



Exploration of Mate Selection Preferences Among Highly Educated in Rwanda

Placide Mutabazi^{a*}, Niyitegeka Jean Pierre^b

^aMinistry of health, Kigali, Rwanda

^bNemba hospital, northern province, Rwanda

^aEmail: muplacidus@yahoo.fr

^bEmail: niyojapi12@yahoo.fr

Abstract

This study focuses on women's and men's preferences in selecting mates for marriage purposes among highly educated at district level. The study considered 50 respondents. Data collection lasted 4 months and was made using questionnaire and data were analyzed using SPSS version 18. Educated women on average are predicted to largely avoid short-term relationships, given that the potential costs outweigh the potential benefits. The opposite pattern is evident for men, given that potential benefits of short-term relationships outweigh the potential cost. How men and women use their reproductive potential is predicted to vary with resource availability, and other characteristics of the individual.

Keywords: sexuality, mating, reproduction, genes

1. Introduction

This paper provides an insight on mate preferences among highly educated females and males, and used as a frame for understanding the how and why of human mate preferences. The basic principle is that the preferred mate choices and behaviors of both women and men have evolved to focus on and exploit the reproductive potential and reproductive investment of members of the opposite sex.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: muplacidus@yahoo.fr

The Similarities and differences in the mate preferences and choices of women and men can be understood in terms of similarities and differences in the form of reproductive potential that women and men have to offer and their tendency to use this potential for the well-being of children.

1.1. Back ground

Many authors are hesitant and sometimes energetically opposed to understanding human behavior in general and human sexuality in particular from an evolutionary perspective [1-4], or at the very least argue that social influences are predominant[5]. Our goal is fairly to provide the selection preferences among highly educated. In particular, we focus on women's and men's preferences and mating selections for marriage purposes among highly educated at a selected district in Rwanda.

2. Methods

The study considered 50 respondents (26 males and 24 females) working at a selected district. An exploratory descriptive research designs was used. Data collection lasted 4 months and was made using questionnaire and data were analyzed using SPSS version 18.

3. Discussion

As with other mammals, most women endow greatly in parenting and are selective when it comes to mating for marriage puoses[6]. Men also express the basic mammalian pattern, they compete extremely for access to preferred, oftentimes multiple female mates to the extent that one man can have more than 3 ready to choose women[2], but in addition many men invest in the well-being of their family and the future of their children [6], [7]. Men's parenting complicates the dynamics of sexual selection, in some cases women are bored to death [8]. This problem comes to very serious due to polygamous culture which can be found in some regions such as northern. In addition to male-male competition and female choice, female- female competition and male choice are also common but the latter seems to be very encountered in the field [4].

We reviewed studies which mainly reflect preferences that are unrestricted by demands of kin, the marriage system, or wider ecological conditions [3]. Thus, the descriptions are primarily of psychological preferences, which are not always realized in actual mate selections which are seen by people as automatic selections [9,10].

The general idea is that the preferred mate choices of both women and men are predicted to have evolved to focus on and exploit the reproductive potential and reproductive investment of members of the opposite sex [7,11,12]. Thus this reveals the truth behind the general picture kept in the minds of the people, even highly educated, lacking information about mate selection preferences.

In most mammals, sexual relationships are short-term [6,13,14] and this is very different from human beings [1], [15] and this seems very complicated among highly educated [1,2]. One consequence is that human sexual relationships can vary from very brief to decades [2,4,8,16] due to the potential costs and benefits of short-term and long-term sexual relationships for men and women [2,8] and levels of choosiness in mate selection decisions and parameters that should influence these choices [6,7]. The most fundamental difference is that the

costs of reproduction are higher for women than for men, and therefore women are predicted to be choosy in their mate selection for both short-term and long-term relationships [1,10,13]. This comes to be very difficult in low and middle income countries where single boys with little financial capability are found starving for ladies [1,3,6,10,11,13] and unable to hold long lasting relationship in their own families [6,7].

In fact, due to culture of Rwandan, both illiterate and educated women on average are predicted to largely avoid short-term relationships, given that the potential costs outweigh the potential benefits [12]. The opposite pattern is evident for men, given that potential benefits of short-term relationships outweigh the potential costs [10,11,14]. When educated men do commit to a long-term relationship, the costs increase and thus the level of choosiness is predicted to increase accordingly and therefore delays their age of marriage particularly in poor countries such as Rwanda [6]. It is clear that most people are not consciously aware of these patterns [14], but they are predicted to respond (e.g., preference for casual sex, preference for physical standing, kindness, good salary) in ways that are consistent with them [3,7,9]. This situation comes to be clearly very crucial in highly educated female in poor countries such as Rwanda [3,6,7].

