



Male and Female Post-Divorce Strategies of Personal Life: A Longitude Research

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Abstract: The number of divorces is steadily growing, both in the Russian Federation and abroad. According to various estimates, every second marriage in Russia falls apart. Divorce and the emotions that accompany it change one's behavior: divorcees' further personal lives are affected by the previous experience of family relationships. Thus, the personal life satisfaction of a divorcee entirely depends on the strategy he or she chooses on the basis of the experience obtained from the previous marriage. The present paper features some results of a longitude study in the strategies of personal life arrangement. The research involved former spouses of three age groups (25-65) five years after divorce. The research revealed that strategies differed significantly according to gender and age. However, the strategy of escape from family lifestyle prevailed.

Keywords: divorce, age, strategy, personal life, men and women, civil marriage, civil marriage, loneliness.

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of divorces is currently growing worldwide. The same trend can be observed in the Russian Federation. According to various statistics, every second marriage in the Russian Federation falls apart. As for the Kemerovo Region, the Federal Service of State Statistics gives the following data for 2016: 6.2 marriages and 4.5 divorces per mille [5]. Most Russian divorcees are under 40 years old. Divorce and the emotions it triggers change people's behavior: they rethink their past relationships and let the new experience shape their further private lives. Thus, the satisfaction a divorcee gets from his or her personal life depends on the chosen strategy.

The present research was conducted in 2014 and 2018. It featured the personal life strategies of men and women who experienced a divorce in 2013-2014.

Research Subject

The research featured male and female personal life strategies five years after divorce.

Under personal life strategies we understand "a form of organization of human interactions that takes into account possibilities, prospects, actions, and various factors that impede interactions, i.e. problems, difficulties, conflicts" [4].

The study focused on such strategists as: 1) a new marriage; 2) a civil marriage; 3) casual relationships; 4) no relationships with the opposite sex.

II. METHODS AND DESCRIPTION

In 2014, we conducted a survey that featured women who went through a divorce: how they visualized their past and future personal life. The respondents were seventy three Kemerovo residents who divorced in 2013-2014 and attended various psychological seminars, trainings, and individual counseling. In 2018, sixty of those women took part in another survey on the life strategies of divorcees. We managed to recruit their former husbands as well: luckily, all of them were alive and resided in the region. Thus, the final stage of the research involved 120 former spouses who divorced 5-6 years previously at the age of 20-60. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Married, years	Age: under 35 Number of respondents: 35		Age: 36-45 Number of respondents: 46		Age: 46-65 Number of respondents: 39	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
≤3	16 62.5%	19 52.6%	21 23.8%	25 24.0%	20 15.0%	19 15.8%
3 - 10	37.5%	42.1%	47.6%	32.0%	35.0%	42.1%
≥ 10	-	5.2%	28.6%	44.0%	50.0%	42.1%

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The psychological counseling practice and observation made it possible to put forward the following hypotheses: 1) The personal life strategies of male and female divorcees differ significantly; 2) The personal life strategies of male and female divorcees depend on the age of the divorcee; 3) In general, the personal life strategies of male and female divorcees change with age with a tendency towards avoiding family lifestyle; however, men and women have different reasons for that.



III. DISCUSSION

At the first stage, we interviewed women who divorced in 2013-2014 about their outlook on their prospective personal life and the married life experience, since these two factors play an important role in choosing the strategy for building new relationships.

We used The Autobiography method ("Me in 5 years") developed by G. Allport and M. Gillespie [3] to study their outlook on the future personal life. Table 2 shows the results of the study.

Table 2 Outlooks of female divorcees on their future personal life

Outlooks	Age: under 35 Number of respondents: 19	Age: 36-45 Number of respondents: 21	Age: 46-65 Number of respondents: 20
Will get married	52.6%	38.1%	50.0%
Will live in civil marriage	36.8%	38.1%	20.0%
Will remain single	10.5%	23.8%	30.0%

In 2013-2014, the newly divorced women from all three age groups were very optimistic in their outlook on their future personal life and demonstrated a desire for a family lifestyle, – probably, to prove their viability as a woman and a wife.

When planning one’s future personal life, it is very important to analyze the mistakes made in the past and to draw a moral from previous relationships. In 2014, we used the Sachs-Levy sentence completion test to study the attitude of the women towards their past marriage and their own behavior [3]. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Female divorcees’ attitude to past marriage and their own behavior in it

Variants of the sentence completion test: "I should have..."	Age: under 35 Number of respondents: 19	Age: 36-45 Number of respondents: 21	Age: 46-65 Number of respondents: 20
...divorced earlier.	21.05%	19.05%	50.0%
...not have married him at all.	31.6%	31.6%	10.0%
...behaved differently / been wiser / loved myself more, etc.	21.05%	14.4%	40.0%
...walked this path to get valuable life experience. Whatever happens, happens for the best.	26.3%	35.05%	-

Three prevailing ideas the women expressed about their past family life can be summarized by the following statements. 1) "I should have divorced earlier": this idea became dominant with the increase in the divorce age (from 21.05% to 50.0%). 2). "I should not have married this man at all": this idea was more typical of young women (from 31.05% to 10.0%). 3). "I should have behaved differently /

been wiser / loved myself more, etc." This attitude increased with age (from 21.05 % to 40.0%).

