

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MATE SELECTION: EVIDENCE FROM A SPEED DATING EXPERIMENT

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September 6, 2018

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MOTIVATION AND QUESTION

- Marriage partner selection has profound effect on people and society.
- Marriage partner selection doesn't come from the general population, but from a pool of the individual's dating partner choices.
- How do cis-het men and women choose partners differently from each other?
- What are the significant factors in those choices?

CONTRIBUTION

- Economics has mostly focused on marriage, only looking at dating recently.
- Dating long studied in psychology through surveys, not experiments.

METHODOLOGY

- 392 graduate and professional students take part in 14 weekday night Speed Dating events from 2002 to 2004 near Columbia University.
- The group size is the only variation between events.
- Subjects rated every partner on a 10 point scale for Attractive, Sincere, Intelligent, Fun, Ambitious, and Shared Interests as well as indicated whether they would like to meet the partner again.
- Subjects also rated themselves in the pre-event survey, as well as provide other biographical data (field of study, ZIP where they grew up, and race).

KEY FINDINGS I

- No preference differences between cis-het men and women with regards to Sincere, Fun, or Shared Interests.
- Cis-het men "put more weight on physical attractiveness than (cis-het women) do, while (cis-het women) put more weight on intelligence."²
- Cis-het men "do not value (cis-het) women's intelligence or ambition when it exceeds their own; moreover, a (cis-het) man is less likely to select a (cis-het) woman whom he perceives to be more ambitious than he is."³

²p 682

³p 685

KEY FINDINGS II

- Cis-het "women prefer partners from more affluent neighborhoods, and both (cis-het) men and women are more likely to accept a partner who grew up in a less densely populated area."⁴
- Cis-het "women exhibit strong preference for partners of their own race, while (cis-het) men do not."⁵
- Cis-het women "become significantly more selective in larger groups; (cis-het men) do not."⁶

⁴ p 686

⁵ p 689

⁶ p 689