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CASE STUDY

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Master of Arts

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Sociology



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**GLOBALIZATION, GENDER, AND PARTNER SELECTION AGE PREFERENCE /
ENTITLEMENT: A RUSSO-AMERICAN CASE STUDY**

By

Aleksandr Gurgenovitch Dovlatov

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology

2005

ABSTRACT

GLOBALIZATION, GENDER, AND PARTNER SELECTION AGE PREFERENCE / ENTITLEMENT: A RUSSO-AMERICAN CASE STUDY

By

Aleksandr Gurgenovitch Dovlatov

This thesis explores, describes, and analyzes the socio-demographic characteristics of users of on-line international marriage-broker and partner-locator web sites. Data is extracted from three major online partner selection web sites; one from the USA, one from Russia, and one from an international “mail-order bride” web site. I investigate gender inequalities created by globalization processes and discuss the lack of international legislation in globalization era. Western men, being in a favorable socioeconomic situation might abuse imbalance of power and take advantage from women who seek marriages from abroad. Analysis of socio-demographic characteristics reveals age preferences differences in partner seeking strategies. Specifically, Western men are looking for females younger than they would be “entitled” to in their home land. The overall study is discussed within the context of increased globalization, transnationalism, and Internet technology.

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INTRODUCTION

On March 4 1999 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now known as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service) reported to Congress on the extent, growth, and activities of mail-order bride businesses in the United States. Congress mandated the report, under Section 652 of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, because of concern that the unregulated international matchmaking industry may exploit women and promote fraudulent marriages.

This report indicated that:

- More than 200 international matchmaking organizations operated in the United States in 1998, and the number is growing.
- Every year these organizations brought thousands of couples together who marry and petition for immigration of the female spouse to the United States. This volume represents between 3 and 4 percent of the direct immigration of female spouses to this country but only 0.4 percent of all immigration to the United States.
- Most of the women came from the Philippines or from the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.

The attention to mail-order marriages reflects growing concern regarding the global recruitment and transportation of women in a variety of exploitative ways. The information on trafficking suggests that mail-order brides may become victims of international trafficking in women and girls. The global magnitude and impact of this traffic in women are already well documented (Glodava and Onizuka, 1997; Caldwell, 1997; Sholes, 1997; Hughes, 2000; Visson, 2001; Pehar, 2003; Constable, 2003, 2005).

The findings of the 1999 INS report stated that while no definitive data exist, estimates of the number of mail-order marriages range from 4,000 to 6,000 yearly, that concern about immigration fraud and domestic violence involving foreign-born spouses is well founded, that the subject is inherently difficult to study, and that few quantifiable sources of information exist. Moreover, the number of businesses engaged in some aspect of the international matchmaking industry is growing rapidly, capitalizing upon the increased globalization of travel, communication, and the growth of the Internet. The number of cases in which immigrants have successfully petitioned for permanent resident alien status without spousal sponsorship, based on a showing of abuse, has grown rapidly and these trends indicate a need for continued monitoring of mail-order marriages. Finally, the report made note of the power imbalance in relations between an American husband and foreign spouse and that this imbalance could be a “plausible” reason for the occurrence of domestic violence within the relationship. This opinion is tacitly reinforced by the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum’s observation that, “[a] foreign spouse relies on her husband for legal protection against deportation and his cooperation in securing legal permanent residency.” (NAPAWF, 2004)

By the summer of 2003 concern over the activities and outcomes of international marriage brokers (IMB, also known as “mail-order bride” agencies) had escalated significantly. It is now recognized that IMBs operate internationally, connecting not only American men to foreign women, but also foreigners to foreigners, in many countries. There has been tremendous growth in the industry, with some estimates putting the number of brokers at 400 and the number of arranged marriages at between 8000 and

12000 annually between American men and foreign women mainly from Asia and the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The rising incidence of homicides and abuse among “mail-order brides” has led to the passage of state legislation to protect IMB women and to pending federal legislation. The federal legislation (S.1455/H.R. 2949) was introduced in 2003 by Senator Maria Cantwell and Representative Rick Larsen from Washington State and seeks to regulate international marriage broker activity in the United States and to provide for certain protections for individuals who utilize the services of international marriage brokers.

Specifically, the International Marriage Broker legislation would:

- Prohibit the disclosure of personal contact information of the potential foreign client without written consent
- Require the American client to undergo a criminal background check and disclose information to the foreign client
- Inform the foreign client of the number of marriages the American client has had and the reason behind the dissolution of the marriage(s)
- Limit the American client to one petition per year for a foreign spouse
- Inform the foreign spouse (in her native language) of her legal right to self-petition for legal permanent residency, and the resources available to her, if she becomes a victim of domestic violence.

Empirical research on international marriage brokerage is limited by problems of data representativeness, validity, and reliability. The extremely fluid arise and demise of some IMBs and their use of internet technology make finding or creating base line data on IMB clients very difficult (INS, 1999, Scholes, 1997, TAHIRIH, 2003). In fact, the

INS report specifically discusses the limitations inherent in existing data sources and the difficulty of developing a generalizable picture of who uses these online partner matching sites. In this research, we propose a new strategy for the creation of base line data; we extract data from three major online partner selection web sites (one from the US, one from Russia, and one international/transnational) to compare female and male attributes within different international contexts (the United States and Russia). Furthermore, we explore, describe, and analyze the socio-demographic characteristics of users of online international marriage broker/partner locator web sites.

The paper proceeds in five stages. As a background to the overall study we locate IMBs within the context of increased globalization, international migration, and technology. We discuss, from a sociological perspective, the gendered differences in age requirements inherent in such internet-brokered relationships. This is followed by a concise description of the data and methods employed to explore and describe differences among and between users of online partner matching web sites. Fourth is an explanation of how socio-demographic characteristics can model and account for age differences in partner-seeking preferences across cultures, and the article concludes with an assessment of the implications of the findings for future research.

BACKGROUND

At least four possible definitions of globalization have emerged in the last decade: globalization as a historical epoch; globalization as the confluence of economic phenomena; globalization as the hegemony of American values; globalization as a technological and social revolution (Reich, 1998). Globalization is often viewed as a primarily economic phenomenon, involving the increasing interaction, or integration, of national economic systems through the growth in international trade, investment, capital, and labor (migration) flows (Kobrin, 1997; Friedman, 1998; Held 1997; Stiglitz, 2002; Nye 2004). This economic interpretation is frequently combined with the rapid increase in cross-border social, cultural and technological exchange as a common, popular conception of globalization.

Others define globalization more specifically as a process in which geographic distance becomes a factor of diminishing importance in the establishment and maintenance of cross border economic, political and socio-cultural relations (Lubbers, 2003). Giddens expands upon this by defining globalization as a decoupling of space and time (a “distanciation”), emphasizing that with instantaneous communications, knowledge and culture can be shared around the world simultaneously (Giddens, 1990, 1991, 2002). Giddens sees three transformations as being preeminent in altering the social panorama: globalization, the knowledge economy, and the intersection of globalization and the knowledge economy to create profound changes in the experiences of individuals, families, household, and communities at the local, national, and international levels. The latter component can be summarized as experiential change and

is often summarized and articulated as “the global rise of individualism” (Monbiot, 2004; Giddens 2002).

