Men's long-term mating preferences and strategies

- Beauty, youth, fertility

- Fidelity and the sexual double standard

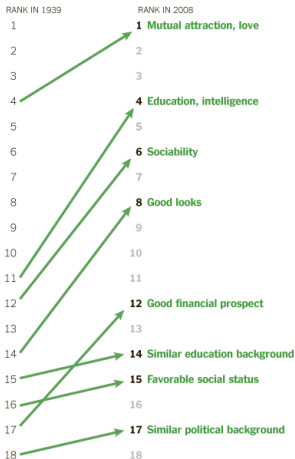- Testosterone, marriage, and fatherhood (we ran out of time on this – we will cover it in a later lecture)

What men want (a reality check)

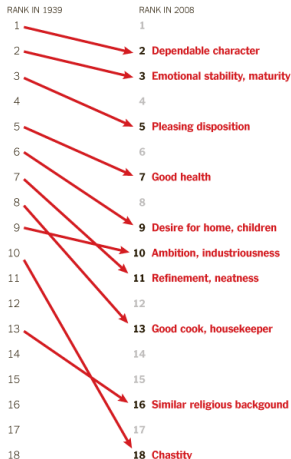## Rank ordering of mate preferences, Iowa undergrads

What Men Want: Then and Now
Surveys asked men to rank the importance of 18 traits in prospective wives. Here's how the rankings changed in seven decades.

TRAITS THAT ROSE IN IMPORTANCE

RANK IN 1939	RANK IN 2008
1	1 Mutual attraction, love
2	2
3	3
4	4 Education, intelligence
5	5
6	6 Sociability
7	7
8	8 Good looks
9	9
10	10
11	11
12	12 Good financial prospect
13	13
14	14 Similar education background
15	15 Favorable social status
16	16
17	17 Similar political background
18	18

TRAITS THAT DECLINED IN IMPORTANCE

RANK IN 1939	RANK IN 2008
1	1
2	2 Dependable character
3	3 Emotional stability, maturity
4	4
5	5 Pleasing disposition
6	6
7	7 Good health
8	8
9	9 Desire for home, children
10	10 Ambition, industriousness
11	11 Refinement, neatness
12	12
13	13 Good cook, housekeeper
14	14
15	15
16	16 Similar religious backgound
17	17
18	18 Chastity

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▶ **Beauty, youth, fertility**

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Youth, fertility, and reproductive value

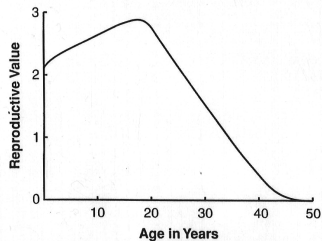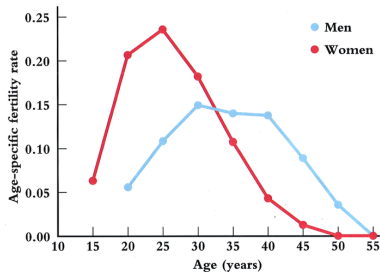Why men are attracted to younger women:

FIGURE 5.1 Typical Reproductive Value Curve for Women.

Reproductive value: The number of offspring that will be born to a woman of a given age (discounted by the population growth rate). Measures the contribution of an x-year old to the future growth of the population.
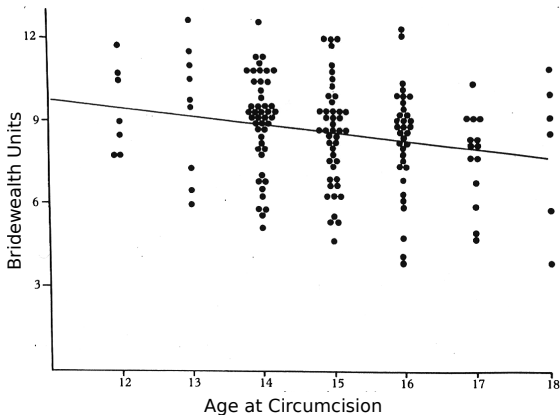
What makes a Kipsigis girl a desirable bride?

