

Evolution for Everyone Teaching Module on Mating Intelligence

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Contents

1. Brief description of Mating Intelligence
2. Bibliography with readings focusing on mating intelligence from varied angles.
3. Stimuli from the SUNY New Paltz Mating Intelligence Project so students can experience a kind of cross-sex mind-reading task involved in heterosexual mating intelligence.
4. Activity based on The Mating Intelligence Scale (from Psychology Today).
5. Information regarding multimedia resources dealing with Mating Intelligence.
6. Mating Intelligence in the movies.

1. Brief description of Mating Intelligence

In its most general terms, Mating Intelligence is defined as the set of cognitive mechanisms and abilities that underlie human mating psychology. The approach taken here suggests that the psychological mechanisms for human mating can be conceptualized as cognitive abilities – or as a form of intelligence.

Geher and Miller (2007) divide these kinds of abilities into two broad categories – abilities that are directly related to content tied to mating (i.e., *mating mechanisms*) and abilities which reflect creative intelligence and that serve the purpose of display during courtship (i.e., *fitness indicators*). Thus, some aspects of human intelligence are specifically about mating (e.g., the ability to say just the right thing to a potential mate so as to get that person's attention/interest) while other aspects of human intelligence have nothing to do with mating on the surface (e.g., complex and sophisticated linguistic abilities), but they are hypothesized to be integral to mating as they act as effective courtship displays (that ultimately advertise one's fitness – see Geoffrey Miller's (2000) book, *The Mating Mind*, for an evolutionary account of creative displays as designed to advertise genetic fitness).

Given its emphasis on reproduction, the evolutionary perspective clearly suggests that features of organisms which facilitate success in mating will be particularly strong targets of selection and will be major elements of the physiognomy and psychology of the organism. As such, we conceive of human mating intelligence as a major feature of human psychology from an evolutionary perspective.

2. Bibliography with readings focusing on mating intelligence from varied angles.

- A primer on Mating Intelligence:

Geher, G., Miller, G. F., & Murphy, J. (in press). Introduction: The origins and nature of mating intelligence. For G. Geher & G. Miller (Eds.), *Mating intelligence*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

http://www.unm.edu/%7Egfmiller/new_papers3/geher%20inpress%20chapter1.doc

- Mating Intelligence as cross-sex mind-reading

Geher, G. (under review). Mating Intelligence Conceptualized as Adaptive Cross-Sex Mind-Reading Errors.

http://www.newpaltz.edu/%7Egeherg/mi_article.doc

- Kaja Perina's cover story from *Psychology Today* (February, 2007) on mating intelligence:

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/index.php?term=pto-20061221-000001&print=1>

- Is general intelligence predictive of success in the domain of mating?

Kanazawa, Satoshi. 2004. "General Intelligence as a Domain-Specific Adaptation." *Psychological Review*. 111: 512-523.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/methodologyInstitute/pdf/SKanazawa/PR2004.pdf>

- Is intelligence and indicator of genetic fitness?

Miller, G. F. (2000). Sexual selection for indicators of intelligence. In G. Bock, J. Goode, & K. Webb (Eds.), *The nature of intelligence*. Novartis Foundation Symposium 233. John Wiley, pp. 260-275.

http://www.newpaltz.edu/%7Egeherg/readings/miller_2000.doc

- Are adaptive mating decisions accurate?

Haselton M. G. & Buss, D. M. (2000). Error management theory: A new perspective on biases in cross-sex mind reading. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 81-91.

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/comm/haselton/webdocs/ErrorManagementTheory.pdf>

3. Glenn's fun Mating Intelligence activity on cross-sex mind-reading!

As part of the SUNY New Paltz Mating Intelligence Project, we collected data from over 400 heterosexual college students. This work focused on the cross-sex mind-reading part of human mating intelligence – how well can you read the mating-relevant thoughts of potential mates? This study had two phases.

In **PHASE ONE**, participants were asked to report their own judgments regarding many mating-relevant stimuli. For instance, participants were presented with three personal ads and were asked which one they would choose to contact if they were looking for a long-term mate.

