

Aging Effect on Mating Preference Thresholds of Age and Height

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In the studies on mating preferences, evolutionary theory (sexual selection) suggests that gender differences in mating preference are based on genetic prerogatives (e.g., Kenrick and Keefe, 1992), and that different genders follow different patterns of changing mating preferences, accompanying increases of their ages. On the other hand, marriage market theory in demographics, suggests that aging men and women confront different marriage markets and different pressures from shrinking marital opportunities. Hence, they adjust their mating preferences accordingly (e.g., South, 1991). The present study examines the application of these two theories on gender difference of age threshold and height threshold, by using individual level data on the mate selection web site in Taiwan. The major findings are: (1) Men, in general, set much lower age thresholds than women do. Moreover, in aging, men lower the floor-age thresholds to a greater degree than do

women. These confirm the predictions of evolutionary theory. (2) Women lower their height threshold when they are getting old, to compensate for their diminished marriage opportunities. These results only partly confirm the prediction of marriage market theory. (3) While aging men lower the ceiling-age threshold, women raise the ceiling-age threshold. For this result, the combination of the two theories provides a better explanation than either evolutionary theory or marriage market theory does on its own. (4) To our surprise, men raise their height threshold when they are getting old. This neither confirms the prediction of evolutionary theory nor marriage market theory. The unexpected result will be discussed in detail.

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