There are profound consequences in the structural phenomenon of societies breaking free from the hold of tradition and custom through the twin forces of globalization and the knowledge economy. Individualism has made itself felt throughout race, ethnic, gender, and family relations. But individualism is more than selfishness or the rank consumerism endorsed by the expansion of a market economy. It also includes the ability to harness the power of technology to control, direct, and manipulate resources and opportunities at a totally individual level. Mauro Guillén distills this succinctly when he defines globalization as “a process leading to greater interdependence and mutual awareness (reflexivity) among economic, political and social units in the world, and among actors in general” (Guillén, 2001:4). From his comprehensive review of the different cross-disciplinary theoretical perspectives on globalization and their accompanying rich literatures, Guillén concludes that we know very little about the consequences of globalization (both as an aggregate and among its individual components) on critical sociological variables like organizational patterns, authority structures, social inequality, and social movements.

Contemporary globalization processes also raise important values questions. Globalization, as a process of socio-economic and socio-cultural change and exchange, has intended and unintended ethical consequences on the lives of human beings. They are value-laden processes that entail value choices and conflicts. The conventional interpretations and definitions of globalization outlined above conceal value choices and ethical dilemmas. For example, Table 1 delineates selected, conventionally accepted

social and political indicators often presented as a gauge of increased globalization, for the world as a whole and also, for the United States and for Russia. As expected, all indicators (internet users, hosts, and secure servers; international telephone usages; international travel) show a significant increase between 1980 and the end of the century. Yet possible ethics, social justice, and humanitarian aspects of these indications of increased globalization are all too often relegated to the sidelines or ignored.

If not specifically for globalization, some of the ethical aspects of the related concept of development have been investigated by a hybrid group of researchers and practitioners that compose the field of development ethics (Goulet, 1995; Gasper, 1997). Development ethics looks at the types, distribution and significance of the costs and gains from major socio-economic change. This field of knowledge focuses its attention on the value conscious ways of thinking and choosing between alternative development trajectories and goals. In parallel, there is an increasing amount of work addressing questions of global justice, either as sociological, ethical or cultural reflections on globalization (Hainsworth, 2003). This work has examined the health, education, environment, humanitarian and gender dilemmas and abuse arising from an increasingly globalized world and argues that the dangers and inequalities inherent in globalization require a rethinking and new ethical approach (Singer, 2002).

From table 1, the globalization indicators of greatest relevance here are those related to the rise of internet technology. The dramatic increase in the number of internet users, hosts, and secure servers worldwide is well-known, as is the dominance of the United States in these trends. Although it started relatively late, Russia has also shown marked increases in the use and availability of internet technology. Russians understand

Table 1. Selected Indicators of Globalization 1990 - 2001.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Internet Users*												
Global	45	4294	6815	9296	15605	33817	57430	93661	150695	235084	344208	483056
United States		3000	4500	5500	8500	20000	30000	40000	60000	74100	95354	142823
Russian Federation			1	20	80	220	400	700	1200	2700	3100	4300
Internet Users / 100,000												
Global	1	81	126	170	282	587	1008	1609	2558	3951	5701	7889
United States		1190	1760	2130	3260	7600	11300	14920	22180	27130	34600	51360
Russian Federation				10	50	150	270	480	820	1840	2120	2960
Internet Hosts*												
Global	43	714	1379	2283	4747	9412	16074	29837	43059	71280	105789	140035
United States		522	943	1476	3179	6055	10113	20624	30489	53176	80566	106193
Russian Federation			0.05	1.4	6.5	21	58	152	182	191	326	354
Secure Servers												
Global							3497	12557	32604	57728	116862	147901
United States							2712	9366	23447	39460	77308	93194
Russian Federation							5	15	49	116	267	430
International Telephone**												
Global	50281	57912	68122	80270	91477	107381	121968	138795	153974	171812	192906	200514
United States	12371	13693	15404	17071	19640	22842	27410	31985	34822	38897	41986	42357
Russian Federation	72	193	287	1149	1239	1871	1894	2018	2068	2704	2828	2481
International Travel***												
Global	755648	772868	847727	877950	935273	885751	967474	1050192	1090851	1126090	1207941	1220851
United States	83986	84240	91159	90190	91203	94080	98800	100710	102683	106877	114418	110988
Russian Federation			7159	15077	16028	31621	28469	28645	27516	31127	39540	40724

* thousands

** traffic: International incoming and outgoing telephone (million mins)

*** thousands arrivals and departures

Source: Measuring Globalization: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/charts/index.htm>

and use internet technology in a wide variety of social and economic information-exchange settings both within Russia and between Russia and the west. The setting of most interest here is the use of the internet to facilitate marriage brokering or what is more generally referred to as “computer mediated relationships,” (Merkle and Richardson, 2000).

Internet-Brokered Relationships.

The impact of the internet on social life has been well documented (Nunes, 1995; Turkle, 1995, 1997; Morris and Ogan, 1996). Merkle (1999, 2000), in particular, has examined the characteristics of computer mediated relationships in comparison to face-to-face relationships and documents the increasing complexity of interpersonal relationships in the age of the Internet.

In conjunction with globalization there has been a concomitant explosion in the number of adoptions, marriages, and other “relationship-arrangements” facilitated by commercial intermediaries both within and between western and non-western countries. Computer technology and the Internet have dramatically changed access to information and have removed communication barriers between nations. The use and misuse of the internet for the on-line implementation of many of these international “transactions” has been documented (Hughes, 1998, INS, 1999; Chittenden, 2000; Lloyd, 2000; Pehar, 2003).

Changing geo-political boundaries and the unregulated rise of the internet have given the age-old practice of arranged marriage new meaning and relevance. In particular, with the spread of the Internet and the collapse of the Soviet Union, western men are using on-line marriage agencies or introduction services to find spouses from the former Soviet Union. In an industry that was traditionally dominated by agencies in the

Pacific Rim, this new breed of Russian Internet marriage agencies is rapidly expanding and overtaking the market (Chittenden, 2000). As Hughes, (1998) succinctly described the situation at the end of the 1990s:

“The collapse of the Soviet Union and the formation of new independent states have created political turmoil, economic crisis, poverty and high unemployment. Women have been the hardest hit through the loss of institutional stability. In Russia, 6.5 million women are without jobs, and employed women’s salaries were only 43 percent of men’s salaries. Violence against women is a severe problem. An estimated 14,000 women are killed each year by their husbands or relatives. A law against family violence has yet to be passed and there are only two shelters for battered women in Russia. These circumstances make women desperate for opportunities. The traffickers, pimps, and mail-order-bride agencies take advantage of this vulnerable population to recruit them into many types of trafficking. One of the commonly promoted characteristics of women from Eastern Europe is that they *“traditionally expect to marry gentlemen that are 10 to 20 years older.”* An agent offering women from Russia also explained the disadvantages of American women and advantages of Russian women:

There is a surplus of beautiful women in their 20’s and 30’s who cannot find a decent man. An attractive 25-year-old woman with a good education in the US is out of reach for most men over 35. In Russia women greatly outnumber the available men. Many women in the US are spoiled by having it too good all their lives and have very confused values. Experience shows [sic] us that Russian women come to relationships with much different expectations.”

