

The Skewed and the Screwed: When Mating Meets Politics

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If an alien learned about our world from browsing the internet of beefs, they would be under the impression that a bitter war is raging between the sexes. All you read about are toxic men and manipulative women fighting to entrench the patriarchy or gynocracy (respectively) and subjugate the opposite gender forever. Men and women are not merely failing to connect, they are fighting a zero-sum conflict without compromise.

This sentiment seems to be coming from the extremes of the political spectrum, the very progressive left and the very conservative right. Humans aren't naturally drawn to cooperate with those of other nations, races, classes, and tribes. But most of us *are* drawn to seeking mates of the opposite sex. So those who fight the culture, class, and identity wars, why do they also fight the gender war?

This question touches on every major theme of this blog: my deep fascination with romance and dating, my model of politics as a horseshoe, my entreaties to seek cooperation and resisting polarization. Above all, my penchant for explaining complex phenomena using simple mathy models.

And so: I will try and explain what happens when mating meets politics using a speculative and overgeneralized model. This is a descriptive account of what I think is actually happening, not a moral sermon. There will be charts, and memes, and dating stories.

Woke Women, Dangerous Men

The immediate *trigger* for this post is the recent article about *The Dangerous Rise Of Men Who Won't Date "Woke" Women* by Vicky Spratt. The article lists the signs by which ye shall know them: men who list "no psychos" as a requirement on their dating profiles, this one guy who described Jordan Peterson as his "dream dinner guest". But a few paragraphs later, Ms. Spratt is talking about MAGA, 8chan, and mass shooters.

I know quite a few guys who are terrified of dating woke women. Let me paint you a picture: nerd, works in tech or journalism, voted for Hillary and is now debating between Bernie and Yang, hooked up with a trans woman once, thinks that Sam Harris pwned Peterson because religion is dumb, asks for verbal consent before kissing on the first date. Not quite the stereotypical right-winger. The real right-wingers can barely distinguish between the "woke" and the moderate liberals. They instead complain that all women are brainwashed by "The Cathedral" into refusing to date ~~conservative~~ real men. Basically, it's the same article but with the signs flipped.

My friend Holly reasonably asked: why don't woke women consider it a favor that dangerous far-right lunatics avoid them? And then it clicked: it's all about **the sex**

ratio.

In this post, I'll talk only about heterosexual relationships, since sex ratio dynamics don't affect gay people in this way. I will also treat gender and sex more or less interchangeably and as a binary because that's what all the research on politics and sex ratios does. Also, because it makes the math easier. I'll focus on the US and UK because those are the societies with whose political tribes I'm familiar with (although math works the same in Macedonia).

In short: if you feel that this post is a mathematical abstraction that doesn't represent your lived experience, you're absolutely right. Sorry. No need to spam the comments.

Markets and the Ratio

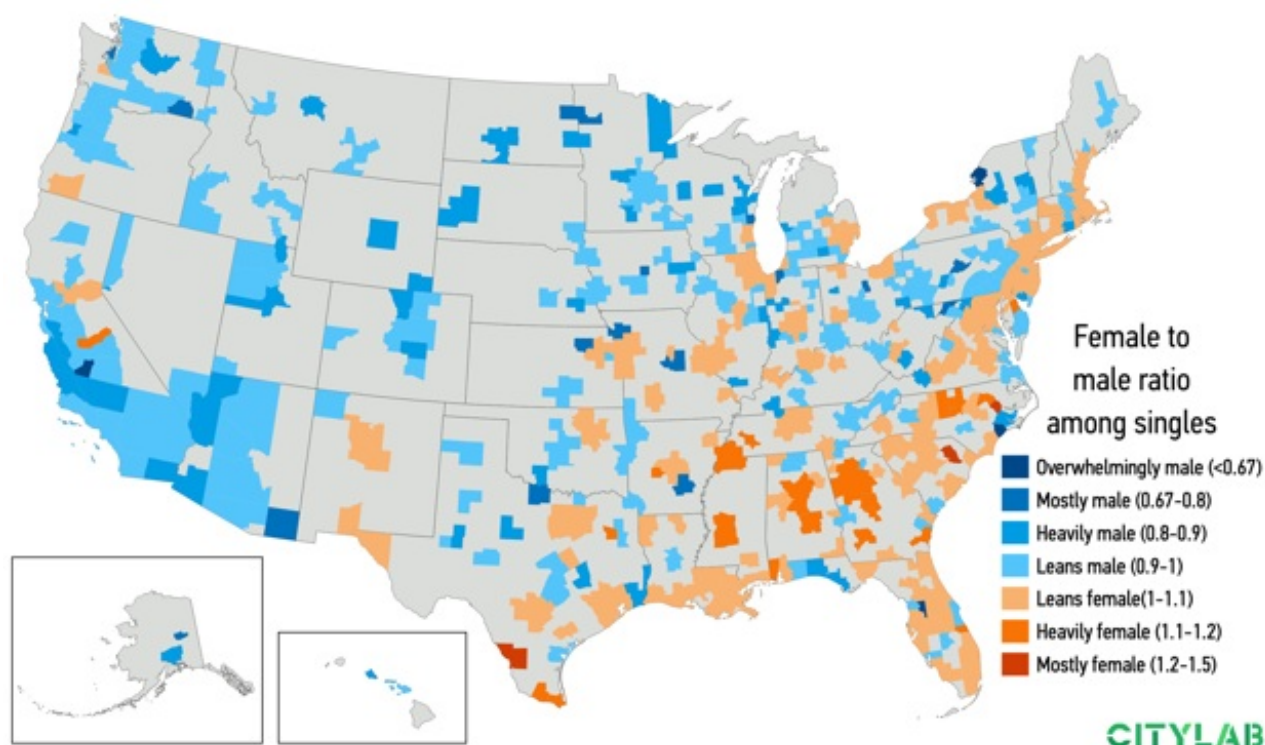
A mating market is a group of people who, among other things, are looking to **mate**: sleep with, date, and/or marry each other. Markets don't necessarily involve money; bees and flowers are in a nectar-pollination market. Markets are about matching up two or more groups who provide value to each other, one's supply to another's demand.