In **PHASE TWO**, participants were presented with the stimuli that were judged by the opposite-sex. Here, participants were told to take their best guesses as to the judgments of the opposite-sex participants. For instance, a male would be asked to choose which personal ad – of three that were initially presented to the women in the sample – was endorsed as most attractive by the actual women in the sample.

Following are four sets of stimuli that were included in this study. In each case, try to guess which personal ad was chosen by most people in the sample. After you take this simple test, you'll be able to see the actual answers from the participants in the SUNY New Paltz Mating Intelligence project. You'll also see how well subjects in that study did in attempting to accurately read the desires of the opposite sex.

A. Males making judgments of females' **long-term** sexual desires – sample item.

The following personal ads are real. They were written by men. In our study, women first reported which of these three they'd prefer for a long-term mating partner. Then men were asked to guess which option was most popular among the women in the sample.

Circle the ad that you think that was endorsed by the most women in the sample in choosing a **long-term mating partner**.

A	B	C
I like weekend getaways, the beach, and the mountains. I'm not into the bar scene; I would much rather be cuddled up inside by the fire or at the beach relaxing with someone special. I love to be outside doing anything: hiking, volleyball or just strolling around.	I am a very passionate person and a sucker for romance. I love the little things, when it comes to someone that I care for. I'm someone that friends can always depend on, and I enjoy being with family more than anything else. Open-minded and easygoing, I love to put a smile on people's faces.	I'm a sincere, energetic, and athletic individual who treats people the way I wish to be treated. I don't play games and my word is my bond. I have a dry sense of humor and love the outdoors, playing golf, skiing, hiking, going to the beach, and riding my bike.

B. Males making judgments of females' **short-term** sexual desires -

The following personal ads are real. They were written by men. In our study, women first reported which of these three they'd prefer for a short-term sexual partner. Then men were asked to guess which option was most popular among the women in the sample.

Circle the ad that you think that was endorsed by the most women in the sample in choosing a **short-term sexual partner**.

A	B	C
I'm pretty busy working all week, but that doesn't stop me from having fun, usually out and about a couple nights during the week and always doing something fun and exciting on the weekend.	I've been described as a very energetic individual. I like to think of myself as someone with a lot of positive energy. I'm new to the area, looking to meet new people. I'm a man in a uniform looking for some fun.	I'm spontaneous and I like to try new things. I enjoy diversity, cultures, art, science, nature, good food and intelligent conversation. I'm happy in the city or the country. I like to draw strange portraits. I believe there is an order to the chaos and vice versa.

C. Females making judgments of males' **long-term** desires –The following personal ads are real. They were written by women. In our study, men first reported which of these three they'd prefer for a long-term mating partner. Then women were asked to guess which option was most popular among the men in the sample.

Circle the ad that you think that was endorsed by the most men in the sample in choosing a **long-term mating partner**.

A	B	C
<p>I'm a woman who can and wants to make my man the happiest one on this planet! I'm the one who will dance erotic dances (only for you), I'm the one who will cook sweet cake, and I'm the one who will kiss you tender when we sleep.</p>	<p>With an explorer's soul, I am a connoisseur of travel, literature, music and art. I am active, curious, interesting, vibrant and intelligent. I am quick to smile and I enjoy a good laugh. I am warm and versatile, attractive, intuitive, a good listener, with a creative spark.</p>	<p>I think people have told me that I am bubbly. I love the quiet life. A relaxing evening to me would be sitting on the porch listening to the crickets and frogs, and then going to watch a movie. I love children, animals, and books.</p>

D. Females making judgments of males' **short-term sexual** desires - The following personal ads are real. They were written by women. In our study, men first reported which of these three they'd prefer for a short-term sexual partner. Then women were asked to guess which option was most popular among the men in the sample.

Circle the ad that you think that was endorsed by the most men in the sample in choosing a **short-term sexual partner**.

