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Participants Presentations

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Social representation of the ideal romantic partner

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OBJECTIVES

- Investigating the attitudes, expectations, cognitions, behaviors Romanians have towards the
Ideal romantic partner (defined as an object of representation) ➡ **SR content** (Moscovici, 1976, 1997)

- Establishing the relations and hierarchy between the elements defining the ideal romantic partner
➡ **SR internal structure** (Structural approach, Abric, 1976);

- Emphasizing the dynamics of the concept, the way it changes in various stages of life

METHODS

1. *Free association techniques* (Abric, 1973) – participants were asked to write down the words they associate with the stimulus "ideal romantic partner". The task allows to investigate the internal structure of SR.

2. *Ranking task* (Verges, 1992) – participants had to rank the associated word considering their importance.

3. *"Justification" task* (DiGiacomo, 1986) – participants had to justify the choice of the five associated words. The answers are going to be submitted to a content analysis in order to reveal the content of the SR of the ideal romantic partner.
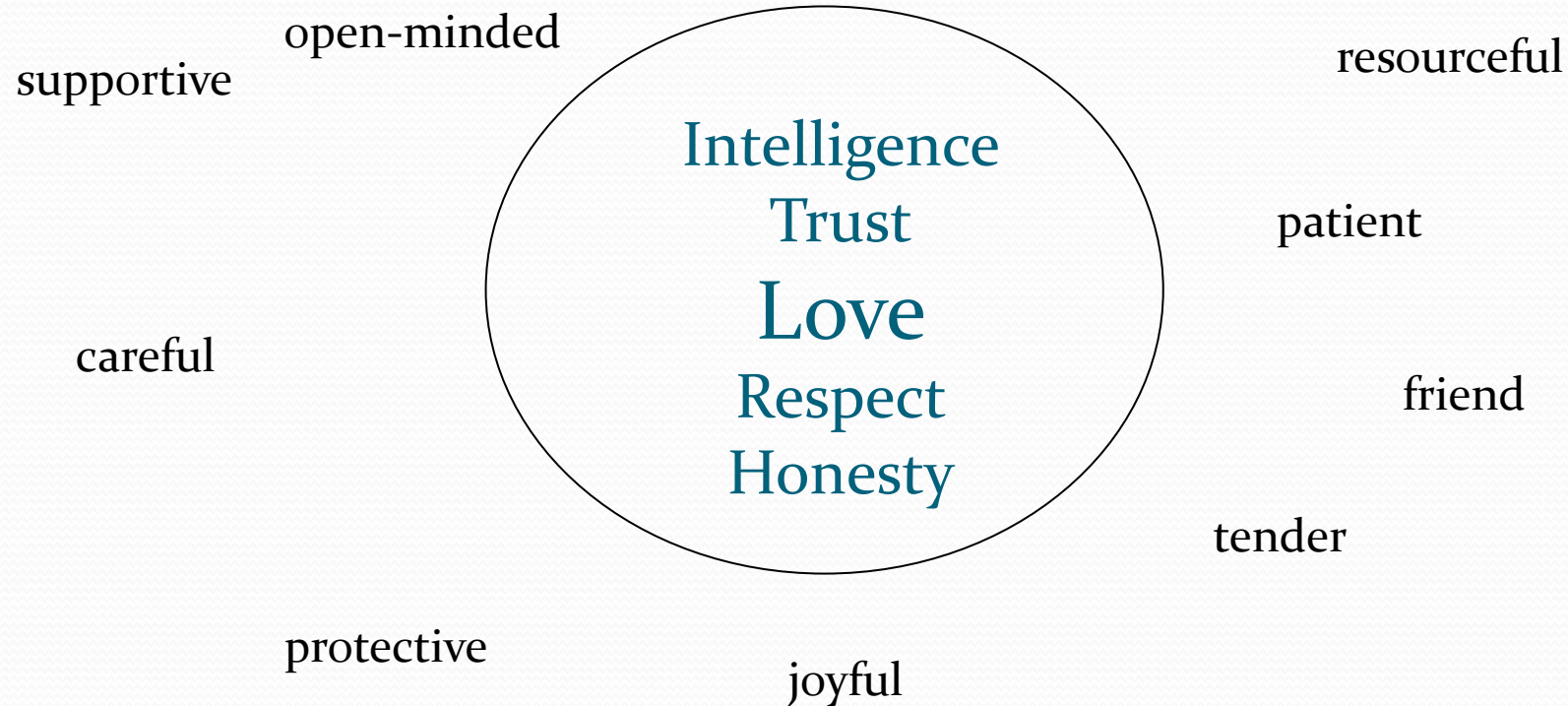
PARTICIPANTS

