



## How Men Select Women

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### Youth

You have the most marvelous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having.... Someday when you are old and wrinkled and ugly, when thought has seared your forehead with its lines and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you will feel it. You will feel it terribly. Now, wherever you go you charm the world. Will it always be so? You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr. Gray....And beauty is a form of genius—is higher, indeed, than genius, as it needs no explanation. It is one of the great facts of the world, like sunlight or springtime or the reflection in dark waters of that silver shell we call the Moon. It cannot be questioned. It has its divine right of sovereignty. It makes princes of those who have it. You smile—ah, when you have lost it you won't smile. People say sometimes that beauty is only superficial. That may be so, but at least it is not so superficial as thought is. To me, beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.

— Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)

Women with *high reproductive value* attract men. 19-year-old women are likely to produce the greatest number of children—twice as many as 30-year-old women. Teenage boys, on average, prefer girls a year older. Men in their middle twenties usually prefer women a year or two younger. Thirtysomething men prefer women 5 to 10 years younger. Many men in their 40s and 50s prefer women 10 to 20 years younger.

Women of all ages up to about 45 prefer, on average, a man a few years older.<sup>[1]</sup>

These statistical findings are mostly medians, however, and not necessarily the mode. In reality, age preferences vary widely from individual to individual, and sometimes from one stage of life to the next.

## Neoteny

*Neoteny* is the retention of juvenile characteristics into adulthood.

In other primates, e.g., chimpanzees and gorillas, both male and female adults have tough skin, coarse body hair, Adam's apples, and deep voices. Humans, however, have characteristics of neoteny. Some of them appear in men, but most appear in women.

Adult women, for example, usually have higher voices like children.<sup>[2]</sup> Men and women agree that attractive women have the large eyes and lips and small noses and chins of children.

Attractive women's faces have the proportions of 11-to-14-year-old children.<sup>[3]</sup>

Women further neoteny by using cosmetics, shaving their legs, and wearing children's clothing, e.g., Mary Jane shoes.

However, attraction of men toward pre-pubescent girls has no reproductive value. Mature women have features that distinguish them from pre-pubescent girls, yet are different from men. These secondary sexual characteristics include prominent breasts, clearly defined waists, and full hips. They reflect sexual maturity and fertility, offsetting the pre-pubescence that neotenous characteristics could otherwise suggest.

Children's long dependency on their fathers is associated with neoteny. Fatherless children—a million years ago or today—were less likely to learn adult skills, inherit social status, and reproduce. Women who appeared young and remained strong were able to keep a man for twenty years, instead of losing him to a younger woman. A young-looking widow could find a second husband, whereas an older-looking counterpart of the same chronological age might not.<sup>[4]</sup> Some statistical extrapolations suggest that someone is more likely to stay with one partner, the longer the partner continues to appear young. A hypothesis has been given to suggest that children with mothers who retain youthful characteristics were more likely to have both parents throughout their childhood, and grow up to reproduce and have descendants. Parents with neotenous characteristics would pass them on to their offspring. E.g., a mother who has certain features that cause her to look younger than other women her age is likely to have daughters having that appearance as well.

## Beauty

Beauty standards are universal across cultures. People around the world have 91-94% agreement about the facial attractiveness of Asian, Hispanic, black, and white women. Even native people unexposed to mass media agree with the rest of the world.

Infants gaze longer and show more pleasure when looking at pictures of attractive male and female faces. One-year-olds play longer with facially attractive dolls than with unattractive dolls.<sup>[5]</sup>

Beauty standards are cues to a woman's health: clear, smooth skin; full, lustrous hair; full lips; bright eyes; and symmetrical features.

Composite faces, made by combining many photographs on a computer, are more attractive than any individual face. Beauty is "average" looks, not unusual or "striking" features.

Men, in general, don't judge women as being fat or thin. Rather, men tend to consider women with a 70% waist-to-hip ratio to be beautiful. E.g., a woman with a 21-inch waist and 30-inch hips, a woman with a 24-inch waist and 35-inch hips, and a woman with a 28-inch waist and 40-inch hips are equally attractive.<sup>[6]</sup> The 70% or higher waist-to-hip ratio, and the Golden ratio (62% waist-height-to-total-height ratio) indicate health and fertility.

## Cultural Beauty Standards

Some beauty preferences vary between cultures, e.g., light or dark skin.

When a society experiences rapid change, it values youth and new, iconoclastic ideas. The 1920s and 1960s preferred thin, flat-chested, youthful women.

Conservative societies—e.g., the Victorian era, or the 1950s—value old ideas, and full-figured, mature women. Large metropolitan cities such as New York value very thin women; in contrast, small, rural towns prefer full-figured, fertile adult women.

American women chose thinner-than-average women as the most beautiful. American men prefer average-size women. Fashion models are thinner than porn stars.<sup>[7]</sup>

Use cultural beauty standards to your advantage. Unlike your ancestors, you can move to a different city or even country. Select a culture where you're beautiful.

## Media Effects on Beauty Standards

Our grandparents saw relatively few people. They saw even fewer beautiful people. In contrast, today we turn on a television and see nothing but attractive people made up to look their best, with the bad shots discarded. (Finally, a reason to praise Fox's "reality" television shows!)

