

Investigation and Study on Love and Marriage Cognition and Attitudes of Contemporary College Students

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Abstract

Purpose to understand the current situation and characteristics of marriage cognitive attitudes of college students during the social transition period. Methods by cluster sampling, 1354 college students from four universities in Chengdu were involved in questionnaires survey about love and marriage values. Results the differences in mate selection, attitudes towards materials and love, naked marriage, and trial marriage were statistically significant among college students with different genders or hometowns ($P < 0.01$ or $P < 0.05$). Conclusion although the value of love and marriage of contemporary college students was a contradictory combination of the traditional and modern; the mainstream of the overall orientation was positive and healthy.

Key words: College students; Love and marriage attitudes; Values

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Love and marriage attitudes are evaluations and behavioral tendencies of love, marriage and the other issues for individuals under the influence of their own ethics and values. With the rapid growth of the young generation, love and marriage attitudes of contemporary college students get more and more social attentions. However, the acceleration of social transformation

and the rapid development of the information society, coupled with the continuous influx of foreign ideas, have affected existing ethics and values, which could inevitably change the cognition and attitudes of love and marriage. Psychoanalyst E. H. Erikson believed that love was an unavoidable topic in human life. From the seventeen to the thirties was a critical period for humans to establish intimacy or loneliness, and also an important stage for emotional intimacy, such as friendship and amateness. If a person cannot have deeply emotional exchanges with others at this stage, he or she would fall into loneliness and solitude (Hu, 2003). Nowadays, a series of new sensitive topics about love and marriage, such as “trial marriage”, “naked marriage”, “flash marriage”, “premarital pregnancy” appear frequently (Li, 2010), and various ideas about them have been frequently discussed, which would inevitably and directly affect the love and marriage values of contemporary college students within their critical period. Through the survey on love and marriage attitudes, this paper has analyzed attitudes and cognitive views of contemporary college students on mate choice, love, marriage and sex, in order to provide them with reference and guidance and to have healthy marriage values.

1. SUBJECTS AND METHODS

1.1 Subjects

By cluster sampling, college students of the generation after 90s from four universities, Sichuan Normal University, Southwest University for Nationalities, Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Chengdu University, were involved in questionnaires survey. A total of 1400 copies of questionnaires were sent out, 1352 valid questionnaires were recovered, with the recovery of 96.6%, in which 546 questionnaires were from male (40.4%), 806 from female (59.6%); 456 from urban students (33.7%), and 896 from rural students (66.3%).

1.2 Tools

Using self-designed “College Students Love and Marriage Cognition and Attitude Questionnaire”, it included four parts: (1) mate choice ideas, including standards and methods; (2) love attitudes, including motivations, conditions, and loyalty; (3) marriage attitude, including the relationship between love and marriage, between marriage and career, and marriage conditions, etc; (4) sexual attitudes, including chastity, sexual tolerance and so on.

1.3 Data Processing

SPSS18.0 (Chinese version) and then X2 Test were used in statistical analysis.

2. RESULTS

2.1 Mate Choice Ideas Situation Analysis of Contemporary College Students

Survey results showed that, in terms of mate choice

methods, more than 90% of the students tended to know each other by themselves. And in terms of mate choice standards, 57.8% of males, 48.4% of females, 44.5% of urban students, and 56.1% of rural students respectively chose emotional factor for the most important factor, followed by personality traits, while appearance, economic situation and family background were rarely mentioned, which were statistically significant among college students with different genders or hometowns ($P < 0.01$). In terms of the most valued partner’s personality trait, “sincere” was valued the most for 31.2% of males, while “responsibility” for 48.9% of females, which was statistically significant among different genders ($P < 0.01$). In terms of the most intolerable partner’s behavior, “emotional derailment” was intolerable for 43.3% of males, while “domestic violence” was intolerable for 50.3% of females, which was statistically significant among different genders ($P < 0.01$). All showed in Table 1.