A	B	C
<p>Who said chivalry was dead? Open doors for me, and I will be your mate. I will rub your back when you throw up and listen to you complain about your boss. I will make your favorite sandwich when you wake up hungry in the night.</p>	<p>I am searching for a fling of epic proportions, someone to caress my face as we kiss and who will write me love notes and leave them under my door—but will not get upset with me if I decide to kiss another man. Human beings are not meant to be paired for life, like lobsters.</p>	<p>I am the kind of girl who loves to sing. I know all the words to Grease and I think that love can be a musical. I love to break out into song on a daily basis. I am looking for someone that can make my heart sing.</p>

E. Results

Analyses were conducted using “Chi-Square Goodness of Fit” tests. Basically, for each set of ads, we addressed if the guesses of one sex were significantly different from the actual reported desires of the other sex. If the chi-square is “significant,” then the sex trying to guess the desires of the other were “way off.”

Overall, men were much more accurate than women – that is to say that their guesses were much more in line with women’s actual reported desires.

To explore the nature of errors that were made, we had blind, independent raters code each ad for presence of sexual content. This allowed us to see if errors that were made related to whether people tended to think the opposite-sex was overestimating the importance of sexual features in judgments.

Results representing typical patterns for male and female long and short-term contexts are presented in turn.

Table 1: Male Long-Term Judgment Example

	A	B	C
	I like weekend getaways, the beach, and the mountains. I'm not into the bar scene; I would much rather be cuddled up inside by the fire or at the beach relaxing with someone special. I love to be outside doing anything: hiking, volleyball or just strolling around.	I am a very passionate person and a sucker for romance. I love the little things, when it comes to someone that I care for. I'm someone that friends can always depend on, and I enjoy being with family more than anything else. Open-minded and easygoing, I love to put a smile on people's faces.	I'm a sincere, energetic, and athletic individual who treats people the way I wish to be treated. I don't play games and my word is my bond. I have a dry sense of humor and love the outdoors, playing golf, skiing, hiking, going to the beach, and riding my bike.
Actual Male frequencies (guessing female choices)	34	66	25
Expected frequencies (Based on actual female choices)	34.38	67.63	23
Chi Square ($df = 2$)	.22		

Brief Discussion: Males judging females' long-term desires were the most accurate of all – apparently, males are actually quite good at knowing what women want in long-term mates.

Table 2: Male Short-Term Mating Judgment Example

	A	B (judged as sexual)	C
Item	I'm pretty busy working all week, but that doesn't stop me from having fun, usually out and about a couple nights during the week and always doing something fun and exciting on the weekend.	I've been described as a very energetic individual. I like to think of myself as someone with a lot of positive energy. I'm new to the area, looking to meet new people. I'm a man in a uniform looking for some fun.	I'm spontaneous and I like to try new things. I enjoy diversity, cultures, art, science, nature, good food and intelligent conversation. I'm happy in the city or the country. I like to draw strange portraits. I believe there is an order to the chaos and vice versa.
Actual Male frequencies (guessing female choices)	32	61	31
Expected frequencies (Based on actual female choices)	28.40	35.84	59.77
Chi Square (df = 2)	31.97*		

* $p < .01$

Brief Discussion: In trying to determine what women want in short-term mates, males seem to overestimate the degree to which women focus on sexual qualities (e.g., the man in the uniform *looking for some fun*). This outcome may result from the tendency for males to overestimate sexual interest on the part of females generally (see article by Haselton and Buss (2000)) – and this kind of error may be adaptive.

Table 3: Female Long-Term Mating Judgment Example

	A (judged as sexual)	B	C
	I'm a woman who can and wants to make my man the happiest one on this planet! I'm the one who will dance erotic dances (only for you), I'm the one who will cook sweet cake, and I'm the one who will kiss you tender when we sleep.	With an explorer's soul, I am a connoisseur of travel, literature, music and art. I am active, curious, interesting, vibrant and intelligent. I am quick to smile and I enjoy a good laugh. I am warm and versatile, attractive, intuitive, a good listener, with a creative spark.	I think people have told me that I am bubbly. I love the quiet life. A relaxing evening to me would be sitting on the porch listening to the crickets and frogs, and then going to watch a movie. I love children, animals, and books.
Actual female frequencies (guessing male choices)	209	57	31
Expected frequencies (Based on actual male choices)	114.94	117.02	64.75
Chi Square (df = 2)	125.35*		

* $p < .01$

Brief Discussion: In trying to determine what men want in long-term mates, females seem to overestimate the degree to which men focus on sexual qualities (e.g., the *erotic dancer* in option A). This outcome may result from the tendency for females to underestimate males' interest in commitment and long-term relationships – displaying an adaptive *commitment skepticism bias* (see article by Haselton and Buss (2000)). Apparently, women think men only want sex - even when seeking long-term mates.