The mating markets of different individuals are never quite the same, but they overlap. Your city, culture, social class, hobbies, favorite subreddit, familiarity with mail-order bride websites — they all define the set of people you are likely to meet for the purpose of mating.

Each participant in the market has a market value: how attractive they are as a partner. Attractiveness is always about more than looks. Status, intellectual traits, knowing to play the guitar, age, money — these all affect attractiveness. Most importantly, value is defined by the market: how many people of the sex you're looking for are interested in what you offer, and how many of your competitors are offering the same or better. A woman with a Ph.D. is much less impressive in Boston than in Des Moines. Six-pack abs on a man are much rarer in Memphis than in Los Angeles. And it's not just because Angelenos are fitter. It's also because Angelenos are more male.

The ratio between men and women in a mating market is the most underrated force shaping mating outcomes. It's underrated because it's not directly visible except in extreme cases. But the downstream effects of a skewed ratio are very visible: one of the sexes has more choices, and thus it has a lot more power.

Gender balance among all singles (aged 20 to 64)



Source: American Community Survey (David H. Montgomery/CityLab)

There are three important aspects of how the sex ratio affects dating.

1 – The sex ratio affects norms around dating

Studies ranging from 19th-century Utah to 21st-century college campuses show how populations respond to skewed sex ratios. Where there is an excess of men there is less premarital sex, men invest more in long-term relationships, women marry young and to richer husbands. Female majority leads to a culture of sexual promiscuity, fewer traditional dates (which the man pays for), fewer long-term relationships.

Opportunity costs affect economic decisions even if the opportunity is never taken advantage of. Similarly, even people in exclusive long-term relationships feel the effects of the prevailing sex ratio on male vs. female investment and on promiscuity vs. commitment.

This doesn't require that all or even most people prefer the dating style stereotypical of their sex. As long as there's any difference in preference *on average*, the minority sex will get to dictate their preferences more. We'll get back to this important point when discussing age and politics.

2 – Skewed sex ratios breed resentment towards the minority sex

From the college campus study:

Our results suggest that women on campuses where they comprise a higher proportion of the student body give more negative appraisals of campus men and relationships [...]

We would expect women on campuses with higher proportions of women to report that men are less willing to commit and less likely to treat women well. This is indeed what we find. On campuses where women are more plentiful, women are more likely to agree that men are not interested in commitment and are not to be trusted. Moreover, women on these campuses expect less from the men they date, find it harder to meet the right kind of men, and do not find many attractive potential partners on campus.

When women complain that “there aren’t enough good guys out there”, half the issue is that *there are too many women*. The real complaint is usually “there aren’t enough good guys *for me*”. Of course, the same obtains for men who complain about the deteriorating quality of women, not noticing the deteriorating sex ratio that’s at the root of their predicament.

3 – Being the majority sex sucks more than being the minority rocks

What is it like being a guy in a 45/55 mating market? (I’ll quote all sex ratios as the ratio of men to women, so 45/55 means 45% male). In short, not much. If you’re the median guy on some generalized attribute of attractiveness (23rd out of 45) you might match with the 23rd-most attractive woman out of 55, the 58th percentile woman instead of the 50th percentile if the ratio was balanced. It’s not a big difference. You’re more likely to have casual sex and be able delay commitment, but a lot of guys prefer steady partners to one night stands anyway. The same goes for women in a 55/45 market.

What is it like being a woman in a 45/55? It’s the anxiety of knowing that you have a one-in-five chance of ultimately not finding a partner. It means fierce competition with other women for guys, which makes intra-sex friendships more fragile. It means not feeling secure in a relationship because your partner’s BATNA is so much higher than yours. If you’re not very attractive or very idiosyncratic, it’s that much worse.