Table 1
Mate Choice Ideas Comparison Among College Students With Different Genders and Hometowns

Mate choice ideas		Males N=546	Females N=806	X ²	P	Urban N=456	Rural N=896	X ²	P
Mate choice methods	Known by themselves	506 (92.7)	741 (91.9)			420 (92.1)	825 (92.1)		
	Introduced by friends	32 (5.8)	60 (7.4)	4.171	.244	29 (6.4)	63 (7.0)	.742	.863
	Known in Internet	6 (1.1)	3 (0.4)			4 (0.9)	5 (0.6)		
	TV dating	2 (0.4)	2 (0.2)			3 (0.7)	3 (0.3)		
	Appearance	27 (5.0)	17 (2.0)			28 (6.1)	16 (1.8)		
Mate choice standards	Economic situation	11 (1.9)	49 (6.1)			22 (4.8)	36 (4.1)		
	Affection	315 (57.8)	390 (48.4)	35.656	$P < .000$	203 (44.5)	504 (56.1)	26.411	$P < .000$
	Family background	11 (1.9)	37 (4.6)			20 (4.4)	29 (3.3)		
	Personality traits	182 (33.3)	313 (38.8)			183 (40.1)	311 (34.6)		
The most valued partner’s personality traits	Gumption	42 (7.6)	126 (15.6)			58 (12.7)	112 (12.5)		
	Inclusiveness	100 (18.4)	77 (9.5)			66 (14.5)	109 (12.2)		
	Responsibility	118 (21.6)	394 (48.9)	160.743	$P < .000$	182 (39.9)	337 (37.5)	3.457	.484
	Mutual understandings	116 (21.2)	64 (8.0)			55 (12.1)	121 (13.5)		
	Sincere	170 (31.2)	145 (18.0)			95 (20.8)	217 (24.2)		
The most intolerable partner’s behavior	Deceive	158 (29.0)	132 (16.4)			87 (19.1)	202 (22.5)		
	Domestic violence	74 (13.5)	406 (50.3)			183 (40.1)	302 (33.7)		
	Emotional derailment	237 (43.3)	199 (24.7)	187.641	$P < .000$	132 (28.9)	299 (33.4)	7.325	.120
	Selfish	62 (11.4)	44 (5.5)			38 (8.3)	67 (7.5)		
	Male or female chauvinism	15 (2.7)	25 (3.1)			16 (3.5)	26 (2.9)		

Note: Figures in brackets were the selection rates (%).

2.2 Love Attitudes Situation Analysis of Contemporary College Students

Survey showed that, for love motivation, “getting rid of loneliness” became the first reason for love, which accounted 46.30% in males and 46.5% in females, while only 6.2% of men and 8.2% of women considered love was the way to find the partner of marriage. About lovelorn, more than half of both men and women

considered lovelorn can promote self-growth, and there were also 4.5% of men believed lovelorn would hurt their self-esteem, which was statistically significant among different genders ($P < 0.05$). For the concept of “women wooing men”, 74.9% of men and 63% of women agreed respectively, which was statistically significant among different genders ($P < 0.01$). All showed in Table 2.

Table 2
Love Attitudes Comparison Among College Students With Different Genders and Hometowns

	Love attitudes	Males N=546	Females N=806	X ²	P	Urban N=456	Rural N=896	X ²	P
Love motivations	Getting rid of loneliness	251 (46.0)	375 (46.5)	4.175	.383	221 (48.5)	405 (45.2)	5.250	.263
	Looking for true love	224 (41.1)	312 (38.7)			165 (36.2)	368 (41.1)		
	Proving charm	37 (6.8)	53 (6.6)			37 (8.1)	56 (6.2)		
	Looking for someone to marry	34 (6.2)	66 (8.2)			33 (7.2)	67 (7.5)		
Lovelorn attitudes	Hurting the self-esteem	25 (4.5)	13 (1.6)	10.482	.015	16 (3.5)	22 (2.4)	5.239	.155
	Ordinary things	163 (30.0)	256 (31.7)			153 (33.6)	266 (29.7)		
	Self-growth	345 (63.1)	522 (64.8)			274 (60.1)	592 (66.1)		
“Women wooing men”	Denying self-value	13 (2.4)	15 (1.9)	24.356	$P < .000$	13 (2.8)	16 (1.8)	5.558	.062
	Opposition	15 (2.8)	55 (6.9)			27 (6.0)	44 (5.0)		
	Uncertain	122 (22.3)	243 (30.1)			139 (30.6)	227 (25.3)		
	Agreement	409 (74.9)	508 (63.0)			288 (63.4)	625 (69.8)		

Note: the “opposition” included the general opposition and complete opposition; “agreement” included general agreement and complete agreement; and the selectivity was in brackets (%).

