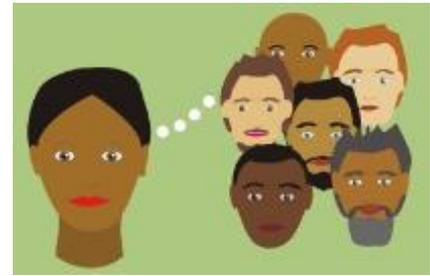


DISCUSS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEXUAL SELECTION AND HUMAN REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR. (8+16 marks)



Sexual Selection is an evolutionary process and there are two types; intersexual-selection (competition within members of the same sex) and intrasexual selection (selection between the sexes where the partner preferences for one sex determines the areas in which the other sex must compete). Sexual selection therefore focuses on the characteristics that make us more attractive to the opposite sex.

The evolutionary theory of sexual selection has found differences in mate choice for both males and females. For males it has been found that young features, an hour glass figure and physical attractiveness is most sought for in a female as these features could be linked with indications of fertility. For females, however, it seems that they look for men with signs of masculinity (such as a square jaw, muscles etc.) and males who have goals in life and can provide finance. These features hint at the ability to provide resources. Several features such as longer than average legs and a symmetrical face has been found to be attractive to both sexes.

These features have evolved through sexual selection and therefore have an impact on human reproductive behaviour. It has been found that males seem more willing to engage in casual sex, desire a greater number of sexual partners and are more likely to have sexual dreams. There are also differences in sexual jealousy as a study by **Buss** concluded that, when being wired up to a machine measuring stress responses, men become more stressed with sexual infidelity and females with emotional infidelity. According to the evolutionary approach this finding is because men always have some potential of paternal uncertainty and so risk raising a child that is not their own.

The theory of sexual selection can be commended for not being culturally biased as **Buss** found when studying 10,000 people in 37 cultures and 33 countries that women across all cultures valued financial success and men valued younger and more physically attractive women. Thus the main mate preferences seem to be universally accepted.

However, it must be noted that even though many people express a desire for their perfect partner, many do settle for less and this is not accounted for in most studies as they tend to only focus on what people say not do. This therefore could reduce the external validity of the studies and affect the extent to which they can back up sexual selection theory.

It is also not scientific; that is, it cannot be proven or disproven. It bases its ideas on what *researchers believe about the Environment of Evolutionary Adaptiveness* and so, without having proper and proven scientific ideals, it lacks scientific evidence and credibility.

With this idea comes the problem of gender bias as sexual selection seems to exaggerate differences between sexes and so fails to account for differences within sexes. For example, some men do stress an attraction to older women.

Sexual selection also cannot explain homosexual relationships as in these relationships no children can be produced. The theory therefore can be criticised for the ethical issue of *highlighting homosexuality as being "abnormal"*. It also has further ethical issues of investigating socially sensitive areas which could cause stress and emotional distress.

Lastly, the study can be praised for having several supporting studies. Firstly, **Miller** found that lap dancers earned almost twice as many tips when they were in their most fertile stage of the menstrual cycle. This supports the theory as evolutionary explanations state that men find women most attractive when they are most fertile. In addition, the idea that men find physical attractiveness appealing has been supported by **Langlois** who demonstrated that an interest in

attractive female faces emerged in the early years of infancy. This therefore suggests the preference is an evolved response rather than a learned one.