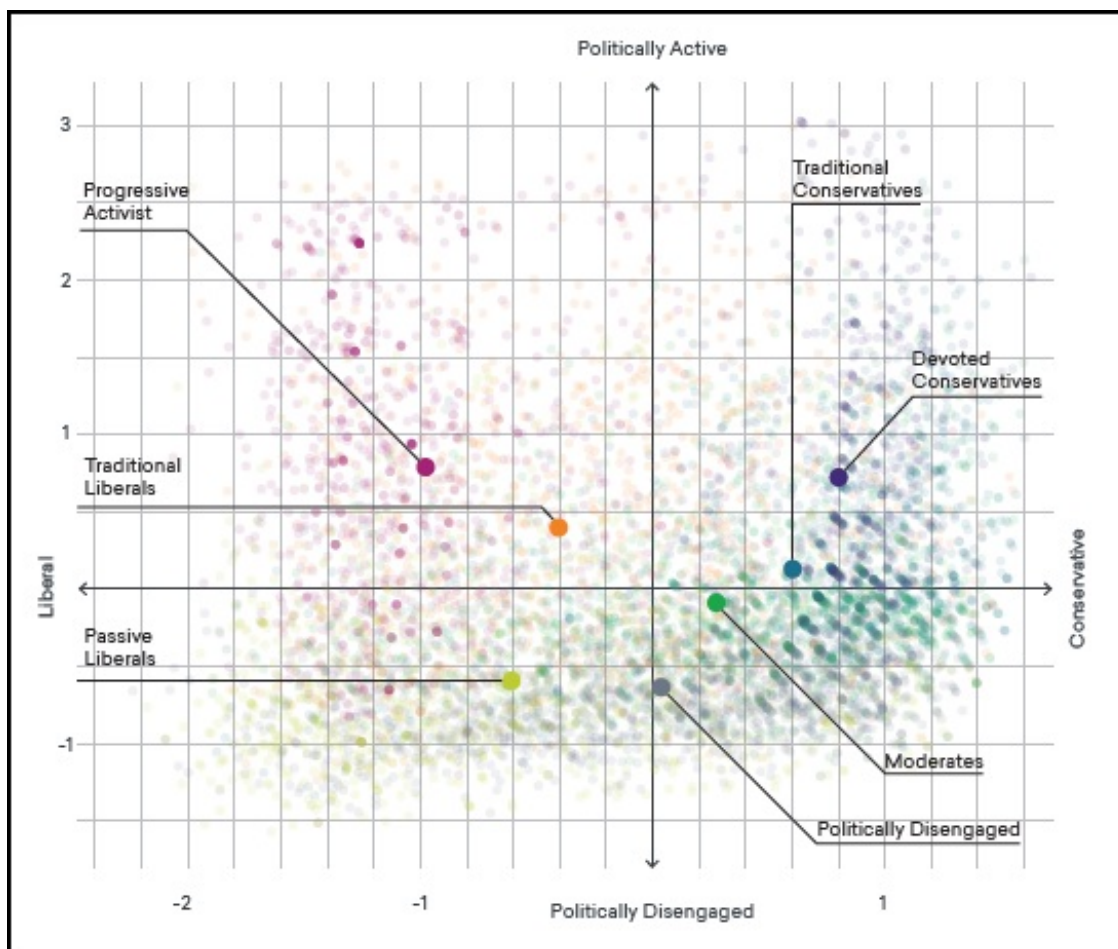
The same applies to men in a market where they are the 55% majority. It sucks.

Moving out of a mating market that’s skewed against you and into a balanced one is a lot more important than moving into a favorable one. As long as the ratio is not skewed against you, it’s better to find a market of people that match. That’s why you see a lot more advice telling single young men to GTFO of the Bay Area than advice telling young women to go west for boyfriends unless these women are particularly interested in polyamorous nerds.

Moving into a mating market where you’re the minority is not opportunistic, it’s altruistic. The opposite sex will be very happy to have you. Even if they don’t personally date you, you’re taking their competitors off the market and improving the ratio.

Gendered Tribes

There are many ways to break down the political and culture war landscape. A relatively comprehensive and rigorous attempt is the report *Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape* by Hawking et al which I'll use as my main reference point.



Source: *Hidden Tribes*

Wow, the political distribution of Americans surely looks like this thing, you know, the thing you put on a hoof.

Hidden Tribes breaks Americans into seven groups, identified by clustering their opinions on various political issues as well as their level of engagement in politics. The three liberal tribes comprise 34% of the population, and they are 55% female. The two conservative tribes comprise 25% of all Americans and are 57% male. The remainder are politically moderate or disengaged.

Within the liberal tribes, the Progressive Activists (which I identify as “the woke”) are younger, whiter (!), and are twice as likely to have 4-year or advanced degrees as the rest of the country. They are in line with Traditional and Passive Liberals on police brutality, immigration, and distaste for Donald Trump. They stand out from other liberals in their stance on male and white privilege, their attitudes about free speech and political correctness, and in their lukewarm feelings towards men.

