

It's Funny Because It's True (Because It Evokes Our Evolved Psychology)

Barry X. Kuhle
University of Scranton

AQ: 1

Evolutionary psychology (EP) and comedian Chris Rock have both grown increasingly prominent over the past quarter-century. EP has blossomed because of its unique ability to explore humans' universal nature. Rock's stand-up routines have vaulted him into the pantheon of comedic talents because, intentionally or not, his comedy is based on a sophisticated appreciation and invocation of humans' evolved psychology. Conventional wisdom and recent EP research suggest that "something is funny because it's true." This perspective on humor rings especially true in Rock's routines. Much of Rock's riffs on sex and marriage ring true and hence funny with his audiences because he deftly evokes their awareness of evolved sex differences in human mating strategies. Popular culture such as Rock's comedy can provide a window into human nature. I illustrate the intersection of EP and popular culture by unpacking the evolutionary theory and empirical evidence underlying 21 verbatim bits on human mating from Rock's five *HBO* comedy specials. Incorporating Rock's outrageously funny, theoretically sound, and empirically supported perspectives on sex and marriage into discussions of the primary literature is a sure-fire way to grab young people's attention and make memorable the myriad ways that sex differences stem from asymmetrical obligatory parental investment.

AQ: 2

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Evolutionary psychology and comedian Chris Rock have both grown increasingly prominent over the past quarter-century (Cornwell, Palmer, Guinther, & Davis, 2005; Silverman & Fisher, 2001; *The Time* 2008 Top 100, 2008; Webster, 2007a; Webster, 2007b). This may not be mere coincidence. Evolutionary psychology (EP) has blossomed because of its unique ability to explore human nature. Rock's stand-up routines have vaulted him into the pantheon of comedic talents because, intentionally or not, his comedy is based on a sophisticated appreciation and invocation of humans' evolved psychology. Conventional wisdom and recent EP research suggest that "something is funny because it's true" (Clarke, 2010; Flanson & Barrett, 2008; Lynch, 2010). This perspective on humor rings especially true in Rock's routines. The hilarity of his stand-up stems, in part, from his invocations of sex differences in the evolved psychological mechanisms underlying romantic relationships.

Popular culture such as Rock's comedy can provide a window into human nature as "the patterns of culture that we create and consume, although not adaptations in themselves, reveal human evolutionary psychology" (Buss, 2012, p. 428). An engaging way to convey EP's contributions to understanding romantic relationships

is through pop culture evocations of evolved psychology. Sprinkling Rock's outrageously funny, theoretically sound, and empirically supported perspectives on sex and marriage into discussions of the primary literature is a sure-fire way to grab young people's attention and make memorable the myriad ways sex differences stem from asymmetrical obligatory parental investment (Trivers, 1972). I aim to persuade the reader of this by reviewing EP theory and evidence that underpin 21 of Rock's routines on romantic relationships from his five *HBO* comedy specials. As a warm-up act for his stand-up, I begin by exploring definitions of humor and theories of its origin and functions.

What Is Humor?

Much like its varieties, definitions of humor abound. Some are poetic, as when Darwin likened humor to a "tickling of the mind" (Darwin, 1872, p. 218). Some are bookish: among its 18 senses of the term, *The Oxford English Dictionary* soberly defines humor as "that quality of action, speech, or writing, which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comicality, fun," (Humor, n.d.a). Others are, well, humorous: *Urban Dictionary* offers, "what makes the worst moments of our already miserable existence that more bearable" (Humor, n.d.b). Although no universally agreed upon definition of humor exists, in his impressively thorough text on humor, Rod A. Martin captures its essence as:

anything that people say or do that is perceived as funny and tends to make others laugh, as well as the mental processes that go into both creating and perceiving such an amusing stimulus, and also the affective response involved in enjoyment of it. (2007, p. 5)

The Evolutionary Origins of Humor

Despite an accepted definition, research into humor has been prolific. Martin's wide-ranging *The Psychology of Humor* (2007)

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Barry X. Kuhle, Department of Psychology, University of Scranton, 800 Linden Street, Scranton, PA 18510-4596. E-mail: BarryKuhle@gmail.com

cites more than 1,000 references on the topic. However, only 11 pages of his 446-page tome discuss the evolutionary function(s) of humor. The limited attention afforded evolution is because until recently, the adaptive benefits that humor potentially provided our ancestors had rarely been studied. Indeed, when early humor researchers did consider the potential role of evolution in the formation of humor, many argued that humor and laughter would have been selectively *disadvantageous*.