Table 4: Female Short-Term Mating Judgments

	A	B (judged as high in sexual content)	C
Item	Who said chivalry was dead? Open doors for me, and I will be your mate. I will rub your back when you throw up and listen to you complain about your boss. I will make your favorite sandwich when you wake up hungry in the night.	I am searching for a fling of epic proportions, someone to caress my face as we kiss and who will write me love notes and leave them under my door—but will not get upset with me if I decide to kiss another man. Human beings are not meant to be paired for life, like lobsters.	I am the kind of girl who loves to sing. I know all the words to Grease and I think that love can be a musical. I love to break out into song on a daily basis. I am looking for someone that can make my heart sing.
Actual female frequencies (guessing male choices)	102	156	34
Expected frequencies (Based on actual male choices)	157.97	71.25	62.78
Chi Square ($df = 2$)	133.83*		

* $p < .01$

Brief Discussion: In trying to determine what men want in short-term mates, females similarly seem to overestimate the degree to which men focus on sexual qualities (e.g., the seeker of the super-fling in option B). This outcome may result from the tendency for females to underestimate males' interest in commitment and long-term relationships – displaying an adaptive *commitment skepticism bias* (see article by Haselton and Buss (2000)). It seems that women overestimate males' interest in sexual qualities regardless of long or short-term context (leading to a potentially adaptive *men are always pigs bias*)

4. Activity based on The Mating Intelligence Scale (from Psychology Today).

Geher, G. & Kaufman, S. B. (2007). The mating intelligence scale. *Psychology Today*, 40, 78-79.

The Mating Intelligence Scale was designed to be a fun measure of different aspects of mating intelligence to coincide with a cover story on mating intelligence that came out in the same issue (see list of readings for corresponding article from *Psychology Today*). This scale is designed with heterosexual people in mind and there are separate male and female versions.

Here it is (don't take it too seriously!):

How well can you read the opposite sex? *PT* encourages you to forsake barroom boasts and put yourself to a scientific test. *The Mating Intelligence Scale* was developed exclusively for *PT* by Glenn Geher and Scott Barry Kaufman. There are two versions, one for heterosexual males and one for heterosexual females. Each test is designed to provide a rough guide to your relationship effectiveness—not a definitive statement about individual character. To take the test, simply answer True or False for each of the 24 items under the test that pertains to you. Scroll to the end for scoring.

For Men

1. ___ I think most women just like me as a friend.
2. ___ I have slept with many beautiful women.
3. ___ I'm pretty good at knowing if a woman is attracted to me.
4. ___ I'm definitely not the best at taking care of kids.
5. ___ I'm good at saying the right things to women I flirt with.
6. ___ I haven't had as many sexual partners compared with other guys I know (who are my age).
7. ___ I have a difficult time expressing complex ideas to others.
8. ___ I am good at picking up signals of interest from women.
9. ___ I'm definitely near the top of the status totem pole in my social circles.
10. ___ I doubt that I'll ever be a huge financial success.
11. ___ If I wanted to, I could convince a woman that I'm really a prince from some little-known European country.
12. ___ Honestly, I don't get women at all!
13. ___ Women tend to flirt with me pretty regularly.
14. ___ If a woman doesn't seem interested in me, I figure she doesn't know what she's missing!
15. ___ Women definitely find me attractive.
16. ___ I've dated many intelligent women.
17. ___ People tell me that I have a great sense of humor.
18. ___ When I lie to women, I always get caught!
19. ___ I am usually wrong about who is interested in me romantically.
20. ___ It's hard for me to get women to see my virtues.