The latter represents an important asymmetry between the far left and the right. All other tribes have more positive feelings towards both genders than the woke have towards men. Another difference is that Progressive Activists are much more likely to

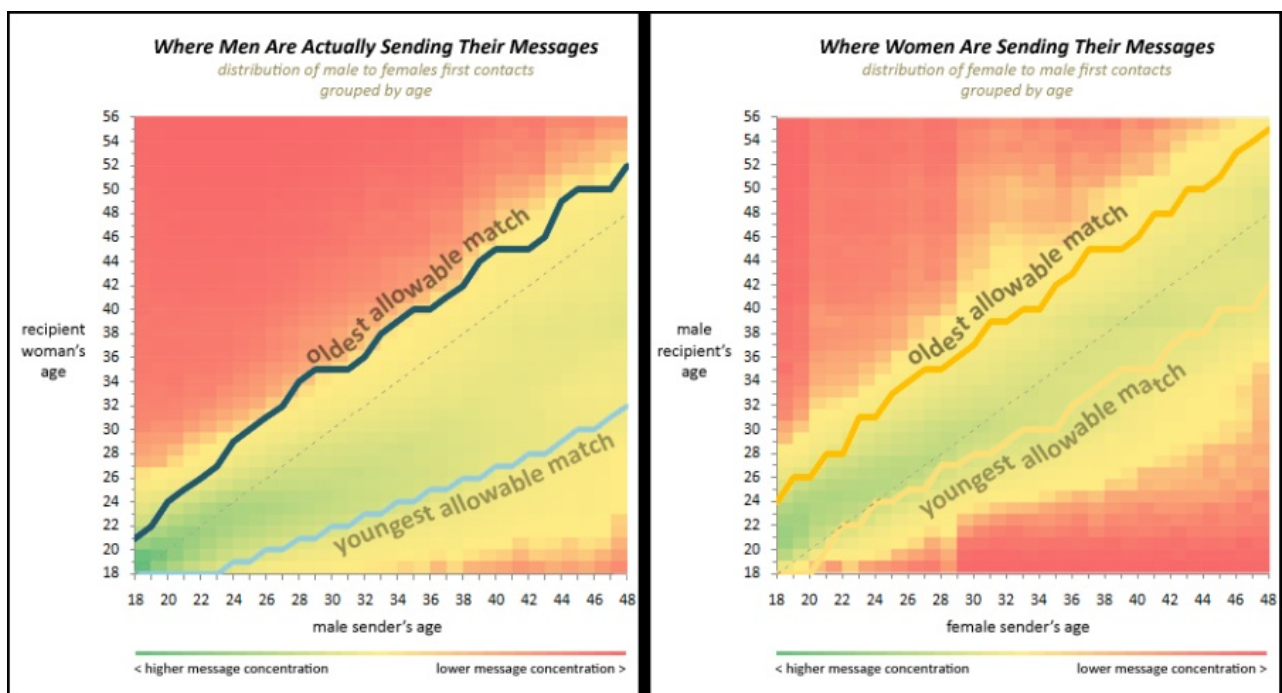
endorse attitudes such as *“People’s outcomes are outside their control”*, 86% vs. a mere 2% of Devoted Conservatives.

Furthermore, within the Progressive Activist tribe, there are big gender gaps on gender-related issues. 19% of woke men agree that *“Men and women mostly have the same chances at success”* but only 1% of woke women do.

This is not a recipe for a happy dating market. And it gets even worse.

An Age-Old Question

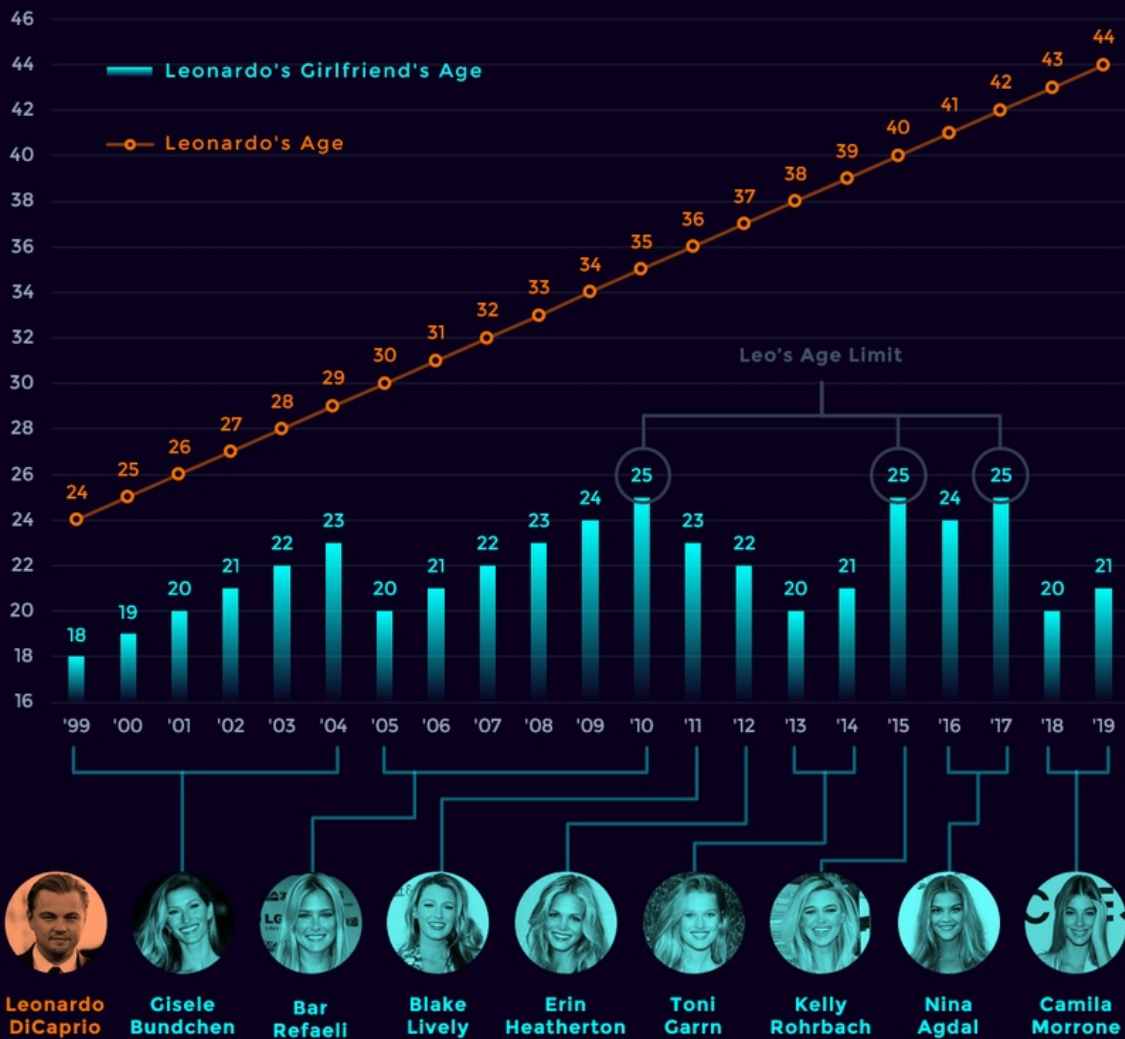
It is a fact of dating life that women prefer men around the same age as them, but men prefer younger women (on average). In fact, men’s preferred age gap grows as they get older.



