

Evolution and Mate Choice



This activity will help you to:

- Understand how evolutionary theory explains mate-choice tendency in humans
- Link mate choice to the concept of parental investment
- Generate hypotheses from psychological theories

Evolutionary theory suggests that a person's choice of mate is driven by the requirement to produce to produce viable offspring. However as we saw in the last session, because of anisogamy, men and women are likely to adopt different mating strategies. One consequence of this is that they will look for different things in a potential mating partner. On the table below are so general ideas from evolutionary theory. Each of these ideas can be used to generate a hypothesis (i.e. a prediction) about the types of characteristics that men or women will look for in a potential mate. Read each evolutionary idea carefully, and then try to come up with a hypothesis that corresponds to each one.

The more resources that are invested in a woman's offspring, the more viable those offspring become. However, each woman has only a limited amount of resources to invest herself.	
A woman has a limited number of years during which she can reproduce, whereas a man can carry on reproducing through most of his lifespan.	
Men reach sexual maturity at an older age than women.	
If a woman gives birth to a child, knows that it contains 50% of her genes. However, a man cannot guarantee the paternity of his partner's offspring ('mummy's babies, daddy's maybes').	
Ambition, drive and success are linked to a man's ability to provide resources.	