With a specific focus on Asian-Pacific women, Sciachitano (2000) locates the mail-order bride industry within the feminist critique of the rhetoric of power relations in the commodification of women’s bodies in mail-order websites. The “cyber” bride industry is an extension of the US/Western patriarchal tradition of imperialist globalization. The reproduction of “western cultural ideologies, imperialist nostalgia, and the ongoing sexual politics of global capitalism” fits well within Edward Said’s definition of cultural imperialism where he sees imperialism and colonialism not simply as acts of accumulation and acquisition but more as the ideological conviction that certain territories and people require and beseech domination (Sciachitano, 2000; p. 57-58). The “cyber” bride industry facilitates the submission of local processes and customs

(marriage and mate selection) to the global process of exploitation and sees women as property to be bought, used, abused, and discarded as any other globally available commodity.

It is also important to understand the economic, social, and cultural structural conditions which directly impact and motivate women in some non-western societies, specifically Russia, to join and participate in the mail-order bride internet market place. There is an established literature on the Russia Diaspora (see for example, Shlapentokh et al., 1994; Melvin, 1995; Poppe and Hagendoorn, 2001; Barrington et al., 2003) and an extensive literature on women in contemporary Russia (Racioppi and See, 1997; Sperling, 1999; Caiazza, 2002; Engel 2004). Similarly, the phenomena of internal migration has been examined (see Heleniak, 1997; Brown, 1997) as has general trends in international migration (Zayonchkovskaya, 2000) but there is comparatively little scholarly research as yet on the causes, channels, and consequences of international migration for Russian women and one of the major channels is that of marriage to a foreigner.

Russian women are at a distinct disadvantage. Some scholars describe women in Russia as second-class citizens, or as “out-moded patriarchal stereotypes,” (Chittenden, 2000). Some Russian feminists, supposedly the champions of women and equality, are accused of describing housework as being beneath men and Russian women are idealized as being gentle and sensitive with natural maternal instincts and the “capacity to love,” (Goscillo, 1996; Chittenden, 2000). Chittenden also points out that Soviet propagandists have always emphasized the 80% of teachers and doctors who are women while deemphasizing the lack of social prestige and respect attached to these jobs. Women

earn less than half of men's wages, are more likely to be laid off and constitute fully three-quarters of the unemployed. Within this perspective, mail-order bride agencies represent a way out of oppression and poverty and, with an American husband, a way into the American dream.

Furthermore, as in many non-western societies, marriage often represents the emotional and personal culmination of a woman's life and is the core institution of Russian society and culture. Demographically, Russian women are in a very tight marriage market. Women outnumber men at every age after 15 and due to the deteriorating health system, the high rate of heart disease, poor public health facilities, and poor health practices (e.g. alcoholism) Russian women live considerably longer than their male counterparts. Several commentators document the immense pressure to marry experienced by Russian women (e.g. Chittenden 2000). Pro-marriage and pro-natalist policies designed to provide economic and non-economic assistance to couples and families has resulted in a decline in the age at first marriage to below 20 years. Chittenden notes that, "unlike other developing nations, this does not result in a decrease in education." Quite the opposite in fact, Russian women continue their education after marriage leading to a significant increase in the numbers of young, educated women adopting subordinate female gender roles. This educational background facilitates their access and ability to use on-line marriage brokering services

The growth of these online marriage brokering services has been phenomenal. Emphasizing Southeast Asia (the Philippines) and Russia (along with the other countries of the former Soviet Union), Scholes and Phataralaoha (2002) comprehensively discuss the rise of the mail-order bride industry in the U.S., the women and men who enroll and

participate, the impact on U.S. marriages and immigration, and the fraud, crime, and abuse arising from the availability and use of these services. Seventy percent of Asian women users were Filipino (this despite the fact that Filipino law makes such online listings illegal) and 85% of the women were under age 30 (61% under age 25).

Analyzing data from one of the largest Russian online sites, they find Russian women to be older with 31% under age 25 and 44% over age 30. The perception among these women is that American husbands are thoughtful and faithful, characteristics they do not associate with native men.

Reviews of the early research on the characteristics of male clients of mail-order bride agencies found them to be generally white, highly educated, politically conservative, professionally successful and drawn to foreign wives through idealized notions of traditionalism and the conventional role of women as wives, home-keepers, and mothers (Scholes and Phataralaoha, 2002). In addition to reviewing the early literature, Scholes and Phataralaoha also examine the “success rates” of international marriage brokers in terms of what percentage of female clients married U.S. men. Reliable data on these patterns and trends is very scarce. The authors estimate that about 4% of the up to 150,000 women seeking U.S. husbands eventually marry, (4,000 and 6,000 marriages between U.S. men and foreign brides each year), representing a tiny fraction of the 2 to 3 million marriages that occur in the U.S. every year. These 4,000 to 6,000 marriages result in less than six per cent of America’s annual number of new citizens and the majority of foreign female permanent resident become so through “meeting their spouse at work or in school or through marriage to U.S. service men stationed overseas.”

These substantively trivial numbers conceal the context, motives, and experiences embedded within international marriage brokerage business. Writing in the mid 1990s Glodava and Onizuka explicitly state that “those who have used the mail-order bride route to find a mate have control in mind rather than a loving and enduring relationship” (Glodava and Onizuka, 1994:26 also cited in Scholes and Phataralaoha, 2002).

Furthermore, the most common times for mail-order brides to leave the marriage are upon receipt of the green card (permanent residency) or after 2 years of marriage which signals receipt of non-conditional residence. Abuse of alien wives within these marriages is very difficult, if not impossible, to quantify placing heavy reliance upon individual case studies of reported abuse, violence, and homicide. Such cases have gained considerable public attention and have been the driving force behind the push for legislation to protect individuals who utilize the services of international marriage brokers.

Incidences of abuse, fraud, victimization and crime within the international marriage brokering industry are increasing. An exposé by the *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* on December 4, 2005 lays bare the victimization of international online brides. For women from Russia, the ease of entry to the United States through this mechanism is irresistible:

“... the complex procedure of getting the visa would require a lot of Katerina. Under federal immigration laws, she would have to undergo a thorough medical examination, pass a complete criminal background check and travel to Moscow for an interview at the US Embassy, where officials would probe into her marriage and family history. Frank, on the other hand, would need to do little other than sign his name. And while he could get all the information gathered about her, she would know only what he chose to tell her.”
(Atlanta-Journal Constitution, Dec 04, 2004)

The extreme outcome can be horrific:

"Anastasia King was murdered by her husband in Washington state, never having known he had been married before to another mail-order bride who had obtained a restraining order against him. (Atlanta-Journal Constitution, Dec 04, 2004)

Many Internet brides settle into happy relationships; Encounters International, a major online marriage broker claims a success rate of 86% and cites just 35 divorces out of 257 marriages (Newsweek Magazine, February 7, 2005). However, further evidence that the incidence of abuse among these women is rising comes from the Tahirih Justice Center, an international women's rights group that has monitored problems in the international marriage brokerage business over time. Specifically, "in a survey of 75 legal service providers representing battered immigrant women nationwide, 55% had assisted women who met their abusers through IMBs ... many of the men were repeat abusers who habitually use IMBs to find their next victims," (Tahirih, 2003:7).