Many factors (Table 1) are linked with the evolutionary logic of mate selection preferences [4] which indicates that the best situation for a woman is a long-term partner with good genes who has reproductive potential and the willingness to invest this potential in her and her children [3,4,7,9]. Men's reproductive potential is determined by the ability to become a mother and the ability to invest in social and material resources in children [4,6,11,14]. In many cultures, women's mate choices are complicated by the influence and oftentimes competing interests of their kin [6,7]. In primate species in which long-term relationships develop, females generally prefer dominant males as mates [11,14]. In comparison to other males, dominant males provide greater protection from members of the same species and often provide better access to high quality foods [79]. Similarly, the social status of men is an important consideration in women's choices of and companionship [12]. Even in cultures in which mortality rates are low, children of culturally successful men benefit in terms of psychological and physical health and in terms of longevity in adulthood [10 14]. These are exactly the conditions that would result in the evolution of women's preference for socially dominant and culturally successful marriage partners [4,7, 8]. In Rwanda, the land and cattle are controlled by men, and gaining access to these resources has important reproductive consequences for women. "Land access is correlated with women's reproductive success, and may be an important causal factor contributing to reproductive differentials, given the greater availability of food in the homes of 'richer' women and the lower incidence of illness among them and their offspring [15,16]. When material resources are not readily accumulated, women's preferences are still influenced by the social status of prospective marriage partners [2,4], men who are skilled at political negotiations or are fierce warriors enjoy a higher social status than do other men, although they do not differ from other men in material wealth [8,14,15] These high status men have more girl friends and wives than other men [4,5,14,16]. An educated woman's preferred marriage partner and her actual marriage partner are not always the same, due to competition from other women and men's mate selection preferences [5,16]. Social psychological studies precise that preferences for marriage partners are thus an important attachment to research on actual marriage choices. These preferences appear to more obviously capture the processes associated with evolved social and psychological mechanisms that guide reproductive behaviors in humans [2,14].

Table 1

Factors of marital preferences n=50

Factors/Item	Percentage(%)
Kind considerable(kind, understanding, royal, considerate, honest)	16
Socially exciting(exciting personality, excellent social skills, charming ,sociable , stylish appearance)	69
Artistic- intelligence(creative, artistic, intellectually stimulating, courageous ,idealistic, interesting to talk to, intelligent,witty)	55
Religious(church-goer, agnostic in religion,religious point of view,want large family, good moral character)	36
Domestic (good housekeeper, good cook,frugal ,musical home oriented)	34
Professional status(college graduate,professional degree, good family background good earning capacity)	31
Like children(fond of children,likes children)	29
Politically conservative (politically conservative,politically liberal,tally,wealthy,healthy)	26
Easy going-adaptable (easy going,able to plan ahead,well liked by others,open minded, adaptable)	25

Alternative Mating Strategies are due to the costs of pregnancy where women are on average more sexually cautious than men [4,6], but they sometimes engage in short-term sexual relationships [15,17]. It appears that some educated women use their reproductive potential, that is, their sexuality, to initiate relationships with educated men who would not otherwise invest in them [8,14]. Stated somewhat differently, educated men's preference for short-term mates and sexual variety creates a demand that some educated women use for financial or other material gains [8,14]. Many other educated women appear to engage in short-term sexual relationships when they perceive the potential for the development of a longer term relationship [4,5], suggesting that educated women sometimes use sexuality as a means to initiate a relationship with a potential marriage partner [2,16]. Women's choices in unable and unwilling educated men have not been systematically studied, but are predicted to be strongly influenced by the physical and pheromonal traits [13,16] for some reasons.

Extra-pair sex is common even in socially monogamous species and was found that about 20% of American women reported engaging in at least one extra-marital affair and that some of these relationships resulted in pregnancy[14,16].