2.3 Marriage Attitudes Situation Analysis of Contemporary College Students

According to the survey, to the point of view of “marriage is more important than career”, it was endorsed by 27.0% of men and 27.6% of women, while the majority indicated uncertainty. To the view of “love cannot survive without material basis”, 53% of males, 63.2% of females, 65.6% of urban students, and 55.9% of rural students agreed respectively, which were statistically significant among college students with different genders or hometowns ($P < 0.01$). To the view of “men’s work centers around career while women’s work centers around family”, 36.8% of males agreed, but 47.8% of females opposed, which was statistically significant among different genders ($P < 0.01$). To the view of “naked marriage

cannot stand the test of reality”, most students were not sure, 28.8% of males opposed, while 27.8% of the other males, 34.4% of females, 37.5% of urban students and 29.2% of rural students agreed, which were statistically significant among college students with different genders or hometowns ($P < 0.05$). To the view of “flash marriage means fast marriage and also fast divorce”, most students said not sure, there were 26.1% of urban students and 34.0% of rural students opposed, which was statistically significant among different hometowns ($P < 0.05$). To the trial marriage acceptance, 49.9% of men, 61.2% of woman, 51.3% of urban students, and 59.2% of rural students opposed respectively, which were statistically significant among college students with different genders or hometowns ($P < 0.01$). All showed in Table 3.

Table 3
Marriage Attitudes Comparison Among College Students With Different Genders and Hometowns

Marriage attitudes		Males N=546	Females N=806	X ²	P	Urban N=456	Rural N=896	X ²	P
"Marriage is more important than career"	Opposition	171 (31.4)	255 (31.6)	0.112	.946	160 (35.1)	269 (30.0)	3.700	.157
	Uncertain	228 (41.6)	329 (40.8)			172 (37.7)	382 (42.6)		
	Agreement	147 (27.0)	222 (27.6)			124 (27.2)	245 (27.4)		
"Love cannot survive without material basis"	Opposition	74 (13.5)	70 (8.6)	16.121	P<.000	43 (9.4)	100 (11.2)	11.294	.004
	Uncertain	183 (33.6)	227 (28.2)			114 (25)	295 (32.9)		
	Agreement	289 (53.0)	509 (63.2)			299 (65.6)	501 (55.9)		
"men's work centers around career while women's work centers around family"	Opposition	151 (27.6)	385 (47.8)	61.892	P<.000	189 (41.4)	349 (39.0)	1.447	.485
	Uncertain	194 (35.5)	244 (30.3)			137 (30)	300 (33.5)		
	Agreement	201 (36.8)	177 (21.9)			130 (28.6)	247 (27.5)		
"Naked marriage cannot stand the test of reality"	Opposition	157 (28.8)	180 (22.3)	9.670	.008	99 (21.7)	236 (26.4)	9.278	.010
	Uncertain	237 (43.4)	349 (43.3)			186 (41.8)	398 (44.4)		
	Agreement	152 (27.8)	277 (34.4)			171 (37.5)	262 (29.2)		
"Flash marriage means fast marriage and also fast divorce"	Opposition	163 (29.9)	263 (32.6)	1.459	.482	119 (26.1)	305 (34.0)	8.349	.015
	Uncertain	250 (45.8)	345 (42.8)			218 (47.8)	379 (42.3)		
	Agreement	133 (24.3)	198 (24.6)			119 (26.1)	212 (23.7)		
Trial marriage acceptance	Opposition	273 (49.9)	494 (61.2)	18.784	P<.000	234 (51.3)	531 (59.2)	11.876	.003
	Uncertain	169 (31.0)	214 (26.6)			134 (29.4)	251 (28.0)		
	Agreement	104 (19.0)	98 (12.2)			88 (19.3)	114 (12.7)		

2.4 Sexual Attitudes Situation Analysis of Contemporary College Students

According to the survey, to the point of view of "sex is an indispensable part of love", 71.5% of men and 51.2% of women agreed, while 15.1% of women opposed, which was statistically significant among different genders (P<0.01). To the view of "the partner must be a virgin", most college students were unsure, 39.9% of urban students and 33.2% of rural students opposed. To

the acceptance of premarital sex, 60.8% of men agreed, while 36% of women opposed, which was statistically significant among different genders (P<0.01). To the acceptance of one-night sex, 53.1% of men and 78.4% of women opposed, which was statistically significant among different genders (P<0.01). To the acceptance of aid communication, 69.1% of men and 82.9% of women opposed, which was statistically significant among different genders (P<0.01). All showed in Table 4.