Source: Christian Rudder on the OkCupid Blog

Again, this is not a male universal. From high school until now, almost all the women I’ve dated were within two years of my age on either side. On the other hand, Leonardo DiCaprio has enforced a hard cap at 25 years regardless of his own age. Even if the skew is driven by a minority of men it will still mean that women in their early twenties will experience a favorable mating market with many suitors, while women in their thirties and older will experience a mating market slightly skewed against them. At the very least, their list of potential suitors does not include Leo.

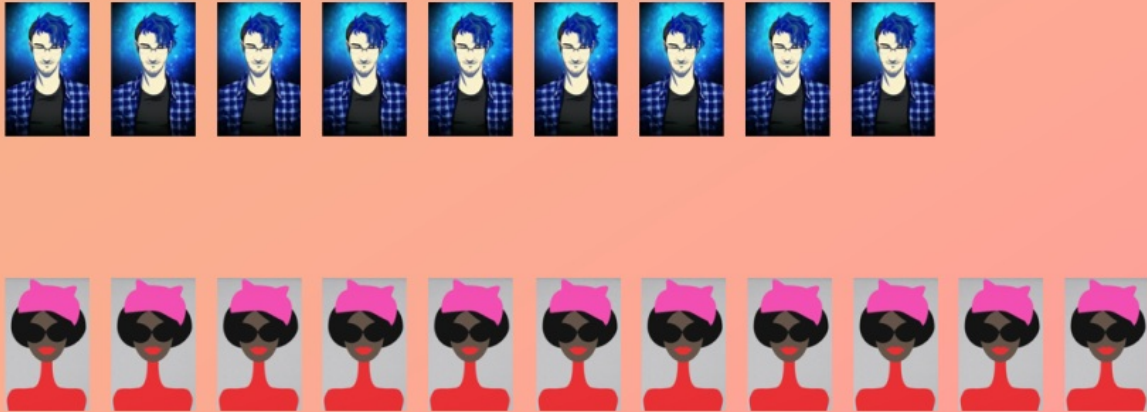
LEONARDO DICAPRIO REFUSES TO DATE A WOMAN OVER 25



Source: u/TrustLittleBrother on r/dataisbeautiful

As you recall, youth is correlated with wokeness. Even if they're the majority sex in their political tribe, young Progressive Activist women can play in a favorable dating market in their twenties. But as they get older, things begin to change.

The woke dating market

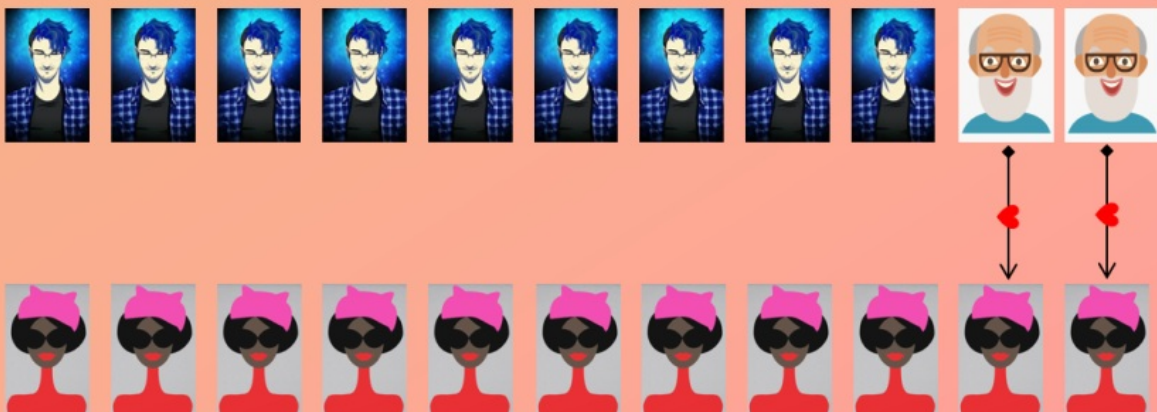


Sex ratio: 45%

This is a chart of the dating market for liberal men and women. Liberals are 55% female and 45% male, which is represented on the chart by 11 women and 9 men.

