

# Wanted: a spouse. But the lovelorn are redefining their criteria

Hu Min

The young generation is reshaping and reshuffling the matchmaking market in Shanghai, as a weekend visit to People's Park downtown can attest.

On a sultry afternoon, one corner of the luxuriant, tranquil park is abuzz with the usual crowd of parents. They stand underneath umbrellas alongside notice boards they have erected to advertise the attributes of their offspring as ideal marriage mates.

The placards usually read like a resume: age, income, educational background, car and home ownership.

For decades, the iconic area known as “matchmaking corner” has been the destination of the lovelorn and parents anxious about the single status of their children.

Nowadays, many young people are also turning up there, but the messages they bring are different from the older generation. Their criteria for marriage have strayed from the traditional.

“I don't like men who work in the financial industry, and I prefer those with memberships on different online platforms, from Taobao's 88VIP to Sam's and airlines,” one of their boards reads. “Those who look like actors such as Bai Ke, Lei Jiayin and Greg Hsu get extra points.”

The woman with the placard said she already has an apartment and car, and is looking for someone very distinctive beyond material assets.

Other mating checklists presented by the younger generation also bear witness to the trend.

“I like ACG (anime, comics and games), visiting supermarkets on weekends and a



Young visitors look at the criteria board at the “matchmaking corner” in the People's Park. — IC



The stalls extend almost to the entrance of the People's Park. — Hu Min

Buddhist mindset in daily life,” reads one.

“Those requirements are pretty low,” said one surprised parent passing by.

“Hello, are you looking for a spouse?” Nick Zhang, 33, asked a young woman as she passed him the bazaar.

“Her appearance attracted me at the first sight, and I wanted to have a talk,” Zhang

told Shanghai Daily.

The woman ignored the overture after a brief glance and walked on.

Zhang, a native of Hunan Province, now works in Shanghai.

“It is my second visit here,” he explained. “I open with a self-introduction because I think it's important to be a bit bold.”

“Actually, we both had no interest in the man, but we were shy to refuse the mother,” she told Shanghai Daily.

Wang said she visited the park mostly out of curiosity and partly because of pressure from her parents to get married.

“But after walking around, we feel only a bit dazed and bemused by it all,” she said. “There are too many people and placards, and the place is so noisy.”

Wang said it was interesting to note that incomes of potential spouses, as shown on the boards, were pretty high.

“There is a man whose annual salary is 900,000 yuan (US\$124,258),” she said. “But he's nearly as old as my father! For me, self-motivation in a man is important, and I think memberships on various platforms indicate whether someone is down-to-earth and cost-conscious — which are good points. Common interests are also important.”

Another young female visitor, who identified herself only as Ni Ni, said she was a 25-year-old migrant working in Shanghai.

She triggered the interest of several parents because of her good looks, but when asked about what she wanted in a spouse, she went blank.

“I blurted out ‘a man’ before I could think of what to say,” she said, looking awkward. “I have never encountered anything like this before in my life.”

One parent even examined her palmistry.

“I came here to learn how I might use this matchmaking market,” she said. “My parents back home are anxious about my single status, but I am not worried about it. I don't want my parents to end up choosing someone for me.”

But so far, no positive results.

As they walked along, Angela Wang and a friend, both born in the late 1990s, were stopped by a woman trying to “promote” her son as good marriage material.

Wang, a Jiangsu Province native who works at a government department in Shanghai, stopped politely to listen to her.