

Evolution of mate selection criteria: A gender perspective in anthropological theoretical models

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Abstract: Mate selection criteria are an important subject reflecting human social behavior, which has changed significantly in the passage of time and the evolution of social culture. From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, the difference between men and women in mate preferences stems from the biological reproductive needs: men tend to choose young and healthy women to ensure the fertility of their offspring, while women value the partner's resource ability to guarantee the support of their children. However, biological factors do not fully explain this process, and social culture also plays a key role in it. In traditional societies, the norms of gender roles influence the mate selection criteria, making men prefer virtuous family women, while women prefer economically competent men. With the development of modern society, gender roles gradually blurred, and women's economic and social status rose, making them pay more attention to psychological needs such as emotional communication and interest consistency; men also pay more attention to female independence and personality. The concept of individualism and gender equality in modern society further promotes the diversification of mate selection criteria, and emotional fit and personalized needs have gradually become important factors, reflecting the society's identification of individual autonomy and emotional needs.

1. Introduction

Partner choice is an important embodiment of human social behavior, whose criteria have changed significantly over time and socio-cultural development. From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, the differences in partner preferences between men and women stem from biological reproductive needs: men tend to choose young and healthy women to ensure the reproductive potential of their offspring, while women value men's resources and ability to guarantee the living conditions of their children. However, the process of mate selection is not driven by biological factors, in which social culture also plays a key role. In traditional societies, the norms of gender roles profoundly influence the criteria for mate selection. As the economic pillar of the family, men tend to find a "good wife and a good mother" who can undertake family affairs, while women pay more attention to the economic ability of their partners to meet the needs of life. However, with the development of modern society, gender roles are gradually blurred, and women's social and economic status is significantly improved, which makes people's mate selection criteria change to the direction of psychological needs such as emotional communication and consistent interests. Modern society emphasizes individualism and gender equality, which further drives the

diversification and individualization of mate selection criteria. This paper aims to explore the evolution process of mate selection criteria from the gender perspective. By combining evolutionary psychology, sociocultural background, and the influence of modern social values, we will analyze the trajectory of change in mate selection criteria from traditional to modern, and explore the transformation of social values reflected by the change and the redefinition of gender roles.

2. Mate selection from the perspective of evolutionary psychology

1).Biologically-driven male mate preference

From an evolutionary psychology perspective, male preferences in mate selection derive from biological reproductive needs. Due to the biological characteristics of men, they do not need to directly bear the high cost of reproduction, so men tend to choose women with high fertility potential when choosing a mate[1]. Younage and health are often markers of high reproductive potential, representing longer reproductive periods and less reproductive health risks. Thus, male preference for young, healthy women is considered to be a result of natural selection that ensures the survival and reproduction of offspring. This tendency occurs not only in human societies, with similar preferences in many animal populations, suggesting that it is a general evolutionary adaptation behavior[2]. By selecting young, healthy partners, males biologically maximize the likelihood of gene delivery. This tendency has been interpreted in evolutionary psychology as the optimization of reproductive strategies, reflecting the male concern on offspring number and gene dispersal.

2). Association of female mate-choice strategies with resource needs

In contrast, women devote much more physiology and energy in reproduction than men, a biological trait that allows women to pay more attention to their offspring when choosing a partner[3]. Because of the time and resources required by pregnancy, childbirth and feeding, women are more likely to find partners who can provide resource support to ensure that they and their offspring have adequate life security[4]. Usually, this partner appears as a male in the economic and social status advantage, who can provide a relatively stable living environment. Choosing a partner with resources can not only improve the survival chances of their children, but also reduce the financial burden of women in raising their children. This preference is also an evolutionary adaptive behavior. Women's focus on resources is not only due to economic needs, but also reflects the strategic choices under the pressure of survival. This mate selection criteria indicates that females pursue the goal during reproduction is not just the number of offspring, but the quality of life of the offspring, and therefore will be more cautious and cautious in mate selection[5].

3). Flexibility in mate selection and culture influence

Although evolutionary psychology provides a biological explanation for sex differences in mate selection, this biodriven mate preference is not static but can be influenced by socio-cultural factors. Modern evolutionary psychology has found that as the social environment changes, women's value on economic conditions in choosing partners varies significantly among different cultural and economic backgrounds. For example, in developed countries, women have relatively high economic independence and less dependence on male economic resources, which makes them to pay more attention to emotional fit and the resonance of interests when choosing a mate. However, in low-income countries, women tend to pay more attention to men's economic ability, which is closely related to the needs of social structure and life security[6]. This phenomenon suggests that the biological basis of mate selection, although important, is not the sole determinant. The fication of gender roles and differences in cultural circumstances have an impact on the criteria for mate selection, which in modern society are largely shaped by individual values and social structures. It also reflects the high adaptability and flexibility of human mate choice behavior, which is able to

find a balance between biological needs and social culture.

3. The influence of social culture and gender roles

1). Shating of mate selection criteria by traditional gender roles

In traditional societies, gender roles often have strict norms, and mate selection criteria are largely influenced by these norms. The traditional division of gender roles usually stipulates that men are the main economic providers, responsible for going out to work and maintaining the economic stability of the family, while women assume the role of family carer, responsible for raising children and managing the housework[7]. This division of labor becomes the default norm in many social structures, and the criteria for mate selection are influenced. Since the society generally expects men to have financial ability, women are more inclined to find men with financial security ability when choosing a partner to meet the needs of life and child support. Similarly, men will prefer younger, virtuous women in choosing their partners to meet the society's expectations for the role of a "good wife and a good mother". This mate preference not only meets the social requirements for gender roles, but also enables men and women to perform their respective duties in the family, meeting the expectations of the traditional society on the structure of marriage.

