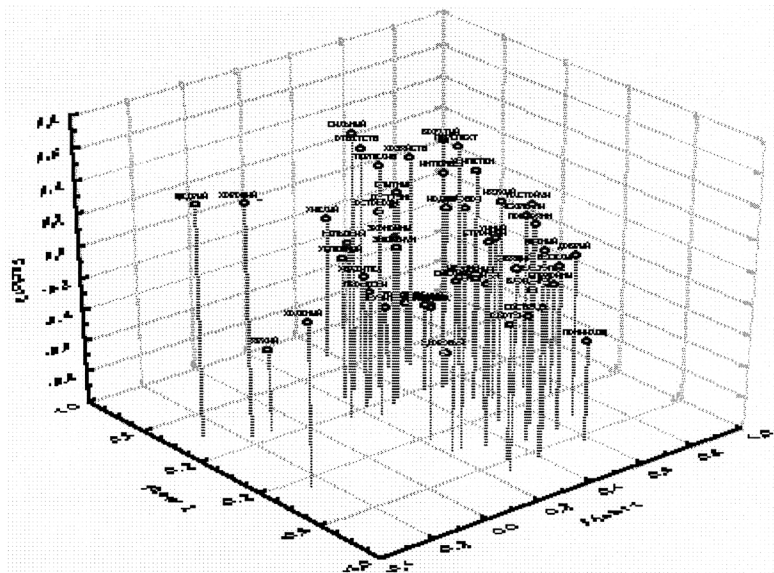
The fourth factor derived after factor analysis explains 10, 82% of general variance. Being unipolar, it has only one statistically significant scale,-interesting .701839. The

scales that are close to statistically significant are: patient .689977; faithful .682477; competent .679259; sincere .646169.

This factor reflects the personal qualities of the marriage partner, which manifest themselves in interactions with other people, so at semantic level it is combined with the factor that is indicated as “Personality in the interaction with the marriage partner.” Due to their semantic concurrence we will regard these factors as the unity, and we’ll call them «Personality in interpersonal contacts».

Scale position in 3-D space, created by the factors “Business qualities of the marriage partner”, «Personality in the interaction with the marriage partner” and “Physical abilities of the marriage partner” (pic.4) attracts our attention to the leading qualities in the structure of marriage partner’s image, created by female students, as strong, rich, responsible, perspective, practical, patient, that is to say business qualities. The least valued are the following qualities of the marriage partner: bright, well-groomed, compassionate, considerate, healthy, that means that the students ignore a large part of partner’s characteristics which are very important for everyday interaction. Such representations of the marriage partner are able to result in the disappointment of the future marriage.

The comparison of characteristics found according to the respondents’ answers in the first group (young girls from single-parent families having no brother (further - group one) and in the second group (young girls from complete families) (further -group 2) let us ferret out some differences.



Picture. 4. Dispersion of scales in 3D-space



The calculation of Student's t-criterion showed the following statistically significant differences in the frequencies of mentioning business and personal qualities: young girls from complete families have more definite representations of personal qualities of the future marriage partner that manifest themselves in the interaction with other people as well, than the girls from incomplete families. The young girls from incomplete families have more developed representations about business qualities of the marriage partner.

In the image of the marriage partner they see first of all, qualities, able to provide financial stability, well being of the family- the wife with children. Husband is a "hunter" who creates financial basis for family life. So the value of personal qualities, reflecting positive attitude to a wife and children are left in the background, they are leveled. However in real life such representations are able to create difficulties, that can take to a divorce and copy mother's life. The young girls from incomplete families, choosing a marriage partner find a man who is able to provide the family financially, but they do not take into consideration personal qualities, such as a good father, patient, considerate, compassionate, careful, gentle, loving, a kind husband and etc.

The girls from complete families appreciate first of all personal qualities of the future partner(0,745), and only then-his business qualities (0,398).

Then these respondents were asked to assess using a seven -scale the correspondence of the found characteristics of the marriage partner relating to the image of desired partner or to father's image. The correlation analysis of the final matrix showed statistically significant correspondence between these two images ($p=0,0024$). It testifies that the young girls from complete families to a considerate extent rely upon qualities typical for their fathers. As a result the imagined portrait of the marriage partner is more alive than the marriage partner's portrait created by the girls from incomplete families. Besides, they are orientated towards personal qualities of the future marriage partner and their own successful career, and it makes the girls from complete families more ready for life difficulties and let them keep the balance in marital relations.

At the end of our research we have compared the role expectations and aspiration in marriage of the young girls from complete and incomplete families, based on the data received according to REA method by Volkova A.N.