Humor does come with costs. Laughter consumes metabolic energy and can be a boisterous beacon for predators (Weisfeld, 1993). Fry sums up this line of thought beautifully: “Breathless, weakened, with lungs and muscles already spoken for; this is certainly not a state in which one would find greatest advantage when faced with life threatening hazards. Laughter thus seem[s] to be in direct conflict with the evolutionary tendency” (Fry, 1987, p. 64). Are humor and laughter “luxury reflexes” with no apparent evolutionary value (Koestler, 1964/1989)? Martin thinks not. In light of the voluminous research discussed in his authoritative book, Martin notes that humor and laughter likely have an adaptive origin. Let us refract humor through an evolutionary lens.

As expected of an evolved trait, the capacity for humor reliably develops in most all humans. Humor and one of its behavioral manifestations, laughter, occur in all known cultures (Apte, 1985). Vocalizations of laughter are indistinguishable between human cultures (Martin, 2007). Emerging between two and six months of age, laughter is one of the first social vocalizations emitted (Darwin, 1877; Scheiner, Hammerschmidt, Jürgens, & Zwiner, 2002; Sroufe & Wunsch, 1972). Laughter even arises in children born deaf or blind (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1970; Goodenough, 1932). A wealth of research suggests that “every normal human being is strongly genetically predisposed to develop the ability to produce and perceive laughter” (Gervais & Wilson, 2005, p. 398).

Although humor and laughter are reliably developing human-universals, they are far from unique to *Homo sapiens*. Many nonhuman animals exhibit signs of humor, as Darwin first noted in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872):

Young Orangs, when tickled, likewise grin and make a chuckling sound; and Mr. Martin says that their eyes grow brighter. As soon as their laughter ceases, an expression may be detected passing over their faces, which, as Mr. Wallace remarked to me, may be called a smile. I have also noticed something of the same kind with the chimpanzee. Dr. Duchenne—and I cannot quote a better authority—informs me that he kept a very tame monkey in his house for a year; and when he gave it during meal-times some choice delicacy, he observed that the corners of its mouth were slightly raised; thus an expression of satisfaction, partaking of the nature of an incipient smile, and resembling that often seen on the face of man, could be plainly perceived in this animal. (p. 144)

Chimpanzees taught sign language can even string words together in playful ways that are suggestive of deliberate humor production, including the use of puns, insults, and incongruous word combinations (Gamble, 2001)—how that would have tickled Darwin’s mind! Laughter is also exhibited by several of humans’ other close cousins, including bonobos and gorillas (Preuschoft & van Hooff, 1997). Gervais and Wilson (2005) conclude that “rudimentary laughter evolved originally at least 6.5 mya, before the hominid line split from the other hominoids, and most likely resembled the pant-like laughter of chimpanzees” (p. 403; see also

Fry, 1994). Between 2 and 4 mya, this early form of laughter likely evolved into the elaborated, ritualized laughter that exists today (Gervais & Wilson, 2005).

Others view laughter as far more ancient and not limited to primates. Panksepp and Burgdorf argue that rats exhibit a high-frequency, ultrasonic, laughter-type chirping response to tickling by humans and to other forms of social rough-and-tumble play (Panksepp, 2000; Panksepp & Burgdorf, 1999). Regardless of whether rat chirping is analogous or evolutionarily homologous to primate laughter (Gervais & Wilson, 2005), it is clear that “*Humor sapiens*” (Greengross, 2011) are but one of several species in which humor and laughter reliably develop.

