

Bridewealth and the american culture

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Bridewealth and the American Culture Family and personal assets affect the choices we make in picking the right mate in Western Culture. The ways we view these issues influences are dating practices, and marriage choices. Evolutionary theory predicts certain mannerism that should influence dating. Most of the time evolutionary theory is reflected in mating practices. Mating choices are also affected cross-culturally in other ways like with the Kipsigis and bridewealth. Choices we make for dating and marriage prospects rate differently according to sex and culture.

The evolutionary theory predicts that women will value financial prospects higher than men do (Boyd, 2006, 461). Because women have a larger parental investment in a child, they want to be with a mate who will be able to take care of them. In David Buss' research he found that knowing a persons culture rather than gender will indicate preferences except for good financial prospects(Boyd, 2006, 465). For men in Western Culture good financial prospects are lower on their list and good looks is higher.

This may be because women who are more attractive to them give the signal that they are less likely to have diseases, and possible based on their body type may be more fertile. Men and women also differ in the preference for the age of their partners. Men tend to date younger women while women date older men. This relates to the evolutionary theory because men's fertility only slightly decreases with age, while women fertility ends as they reach menopause. It would make sense in evolutionary terms for men to choose women who have the ability to have children and are therefore younger.

In actual practice men do choose women that are younger but not all of them are able to have children. “ Older men may desire younger women, but they may also want to find someone who shares their tastes in music, has similar goals in life, and so on” (Boyd, 2006, 462). They may also settle with knowing that they may only be able to date women who are closer to their own age. In Kipsigis culture bridewealth is practiced. Bridewealth is payment given to the father of the bride from the groom’s father. The payment, tendered in livestock and cash, compensates the bride’s family for the loss of her labor and gives the groom rights to her labor and the children she bears during her marriages” (Boyd, 2006, 468). It is almost like an investment. The more a woman is “ worth” the higher the bridewealth. A woman is also expected to return to her family during the harvest and a higher bridewealth may be paid if the families are too far apart. Higher bridewealth is also paid for women who have had their first menstruation. This also fits in with evolutionary theory that women have a set timeline for having children.

As a woman is younger they may be fit to have more children. A plumper woman will fetch a higher the bridewealth as well. Thinness in animals reflects less of ability for children and these views are reflected in the Kipsigis people when they choose women who have more body. In Western culture bridewealth is not common. Typically the bride’s family is expected to pay for much of the wedding reflecting more of a dowry. In both cultures typically the more desirable the woman’s assets are, the better choices of bridewealth or financial prospects. Mating choices and preferences can vary from culture to culture.

There is one thing that all cultures have in common which is that females prefer a partner with better financial ability. Evolutionary theory favors mating choices that will produce the most amount of fertility. For the Kipsigis this is seen in the healthier plump women and young women who have the ability to have more children. In Western society men rate attractiveness higher than women and often choose younger women as well even if it doesn't increase fertility. Our mating choices are based on our gender and culture. References Boyd, Robert, & Silk, Joan B. (2006). *How Humans Evolved* (4th ed.). New York: W W Norton & Company.