The federal legislation now pending would require any U.S. citizen planning to marry a mail-order bride to first undergo a criminal back-ground check. Before a fiancée immigrated here, a US consular officer would inform the potential mail-order bride/groom of any criminal convictions or civil orders against the future spouse and the groom/bride-to-be would also receive information about their rights in the U.S. should they become the victim of domestic violence. This proposed legislation has met with resistance from international marriage agencies who fear that the time lag and extra cost implied by the back-ground check will create an incentive for men seeking mail-order brides to use unregulated on-line match-making companies based outside the U.S. which are rapidly growing in number with the increased ease of internet technology and on-line communication (see table 1).

Lloyd (2000) specifically examines the business of marketing women internationally as brides to men in economically developed nations. The internet mail-

order bride industry is international; poverty and gender roles are what motivate women in non-western countries to participate while power-embedded ethnic and gender stereotypes promote western male participation. The mail-order bride industry is virtually unregulated and “the international law-making community has paid little attention to the open trafficking of women in this form, instead concentrating on forced prostitution and trafficking of children,” (Lloyd, 2000:349). Critics of the pending legislation, citing the extremely low barriers to entry and increased globalization of technology and communication, claim that “there are probably 10,000 to 20,000 local [mail-order bride] companies in the former Soviet Union and that the U.S. legislation will simply drive clients to these unregulated sites while “law-abiding U.S. companies would be driven out of business,” (St. Petersburg Times, Sept 2, 2003). Until now, there have been no international comparative empirical analyses of the patterns and user-characteristics of on-line computer mediated relationship agencies.

I address these issues by explicitly including an international comparative analysis of on-line mail order bride agencies. This analysis builds a base-line data set which enables the comparison of on-line user characteristics within the United States and Russia and across these two countries. Beyond a straightforward exploration and description of on-line users socio-demographic characteristics, we build an age profile for both male and female users, we examine the age and age preference differences by gender between the age of the on-line client and the age of their ideal partner, and we explain variation in the age-preference profile of users in terms of their socio-economic background characteristics.

DATA

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select data from three large, publicly available Internet web sites during December 2004 – February 2005. Purposive sampling depends on the researcher's expert knowledge to select units that are "typical" or "representative" of the population. The technique involves identifying important sources of variation in the population and then to select a sample that reflects this variation. Purposive sampling is an acknowledged alternative to rigorous random sampling in situations where such rigor is impossible to achieve. While purposive sampling permits much stronger inferences than convenience sampling, its major weakness is that expert knowledge of the population is a prerequisite. In this research such expert knowledge has been accumulated during the two years preceding the data selection.

These three online sites are large, well known and heavily used vehicles for posting and retrieving personal information by individuals looking for short-term or long-term relationships. Their durability in terms of years in existence, heavy use, and widespread name-brand recognition make these three web sites relatively more reliable and valid sources of data than others. The first site is a well known internet source in USA, the second is its Russian equivalent, and the third is another Russian site that has been online for more than 5 years and is consistently ranked very high on Internet search engines and indexes. we label these three sites as follows: 1) USA → USA, indicating that both the searcher and the desired partner are individuals located within the United States; 2) East → West, indicating that the searcher is located in the West (most commonly the United States) and the desired partner is in the East (Russia); and 3)

Russian → Russian, indicating that both the searcher and the desired partner are located in Russia. Given the focus of the research, only heterosexual partner searches were included in the data set.

The USA→USA site provides a commercial subscription service for both men and women. On this site USA men are looking for USA women and vice versa. The East→West site is free for females but is a paid commercial service for men. On this site Western (and a very small number of non-western) men are searching for women mainly from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus but also from many other Commonwealth of Independent Countries (CICs). The third data source, the Russian→Russian site is free for both men and women and comprised of Russian men or women seeking partners.

On all sites both gender, and age are required data input fields and an equal number of males and females were selected from each data source. Table 2 provides a detailed socio-demographic profile of the total dataset and the three component data sets. Selected socio-demographic background characteristics are presented for both male and females.

A total of 702 cases, 234 for each web site, were initially selected using purposive sampling technique. However because of extreme values on some variables (mostly age), seven cases were eliminated from this total leaving a grand total of 695 cases. For the overall data set, individuals were mostly from large cities, fairly equally distributed across age categories with a median age of 38 years, mostly single, white, and college educated. With the exception of the skilled occupation category, the 695 cases were rather equitably distributed across occupation classifications and almost half spoke at

least one foreign language. However there are marked differences from these overall norms when the data is disaggregated into the three component data sets.

For the USA→USA data, a significant majority are from large cities (65%), well over 50% of both males and females are over 40 years of age, about a third are single, and both sexes are overwhelmingly white and very highly educated. The major differences between the USA→USA males and females are that males overwhelmingly describe themselves as of average or athletic body type, are more likely to hold a skilled occupation, and speak a foreign language. Individuals from both the East→West and the Russian→Russian data sets are younger, while Americans seeking Americans are much more likely to be single, to speak a foreign language and, like the Americans, are highly educated.

Table 2. Selected Background Characteristics of Online Partner Seeking Participants from three Online Partner Selection Services: 2004-2005.

	US → US		EAST → WEST		RUSSIAN → RUSSIAN		TOTAL		Total	N
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		
City Size										
Large	65.0%	65.0%	55.6%	32.8%	93.0%	98.2%	71.0%	65.0%	68.0%	472
Age Group										
< 25	12.0%	7.7%	63.2%	12.0%	7.9%	10.6%	27.9%	10.1%	19.0%	132
25-29	4.3%	11.1%	16.2%	10.3%	11.4%	10.6%	10.6%	10.7%	10.6%	74
30-34	8.5%	6.0%	12.8%	22.2%	7%	16.8%	9.5%	15.0%	12.2%	85
35-39	14.5%	4.3%	6.8%	16.2%	11.4%	9.7%	10.9%	10.1%	10.5%	73
40-44	13.7%	10.3%	0.9%	12.0%	16.7%	14.2%	10.3%	12.1%	11.2%	78
45-49	6.0%	7.7%	---	12.0%	17.5%	24.8%	7.8%	14.1%	10.9%	76
50+	41.0%	53.0%	---	17.1%	28.1%	13.3%	23.0%	28.0%	25.5%	177
Age Group 2										
less or equal 38	36.8%	28.2%	98.3%	57.3%	36.8%	46.9%	57.5%	44.1	50.8%	353
Marital status										
Never married	29.8%	34.5%	80.3%	65.2%	87.5%	74.5%	65.4%	56.9%	61.2%	404
Ethnicity										
White	78.3%	81.9%	97.4%	91.5%	100%	100%	91.9%	91.0%	91.5%	601
Body Type										
Average	45.2%	37.6%	---	---	61.4%	41.9%	51.4%	39.5%	45.1%	178
Athletic	10.4%	40.2%	---	---	17.1%	29.0%	13.0%	35.2%	24.8%	98
Large	26.1%	17.1%	---	---	12.9%	18.3%	21.1%	17.6%	19.2%	76
Slim	18.3%	5.1%	---	---	8.6%	10.8%	14.6%	7.6%	10.9%	43
Has Children										
Yes	60.9%	53.5%	16.2%	33.6%	70.1%	56.8%	48.4%	47.4%	47.9%	318
Religiousness										
Yes	54.7%	55.6%	94.0%	64.1%	---	4.4%	50.0%	41.8%	45.9%	319
Foreign Language(s)										
Yes	15.4%	24.8%	98.3%	67.5%	41.2%	52.2%	51.7%	48.1%	49.9%	347
Education										
College +	87.6%	92.1%	90.6%	84.7%	100%	89.5%	90.0%	88.5%	89.3%	442
Occupation										
Professional	32.1%	26.0%	18.8%	18.3%	42.1%	26.5%	27.3%	22.6%	24.9%	117
Service	44.4%	35.4%	34.8%	34.9%	42.1%	32.4%	39.4%	34.7%	37.0%	174
Skilled	2.5%	13.5%	9.8%	12.8%	5.3%	26.5%	6.5%	15.1%	10.9%	51
Unskilled/Other	21.0%	25.0%	36.6%	33.9%	10.5%	14.7%	26.8%	27.6%	27.2%	128
N	117	117	117	117	114	113	348	347		695