Hypothesized Ultimate Functions of Humor

There is no shortage of benefits that humor may have conferred on our ancestors. Dozens of evolutionary accounts of humor have been proposed (for reviews see Martin, 2007; Polimeni & Reiss, 2006; Schmidt & Williams, 1971; Tisljar & Bereczhei, 2005; Vaid, 1999). Most accounts fall into one of 10 categories. Humor is variously hypothesized to have evolved to: (a) promote social bonding (Dunbar, 1996; Dunbar et al., 2011); (b) facilitate cooperation (Jung, 2003); (c) disable pursuit of counterproductive paths (Chafe, 1987); (d) signal that a stimulus is nonthreatening (Hayworth, 1928; Ramachandran, 1998); (e) signal interest in pursuing and maintaining social relationships (Li et al., 2009); (f) promote social learning (Fredrickson, 1988; Gervais & Wilson, 2005; Weisfeld, 1993); (g) manipulate status (Alexander, 1986; Pinker, 1997); (h) make finding and fixing inference errors fun (Hurley, Dennett, & Adams, 2011); (i) court mates (Miller, 1997, 2000a); and (j) signal shared knowledge, attitudes, and preferences (Flamson & Barrett, 2008). These theories vary widely in their theoretical coherence, aspects of humor accounted for, falsifiability, and empirical support. The latter two are particularly well fleshed-out and relevant to the present discussion.

Humor promotes courtship. A particularly promising theory of humor that has generated much recent research flows from sexual selection theory (Darwin, 1871). In a series of publications (Greengross & Miller, 2008, 2009, 2011; Kaufman, Kozbelt, Bromley, & Miller, 2008; Miller, 1997, 2000a; Sefcek, Brumbach, Vásquez, & Miller, 2006), Geoffrey Miller and collaborators argue that humor “evolved in the service of sexual choice, to assess the joke-telling ability of others” (2000a, p. 241). According to his theory of mental fitness indicators (Miller, 2000a, 2000b), humor is sexually attractive because it reveals intelligence, creativity, mental health, and genetic quality in general.

Recent evidence suggests that general and verbal intelligence do predict humor production ability, at least as measured by the ability of undergraduates to generate funny captions for cartoons from *The New Yorker* (Greengross, Martin, & Miller, 2012; Greengross & Miller, 2011). Kaufman et al. (2010) also found a significant positive relationship between intelligence and ability to generate funny cartoon captions using a large, ethnically diverse sample with a wide age range. This positive correlation between general intelligence and humor has been found using other humor production tasks as well (Howrigan & MacDonald, 2008). These findings support the hypothesis that humor evolved as an honest display of general intelligence in humans.

In accord with this perspective, much research indicates that humans value a sense of humor in a potential mate (Feingold, 1992; Goodwin, 1990; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990; Sprecher & Regan, 2002). Buss (1988) found that “displayed a good sense of humor” (p. 624) was rated by men and women as the most effective of 101 potential mate attraction tactics. What is more telling is that men and women may differ in how they make sense of survey items about the multifaceted construct “sense of humor.”

One facet of humor involves production: making others laugh. A second facet involves appreciation: laughing at others’ productions of humor. Recent evidence suggests that in the long-term mating realm, women value men who can produce humor and who value women’s own productions, while men only value a partner’s receptivity to their humor. Force men and women to choose between humor appreciation and production in a potential partner and the sex difference becomes even clearer: men covet appreciators, women desire producers (Bressler, Martin, & Balshine, 2006).

This sex difference has been replicated using different methods and found in at least one non-North American culture. An experimental manipulation of target individuals’ humor production abilities found that women, but not men, chose humorous targets as preferred relationship partners (Bressler & Balshine, 2006). A study of personal ads found that “women seek men who make them laugh, and men are anxious to comply with this request” (Provine, 2000, p. 34). An experimental field study in France recently demonstrated that women were three times more likely to divulge their phone numbers to a confederate suitor they overheard telling jokes compared to a confederate suitor who was not overheard producing humor (Guéguen, 2010). Displaying humor appears to increase men’s but not women’s attractiveness on the mating market. The tendencies for males to display humor and women to prefer men exhibiting “humor displays” are also consistent with the sexual selection-based theory of humor.