Kipsigis are East-African agro-pastoralists, and men must pay bridewealth to marry. Borgerhoff Mulder used bridewealth amount as a behavioral measure of a woman's desirability as a wife

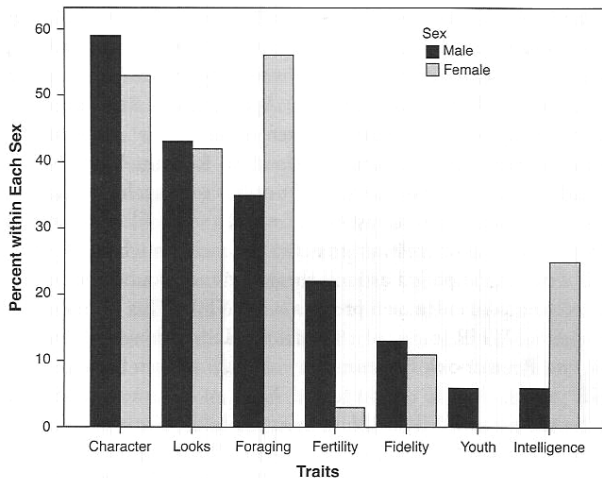Bridewealth payments affected by things that affect a woman's reproductive value:

- early maturity: early-maturing girls cost more to marry
- fatness: plump girls cost more than skinny girls
- good health (2 physically handicapped brides "almost free")
- brides with children by another man cost less to marry

Kipsigis men pay more for early-maturing women

Kipsigis girls are "circumcised" (clitoridectomy) after first menses. Early-maturing girls have a longer reproductive lifespan and more offspring per married year
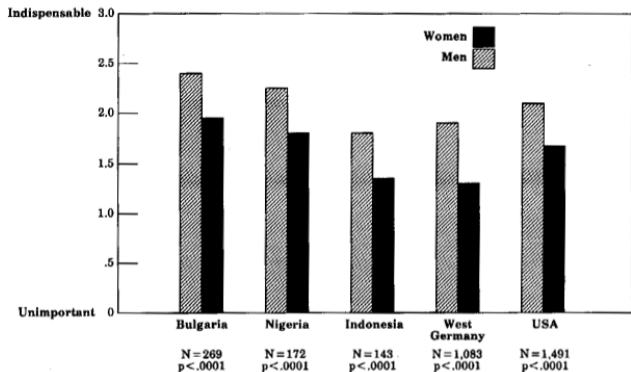
Sex differences in mate choice among Hadza

Sex difference in importance of youth and fertility

Male choice for physical attractiveness: 37 cultures study

How important is physical attractiveness in a marriage partner?
(5 of the 37 cultures, from Buss 1989 and Buss and Schmitt)

- ▶ Sex difference found in 35/37 cultures
- ▶ no sex difference found in India (valued in both sexes) and Sweden (valued in neither).
- ▶ Very large cultural differences in this trait

What makes a face beautiful? Masculinity and femininity

(from Little, Jones and DeBruine, 2011)

What makes a face beautiful? Masculinity and femininity

- ▶ feminine female faces are considered attractive

- ▶ estrogen $\rightarrow$ feminine features possible cue to fertility?

- ▶ masculine male faces and attractiveness? (depends)

What makes a face beautiful? Hints from the cosmetics industry

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Youth (in women):
- larger eyes
- thinner, arched eyebrows
- fuller lips
- smoother skin
- fewer wrinkles
- whiter teeth

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Health (in men and women):
- warm-colored skin tones
- no visible blemishes
- symmetry

Youth, dominance, attractiveness

Keating manipulated male and female faces: Mature, Average, Youthful

- ▶ mature faces rated more dominant (male and female faces)
- ▶ male faces: mature faces rated *more* attractive
- ▶ female faces: mature faces (esp. eyes) rated *less* attractive

Keating, C. F. (1985). Gender and the physiognomy of dominance and attractiveness. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 48, 61-70.