Since the 1930s—the beginning of mass media—men have increased the importance of "good looks" in a wife by 40%. Women have increased the importance of a good-looking

husband almost 80%. Women in 1996 valued "good looks" in husbands more than men in 1939 valued "good looks" in wives.<sup>[8]</sup>

Photos of beautiful women made men rate their wives as less attractive, and feel less committed to their marriages, compared to men who looked at photos of "average" women.<sup>[9]</sup> Learn the game, then bend the rules. Before submitting a personal ad, have a "makeover" photo studio make you look like a glamorous model. When you marry, get rid of your television.

The media also affect men. Performers such as Jerry Seinfeld raise expectations of men's entertainment skills. As media images make women feel inadequately attractive, media entertainers make men feel inadequately entertaining. These men give up and say that they can't dance, sing, or tell jokes. The positive side is less competition for men who try to entertain women. Older men have an advantage here over younger men. Many young women have never had a man make them laugh, lead them on the dance floor, or play Chopin for an audience of one.

## Beautiful Young Women Don't Have It Easy

For beautiful young women, the problem is sorting the wheat from the chaff. Finding a quality mate is no easier for them than for anyone else. They spend as much effort rejecting the wrong men as others spend finding men.

(Another problem is that a woman's power over men vanishes when a younger, more beautiful woman walks into the room.)

In the animal world, females initiate 80% of matings (see Flirting). Males who initiate mating are the males that no female will approach. Men who approach women pick young, beautiful women. Q.E.D., beautiful young women meet more than their share of losers.

Dating advice books tell men to ignore a woman to attract her attention. It's not that women like to be ignored. Rather, women know that if a man pays too much attention to a woman, he's a loser. (The converse isn't true—men's egos are attracted to women who pay attention to them.)

If women are too attractive, men stay in their cerebral cortexes. They'll date beautiful women to feel envy from their male friends. They have no reason to shift into their limbic brains and emotionally connect. When men are jerks and women are shallow, they're stuck in their cerebral cortexes.

Putting effort into clothes and make-up will get you more dates, but impair men's vision of your inner beauty, and attract the "wrong" kind of men (those who don't look deeper than the level of physical appearance). The ideal is to look nice, but don't overdo it. If you're getting many dates but aren't meeting quality men, work on improving yourself, not your wardrobe.

Encourage self-selection of potential mates. Tell suitors that you can't go out on a date, but they're welcome to join you volunteering, e.g., with Habitat For Humanity. The few men who show up to work are the ones worth dating.

## Dress Against Your Stereotype

Stereotypically, unattractive women dress badly. They think that if they don't put effort into their appearance, men will think they have interesting minds. These women may read Dostoevsky but they look boring and stupid.

Or unattractive women dress well, but wear styles older than their age. E.g., you look like your grandmother buys your clothes. That's bad when you're 20, and really bad when you're 50.

Stereotypically, attractive women dress well. They spend time and effort on their clothes, hair, and make-up. These women may be shallow (e.g., reading nothing more challenging than *Cosmopolitan*) but they look sophisticated and intelligent.

And attractive women dress younger than their ages. Attractive 50-year-old women think it's fun to dress in teenagers' platform boots for Halloween.

If you were born with "unattractive genes", put more effort into your appearance. Dress younger than your age.

If you were born with "cover girl genes", leave the four-inch stilettos in your closet. Wear Converse sneakers and read *The Brothers Karamazov* at the coffee shop.

## Education and Employment

Education, employment, and relationships are problematic for women. On the one hand, school and work are the most common places where couples meet (see *Where Couples Met*). Women who go to college and choose a professional career are more likely to meet men (especially if they choose traditionally male fields, e.g., science). And men prefer to marry women with good educations and good jobs.<sup>[10]</sup>

On the other hand, career women sometimes must sacrifice relationships. E.g., a job may require moving to a new city. Women who choose professional careers postpone marriage until they're out of college and have started their careers—by which time they find that many of their male classmates and co-workers are married.

Conversely, women whose primary goal is to be a mother are least likely to meet men. Such women forego higher education and professional careers. E.g., a woman who loves children may seek employment in childcare—where she works with other women.

## Emotional Connection

Emotional connection makes women want sex. Emotional connection makes men want long-term relationships.

Emotional connection makes men and women switch gender roles (see *Becoming a Couple*). Individuals who use masculine sexuality (usually, but not always, men) want to have sex with many partners. Individuals who use feminine sexuality (usually, but not always, women) want long-term committed relationships. Emotional connection makes women switch to masculine sexuality, and makes men switch to feminine sexuality.

A man using masculine sexuality shows off his social status, physique, and money to attract women's attention. But that's all stereotyped gender roles can do (attract attention). Once he has a woman's attention, she'll look for relationship skills, entertainment skills (e.g., a sense of humor), and, above all, the emotional connection of "chemistry."

A woman using feminine sexuality shows off her youth and beauty to attract men's attention. But that's all her stereotyped gender role can do. If they don't emotionally connect, he'll date her only as long as he thinks he might get to have sex.

## Be Seen in Different Venues

Make your suitor feel emotionally connected by letting him see you in a variety of situations. E.g., volunteer with a non-profit organization, take a continuing education class, and participate in a new sport. When a man approaches you in one venue, invite him to do the other activities with you. If you met him in a business computers night class, suggest that he join you volunteering with Habitat For Humanity on Saturday, or at a rock climbing class on Sunday.

He'll see you using a variety of emotions. You may be confident and professional in the business computers class, caring and nurturing with the non-profit organization, and scared—then triumphant—climbing a cliff.

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