The second stage (2018) focused on the personal life strategies of the same women and the men they divorced five years earlier. We designed and used a questionnaire we called "My personal life" [2]. The results of the second stage are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Personal life strategies of male and female divorcees

Strategies	Age: under 35		Age: 36-45		Age: 46-65	
	Men: 16	Women: 19	Men: 25	Women: 21	Men: 19	Women:
Married again	31.25%	52.6%	48.0%	28.6%	15.8%	-
Civil marriage	18.75%	21.1%	28.0%	9.5%	10.5%	9.5%
Casual sexual relationships	50%	15.8%	24.0%	52.4%	26.3%	47.6%
No sex life	-	10.5%	-	9.5%	47.4%	42.9%

An analysis of the data showed the following results for the group of former spouses who divorced under the age of 35. Over the past 5 years, 52.6% of women and 31.25% of men married again. In most cases, the new

marriage took place quite soon after the divorce, and the new love was the reason the previous marriage fell apart.

21.05% of women and 18.75% of men live in civil marriage with possible marital prospects. They demonstrate an obvious adherence to stable relations with the opposite sex.

However, 50.0% of young men in this age group hesitate to start a new marriage, being content with no-strings sex contacts without any marriage prospects. Only 15.8% of women demonstrated the same attitude.

Still, none of the men in this age group refused completely from love relationships, while 10.5% of young women stated a complete absence of sexual contact in their lives after the divorce.

As for the group of men and women who divorced at the age of 36-45, the survey showed the following results. Over the past 5 years, 48.0% of men and 28.6% of women in this group married again. It was obviously more difficult for women to find a new partner than it was for men.

28.0% of men and 9.5% of women live in civil marriage with possible marital prospects.

The remaining 24.0% of men and 52.4% (!) of women in this age group are content with occasional sexual contacts without the prospects of finding a stable partner.

The men in this category fall into two types. The first type is represented by heavy drinkers that tend to be dependent. It was their wives who initiated the divorce. They seem to represent no interest for single women. After the divorce, they stayed close to the former wife in hope to return to the family; they keep asking their adult children and friends to assist them in reaching that goal. The wives, however, are not eager to take them in. At the same time, the wives in question do not plan to remain single.

The other group of men is the direct opposite of the first one. It is represented by wealthy men who have their own accommodations and a well-paid job (doctors, lawyers, businessmen, etc.). The divorce was triggered by their behaviour: frequent adulteries or extradyadic relationships, no desire to be involved in child-rearing or invest in the family, alcohol abuse, etc. However, they continue supporting the family financially after divorce. They show no aspiration for new serious relations or for returning into the past family; they stick to temporary relations with no strings attached, usually with young childless women.

As for the women, the situation in this age group is different. In their opinion, they have to satisfy themselves with temporary sexual contacts, as they cannot find "men of sound mind", and they are reluctant to build stable relationships with alcohol abusers. Among other reasons, the demographic situation in the country and in the region is not in favor of women. As a result, those women who retained their sexual attractiveness and a desire to be sexually active prefer casual relationships with younger men: they have decided to "live for themselves" and wish they have done it earlier.

In this age group, there are no men living alone. However, there are 9.5% of single women who are convinced that there is no chance they can build stable relationships with men.

For men and women who divorced at the age of 46-65, the situation is much worse.

None of the women and only 15.8% of their ex-husbands managed to marry again.

47.4% of men and 42.8% of women in this age group have no sexual life. For men approaching sixty, health begins to play a dominant role in sexual life. There is a high

rate of disability and mortality, not to mention erectile dysfunction.

Women of this age have a better health. However, they are overcome by the problems with their grown-up children and grandchildren. Moreover, their own parents are getting old and demand constant care. Thus, human sex life is short.

In this age group, there are 26.3% of ex-husbands who maintain a certain financial, residential, or career appeal for young women. They do not find women of the same age sexually attractive. Hence, they stick to casual sexual contacts, which may lead to marriage as soon as they feel physically unable to live alone. Such relationships have a character of a bargain and, like any bargain, are beneficial for both parties.

47.6% of women in this age group are content with casual sexual contacts. Some of them are drawn to younger men, some restart relationships with their former lovers who are now widowed or divorced. The women explain the nature of these relationships in a very peculiar way: the men they had an affair with in their youth remember them young and beautiful. These women look after their health and appearance to the extent of their financial capacity. Their motto is "live for yourself".

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. The research confirmed the hypothesis that the personal life strategies of divorced men and women depend on the age of the divorcee.
2. Men aged 36-45 (48.0%) and women under 35 (52.6%) tend to marry again.
3. In general, the personal life strategies of divorcees change with age: a person who has gone through a divorce becomes suspicious and cautious, demonstrating preference to relationships with no strings attached.
4. Divorce contributes to the disintegration of the family lifestyle in many ways. It does more harm to women, who have to single-handedly raise children, and children grow in a single-parent family. Thus, women have not so many opportunities to return to active personal life after divorce. Only those under 35 have a good chance to marry again and, according to our previous studies, to previously unmarried, childless men.
5. Although women are generally more active and adaptive in terms of their personal life, a mere desire for a family lifestyle is not enough, especially for women aged 46-65: there is a high rate of early mortality and disability among men over sixty. As a result, women give preference to temporary relationships. They explain it to themselves that there are no "men of sound mind" and appropriate age around, and a lot of single men of their age group are susceptible to alcoholism. There are women's statements about the time lost in a previous marriage, that life is better than one.

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