Of particular interest is the difference between the men and women of the East→West data set, given that the males represent fee-paying Americans searching for self-identified “available” Russian women. The Russian women are young, educated, single, have not had children, speak a foreign language and hold mainly service or unskilled jobs. The American men are not from large cities, older, quite possibly have been married with children, and have had some college education. Also of interest is the comparison between the Russian women searching for American men and Russian women searching for Russian men. Overwhelmingly, Russian women searching for Russian men are from large cities, are considerably older, probably have children, do not speak a foreign language, and are much more likely to hold a professional level occupation than Russian women willing to accept American partners. That both groups of women are almost equally well educated and overwhelmingly white reflects the socio-demographic norms of Russian society. The age, language ability, presence of children, and occupational differences explain, at least from a socio-demographic perspective, why some women search for Russian partners and other for non-Russian partners.

FINDINGS

Sociobiologists or evolutionary psychologists have attributed observed differences in the ages of male and female partners to be an indicator of mating preferences and as evidence of biologically based sex-specific characteristics in human mating patterns (Buss and Barnes, 1986; Buss, 1987, 1989 1992; Greenlees and McGree, 1994). Males desire younger, more fecund females; females seek older males who can materialistically, in terms of prestige, income and the attendant security thereof, ensure the likelihood of their young surviving to reproductive age. Arguments that male-female age differences with respect to mating preferences and choices reflect sex-linked differences in reproductive strategies, echoing the biological processes of fitness and selection, have been firmly rejected by sociologists and anthropologists. Such arguments are seen as ecologically fallacious (Davis 1998:379), dismissive of different social maturation rates between males and females (McGuffin and Scourfield, 1997), indifferent to the existence of higher male mortality at every age (Preston, 1976, Weeks, 2005), and unconcerned with cultural and social structural factors which shape female and male mating preferences, choices, and patterns. In short, historical and contemporary cultural, demographic, economic, and social dynamics and indicators best explain age preference differences. Paying close attention to these dynamics, and for selected indicators, tables 3 through 6 explore, describe, and explain age differences and age-preference differences for males and females seeking partners through computer mediated searches in the United States and in Russia.

First, we present a simple cross-tabulation of average age for both the entire data set and the component data sets within categories of socio-demographic background

characteristics. Apparent immediately is that the USA→USA partner seekers, male and female, are almost uniformly considerably older than both the males and females from either of the other two web sites, East→West and Russian→Russian. In only three categories are USA women younger than Russian women (never married, large body type, and some college education) and in all three cases the American women are younger slightly younger than Russian women seeking Russian partners. In general, the youngest seekers of a computer mediated relationship are those females and males looking for international partners. Both the domestic marriage broker sites attract a considerably older clientele, across almost all socio-demographic characteristics.

There are interesting patterns within each of the three different online data sets. As would be expected, individuals who are married and have children are, on average, much older and while this observation holds across datasets and sex, married Russian females with children in the East→West context are very significantly younger than their married with children counterparts of either sex in any other context. Across all categories of the socio-demographic variables western men seeking Russian women are very much older than Russian women seeking western men. In some case the differences are striking. For western males, in no socio-demographic category is the average age below 33 and across categories the range is over 11 year. Whereas for Russian females, in no socio-demographic category is the average age above 31 years and the ranges is tighter.

In summary, Table 3 clearly shows that in the United States, computer mediated relationship services attract a considerably older clientele mostly in their 40s and 50s. In Russia, there is a similar tendency towards middle age among users of these brokerages,

Table 3. Mean Ages of Online Partner Seeking Participants from three Online Partner Selection Services: 2004-2005.

	US → US		EAST → WEST		RUSSIAN → RUSSIAN		TOTAL		Total	N
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		
City Size										
Small	34.1	58.9	24.2	38.2	32.6	26.5	28.9	45.0	37.7	222
Large	51.8	42.2	25.3	37.2	42.4	39.5	40.8	40.0	40.4	472
Marital status										
Never Married	31.1	34.7	23.3	33.9	42.3	37.9	32.4	35.6	33.8	404
Ever Married	52.1	54.9	31.0	44.7	42.5	45.2	46.8	50.3	48.7	256
Ethnicity										
White	46.2	50.4	24.8	36.9	41.8	39.2	36.9	42.4	39.5	601
Other	43.5	37.5	26.3	33.6	-	-	41.7	36.5	39.1	56
Body Type										
Average	47.8	50.4	-	-	42.9	40.9	45.6	46.0	45.8	178
Athletic	42.3	43.3	-	-	36.2	36.7	39.3	40.9	40.5	98
Large	42.5	54.3	-	-	46.1	40.5	43.3	48.0	45.6	76
Slim	46.8	47.3	-	-	46.3	40.6	46.7	43.1	45.4	43
Has Children										
No	35.4	38.4	23.7	34.4	29.2	30.4	27.7	34.7	31.2	346
Yes	52.5	56.5	30.5	44.5	47.3	45.6	47.6	49.6	48.6	318
Religiousness										
No	43.1	48.8	25.3	35.8	41.8	40.0	41.5	41.4	41.4	376
Yes	47.6	47.5	24.8	38.9	-	22.4	33.2	42.2	37.2	319
Foreign Language(s)										
No	45.7	49.9	22.0	37.3	43.3	40.4	44.4	44.3	44.4	348
Yes	44.8	42.4	24.9	38.0	39.6	38.2	30.7	38.8	34.6	347
Education										
Less than College	47.4	60.3	24.5	36.2	-	40.0	37.3	44.2	41.0	53
College +	45.6	47.1	24.9	38.3	47.3	38.9	36.0	42.6	39.2	442
Occupation										
Professional	51.8	51.3	23.4	40.3	46.5	41.1	41.0	45.5	43.1	117
Service	41.6	44.4	28.0	35.6	44.2	36.7	36.2	39.3	37.7	174
Skilled	52.0	47.5	25.4	38.6	49.5	38.0	32.1	41.7	38.9	51
Unskilled/Other	48.4	49.7	22.2	38.9	44.2	45.4	30.8	43.3	37.2	128
Total Mean Age	45.5	48.1	24.8	37.8	41.8	39.2	37.3	41.7	39.5	
Standard Deviation	15.15	15.21	5.36	10.4	11.45	10.98	14.52	13.18	14.03	
N	117	117	117	117	114	113	348	347		695

with the clientele mostly being in their upper 30s and lower 40s. Individuals looking for international partners present a strikingly different profile. Across all socio-demographic categories the Russian women are in their 20s, while the western men are in their mid to upper 30s and low 40s.