The study [14,16] found that when women initiated an infidelity, it often occurred around the time of ovulation. For its sample, 7% of the copulations during the time of ovulation were with an extra-pair man, and these relationships were less likely to involve the use of contraceptives than were copulations with their social partner [2,4,13], it appears that men are deceived by their partners into raising the children of another man, that is, cuckolded, about 10% of the time [8,14,15]. The issues are complex in low income countries among highly educated where non paternity have reported rates greater than 20% [14-16]. It is also possible that some of these men are aware of the non paternity of the children they are raising and thus have not been technically cuckolded [17]. In any case, when extra-pair relations do occur, they are typically initiated by the woman around the time of ovulation[14]. This is especially true in contexts where most men do not have the material or social resources to support a family [16]. To adjust to this circumstance, some women develop a successive series of relationships with a number of men or several simultaneously, each of whom provides some investment during the course of the relationship [5,14]. In several South American Indian societies women will engage in sexual relations with men who are not their social partners, especially after becoming pregnant [2,8]. By tradition, these men are called secondary fathers and are socially obligated to provide material resources and social protection to the woman's child, although not all of them do so.

Regarding preference of potential mate(table 2), both women and men prefer sexually attractive partners, but this preference is consistently found to be more importantly a necessity and not a luxury for educated men than for educated women [8]. Men's ratings of women's physical attractiveness are related to several specific physical traits, including facial features that signal a combination of sexual maturity but relative youth, body and facial symmetry, and age [1]. Body mass index (BMI), a measure of leanness to obesity independent of height, is also associated with rated attractiveness [13] but big educated female are less mated [14]. A negative relation between BMI and the rated attractiveness was found in women (but not men), such that leaner women were rated more attractive than heavier women [7,12,14]. The combination of all of these traits (BMI, age,etc) provides cues to women's fertility [1,2,7,12,14] as predicted from the evolutionary perspective[4]. Infertility is the most common cause of family problems leading to separation or divorce for which men's mate preferences would almost certainly evolve to be sensitive to indications of women's weight and age causing repetitive abortions [5,16].

Across age, and socioeconomic status, women preferred husbands who were better educated than they were and who earned more money than they did. Different studies have found the same pattern for women ranging in age from their 20s to their 60s [5,14,16] . This preference is highlighted when women make cost-benefit tradeoffs between a marriage partner's cultural success and other important traits, such as his physical [14]. When women are forced to make such trade-offs, a prospective marriage partner's cultural success is rated as a necessity and other characteristics as a luxury [5,8,14].

The study carried out among Hungarian men and women who were 35 years of age or older (and thus not likely to have more children) found that women who had married older and better educated men on average had more children, were less likely to get divorced, and reported higher levels of marital satisfaction than did women who married younger and/or less educated men [3,10,11]. Thus , marrying a culturally successful man provides the woman with social, psychological, and reproductive benefits [6,10].

Table 2

Preference concerning potential mate N:50

Rank	Characteristics	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total Percentage (%)
1	Socially exciting(physically attractive)	35	34	69
2	Intelligent	25	20	55
3	kind and understanding	15	21	36
4	Religious	18	16	34
5	Good housekeeper	21	10	31
6	College graduate	14	15	29
7	Fond of children	16	10	26
8	Healthy	13	12	25
9	easygoing	9	7	16

There is also evidence that women’s mate and marriage choices are influenced by men’s immune system gene [14], just as the mate choices of females of at least some other species are influenced by indicators of the males’ immune competence [1,4]. Immune-system genes are signaled through pheromones and women are sensitive to and respond to these scents, especially during the second week of their menstrual cycle when they are most fertile. In a 5-year prospective study of fertility, researchers found couples with dissimilar immune-system genes conceived more quickly (2 vs. 5 months) and had fewer spontaneous abortions than did couples with more similar genes [2,14]. The evidence supports the view that women’s mate and marriage choices are influenced by indicators of the physical and perhaps genetic health of men, as reflected, in part, in the man’s physical attractiveness and scent [14].

4. Conclusion

This study does confirm that human mate preferences and choices are a product of our evolutionary history, and reflect many of the same mechanisms like sexual selection. The fact is that both sexes focus on and exploit the reproductive potential and reproductive investment of the opposite sex. Reproductive potential is the genetic or other resources such as ability to have children an individual can potentially invest in children, whereas reproductive investment is the actual use of these resources to promote the well-being of children. For most women, competition creates a gap between preferred and actual mate choices and allows individuals with high reproductive potential to better achieve their preferences than other individuals. These are men who wield greater social influence than other members of the community and control the resources such as money, land, cattle, and so forth which women would prefer to have invested in themselves and their children. Women are thus predicted to prefer these men as monogamous marriage partners. Thus, most women prefer monogamous

marriages to wealthy, socially dominant, and physically attractive men, and want these men to be devoted to them and their children.