- **114 subjects with ages between 15 and 73 participated in this study. They filled in the free association questionnaire with the stimulus ideal romantic partner. After that they had to rank and justify the associated words.**

Central nucleus and peripheral elements

Love	44	1.886	Funny	23	4.217
Trust	32	2.344	Communication	21	2.905
Intelligent	36	2.361	Faithfull	20	3.200
Respect	31	2.484	Beautiful	21	3.714
Honesty	34	2.294c	Understanding	25	2.880
Affection	8	2.125	Careful	9	3.778
Educated	6	2.333	Opened	5	2.600
Determined	7	2.571	Resourceful	5	3.400
			Friendship	5	4.400
			Protective	7	3.286
			Patient	6	3.000
			Supportive	5	3.600
			Tender	11	3.455
			Joyful	5	3.600

Central nucleus and peripheral elements

open-minded

supportive

resourceful

Intelligence
Trust
Love
Respect
Honesty

patient

careful

friend

protective

tender

joyful

Categories

- The most frequent 32 words can be divided into three categories:

- Characteristics of the romantic ideal relationship
- Psychological attributes of the romantic ideal partner
- Physical attributes of the romantic ideal partner

Categories

- **Characteristics of the romantic ideal relationship**:
  - Love
  - Respect
  - Trust
  - Honesty
  - Communication
  - Affection
  - Friendship
  - Compatibility
  - Sexual compatibility

- The first 4 words are also the most often mentioned words, because they are considered the foundation of every successful romantic relationship.

- The Romanian culture is a traditional one, and promotes family and stability, thus people are educated in maintaining a relationship based on trust, communication and commitment, not on independence.

- There are many economical impediments that stop people from getting divorced in Romania, and this is another reason why the characteristics of the romantic relationship are mentioned often in opposition to those of the romantic partner: maintaining a relationship and a family is more important then the partner's qualities.

Categories

- **Psychological attributes of the romantic ideal partner**:
  - Intelligent
  - Funny
  - Faithful
  - Understanding
  - Resourceful
  - Educated
  - Attentive
  - Supportive
  - Sensitive
  - Romantic
  - Tender

- Regarding these choice of words there are some important differences between men and women. Men chose attributes like: sensitive, educated and understanding.
- Women preferred words like supportive, resourceful and faithful.
- These different preferences are related to the fact that in Romania we still have strong social roles, we are in transition to a more balanced society, but it will take time until these conceptions will change.

Categories

- **Physical attributes of the romantic ideal partner** :

  - Beautiful
  - Pretty
  - Attractive

- The physical aspects were not mentioned very often, which could be explained by

- social desirability or

- the fact that people really don't appreciate the physical qualities.

Conclusions

- These preliminary results show that the social representation of the ideal romantic partner includes general aspects that refer to the relationship (love, trust, respect etc.) and particular aspects that refer to the partner's attributes (intelligent, funny faithful).

- People rarely mentioned physical attributes, there were only three reported: attractive, beautiful and pretty.

New directions

- In the following period we will corroborate these results with those we will obtain by using other methods like the interview.

- We will also extend the present research by applying these association techniques to a larger number of people so that we can emphasize the differences between men and women.

- The dynamics of the concept is another aspect that we will take into account, we would like to see how the perception of the ideal romantic partner evolves in various stages of life.