To further facilitate this international comparison of age profiles, simple percentage cross-tabulations of the age-range of partner seekers by the age-range of their desired partner in 5 year age categories for the total data set and the three component data sets are presented in tables 4A and 4B.

Table 4A presents the age preference categories of desired females for male partner seekers and table 4B presents the age preference categories of desired males for female partner seekers. The percentages on the diagonal show a preference for desired partners of the same age category as the seeker while the percentages above and below the diagonal show a preference for younger or older desired partners respectively. Panel D of both tables shows these cross-tabulations for the combined data and the other panels are for the three component data sets. As expected, for the combined data set men desire partners younger than themselves while women have a similar strong proclivity towards older desired partners. We note in passing that older males' and older females' preferences for desired partners either in the same age category or in one or two age categories younger (for males) and older (for females) supports the research (e.g. Davis, 1998) that rejects sociobiological interpretations of partner age difference preferences. Sociobiologists predictions of: 1) male preference for very young female partners whose potential fecundity would assure male reproductive needs and 2) female preference for

significantly older male partners who would provide the stability and resources critical to female reproductive strategies, are decisively rejected by these data.

Panels A of both tables show that both American men and women prefer a desired partner either within their own age group or within an immediately adjacent age group (older for females, younger for males). This is especially true for older partner seekers; 71% of 45–49 year olds and almost 92% of females over the age of 50 desire a partner in their own age group, and the respective percentages for males in the same age groups are 55% and 64% respectively. For international seekers, there is a much weaker desire for potential partners to be within their own age group. Middle aged men in particular are seeking younger women, often overwhelmingly so. Russian women seeking western men also overwhelmingly prefer potential partners to be older. For Russians seeking Russians the desired partner age preference patterns are intermediate between the two extremes of USA→USA and East→West, although Russian men do desire younger partners.

To go beyond these simple descriptive patterns in the age preference differences of computer mediated relationship brokerages requires the inclusion of a matrix of independent variables. It is impossible to replicate the analyses of Tables 4A and 4B by simply adding controls for additional variables; interpretations of the resulting cross-tabulations are fraught with ambiguity because of small numbers in some cells. However, when the dependent variable (the difference between the age of the user and that of their desired partner) is operationalized as a continuous metric it becomes possible to calculate the actual difference in years between the seekers and their desired

Table 4A. FEMALE Age Preferences of Male Online Partner Seekers, 2004-2005 (percentages)

	Male Seeker Age Category						
	<25 yrs	25-29 yrs	30-34 yrs	35-39 yrs	40-44 yrs	45-49 yrs	50+ yrs
Desired Female Age							
A							
US → US							
< 25 years	77.8	30.8					
25-29 years	22.2	53.8	71.4	20.0	8.3		
30-34 years		15.4	28.6	80.0	8.3	11.1	1.6
35-39 years					66.7	22.2	1.6
40-44 years					16.7	55.6	12.9
45-49 years						11.1	19.4
50+ years							64.5
B							
EAST → WEST							
< 25 years	85.7	66.7	30.8	15.8	7.1		
25-29 years	14.3	25.0	53.8	36.8	28.6	16.7	15.0
30-34 years			11.5	42.1	57.1	16.7	10.0
35-39 years			3.8	5.3	7.1	41.7	65.0
40-44 years						25.0	5.0
45-49 years							5.0
50+ years							
C							
RUSSIAN → RUSSIAN							
< 25 years	90.9	81.8	20.0		15.4		
25-29 years	9.1	9.1	73.3	60.0	30.8	4.2	14.3
30-34 years		9.1	6.7	20.0	30.8	37.5	
35-39 years				20.0	15.4	25.0	
40-44 years					7.7	25.0	7.1
45-49 years						8.3	42.9
50+ years							35.7
D							
TOTAL							
< 25 years	85.3	58.3	22.9	8.8	7.7		
25-29 years	14.7	30.6	62.5	41.2	23.1	6.7	5.2
30-34 years		8.3	12.5	41.2	33.3	26.7	3.1
35-39 years			2.1	8.8	28.2	28.9	14.6
40-44 years		2.8			7.7	31.1	10.4
45-49 years						6.7	19.8
50+ years							46.9

Table 4B. MALE Age Preferences of Female Online Partner Seekers, 2004-2005 (percentages).

	Female Seeker Age Category						
	<25 yrs	25-29 yrs	30-34 yrs	35-39 yrs	40-44 yrs	45-49 yrs	50+ yrs
Desired Male Age							
A							
US → US							
< 25 years	71.4						
25-29 years	28.6	40.0					
30-34 years		60.0	40.0	17.6			
35-39 years			60.0	35.3	18.8		
40-44 years				41.2	37.5	14.3	4.2
45-49 years					25.0	71.4	4.2
50+ years				5.9	18.8	14.3	91.7
B							
EAST → WEST							
< 25 years	6.8						
25-29 years	33.8	5.6					
30-34 years	44.6	61.1		12.5			
35-39 years	10.8	27.8	26.7	12.5			
40-44 years	1.4	5.6	46.7	37.5			
45-49 years	1.4		13.3	25.0	100.0		
50+ years	1.4		13.3	12.5			
C							
RUSSIAN → RUSSIAN							
< 25 years	42.9						
25-29 years	42.9	16.7					
30-34 years	14.3	50.0	14.3	7.7			
35-39 years		25.0	71.4	38.5		5.3	
40-44 years		8.3	14.3	23.1	21.1	15.8	
45-49 years				30.8	63.2	31.6	3.2
50+ years					15.8	47.4	96.8
D							
TOTAL							
< 25 years	18.9						
25-29 years	33.7	14.3					
30-34 years	35.8	57.1	15.6	13.2			
35-39 years	8.4	22.9	46.9	31.6	8.3	3.8	
40-44 years	1.1	5.7	25.0	34.2	27.8	15.4	2.5
45-49 years	1.1		6.3	15.8	47.2	42.3	3.8
50+ years	1.1		6.3	5.3	16.7	38.5	93.7

partners and to cross tabulate those differences by selected socio-demographic characteristics¹. Table 5 presents such cross tabulations.

Reading across the bottom of the table to examine the age difference between partner seekers and the desired age of their potential partners, it is immediately apparent that across the board men are looking for women significantly younger than themselves and women are looking for older partners, especially Russian women. The age preference differences are smallest within the USA→USA data, where in fact there is barely a one year difference between the age of women searchers and their desired partners' age. American men, on average, desire a woman about five and a half years younger. For both the Russian and the international data, the differences are much greater with the most striking disparity, 8.5 years being among western men looking for younger Russian women and Russian women looking for older western men. Russian males seeking Russian females also prefer much younger women while Russian women prefer a partner almost four years older.