In their early twenties, life is good for woke heterosexuals of both persuasions. The men have plenty of female peers to flirt with in class and at rallies. The women get plenty of attention from older men, which balances out the sex ratio.

The woke dating market – early twenties

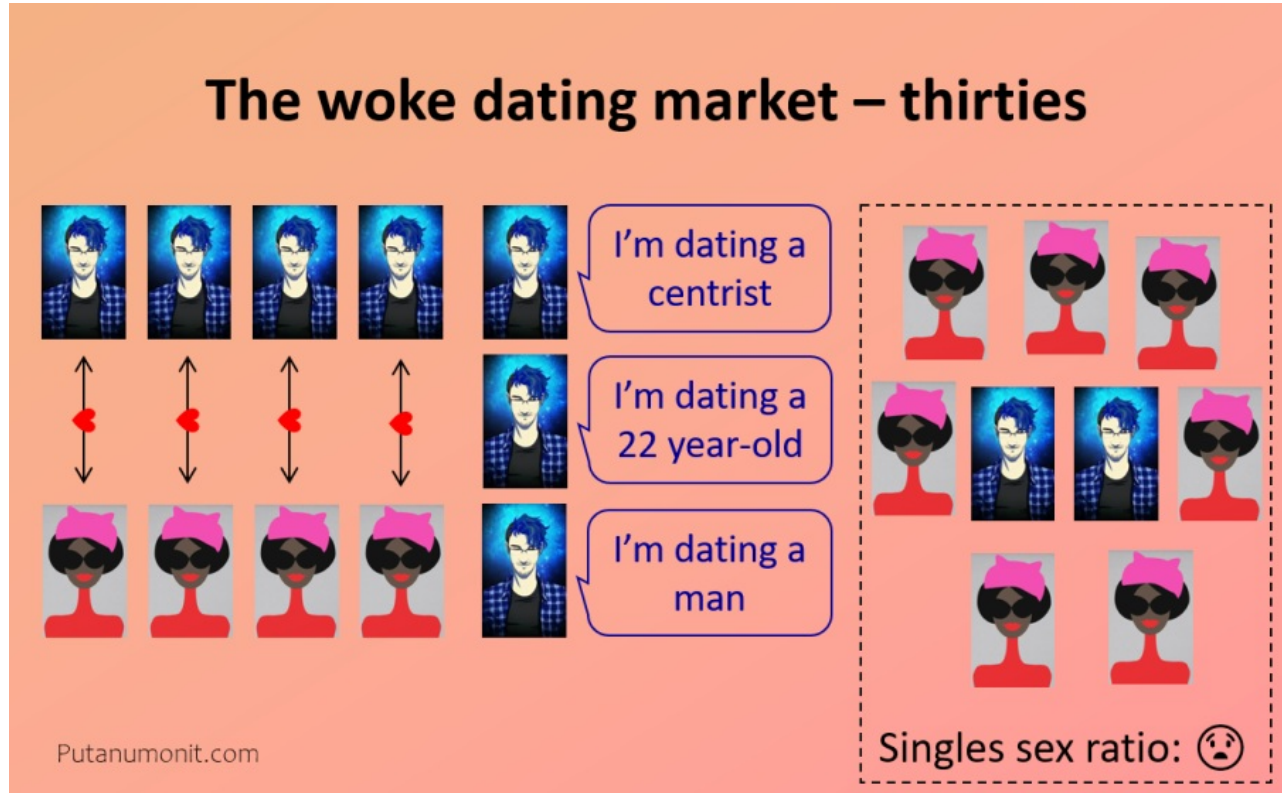


Sex ratio: 50+%

As they enter their thirties, several things start going against the women in particular.

1. A rising number of people pair off and leave the dating market, making all imbalances more pronounced for the singles that remain.
2. They receive less attention from the older men who like their women to stay the same age.
3. The age preference bites them a second time when some of the liberal men turn out to be DiCaprios themselves and switch to pursuing women in their early twenties.
4. More men than women transition out of the very liberal tribe, at least in their dating preference. In part, these are the men who were never as on-board with the gender politics of the Progressive Activists. And in part, because Progressive Activists are likelier to be white and educated and when white educated men hit their thirties they tend to start making good money. A rich white man may prefer to date outside of the tribe that treats “white”, “man”, and “rich” as synonyms for the outgroup.
5. Finally, there are more gay men than lesbian women and more male-to-female transsexuals than female-to-male. These are all likelier to be members of the liberal tribes. This further reduces the number of single, woke men-who-date-women available.