21. ___ At parties, I tend to tell stories that catch the attention of women.
22. ___ I'm not very talented in the arts.
23. ___ I can attract women, but they rarely end up interested in me sexually.
24. ___ When a woman smiles at me, I assume she's just being friendly.

For Women

1. ___ I can tell when a man is being genuine and sincere in his affections toward me.
2. ___ I doubt I could ever pull off cheating on my beau.
3. ___ I look younger than most women my age.
4. ___ When a guy doesn't seem interested in me, I take it personally and assume something is wrong with me.
5. ___ Good looking guys never seem into me.
6. ___ I have a sense of style and wear clothes that make me look sexy.
7. ___ I attract many wealthy, successful men.
8. ___ Honestly, I don't think I understand men at all!
9. ___ With me, a guy gets what he sees—no pretenses here.
10. ___ If I wanted to make my current guy jealous, I could easily get the attention of other guys.
11. ___ Men don't tend to be interested in my mind.
12. ___ I'm definitely more creative than most people.
13. ___ I hardly ever know when a guy likes me romantically.
14. ___ I laugh a lot at men's jokes.
15. ___ If a guy doesn't want to date me, I figure he doesn't know what he's missing!
16. ___ I am not very artistic.
17. ___ My current beau spends a lot of money on material items for me (such as jewelry).
18. ___ I am usually right on the money about a man's intentions toward me.
19. ___ I really don't have a great body compared with other women I know.
20. ___ Intelligent guys never seem interested in dating me.
21. ___ I believe that most men are actually more interested in long-term relationships than they're given credit for.
22. ___ Most guys who are nice to me are just trying to get into my pants.
23. ___ When it comes down to it, I think most men want to get married and have children.
24. ___ If I have sex with a man too soon, I know he will leave me.

How to tally your Mating Intelligence score.

For Males

Give yourself one point for every T answer to questions 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 21. Add one point for every F answer to item numbers 1, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 24.

For Females

Give yourself one point for every T answer to questions 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 22, and 24. Add one point for every F answer to items 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 19, 20, 21, and 23.

If you score 18 or above, you have High Mating Intelligence.

You read the opposite sex well, you are good at getting members of the opposite sex interested in you (using a variety of psychological tactics), and you tend to be relatively successful in achieving your mating goals.

14-17: Average Mating intelligence

You have a decent read on the opposite sex and are able to get members of the opposite sex physically and psychologically interested in you. Your relationship strategies and outcomes tend to be typical (you win some, you lose some).

13 or below: Low Mating intelligence

There are likely areas in your relationship psychology that need improvement. You may not feel that you understand the opposite sex very well, and you don't see yourself as skilled at getting the attention of the opposite sex. Console yourself that there is room for improvement in future intimate relationships.

Activity

A. Take the test.

B. Compute a score – using the scoring system included with the test. Don't worry if you score low (lots of people do, as it turns out!).

C. Each item represents a different facet of mating intelligence that we think of as important in defining the construct. Following is a key to let you know which items go with which facet:

Mating Intelligence Facet	Male Version	Female Version
Accurate Cross-Sex Mind-Reading (this facet addresses how well you can read the mating-relevant thoughts of the opposite sex)	Items 3, 8, 12, 19	Items 1, 8, 13, 18
Adaptive Self-Deception in Mating Domain (this facet addresses the tendency to inflate your value as a mate in your understanding of yourself)	Items 4, 9, 10, 14	Items 3, 4, 15, 19
Adaptive Mate-Deception (this facet addresses how well you can deceive mates in a way that may be adaptive)	Items 5, 11, 18, 20	Items 2, 6, 9, 10
Effective Behavioral Courtship Display (this facet addresses your abilities related to creative intelligence, which are attractive to potential mates)	Items 7, 17, 21, 22	Items 11, 12, 14, 16
Self-Reported Mating Success (this facet is something of an outcome hypothesized to follow from mating intelligence – how successful are you in the mating game?)	Items 2, 6, 16, 23	Items 5, 7, 17, 20
	Boldfaced items are “reversed” – thought about as reflecting “low mating intelligence”	Boldfaced items are “reversed” – thought about as reflecting “low mating intelligence”

D. Put yourself in the shoes of someone who is charged with the task of coming up with more self-report items for the mating intelligence scale. Based on the facets of mating intelligence described in this section, come up with a self-report item for each facet for each sex (e.g., accuracy in knowing the desires of the opposite-sex) – a total of 10 items.