The age differences presented in the body of the table strongly reinforce the overall finding that women universally prefer younger men and men prefer older women. Only American women over age 50 prefer younger men. In general, American women's age preference differences are substantially trivial and statistically insignificant. Russian women seeking western men prefer much older potential partners than Russian women seeking Russian men across all categories of the independent variables. The biggest age preference difference for men are those of western men seeking Russian women. For example, the older the western man the younger a Russian female partner he prefers and

Table 6. Age Preferences Differences for Online Partner-Seeking Participants Regressed upon Socio-demographic Characteristics: 2004-2005.

	US → US		EAST → WEST		RUSSIAN → RUSSIAN		TOTAL		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
City Size (ref. Small)									
Large	-1.372 (1.057)	0.516 (1.200)	1.365 (0.925)	-0.265 (1.664)	---	---	0.546 (1.077)	0.721 (1.251)	2.349 ** (1.177)
Marital status (ref. never married)									
ever married	-0.427 (1.355)	-2.223 * (1.308)	-1.505 (1.625)	-5.372 *** (2.027)	-1.799 (2.938)	-0.554 (3.251)	-2.181 * (1.157)	-1.884 (1.310)	-3.746 *** (1.252)
Has Children (ref. No)									
Yes	0.297 (1.239)	-1.426 (1.254)	0.129 (1.736)	-0.715 (2.074)	-1.382 (2.137)	-3.458 (2.844)	-1.003 (1.150)	-2.240 * (1.295)	-1.184 (1.248)
Ethnicity (ref. White)									
non-White	-0.995 (1.190)	3.169 ** (1.398)	3.198 (3.023)	3.722 (2.810)	---	---	-2.229 (1.714)	4.280 ** (1.950)	-0.064 (1.883)
Religiousness (ref. No)									
Yes	-0.396 (0.962)	0.895 (1.018)	0.804 (1.889)	-2.125 (1.570)	---	5.814 (6.295)	1.642 (1.070)	0.007 (1.183)	2.783 ** (1.130)
Foreign Language(s) (ref. No)									
Yes	1.721 (1.362)	-0.508 (1.251)	5.139 (3.507)	-0.762 (1.639)	0.744 (1.979)	-2.044 (2.756)	3.438 *** (1.066)	-2.229 ** (1.101)	0.997 (1.090)
Education (ref. HS)									
College +	0.813 (1.457)	1.200 (1.971)	-2.022 (1.652)	-2.671 (2.177)	---	---	-0.557 (1.579)	-0.772 (1.785)	0.613 (1.709)
Body Type (ref. average)									
in shape	0.029 (1.063)	-1.160 (1.079)	---	---	-2.290 (2.255)	-1.864 (2.644)	-1.561 (1.044)	-1.239 (1.137)	-3.797 *** (1.104)
Occupation (ref. Professional/skilled)									
Unskilled / Other / service	-0.437 (1.002)	-1.530 (1.047)	-0.103 (1.002)	0.497 (1.675)	0.498 (1.900)	-0.370 (2.847)	0.491 (0.984)	-0.739 (1.147)	0.667 (1.094)
Constant									
coefficient	1.880 (2.009)	-4.203 * (2.332)	4.129 (4.162)	-2.757 (2.834)	4.977 ** (2.280)	-3.636 (3.021)	3.547 * (2.177)	-3.346 (2.168)	-2.193 (2.215)
R²	0.075	0.199	0.092	0.228	0.117	0.172	0.307	0.148	0.142
N	79	94	111	76	24	28	104	125	229

* = P Sig. < .10

** = P Sig. < .05

*** = P Sig. < .01 ,

Pairwise deletion

western men who have ever been married or who have children prefer women about 12 years younger. Russian men also show strong preferences for younger women evident across socio-demographic covariates as do American men seeking American women but the substantiveness and significance of the differences declines considerably.

This description of the background characteristics and age preference differences among Americans, Russians, and Western/Russian users of computer mediated relationship brokerages could perhaps be elaborated upon by the inclusion of more control variables or by a closer examination of the variation between and among the percentages and age differences presented in tables 4 and 5. However, the broad observed themes of western males' strong preference for younger Russian women, Russian males lesser but still strong preference for younger Russian partners, the limited age difference preference between potential American partners and the strong preference of Russian women for older partners would probably unchanged. We move instead to a multivariate analysis of age preference differences.

To examine the simultaneous effects of a matrix of independent variables on age preference differences ordinary least squares regression techniques were employed. The major advantages of this approach are that such an analysis can examine the variation in age preference difference and the relationship of each independent variable to age preference difference while simultaneously controlling for all the other independent variables in the equation. Nine equations were modeled: male and female separately for each of the three component data sets and for the total data set. The resulting coefficients and their associated standard errors are reported in table six.

Given the dichotomous nature of all the independent variables, the predictive power of all models is very moderate, the proportion of variation in the dependent variable explained ranges from a very modest 7 per cent to a very moderate 31%. The regression equation for the total data sets shows city size, being ever married, religiosity, and good physical condition as the most significant predictors of age preference differences. However, the coefficients for the separate regressions for the national and international data sets, separated by gender, while having the expected sign and being substantial in size are almost uniformly statistically insignificant (the one exception being marital status which maintains its negative sign and significance for both western men seeking Russian partners and western men seeking American partners).

I would like to explain in more details why there is different age entitlement among participants of three regions because it is an important development in the context of global inequalities.

Explanation of Differences in Age Preferences.

It is obvious from Table 5 that there are considerable age differences in dating pattern among people from the three regions; USA, Russia, and global. Specifically, American women are looking for American men who are 1.14 years older than them, American men are looking for American women 5.49 years younger, Russian women are looking for Western men 8.59 years older, Western men are looking for Russian women 8.43 years younger, Russian women are looking for Russian men 3.76 years older, Russian men are looking for Russian women 7.47 years younger.

In USA, on average, an American man desires to have a wife or a dating partner who is 5.49 years younger. Dating Russian women, American and Western men are

looking for someone who is in average 8.43 years younger than themselves. Why, when dating internationally, do American men request in their profiles that Russian women should be younger than American women? One answer may be that since these women are from economically less successful countries unequal development in the global economy makes Russian women less powerful than American women. American men can request more from a woman on the global market than in domestic market. Just as General Motors uses its comparative advantage on the global market, so do American men. This is why for American men, Russian women are more attractive than American women. This is why there is a difference in age entitlement. For a Russian woman, to marry an American means marrying up, therefore some concessions have to be made.

It is also common sense that richer men request younger and more attractive women. Poor men might request not so young women or even older women. Unfortunately, no analysis of income differences or preferences was possible. Income data is not collected on the international web site. On the USA web site, there is a variable “income”, but the data is neither valid nor reliable and could not be included for analysis. The Russian web site also does not have a requirement for participants to indicate their income.