2). The ambiguity of gender roles and diversification in mate selection in modern society

With the development of modernization, the definition of gender role gradually blurred, and the traditional gender division of labor began to be redefined. Women's social status increases with increasing education and economic opportunities, they gained more independence financially and professionally, and no longer rely on the financial support of men. This shift has made women more autonomous in choosing their partner. Their criteria are no longer limited to men's financial ability, but gradually focus on psychological needs such as emotional support and consistent interests. This change reflects the modern women's pursuit of self-actualization and personal happiness, and the preference of mate selection has changed from the traditional material security to the spiritual fit. Similarly, men have gradually changed their expectations for partners in modern society, no longer only pursuing traditionally virtuous partners, but more on women's personality, intelligence and independence. The concept of gender equality in modern society has promoted the diversification of men and women in the choice of partners, and both men and women express their needs and preferences more equally.

4. Influence of modern social values

1). Individualism and the concept of gender equality promote the diversification of partner choice

With the acceleration of globalization and the transformation of modern values, the rise of individualism makes people pay more attention to self-realization and individual happiness. Under the influence of this concept, the partner choice gradually gets rid of the shackles of traditional economic and social status, and turned more to the satisfaction of emotional and personal needs. In traditional society, the choice of partners usually revolves around economic conditions, social status and family background, while in modern society, individuals' self-needs and intrinsic values are more and more valued[8]. The rise of individualism encourages people to pay more attention to their partner's emotional support, personality fit and common life values when choosing a spouse, which makes the mate selection criteria tend to be diversified and personalized. The popularization of the concept of gender equality has further broken the traditional shackles of gender in mate selection, and men and women are more equal in the choice of partners. Partner choice is no longer based on gender roles, but more focused on equal participation and mutual support in life, career and emotion. Under the influence of this concept, the partnership gradually changed from the

traditional dependence in the past to the relationship of equal cooperation, and the choice and decision-making rights were more balanced. This change of values makes men and women gradually abandon the old gender role constraints when choosing their partners, and thus become more free to pursue partners who meet their own needs.

2). Impact of online social networking platforms on the way and criteria of mate selection

With the development of information technology, social media and online dating platforms are playing an increasingly important role in the modern society. These platforms not only change the way people meet their partners, but also make the criteria for mate spouses more open, transparent and diverse. By making friends online, individuals can break through geographical and time constraints and reach more widely with potential partners[9]. Online dating platforms provide people with a variety of channels of mate selection, through interest labels, personality tests and other ways, to help people find partners with similar interests and emotionally compatible emotions. This screening and matching mechanism makes modern people pay more attention to each other's feelings and interests in choosing spouses, and emotional compatibility and common interests become important factors affecting the choice of partners. According to the data, on online social media platforms, men and women show a certain convergence on their mate selection criteria, which reduces the gender difference to some extent and reflects the redefinition of gender roles by modern social values. Through social platforms, the criteria for mate selection gradually change from traditional external factors such as economic and social status to internal psychological needs. The openness of the platform and the diversification of their choices also encourage people to rethink their own criteria for mate selection, and pay more attention to their internal emotional needs, rather than simply pursuing external economic security.

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The evolution of mate selection criteria is a complex process conditioned by biologically driven, socio-cultural influences as well as modern values. From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, sex differences in mate selection have a biological basis, with males tending to select young and healthy females to ensure reproductive success, while females favor males with resources to guarantee the survival of their offspring, reflecting sex differences in reproductive strategies. However, this biological preference is not static, but is constantly adjusted with the changing social environment. In the socio-cultural framework, different cultural norms and gender role expectations present mate selection criteria. In traditional societies, gender roles usually stipulate men as the economic pillar and women as the family carer, which affects the criteria of partner choice and makes men and women pay more attention to the complementarity of roles when choosing a mate. With the development of modernization, the boundary of gender roles is gradually blurred, and women's economic independence is improved. They pay more attention to emotional support and personality matching, while men gradually pay attention to women's personality and intelligence. The transformation of modern values promotes the individualization and diversification of mate selection criteria, and the popularization of individualism and gender equality makes mate choice no longer limited to traditional economic and social status, but pays more attention to emotional satisfaction and personal happiness. The rise of social media has further changed the way and standard of mate selection, emotional compatibility and common interest have become important factors, the influence of gender differences in mate selection has gradually weakened, and partner choice has shifted to focus on emotional interaction and relationship quality, reflecting the deep pursuit of individual happiness and emotional satisfaction in modern society.

5. Conclusions

The evolution of mate selection criteria is a complex and dynamic process that is both

biologically driven and profoundly influenced by socio-cultural and modern values. From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, gender differences in mate selection focus more on men's fertility potential and women more on resource support. However, this biological basis is not fixed. In a socio-cultural framework, differences in the definition of gender roles and cultural context have had a profound impact on mate selection criteria. From traditional society emphasizing the complementarity of gender roles to modern society paying more attention to the fit of individual emotional needs and life values, human partner choice behavior shows a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. The values of modern society, especially the popularization of individualism and gender equality, further promote the diversification and individuation of mate selection criteria. The rise of online social platforms has changed the way people find their partners, making emotional compatibility and personality needs an important factor. Partner choice has shifted from traditional economic and social status to deep emotional connection and relationship quality. The discussion in this paper not only reveals the historical evolution of mate selection criteria, but also reflects the reshaping of gender roles and changing individual values in modern society. This evolution process is not only a microcosm of social progress, but also highlights the profound pursuit of happiness and emotional needs in a complex social environment. Future studies could further explore the impact of emerging technologies and multicultural environments on mate selection criteria, providing a more comprehensive perspective on understanding human social behavior.

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