Table 4
Sexual Attitudes Comparison Among College Students With Different Genders and Hometowns

Sexual attitudes		Males N=546	Females N=806	X ²	P	Urban N=456	Rural N=896	X ²	P
"Sex is an indispensable part of love"	Opposition	45 (8.2)	121 (15.1)	55.090	P<.000	49 (10.7)	116 (13.0)	1.239	.538
	Uncertain	111 (20.3)	272 (33.8)			129 (28.3)	255 (28.4)		
	Agreement	390 (71.5)	413 (51.2)			278 (61)	525 (58.6)		
"The partner must be a virgin"	Opposition	181 (33.1)	297 (36.8)	4.746	.093	182 (39.9)	297 (33.2)	5.901	.052
	Uncertain	226 (41.4)	344 (42.7)			174 (38.2)	395 (44.0)		
	Agreement	139 (25.5)	165 (20.6)			100 (21.9)	204 (22.8)		
Acceptance of premarital sex	Opposition	85 (15.8)	290 (36.0)	110.667	P<.000	128 (28.1)	249 (27.8)	0.620	.733
	Uncertain	129 (23.4)	251 (31.2)			121 (26.5)	256 (28.6)		
	Agreement	332 (60.8)	265 (32.8)			207 (45.4)	391 (43.6)		
Acceptance of one-night sex	Opposition	290 (53.1)	632 (78.4)	114.642	P<.000	309 (67.8)	614 (68.5)	2.565	.464
	Uncertain	134 (24.5)	128 (15.9)			86 (18.9)	176 (19.6)		
	Agreement	122 (22.3)	46 (5.7)			61 (13.4)	106 (11.9)		
Acceptance of aid communication	Opposition	377 (69.1)	669 (82.9)	41.053	P<.000	348 (76.3)	698 (77.9)	0.500	.779
	Uncertain	129 (23.6)	120 (14.9)			89 (19.5)	160 (17.9)		
	Agreement	40 (7.2)	17 (2.1)			19 (4.2)	38 (4.2)		

3. DISCUSSION

The study found that, in terms of mate choice methods, more than 90% of the students tended to know each other by themselves. However the most popular mate choice methods in modern society, such as online and television dating, were only adopted by a very few, which revealed university students were still influenced greatly by traditional culture and ideas. And in terms of mate choice standards, the majority of students valued their own emotional feelings most, followed by personality traits, while appearance, economic situation and family background were rarely mentioned, which was consistent with the usual survey findings (Su & Ren, 2008). The phenomenon that men valued emotional factors more than women has greatly denied the subjective speculation of bad marriage attitudes from men. And the phenomenon that rural students valued emotional factors more than urban ones, maybe due to the long years of parents' absence for rural college students, who were more eager to emotional connections. While urban students paid more attention to personality traits than rural ones, it may be because urban students affected by social environmental impacts were more independence and freedom, thus valued unique partner's personality traits. In terms of the most valued partner's personality trait, "sincere" was valued most by males, while "responsibility" was valued most by females, which was of the same strain with China's unique traditional culture. As in traditional Chinese culture, men played a more important role in being the breadwinner; women preferred more in men's sense of responsibility, while men preferred more in restrained and sincere characters of oriental women. In terms of the most intolerable partner's behavior, "emotional derailment" was the most intolerable factor for males, while "domestic violence" for females, which was probably because from the traditional point of view, women should keep loyalty to marriage. Emotional derailment was a kind of immoral thing and may wound men's self-esteem. While in modern society, with the rise and enhancement of female independent consciousness, the desire to be respect and the concept of gender equality deeply rooted in people's hearts, the strong opposition to domestic violence grew increasingly.

