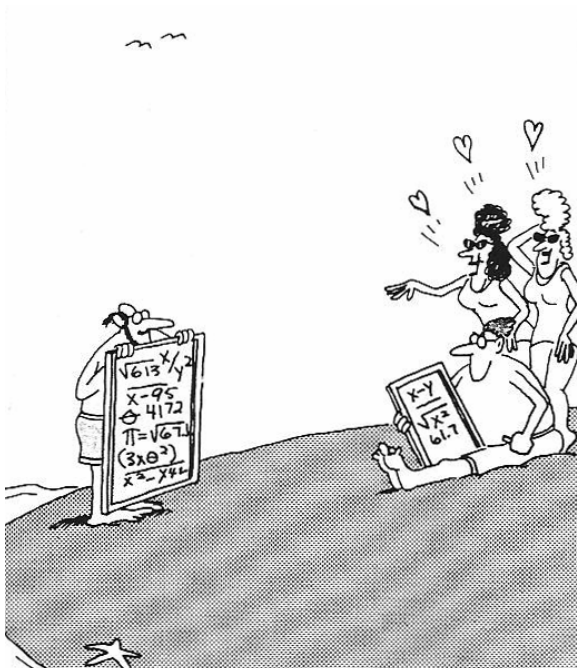


Women's mating preferences

What does a woman really want?



Outline

- ▶ preferences are context-dependent
- ▶ female choice for “good genes”
 - ▶ MHC diversity
 - ▶ health and symmetry
 - ▶ masculinity?
- ▶ female choice for resources
- ▶ female choice for male investment
- ▶ women face tradeoffs; preferences are context-dependent

Female choices: changing times

Rank ordering of mate preferences among Iowa undergrads, across 7 decades (from Christine Whelen)

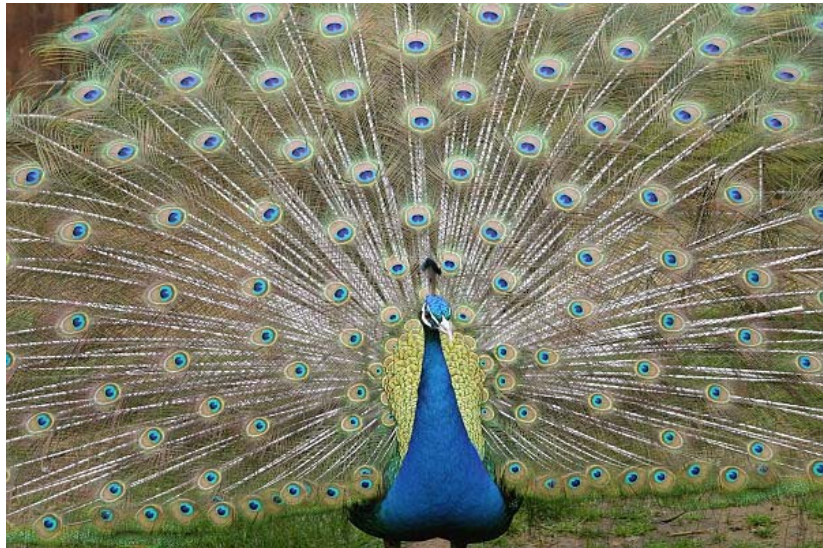
WOMEN: PARTNER TRAITS THAT ROSE IN IMPORTANCE

1939 RANK	2008 RANK
1	1 Mutual Attraction / Love
2	2 Dependable Character
3	3 Emotional Stability / Maturity
4	4 Desire for Home / Children
5	5 Education / Intelligence
6	6 Sociability
7	7 Pleasing Disposition
8	8 Ambition / Industriousness
9	9 Good Health
10	10 Good Financial Prospects
11	11 Similar Education Bkgrnd
12	12 Good Looks
13	13 Refinement / Neatness
14	14 Similar Religious Bkgrnd
15	15 Good cook, Housekeeper
16	16 Favorable Social Status
17	17 Similar Political Bkgrnd
18	18 Chastity

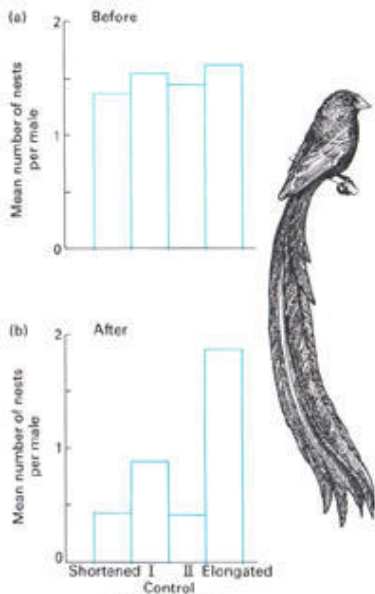
WOMEN: PARTNER TRAITS THAT DECLINED IN IMPORTANCE

1939 RANK	2008 RANK
1	1 Mutual Attraction / Love
2	2 Dependable Character
3	3 Emotional Stability / Maturity
4	4 Desire for Home / Children
5	5 Education / Intelligence
6	6 Sociability
7	7 Pleasing Disposition
8	8 Ambition / Industriousness
9	9 Good Health
10	10 Good Financial Prospects
11	11 Similar Education Bkgrnd
12	12 Good Looks
13	13 Refinement / Neatness
14	14 Similar Religious Bkgrnd
15	15 Good cook, Housekeeper
16	16 Favorable Social Status
17	17 Similar Political Bkgrnd
18	18 Chastity

Female choice for good genes



Female choice for good genes: Sexual selection for tail length in long-tailed widowbirds



Top: no difference in female nests in territory before experiment.