For most women, this preference is not achieved. Some women attempt to achieve a compromise of sorts through relationships with several men. The implicit goal appears to get the best material investment from one man and the best genetic investment from another. Men are more focused on the physical traits of a long-term mate and less concerned about her cultural success or her potential for cultural success. Theoretically, men should have evolved to focus on those physical attributes of women that are predictive of their reproductive potential, specifically their ability to conceive, carry, and give birth of healthy children. As predicted, men do indeed focus on these traits when judging the attractiveness of women as potential short-term and long-term mates. It is important to understand that there is a single strategy for women and another for men in human mate choices and selection preferences. Rather, how men and women use their reproductive potential is predicted to vary with resource availability, social dynamics, cultural mores, and characteristics of the individual.

References

- [1] A. C. Little, D. M. Burt, and D. I. Perrett, "Assortative mating for perceived facial personality traits," vol. 40, pp. 973–984, 2006.
- [2] R. Godoy, D. T. A. Eisenberg, V. Reyes-garcía, T. Huanca, W. R. Leonard, T. W. Mcdade, and S. Tanner, "Assortative mating and offspring well-being : theory and empirical findings from a native Amazonian society in Bolivia," vol. 29, pp. 201–210, 2008.
- [3] R. Arum, "An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Meetings of the American Sociological Association. Thanks to Carmen Garcia, Sara Hallman, and Anjali Srivastava for research assistance. Address correspondence to the first author at the Department of ," no. January, 2007.
- [4] O. Article, "Mixed Support for Sexual Selection Theories of Mate Preferences in the Swedish Population," vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 575–585, 2008.
- [5] D. M. Buss and M. Barnes, "Preferences in Human Mate Selection," vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 559–570, 1986.
- [6] F. O. Onu, N. State, and M. P. Armstrong, "The Ideal Man : An Investigation into Qualities That Influences Mate Selection among Female Undergraduate Students," vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 80–84, 2013.
- [7] S. Schwarz and M. Hassebrauck, "Sex and Age Differences in Mate-Selection Preferences," no. 1945, 2012.
- [8] L. Alvarez and U. S. Bolívar, "Narcissism guides mate selection : Humans mate assortatively , as revealed by facial resemblance , following an algorithm of " self seeking," pp. 177–194, 2004.

- [9] A. Wilke, J. M. C. Hutchinson, P. M. Todd, and D. J. Kruger, "Is risk taking used as a cue in mate choice?," pp. 367–393, 2006.
- [10] B. Todosijevi, S. Ljubinkovi, and A. Aran, "Mate selection criteria : A trait desirability assessment study of sex differences in Serbia," pp. 116–126, 2003.
- [11] M. J. Rosenfeld, "A Critique of Exchange Theory in Mate Selection 1," vol. 110, no. 5, pp. 1284–1325, 2005.
- [12] S. S. Place, P. M. Todd, L. Penke, and J. B. Asendorpf, "Humans show mate copying after observing real mate choices ☆," *Evol. Hum. Behav.*, vol. 31, no. 5, pp. 320–325, 2010.
- [13] A. W. Lukaszewski and J. R. Roney, "Kind toward whom ? Mate preferences for personality traits are target specific," *Evol. Hum. Behav.*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 29–38, 2010.
- [14] S. Luo and E. C. Klohnen, "Assortative Mating and Marital Quality in Newlyweds : A Couple-Centered Approach," vol. 88, no. 2, pp. 304–326, 2005.
- [15] G. J. Hitsch, A. Hortaçsu, and D. Ariely, "What Makes You Click ? – Mate Preferences in Online Dating * ," vol. 0449625, pp. 1–37, 2010.
- [16] A. Arbor, "MATE SELECTION PREFERENCES IN GERMANY," no. Ii, pp. 1269–1280, 1989.
- [17] M. Belot and M. Francesconi, "Can Anyone be ‘ The ’ One ? Evidence on Mate Selection from Speed Dating *," no. October 2006.