And so the women who stay in the Progressive Activist tribe have two options: read Sana’s guide for women dating women, or face a dating market that is suddenly very skewed against them.



Ms. Spratt, the author of the article about men who don’t date woke, is 31, single, and “grateful to be financially independent and living in a time where it’s acknowledged that you’re better off on your own for a while than trapped in an unhappy relationship.” So that is the third option: going your own way while writing

articles about the men who keep out of your mating market.

I hope that this doesn't come across as mocking. I find this genuinely sad. I strongly believe that relationships are preferable to aloneness. The predicament of Ms. Spratt and her fellow progressive sisters in their thirties is a result of mating market dynamics, not of unusual malice on their part. In a sad irony, the progressive tribe is the one sounding the loudest alarm bells about the negative outcomes that arise from unchecked market dynamics. Ha ha.

These dynamics are also quite independent of the merits of progressive ideology on its own. Whether the world is indeed shaped by the privileged elites oppressing the rest of humanity or not has no bearing on the numbers. But, progressive ideology does make matters worse for women because of its belief that people's outcomes are outside of their control. If you believe that, you will be a lot less likely to improve your situation through your own agency (such as by moving to more favorable markets). Given that the gender imbalance of the political wings is unlikely to change by itself, those who don't help themselves won't be helped by circumstance.

But wait, it gets even worse.

Vicious Cycles

If you recall, skewed mating markets make the majority sex resentful of the minority (quite reasonably, you may add). And a feature of the woke tribe is resentment of men: that men have an unfair advantage, that they have more power, that they exploit it for their own good.

And in the woke dating scene, this is absolutely 100% correct.

I have gone on a few dates with very progressive women who spent the entire time complaining about their mistreatment at the hands of men. And while I have real compassion for their plight, this topic isn't going to light a romantic spark on a first date.

And so, the vicious cycle runs:

1. Female-skewed sex ratio, which leads to
2. Men having more power and taking advantage of it, which leads to
3. Women building resentment and complaining about men, which leads to
4. Men leaving the mating market for places where their sex is more welcome, which leads to
5. An ever more skewed mating market.

This cycle is mirrored quite symmetrically on the opposite end of the gender war horseshoe. The manosphere keeps going on and on about hypergamy — that all women are focused on the tiny sliver of guys who are hot, rich, and popular, and that the average guy is left holding his junk. This seems somewhat incongruous with all the

broke, average-looking, medium-status men I see going on dates all around me.

But then I realized that the manosphere is just that, a community of mostly men. Guys who are ideologically aligned with the various flavors of the red pill are more likely to be in male-majority mating markets such as the two conservative tribes (57% male) or the libertarian gang (63%). These men may think that their dating market encompasses all political tribes, but women aren't stupid. Both genders have a strong nose for politics and ideology when looking for partners.

The women who choose to remain in the dating pools of red-pilled guys know that they're a hot commodity and can choose from the best partners. These men created hypergamy by their own efforts.

This also explains why politics and culture war extremists tend to espouse a view of relationships as a zero-sum power struggle.

In the politically-moderate gender-balanced middle, neither men nor women have a dim view of the other sex and neither has the power to dictate terms. Compromise and cooperation lead to the best outcomes, in Congress and in the bedroom. But on the sex-skewed edges, the minority do what they can and the majority suffer what they must while building seething resentment. Political conflict theory turns into gender conflict theory.

Virtue Signaling

If you're a woman in a very progressive mating market or a man in a strongly conservative one, you're likely to care a lot about the ideological fidelity of your potential mates. This is for two reasons:

1. People on the extremes of the horseshoe are more strongly devoted to their position. Ideology plays a bigger role in their life and makes up a larger fraction of their identity. They want a partner who matches that fervor.
2. They know that a partner who is less devoted to the tribe has more options — they can always betray the cause for a cute centrist. An ideological partner has fewer options and is more reliable.

What kind of man signs up for dismantling the patriarchy? What sort of woman embraces the red pill? Two types: the true believers in the creed, and those that were attracted by the generous sex ratio and the opportunities to exert mating choice power. It is very important for the true believers to tell the two apart, and the mechanism for doing so is exhaustive and exhausting virtue signaling.

In 2014 I went on a date with a teacher at a Bronx public school, an intensely progressive social environment. One drink into the evening, we had the following astonishing conversation.

Me: You went to Metropolitan Comedy Club? I did my first stand-up set there. It's quite embarrassing and also on YouTube forever.

Her: You do stand-up? Who are your top 5 comedians?

Me: I don't really keep lists, but if I had to put one together it would be Nikki Glazer, Jerrod Carmichael, Chappelle, Sarah Silverman, Pete Holmes. How about you?

Her: [Names 5 dudes].

Me: It's cool that you're a comedy fan.

Her: Wait, there were no women on my list!

Me: It's fine, it's just the comedians you like. I'm sure your favorite novelists are mostly women.

Her: How can you say it's fine?! It's not fine! This sort of attitude is why it's so hard for women to be represented in comedy!!!