What makes a body beautiful: Waist to hip ratio

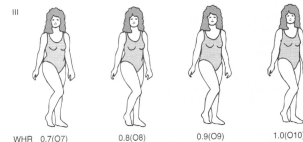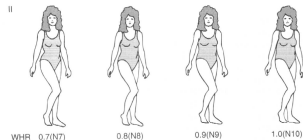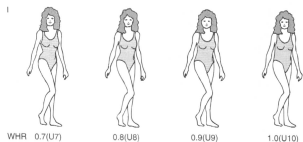Waist-to-hip (WHR) ratio: a commonly used
medical marker

What makes a body beautiful: Waist to hip ratio

Waist-to-hip (WHR) ratio: a commonly used medical marker

- estrogen → gluteofemoral fat
- cortisol and testosterone → abdominal fat
- low WHR has been associated with higher fecundity in women (but recent research has questioned this)
- high WHR associated with diabetes, other chronic diseases
- a cue to youth in women (WHR increases with parity and age)

What makes a body beautiful: Weight and WHR

- ▶ US men prefer low WHR (0.7) normal weight (a mostly cross-cultural preference)

- ▶ Hadza men preferred heavy women (at all WHR), think thin women look sickly

- ▶ Lower WHR preferred in societies with traditional sex roles (Swami et al)

Note: These figures are from Dev Singh's original study, but the preference has been replicated using other methods, including 3-D images and before-after surgical photos. The preference is found in nearly all societies, but importance varies. Most women have a WHR larger than the putative optimum of 0.7 (why?) and it increases with age and parity (why?)

Is women's concern about beauty adaptive?

Women are responding to evolved male preferences.

BUT

- ▶ Obsession with beauty is an evolutionary novelty
- ▶ A girl in a foraging band compares herself to few peers
- ▶ A girl in our society compares herself to many schoolmates
- ▶ And to unrealistic, photoshpped "peers" in the media

Media images as "mating sugar"

Men who had viewed pictures and videos of attractive women

- judged their actual partners to be less attractive
- judged selves to be less committed to their actual partner

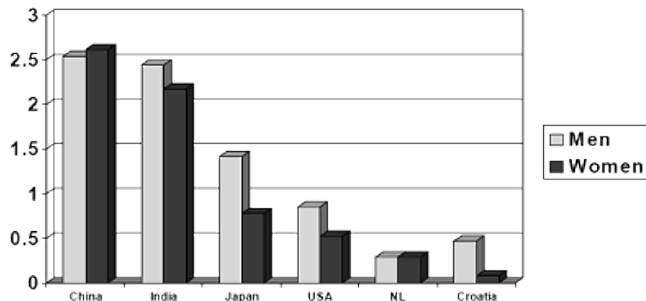media provides an unrealistic sense of the pool of possible mates
$\rightarrow$ frustrated men, and women who struggle with low self-esteem

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- ▶ Beauty, youth, fertility

- ▶ **Fidelity and the sexual double standard**

- ▶ Testosterone, marriage, and fatherhood

Male concern about chastity: 37 cultures study

37 cultures rated importance (0-3) of pre-marital chastity in a marriage partner or long-term mate. (Buss 1989)

- ▶ males valued chastity more in 61% (23/37) of societies (no difference in 14/37)
- ▶ huge cross-cultural variation in this trait

Fidelity, sexual proprietariness, and paternity confidence

Why are males more concerned about chastity?
A mother always knows the child is hers; Dad. . . can't be as sure.

When parents asked: "does your baby look like mom or dad?"
Mom more likely to say "dad" (but dads don't have this bias)

Fidelity, sexual proprietariness, and paternity confidence

The sexual double standard is widespread cross-culturally:

- ▶ Punishment for adultery falls more heavily on women than men cross-culturally
- ▶ Cross-culturally more concern about female modesty
- ▶ In extreme cases, claustration, virginity tests, infibulation

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But highly variable cross-culturally. (why?)

Fidelity, sexual proprietariness, and paternity confidence

Why is the sexual double standard variable cross-culturally?

Some evidence that it is lower where male investment is low: these men do not risk investing in another man's child. Perhaps also when women have other options for support, the women have more options.

- ▶ Low in matrilineal societies, where male investment is low
- ▶ Low where mothers have state support (Sweden, Netherlands)
- ▶ High concern in stratified patrilineal societies (high male investment)