

MATING ACTIVITY DISCUSSION AND DATA SUMMARY FORMS

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Supplement to Mating Activity Described in Activity Plan 1, chapter 9, *How Real is Race? A Sourcebook On Race, Culture, And Biology*. 2014, 2nd Edition, AltaMira Press, <https://rowman.com/ISBN/978-0-7591-2273-4>

The forms below provide some discussion guidelines for student responses to questions about their “ideal mate” and the “ideal mate” their parents/family members might select for them. There is also a third question, about what students find “attractive”.

These discussion questions can be used by the instructor or facilitator of a large group discussion.

Or the forms can be printed out and distributed to students for them to use in small group discussion or to do a reflective individual essay. In this case, I sometimes print the question for students on one side of the page [SIDE ONE]. On the other side are the discussion guidelines for small groups to use as they subsequently analyze their responses to the questions. [SIDE TWO].

To analyze variations in student responses (e.g., by gender, race/ethnicity, immigrant vs. U.S. born), I have students also provide relevant background data. This also gives students a chance to do some analysis of group data. Sample questions are at the end of this file.

SIDE ONE: YOUR IDEAL MATE

Question: Think about your “ideal” mate. What is your image? How might you describe this person to someone who was going to help find that individual? How might you write a “mate wanted” add, what characteristics would you include.

[HAVE BLANK SPACE FOR STUDENTS TO LIST CHARACTERISTICS]

SIDE 2: POTENTIAL DISCUSSION AND FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS TO “MY IDEAL MATE”.

- Were you thinking of a long term mate or a short term mate
 - Would your description be different if you were thinking of a long-term mate? If so, in what ways?
- How important are physical traits in your description?
 - About what percentage [approximately] of your ideal mate characteristics are physical traits? Is that a good measure of how important they are [e.g. 50%]
 - Which physical traits are most important?
 - Which physical traits are not mentioned? Are genitals mentioned?
 - Are any of these important physical traits gender-specific???
 - Are any of these important physical traits culturally or ethnically specific?
 - Which physical traits are “purely physical” and which are “physical traits” that actually convey **other** information about the person? What information or meanings do they carry?
- What other kinds of traits other than physical traits appear in your list or image?? Could any of these be described as “personality” or “character” traits?
 - How important are these types of traits?
 - Are any of these traits gender-specific?
 - Are any of these traits culture-specific?
- Are there other kinds of characteristics of your ideal mate that could be described as “sociological” characteristics—i.e. that reflect a person’s family background and socioeconomic characteristics or the various social groups they belong to or are part of (including religion) or by which we socially classify people (generation, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc.)?
 - How important are these traits?
 - Are any of these gender-specific?
 - Are any of these traits culture-specific?
- Are there any other kinds of characteristics of your ideal mate that don’t fit any of the above that could be described as affecting the “quality of the social relationship” between you and your ideal mate?
- Are there other kinds of characteristics of your ideal mate that don’t fit any of the above?
 - What are they and how important are they?

SIDE ONE: YOUR PARENTS' (or older family members) IDEAL MATE FOR YOU: IF THEY COULD ARRANGE YOUR MARRIAGE USING THEIR CRITERIA, WHAT WOULD THEY LOOK FOR? What kind of person would they NOT want for you? How would they describe this person to a “match-maker” or in an advertisement for your mate?

[SPACE FOR STUDENT RESPONSES]

SIDE 2: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: YOUR PARENTS'/FAMILY'S IDEAL MATE FOR YOU USING THEIR CRITERIA

What contrasts (if any) appear in the type of traits in YOUR LIST and the type of traits in YOUR PARENTS LIST?

- What types of characteristics [eg. Physical, personality-character, social characteristics] are most important to your parents/family?
- Are any of these gender-specific?
- Are any of these culturally-specific? Religiously specific?

What similarities (if any) appear in the type of traits in YOUR ideal mate vs. YOUR PARENTS' Ideal mate for you?

- Are any of these culturally specific?
- Are any of these gender specific?
- Are any of these culturally specific?

What traits in a mate would make them MOST upset??

- Are any of these gender specific?
- Are any of these cultural?

SIDE 1: “ATTRACTIVE”. Reflect on your image of someone you find “attractive” and to whom you might be physically attracted. What do they look like? Describe them below as best you can.

[STUDENTS RESPONSES]

SIDE 2: DISCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT CONCEPTS OF “ATTRACTIVE” AND WHAT MAKES SOMEONE “ATTRACTIVE”.

- Optional: Are these the same characteristics as in someone who you would find physically attractive? [but may not be attracted to, such as someone of the same gender if you are heterosexual; diff-age group; someone “off limits”, etc.].
- Does “attractive” imply physical attraction?
 - How important are the physical aspects in your image of someone you find “attractive”?
 - Which physical aspects do you notice or care about?
 - Which physical aspects are not mentioned?
 - Which physical aspects are noticed but not relevant to you?
 - Which physical aspects may be “natural” attractants [based on what we know about other primates and about human unique sexual anatomy and erogenous zones]. (this isn’t discussed in the previous overview of conceptual points.
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- Do any of these physical characteristics have other “meanings” attached to them, especially cultural and social meanings? In other words, do they function as “symbols”.....meaning-carrying vehicles???
- Are any of these physical characteristics gender-specific? And do they reflect natural gender differences or differences in the roles culture assigns to males and females
- Are any of these physical characteristics culture-specific, to particular cultures or ethnic groups? In what ways? Do these physical traits reflect the relative status of particular ethnic groups in a society?
- Do any of these physical characteristics reflect “class status” ---that is characteristics that upper classes would more likely to have than lower socioeconomic groups or lower status groups.
- Other comments

STUDENT/RESPONDENT BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS [for summary purposes and for further analysis of variations among students/respondent responses]

Gender: M____ F____

Age: _____

Sexual Preference if other than Heterosexual_____

Racial or Ethnic Background[s] or
Ancestry[ies]:_____

Religious Backgrounds [s], if any:_____

Your country of birth:_____

Your parents' country[ies] of birth:_____

Other Relevant Information: [add whatever might affect responses on these questions]