

Explanations of interpersonal attraction

Evolution

Human females invest a lot of time and energy to producing and maintaining offspring due to their 9 month pregnancy and a prolonged period of infant dependency. This high level of parental investment means it is in a woman's best interest to find a reliable mate to share this task. In comparison the parental investment of men is low; they are capable of producing an infinite number of offspring.

Characteristics favoured by evolution

What women want

According to the evolutionary explanation women are attracted to men who are able to defend and provide. In the past this might have been the ability to fight sabre tooth tigers and hunt woolly mammoths. In today's world it means the ability to provide a good and secure income. Women are attracted to men who are reliable and unlikely to roam to other females. However; they also want strong, viable offspring so a man's physical attributes do play a part in mate selection. What women want can depend on whether they are ovulating or not.

What men want

Men want to produce as many offspring as they can and seek to find healthy, fertile women who are capable of carrying viable offspring. Men seek signs of youth. This can include a certain figure, clear, smooth complexion, and good muscle tone.

Ultimately the evolutionary explanation states that are relationships are formed and maintained to ensure the reproductive success of your genetic material (your children).

Your task:

- Look through the lonely hearts columns and select ten 'men seeking women' and ten 'women seeking men' adverts.
- Make a list of what is each offering (i.e. which of their own characteristics do they mention?) and what are they seeking.
- Do the results support the evolutionary theory of interpersonal attraction? Why?