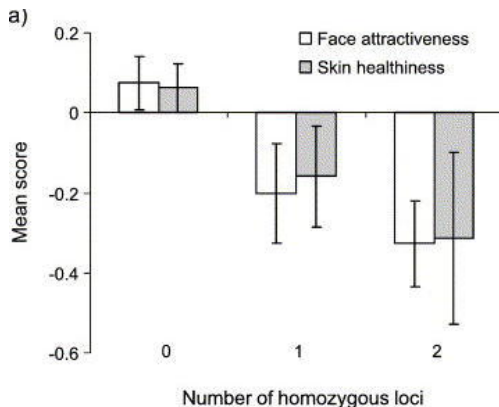
Bottom: Mating success went down after tails were cut, and up when tails were lengthened. Control I (unmanipulated) Control II (cut and re-glued, same length).

from Andersson 1982.

Female choice for good genes

- ▶ Men don't have fancy feathers. Do women care about “good genes”?
- ▶ What are “good” genes anyway, and how can a woman tell?
 - ▶ MHC diversity and pathogen resistance
 - ▶ fluctuating asymmetry and health
 - ▶ testosterone and masculine features ?
- ▶ Note, just because women attend to these cues doesn't mean they evolved through “mate choice” sexual selection.

Female choice for good genes: MHC diversity

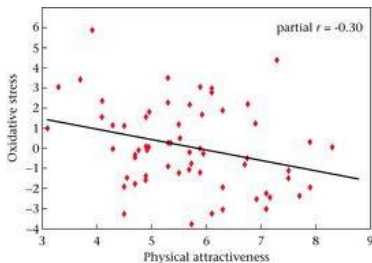
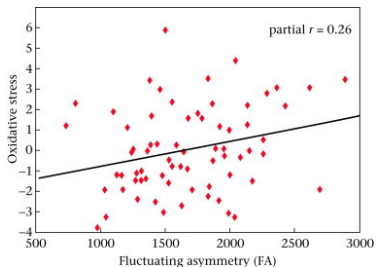


Women judge men heterozygous at MHC loci to be more attractive and healthy, irrespective of MHC similarity.

(C. Roberts et al. 2005).

Good genes: health, symmetry, and attractiveness

Women prefer healthy, symmetrical men

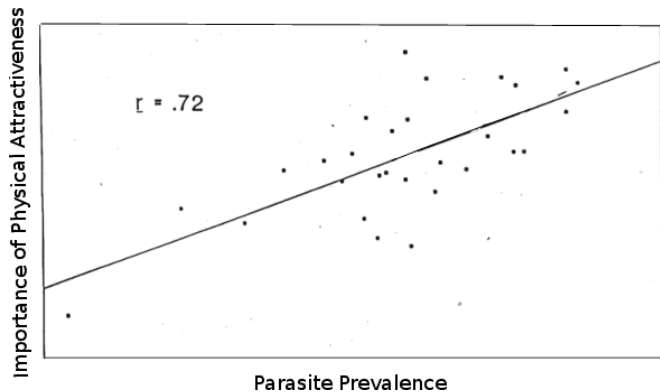


Oxidative stress (a health risk factor) in men associated with:

- ▶ fluctuating asymmetry (FA)
- ▶ women's ratings of attractiveness, health, and masculinity

(from Gangstad et al. 2010)

Female choice for good genes may be context-dependent



pathogen prevalence in society by rated importance of physical attractiveness in a mate. (from Gangestad and Buss)

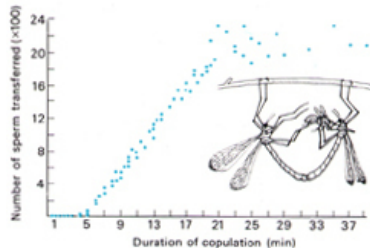
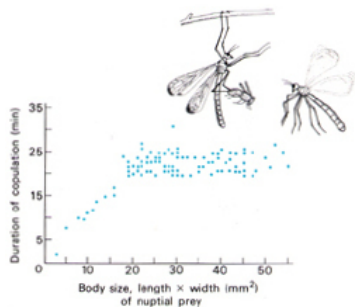
Good genes: Is masculinity a sign of good immunity?