Humor signals shared common knowledge. While numerous evolutionary theories of humor’s function have been put forward over the last two decades, only recently has an evolutionary perspective on humor’s origin also shed light on what makes something funny. Conventional wisdom has long held that we find things funny because we find them to be true. The “it’s funny because it’s true” premise is commonly used by stand-up comedians (Clarke, 2010, p. 86). Jerry Seinfeld’s “Have you ever noticed . . .,” and Jeff Foxworthy’s “You might be a redneck if . . .,” are observational forms of comedy predicated on the audience seeing the “truth” in the comedian’s perspective. According to Flamson and Barrett’s (2008) encryption theory of humor, shared background knowledge (conceptions of what is true) is central to humor production being appreciated.

In a successful joke, both the producer and the receiver share common background knowledge—the key—and the joke is engineered in such a way (including devices like incongruity) that there is a nonrandom fit between the surface utterance and this background knowledge that would only be apparent to another person with the background knowledge. Humor, therefore, guarantees or makes highly likely that specific, hidden knowledge was necessary to *produce* the humorous utterance, and that the same knowledge is present in anyone who *understands* the humor (Flamson & Barrett, 2008, p. 264).

Humor can thus serve as a means of assessing the shared underlying knowledge, attitudes, and preferences of others and “works, in a sense, as a mind reading spot-check, ‘pinging’ various minds in the environment and discovering those which are most compatible” (Flamson & Barrett, 2008, p. 266). Ancestral humans could have used reactions to humor in their attempts to assort on shared attitudes, interests, backgrounds, and goals, which would have allowed like-minded individuals to better form successful cooperative alliances and accrue the myriad fitness benefits that flow from them.

“To alcohol! The cause of, and solution to, all of life’s problems” ~ Homer Simpson (Groening, 2004).

As Lynch (2010) notes in his test of the “because it’s true” perspective on humor, one reason some find Homer Simpson’s above toast funny is because they share with Homer the sobering awareness that alcohol can be used to escape from hardships that alcohol itself gave rise to. For his study, Lynch had participants watch 30-min of stand-up, scored their laughter using the facial action coding system, and measured their preferences using computer-timed Implicit Association Tests. As predicted, students laughed more at the specific bits that matched their implicit preferences. What they found to be true they found to be funny. Experiments by Flamson and Barrett (2008) showing that prior familiarity with a joke’s topic plays an important role in perceiving the joke as humorous also support the perspective that something is funny because it is true.

The quantity of research on the function(s) of humor is beginning to catch up with the dizzying array of theories of humor. Nonetheless, like an agreed upon definition of humor, a consensus on its adaptive value(s) remains elusive. This may always be the case. “No one has yet proposed a comprehensive theory of humor, and a unitary theory may not even exist, as different aspects of humor may have different origins and purposes” (Greengross, 2008, p. 92). The search for “*Homo humorous*” (Greengross, 2009) thus far suggests that human humor and laughter likely originated in social play and were subsequently adapted to serve reproductive ends by signaling one’s intelligence and shared knowledge.

The Evolutionary Origins of Chris Rock’s Humor

To return to the premise with which I began, the universal truth inherent in much of Chris Rock’s humor may be one reason for his phenomenal success as an entertainer. Although best known as a stand-up comedian, Rock is also an actor, author, screenwriter, director, and producer. His first *HBO* comedy special debuted in 1994 and his fifth aired in 2008. He was voted the fifth best stand-up comedian ever by the U.S.’s Comedy Central in 2004 and the eighth best by the U.K.’s Channel 4 in 2010 (Chris Rock, n.d.). Rock has won four Emmy Awards and three Grammy Awards. He has been called “probably the funniest and smartest comedian working today” by *The New York Times* (James, 1997), “the funniest man in America” by *Time* magazine (Farley, 1999), and was selected as one of *Time*’s 100 Most Influential People in the World in 2008 (*Time* 2008 Top 100, 2008).