For love motivations, "getting rid of loneliness" and "looking for true love" became the first two reasons. However, the traditional idea that "love is the way to find the partner for marriage" was rarely mentioned, which indicated that with the development of society and the changes in ideas, previous traditional concepts of marriage did not apply for contemporary college students. As advocating freedom, contemporary college students have paid more attention to inner feelings and self-experience, so their love must comply with their own feelings, leading to deviations between love and marriage motivation. On the lovelorn issue, 64.1% of

college students saw it as an opportunity to self-growth, and 31% ones saw it as a common thing, not enough to deny themselves, which suggested that general attitudes of college students towards lovelorn were positive, rational, and self-confidence. For the concept of "women wooing men", there were 74.9% of men and 63% of women agreed respectively. Compared to women, men agreed more on this view, which suggested that with the times progress and consequential changes in people's ideas, the view that "taking the initiative to pursue happiness is a right to both men and women" was accepted by more and more people. Overall, the love attitudes of contemporary college students were simple and idealistic (Li, 2013).

For marriage attitudes, to the view of "marriage is more important than career", the majority indicated uncertainty, while the agreement and opposition of it were approximately half to half for the remaining people, which may be because college students often make judgments just by their self-experience in the simple university environment. To the view of "love cannot survive without material basis", more women agreed, which was because women were suffering multifaceted stresses with the increase of the living cost in economic development, and more expecting satisfaction and security brought by materials. Furthermore, more urban students agreed with it than rural ones, which was because in reality, there were more economic pressures in urban life than in rural life, so urban college students have more realistic marriage attitudes. This was an inevitable consequence of gradually changing marriage concepts of the whole society. To the view of "men's work centers around career while women's work centers around family", women more than men opposed. So the role distribution in traditional family was no longer applicable for contemporary college students, resulted from the increasingly gender equality, the rising of women's status, and the growing awareness of female autonomy and independence in a modern society. To the view of "naked marriage cannot stand the test of reality", most students were not sure; women agreed with it more than men, which may due to the greater risks for women in naked marriage; and urban students agreed with it more than rural ones, which may be because urban student grew up in a rapid development of society, thus they were more aware of hardships in naked marriage. To the view of "flash marriage means fast marriage and also fast divorce", most students were not sure, there were 26.1% of urban students and 34.0% of rural students opposed, which indicated that with the influx of new ideas, rural students were gradually accepting them. To the trial marriage acceptance, women opposed it more than men, which may due to a greater harm brought to women in trial marriage; and rural students opposed it more than urban ones, which was because the ideology of rural students was a traditional and modern contradiction.

Finally, the study also found that, to the point of view of "sex is an indispensable part of love", 71.5% of men

and 51.2% of women agreed. The proportion of agreement of it was much higher than that of opposition, the reason may be that with the popularization of adolescent sexual health education and the spreading sexual knowledge, more and more students had richer understandings about sex, and the point of view that "love is the combination of sex and affection" was accepted by the majority of college students. To the view of "the partner must be a virgin", most college students were unsure, and urban students opposed it more than rural ones, which may be due to the more open view about sex of urban students. To the acceptance of premarital sex, 60.8% of men and 32.8% of women agreed, which was not a small change in Chinese tradition, indicating that more and more people have tolerant attitudes towards premarital sex. But there were still 36% of women opposed it, which was due to the greater risks assumed by women in premarital sex. To the acceptance of one-night sex, more than half of college students opposed, and women opposed it more than men. From the traditional point of view, women exposed to higher risks brought by one-night sex, and it was contrary to the traditional ethics. The reason for these findings was that, with the influence of both domestic and foreign new ideas and concepts, the sex cognition of contemporary college students showed a trend of diversification, and sexual attitudes became more open. Therefore, the sexual attitudes of contemporary college students changed from closed to open, and the view of marriage and childbearing became more scientific (Gao & Li, 2013).

In summary, all these characteristics of love and marriage attitudes owned by contemporary college students were associated with family education, social background, school education and other factors. In mate selection, contemporary college students still valued more of inherent conditions, such as self-experiences and feelings, personality traits, but less of external

conditions. However, with the diversified manners of love for college students at present, there were still much room for improvement, for example, only focusing on their own feelings, lack of responsibility sense, be more emotional than rational in love, ignoring others' feelings, be impulsive and blind. In today's society, under the bad influence of "money worship" and other unhealthy marriage attitudes, how to guide contemporary college students to have the right idea and healthy marriage attitudes was essential for educators and parents. Therefore, it required schools and families to timely grasp the physical and mental development of college students, to give appropriate advices and guidance in terms of love, and some psychological counseling about love. Meanwhile, as all kinds of popular fashion marriage attitudes in society would influence contemporary college students more or less, the television and online medias should take more social responsibilities in the promotion of healthy love and marriage attitudes.

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