- ▶ Testosterone (T) promotes masculine features
- ▶ Testosterone is thought to suppress the immune system
- ▶ Yet some think masculinity signals heritable disease resistance (only “immunocompetent” males can “afford” high T)
- ▶ Data on T and immunity are weak and conflicting
- ▶ e.g.: Gangestad study (last slide): healthy men were rated more attractive and masculine, but did not have higher T
- ▶ Most studies find that women do not prefer extreme masculine features. Masculine features probably evolved as a signal to other men (not women) of toughness, not health

Female choice for good resources



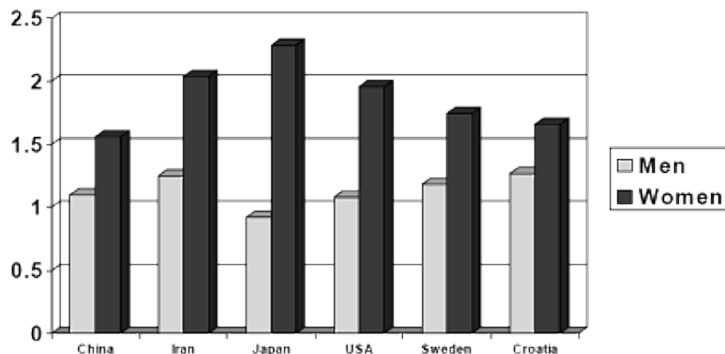
Female choice for good resources: meat for sex



Female hanging flies mate for a longer time if the male brings a larger prey item for her to eat during copulation. The male benefits from long copulation because he fertilizes more eggs.

Female choice for good resources: 37 cultures study

37 cultures rated importance (0-3) of “good financial prospect” in a marriage partner. (Buss 1989)



- ▶ Sex difference found in 36/37 cultures
- ▶ Large cultural differences in importance of financial resources
- ▶ Similar sex difference (29/37 cultures) in “ambition and industriousness”

Female choice for good resources

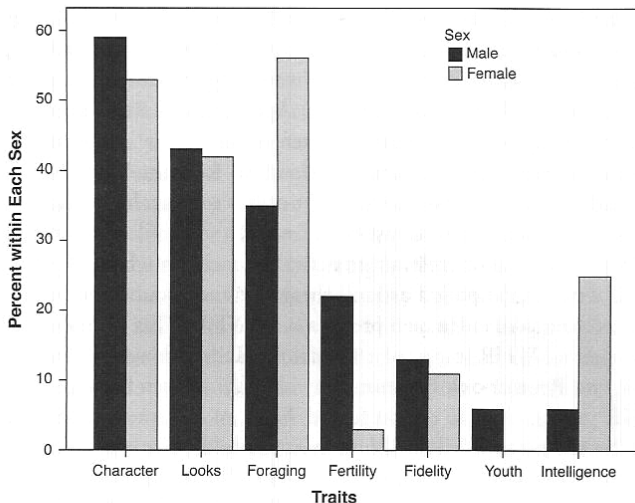


Figure 7.4. The percentage of Hadza women and men who cited various traits as important in a potential spouse ($n = 36$ females, $n = 46$ males). The only significant differences between the sexes are on the traits fertility and intelligence.

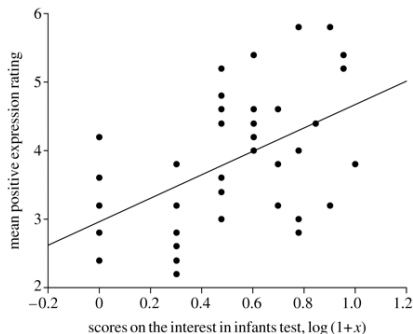
Female choice for male investment

But will he stay around, and how can she know?

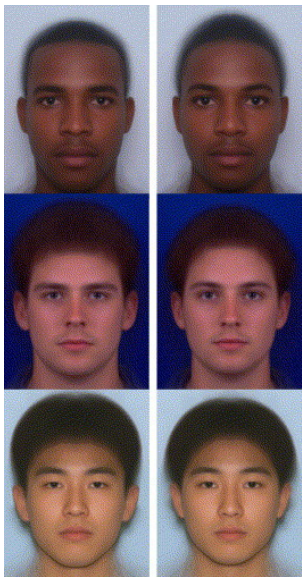


Female choice for male investment

- ▶ women accurately assessed men's self-reported interest in infants from photograph
- ▶ men's interest in infants correlated with desirability as long-term mate (not short-term mate)
- ▶ assessment mediated by positive (happy vs angry) expression
(from Roney et al. 2006)



Female preferences are context-dependent

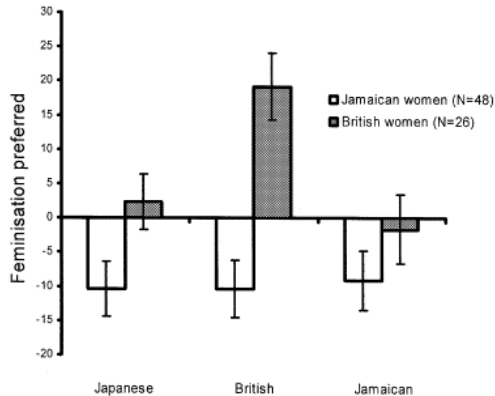


masculinized feminized

Feminized faces seen as more honest, caring, sensitive.

British women prefer more feminized faces in a long-term partner

British women prefer more feminized faces than Jamaican women



Outline

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