A closer examination of Russian→Russian web site, reveals that age entitlement here is different from both USA→USA and East→West cases. Age entitlement here is between the USA→USA and East→West ranges. Russian men are looking for Russian women who are 7.47 years younger, which is less than 8.43 – the age entitlement of the Western men on global market, and more than 5.49 – the age entitlement of the USA men in domestic market. Russian women, in turn, are looking for Russian men who are 3.76

years older, which is more than 1.14 – the age entitlement of the USA women, and less than 8.59 – the age entitlement of the women on international web site. This difference can be explained by different levels of equality between genders in USA and Russia. American women are more emancipated, more independent, have more income than Russian women, therefore American women, in according to exchange theory can afford to desire younger men than Russian women can. The same reasoning explains why Russian men in Russia can afford to desire women younger than men in USA can. On the international scene, Western men on the global market are stronger than both Russian and American men in their homelands. In their turn, Eastern women are weaker on the global market than both women in USA and women in Russia are. Table 5 shows this explicitly.

Table 5. Age Preferences Differences for Online Partner-Seeking Participants from three Online Partner Selection Services: 2004-2005.

	US → US		EAST → WEST		RUSSIAN → RUSSIAN		TOTAL		Total	N
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		
Age Groups										
<25	2.50 ***	1.28 ***	9.14	0.64 ***	5.50	0.68 ***	7.89 ***	0.82 ***	6.03 ***	129
25-29	3.30 **	-0.65 ***	7.31	-1.33 ***	6.25 ***	-3.55 ***	6.37 ***	-1.76 ***	2.25 ***	71
30-34	1.70	-2.43 ***	9.30	-6.08 ***	4.93	-5.97 *	5.97	-5.51 ***	-0.92	80
35-39	1.85	-5.20	5.25 *	-8.710	4.15	-7.25	3.36	-7.76	-1.90	72
40-44	1.94	-5.96	7.50	-12.04 ***	3.82	-10.15 *	3.08 **	-9.54 ***	-3.48 **	75
45-49	0.64	-7.00	---	-10.92	1.47	-10.58 ***	1.25 ***	-9.96 ***	-5.85 ***	71
50+	-0.05 *	-7.54 ***	---	-17.83 ***	3.35	-10.89 ***	1.28 ***	-10.17 ***	-5.00 ***	175
Age										
Young or equal median	2.05	-1.08	8.65	-4.33	5.21	-4.13	6.52	-3.53	2.22	341
Older than median	0.61 *	-7.22 ***	5.50	-13.93 ***	2.98 ***	-10.42 ***	1.81 ***	-9.92 ***	-4.76 ***	332
City Size										
Small	2.07	-6.60	7.66	-8.56	3.63	-1.75	5.05	-7.78	-1.98	221
Large	0.63 *	-4.89 *	9.33 *	-8.36	3.78	-7.59	4.28	-6.75	-0.85 *	451
Marital status										
Never married	1.56	-3.43	8.87	-6.33	3.86	-6.95	5.69	-5.90	0.42	394
Ever married	0.86	-6.41 ***	7.43	-12.10 ***	1.19 **	-9.38	2.16 ***	-8.52 ***	-3.63 ***	251
Has Children										
No	1.33	-3.94	8.79	-6.87	4.75	-4.80	6.16	-5.48	0.39	339
Yes	1.04	-6.74 ***	7.56	-11.50 ***	3.29	-8.03 ***	2.79 ***	-8.42 ***	-2.56 ***	308
Ethnicity										
White	1.29	-6.16	8.47	-8.38	3.76	-7.47	4.76	-7.26	-0.81	579
Non-White	0.44	-2.61 ***	13.33 *	-5.93	---	---	1.82 ***	-3.45 ***	-0.81	56
Body Type										
Average	1.16	-5.34	---	---	3.82	-7.19	2.17	-6.12	-1.62	243
in shape	1.06	-5.67	---	---	1.56 *	-8.50	1.23	-6.78	-3.85 ***	137
Religiously										
No	1.39	-5.92	8.43	-6.94	3.76	-7.84	3.21	-7.10	-2.22	355
Yes	0.93	-5.14	8.61	-9.26 *	---	-0.60 **	5.77 ***	-7.12	-0.11 ***	318
Foreign Language(s)										
No	0.89	-5.63	5.25	-7.24	3.54	-6.68	1.96	-6.27	-2.26	337
Yes	2.50	-5.05	8.65	-9.00	4.08	-8.20	6.86 ***	-8.03 **	-0.18 ***	336
Education										
High School	0.25	-7.50	10.86	-6.24	---	-5.75	4.92	-6.61	-1.17	53
College +	1.34	-5.42	8.36 *	-8.94	3.74	-9.31	4.84	-7.25	-1.07	440
Occupation										
Professional / skilled	1.39	-4.91	8.60	-8.92	4.06	-8.31	4.91	-7.08	-1.48	165
Unskilled / Other / service	1.06	-5.98	8.58	-8.30	4.80	-9.10	5.48	-7.47	-0.89	301
Total age difference	1.14	-5.49	8.59	-8.43	3.76	-7.47	4.51	-7.11	-1.22	
N	117	117	117	117	114	113	348	347		695

Negative sign means a partner seeker is looking for someone younger than he or she is.

* = P Sig. < .10

** = P Sig. < .05

*** = P Sig. < .01

CONCLUSION

The increasing number of international marriages, its impact on immigration, and lack of legislation is a problem today and will continue into the future. The INS reported to Congress in 1999 on the extent, growth, and activities of mail-order bride businesses in the United States. The attention to mail-order marriages reflects growing concern regarding the global recruitment and transportation of women in a variety of exploitative ways. The information on trafficking suggests that mail-order brides may become victims of international trafficking in women and girls. The rising incidence of homicides and abuse among “mail-order brides” has led to the pending federal legislation to protect women who use International Marriage Brokerage organizations. Women involved in mail-order bride activities are mostly from the Philippines or from the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.

In this research focused on the Russo-American case I discussed, from a sociological perspective, the gendered differences in age requirements inherent in such Internet-brokered relationships. Gender inequality on the global level is one of the major themes of this research. Quantitative analysis of age preferences differences reveals some aspects of gender and power relationships. From a sociological point of view it is important to study the mail-order bride phenomena, because Internet-mediated relationships have become a widespread activity around the globe.

I found, when dating internationally American men request in their profiles that Russian women should be younger than American women. One explanation to it is that Russian women are from an economically less successful country. Unequal development in the global economy makes Russian women less powerful than American women and

therefore more attractive for men. In their own countries, American women are more emancipated, more independent, have more income than Russian women, therefore American women, in according to exchange theory can afford to desire younger men than Russian women can.

Arguments of sociobiologists or evolutionary psychologists that male-female age differences with respect to mating preferences and choices reflect sex-linked differences in reproductive strategies, echoing the biological processes of fitness and selection, have been firmly rejected by sociologists and anthropologists. This research also suggests that age preferences in mate selection are not explained by sex-linked biological reproductive strategies, but by other causes. Historical, cultural, demographic, economic, and social factors best explain age preference differences.

I do not discuss consequences of Internet dating, namely how many marriages occur and how they work after successful dating, because it is impossible to track international on-line relationships. Lack of resources prevent me from exploring research on how many people got married, how many abuse cases there are in these marriages, how many there are happy marriages, and how many divorces.

Mail-order brides case studies, like the present one, should also be done with Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and African countries. The overall study is discussed within the context of increased globalization, transnationalism, and Internet technology.

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¹ The average difference between the age of the online user and their expressed desired age of a potential partner is calculated as: ((Partner's Minimum Desired Age + Partner's Maximum desired Ages)/2) – Age of Seeker

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