E. As a group, discuss some of the newly created items – have the class talk about the items – and if you have a good one, talk about what makes that item a good item. For instance, does it seem to catch the essence of the construct well? Is it worded in a particularly unambiguous way? Etc.

F. Next, take a look at the Psychology Today scale. As a group, discuss the scale – including the different facets and particular items. In your discussion, address the following:

1. Do you think this scale captures the notion of Mating Intelligence well? Why or why not?
2. Are there other facets that should be included that are not?
3. Does it make sense to you that the scores for items across these varied facets should be added together to create a “total” score? Or are the different facets, in essence, apples and oranges?
4. Can “high” scores be interpreted as meaning something different from “high mating intelligence?”
5. By definition, mating intelligence is thought to be predictive of success in the domain of mating. Have students get into small groups – each group asked to design a simple study to assess if this test is valid – that is, can you design a study that tests whether high scores on the Mating Intelligence Scale tend to correspond to real-life success in the domain of mating? Keep in mind that you’ll need to think of ways to measure behaviors that represent real mating success – this should lead to a discussion of:

a. what real mating success is

b. whether mating success should be operationally defined differently for males and females

and

c. ways that we can measure mating success in that approach Darwin's bottom line – reproductive success (particularly tricky in light of modern contraceptive technologies).

5. Information regarding multimedia resources dealing with Mating Intelligence.

- [Geher, G., & Miller, G. F. \(Eds., 2007\). *Mating Intelligence: Sex, Relationships, and the Mind's Reproductive System*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.](#) (available at amazon.com)
- PowerPoint presentation on the cross-sex mind-reading component of Mating Intelligence given at Binghamton in Fall of 2006 can be found here:
<http://www.newpaltz.edu/%7Egeherg/MI%202006%20final%2011%2009%202006.ppt>
- Glenn Geher's website (with links regarding mating intelligence): glenngeher.com
- Geoffrey Miller's website (with links regarding the interface between mating and intelligence):
http://www.unm.edu/%7Epsych/faculty/lq_gmiller.html
- Martie Haselton's website (with links regarding adaptive biases that typify human mating psychology (and Error Management Theory more generally):
<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/comm/haselton/home.html>
- Norm Li's website (with links pertaining to human mating psychology conceptualized in terms of economic decisions): www.normli.com

6. Mating Intelligence on the Big Screen

Here are some movies (with brief descriptions) that capture some of the basic ideas of mating intelligence*:

- **Hitch**

Synopsis from imdb.com: "While helping his latest client woo the fine lady of his dreams, a professional "date doctor" (Smith) finds game doesn't quite work on the gossip columnist (Mendes) with whom he's smitten." In this movie, Will Smith plays the role of a "date doctor". He helps men woo the women of their dreams by teaching them Mating Intelligence techniques, such as displaying kindness, wit, etc. The movie exemplifies Mating Intelligence by showing how looks aren't everything. Hitch helps a particular client (who is unattractive) woo a beautiful girl by using charm and kindness.

- **Wedding Crashers**

Synopsis from imdb.com: "John Beckwith and Jeremy Grey, a pair of committed womanizers who sneak into weddings to take advantage of the romantic tinge in the air, find themselves at odds with one another when John meets and falls for Claire Cleary." This movie shows two men with high short-term Mating Intelligence, but low long-term Mating Intelligence, when a guy who is the master of the "pick-up" now has to face the situation where he is in love.

- **Swingers**

Synopsis from imdb.com: "This is a story about Mike, a guy who left his girl in New York when he came to LA to be a star. It's been six months since his girlfriend left him and he's not doing so good. So, his pal and some other friends try and get him back in the social scene and forget about his 6 year relationship. In particular, Trent teaches his friend Mike the unwritten rules of the scene."

*thanks to Scott Barry Kaufman for help with this section!