Table 2

Comparison table of the average values of role expectations (RE) and aspiration (A) in accordance with scales of REA of female students of two groups.*

The title of scales	RE			RA			PRE- RA ≤
	1 group	2 group	P1,2≤	1 rp.	2 rp.	P1,2≤	
1. Intimate –sexual	3,6	7,9	0,01	8,2	7,6	-	0,01
2. Personal identification with a marriage partner	5,6	8,4	0,01	6,1	8,6	0,01	-
3. Household	8,7	6,8	0,05	4,3	7,9	0,01	0,001

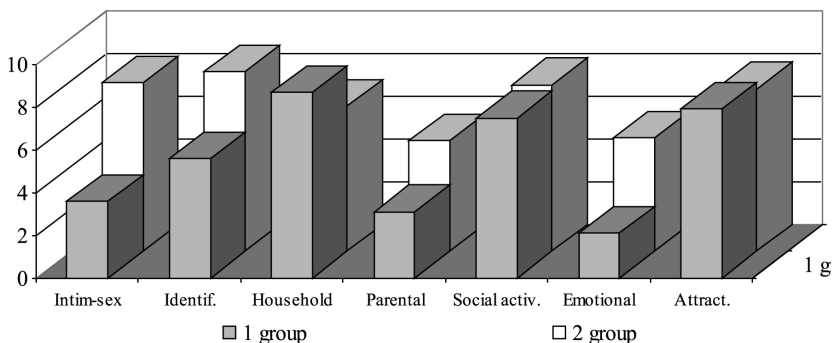


4. Parental-educational	3,1	5,2	0,05	8,9	8,8	-	0,01
5. Social activity	7,5	7,8	-	5,4	6,1	-	-
6. Emotional and psychotherapeutic	2,1	5,3	0,01	4,7	7,6	0,01	0,05
7. Outward attractiveness	7,9	7,6	-	7,8	7,6	-	-

*Note: 1 group – young girls from incomplete families having no brother ; 2 group – young girls from complete families

The analysis of role expectations of young girls from incomplete families (group 1) allows to make a conclusion that in their representations 1) a small role is assigned to intimate-sexual (3,6 scores), parental-educational (3,1 scores) and emotional-psychotherapeutic (2,1 scores) abilities of their marriage partner; 2) there is a strong position about marriage partner's household duties (8,7 scores), realization of social activity (7,5 scores) and the visual appeal (7,9 scores).

The role expectations of the young girls from complete and incomplete families coincide in accordance with scales of social activity and external attractiveness.



Pic. 5. The dispersion of average values of family role expectations of girls from incomplete families (1 group) and complete families (2 group)

The differences in role expectations (pic.5) refer to the following scales:

- intimate-sexual scales: the young girls from complete families claim more from the partner to achieve the sexual harmony in the couple (score 7,9) than the girls from incomplete families (3,6);
- scales of the personal identification with the wife: they expect that the marriage partner will share their interests, value orientations, needs, leisure activities more than the girls from incomplete families (8,4 in comparison with 5,6);
- household occupation scale: they require less in comparison with the girls from incomplete families, that insist upon active role of the husband in every day life problems (6,8 in comparison with 8,7);



- parental-educational scales: to a considerable extent girls from incomplete families expect the marriage partner to fulfill his parental duties (5,2 scores in comparison with c 3,1 scores);
- emotional-psychotherapeutic scales: they expect more, than the girls from incomplete families, the husband's participation in improving family microclimate,
- moral and emotional support, creation of "psychotherapeutic atmosphere" (5,3 scores in comparison with 2,1 scores).

These methods allowed to draw a distinction between role expectations and aspirations of incomplete and complete families according to the scales: intimate-sexual, household, parental-educational and emotional psychotherapeutic. The girls from incomplete families specified requirements towards themselves more than before in the sphere of intimate-sexual relations (from 3,6 scores up to 8,9 scores) and parental-educational functions. The decrease of demands was registered relative to household attitudes: from 8,7 scores up to 4,3 scores. The girls from complete families demonstrate adequate roe expectations and aspirations. The girls from incomplete families demonstrate the biggest distinction between the things they expect from the marriage partner and the things that they are ready to realize in the future.

Summarizing the results the research, it is necessary to underline: 1) stufents' representations of the marriage partner are divided into three groups: personal qualities, that manifest themselves in marital relations; 2)the deficient representations are discovered in the group of young girls from incomplete families; 3) the deficient representations can be found in several forms: a short list of value judgments; incompatibility of the attributed characteristics extreme dominance of characteristics from one semantic group and ignorance or depreciation of other traits; 4) the girls with the well-formed representations about marriage partner have a high percent of correspondence between the attributed qualities and father's or brother's images.

The difficulties that arise while creating marriage partner's image require additional psychological work to overcome these defects.

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