Me:

I'm not entirely sure what happened. Was my failure to punish defectors worse than the norm-breaking itself? Was I automatically in the wrong because I'm male? Was she just signaling her wokeness to me, lest I think that she doesn't sufficiently care about women's issues? One can imagine that in her social circles, she's as worried about being "found out" as not woke enough as she is about purity-testing men.



Interestingly, despite this catastrophic failure of virtue signaling on our part, she was quite willing to continue our romantic dalliance. Tribal politics are strong, but so is horniness.

Choosing Sex or Sex Politics

Emma Sulkowicz became famous as Columbia University's *Mattress Girl*, lugging a 50-pound mattress around campus to protest the university's mishandling of her rape allegation. Whatever happened that night in Sulkowicz's dorm room, Columbia found no evidence base to take action against the man accused by Sulkowicz and even settled with him out of court for gender discrimination.

The *affair* put Sulkowicz in an interesting position. On one hand, an inspiration for women survivors of assault and a symbol of #BelieveAllWomen. On the other hand, a reputation that is likely quite intimidating to potential sexual partners, even of the most progressive sort.

And so, 5 years after she picked up the mattress, Sulkowicz is “attending house parties and happy hours with conservative and libertarian intellectuals, reading Jordan Peterson and articles from the *National Review*.” She talks about the importance of understanding a variety of political attitudes, of listening with an open mind. What triggered this change in attitude? In Emma’s own words: “*This story starts with me being on Tinder [...] He was very blond, law school, cut jawline, trapezoidal body figure, tweed suit kind of vibe, but something inside of me made me swipe right, I don’t know.*”

Art, humor, altruism, ideology — everything we do is guided by our psychology, and our psychology evolved by sexual selection. And so everything we do is driven by the desire for reproduction (apart from actually publishing psychology papers). It’s often not the immediate cause of our actions, but it’s always in the back of our brains and in the chains of cause and effect guiding us. “*Something inside us*”, as Ms. Sulkowicz says. And when our brains sense that our behavior (such as adherence to a political ideology) is costing us in the mating domain, it’s cause for internal conflict.

Since I’ve left business school and come to NYC, I’ve significantly softened my stance on economic questions. I’m a lot less dogmatic about free-market ideals, and I see a lot to like in the economic platform of someone like Andrew Yang. Did I happen to read more smart articles to my left on economics? Or did I happen to flirt with a lot of women in NYC, almost all of whom are to my left on economics? Perhaps I sat down to read those articles *because* I met those women. It’s impossible to disentangle the two. I only have one brain that I use for both dating and thinking about economics, I bring all of it to both endeavors.

An ideologue would be horrified by someone “betraying the cause” for the sake of something as base as getting laid. I’m equally horrified by people choosing an ideological stance, one that is most often purely about signaling and has no impact on the world, over pursuing a romantic connection.

Ideally, people find a compromise. The day I started writing this post the trending hashtag on Twitter was #HotGirlsForBernie. Attractive women are posting sexy selfies all over in support of a socialist candidate. Wat means?

Bernie Sanders’ main rival in the progressive wing of the Democrat Party is Elizabeth Warren. Warren leans heavily on gender and identity politics, and her supporters are disproportionately female and old. Sanders leans on class war and socialist economics, he is the best polling candidate among the young and the male.

The young liberal women, those that are interested in their own popularity among young male progressives, have taken notice. Tweeting for Bernie, name dropping Joe Rogan or Sam Harris, putting books by Camille Paglia or Jonathan Haidt on their shelves, these are the ways that young women signal *I'm liberal, but I'm not too woke to date*. And the brave ones admit to having watched some Jordan Peterson videos too, just out of curiosity.

The Leftovers

What happens to those who refuse to compromise? As a mating cohort gets older, those who are willing to relax their ideological stances for the sake of relationships pair off and leave the market. That leaves the politically obstinate, who are faced with a shrinking mating market mired in virtue signaling and a sex ratio that gets more skewed by the year. They become even more convinced that the opposite sex is using its power to oppress them, and their personal experience confirms it.

These lonely partisans are a minority of the population, but they are active in politics and media. I'm convinced that a lot of discourse about the "gender wars" and polarization of men against women is driven by those at the edges of the horseshoe, especially as they leave their twenties behind. In the exhausted moderate majority, men and women seem to be getting along just fine.

And so let us get back to the original question: why is Vicky Spratt complaining about the men who don't date woke if she despises them so much? Because every man who forswears woke women is one fewer man to take a female competitor off the dating market, one fewer opportunity to balance the ratio. It's one fewer lifeline that would allow Ms. Spratt to keep her ideology *and* her mating value without sacrificing either.

The real article should have been called "*The Dangerous Decrease in Moderately Liberal Men Who Are Willing to Date My Woke Friends Who Compete With Me for the Last Few Single Woke Guys in Their Thirties*". Perhaps Ms. Spratt is not the woman to write it if she is genuinely happy with her political convictions and romantic situation. In any case, the original magazine is certainly not the venue to publish it — one-sided polemics sell more ads than discussions of real, painful trade-offs.

But I don't have ads to sell or ideologies to promote, I just do math and go on dates. I certainly recommend it.