Rock’s comedy centers on race, class, politics, sex, and marriage. Much of Rock’s riffs on sex and marriage ring true and hence funny with his audiences because he deftly evokes their understanding of evolved sex differences in human mating strategies (Buss, 2003). Rock’s ability to induce laughter by shining a

comedic light on humans' universal nature is evidenced in the cross-cultural appeal of his most recent, Emmy Award winning *HBO* special, *Kill the Messenger*, which director Marty Callner spliced together from Rock's performances in London, U.K., Harlem, U.S., and Johannesburg, S.A. I aim to illustrate the intersection of EP and popular culture by unpacking the evolutionary theory and empirical evidence underlying 21 bits on human mating from Rock's five *HBO* comedy specials. Before doing so, three disclaimers are warranted.

First, to preserve their artistic integrity and humor, unedited transcriptions of relevant portions of Rock's bits are used, and these often include profane, sexist language. As a bit's funniness is in part a function of its content and its delivery, I felt it important to render Rock's riffs as he delivered them. Amending Rock's humor by sanitizing it would threaten its funniness and undermine a central tenet of my main thesis (Chris Rock is funny because he evokes our evolved psychology). Additionally, sanitizing his humor by omitting or obscuring vulgar words smacks of snobbery and elitism. Surely we are not so precious that we cannot allow our scholarly minds to encounter the real life comedy that people around the world find funny. Moreover, sanitizing Rock's bits by omitting or obscuring profane language with \$&!% or f—k is uglier than the words themselves. Quiet ironically, such devices serve to highlight the inclusion of forbidden words as the "words" now pop-off the page. There is no reason to draw any unnecessary attention to his use of profanity. Worse still, such devices unnecessarily tax the reader by purposely making sentences less intelligible.

Second, discussion of Rock's material and the theory and evidence in support of his contentions are *in no way whatsoever* an endorsement or excuse for the behavior described. As has been thoroughly discussed by Pinker (2002), to conclude that something evolved or natural is inherently acceptable or permissible is to commit the naturalistic fallacy (see also Kuhle, 2012).

Third, although a sure-fire way to ruin a joke is to explain it, that risk is knowingly undertaken here. Mining Rock's humor for its reflections of human nature may dampen its comedic value, but I have succeeded if its intellectual underpinnings are laid bare.

The bits discussed below were selected because they illustrate mating domains explored by evolutionary psychologists that coincide with the various stages of many romantic relationships. As many mateships begin, I start with an opposite sex friendship bit, proceed to discuss mate preferences, mate attraction tactics, conflict between romantic partners, parenting, and infidelity, before concluding with Rock's musings on divorce.

Opposite Sex Friendships

Women get to have platonic friends. "He's my pal, he's my bud. He's my platonic friend, I love him like a brother. He's my bud, my platonic friend!" Men don't have platonic friends, ok? We just have women we haven't fucked yet! "As soon as I figure this out, I'm in there!" We got some platonic friends. Oh no, I got some, but they all by accident! Every platonic friend I got is some woman I was trying to fuck, I made a wrong turn somewhere, and ended up in the friend zone. "Oh no, I'm in the friend zone!" (Rock, 1996, 42:10–43:00).

This perspective on opposite sex friendship (OSF) is a common one in pop culture, perhaps most famously summarized by Billy Crystal's character in *When Harry Met Sally* . . . : "Men and

women can't be friends because the sex part always gets in the way" (Reiner, 1989). Research by Bleske-Rechek and Buss (Bleske & Buss, 2000; Bleske-Rechek & Buss, 2001) revealed the underlying kernel of truth in this overgeneralization: Relative to women, men rate sexual attraction and a desire for sex as more important reasons for initiating OSFs. Compared to women, men report a stronger preference for sexual attractiveness when initiating an OSF and rate the lack of sex as a more important reason for dissolving an OSF. AQ: 4

Mate Preferences

Whatever you into, your woman gotta be into too, and vice versa, or the shit ain't gonna work. It ain't gonna work. That's right. If you born-again, your woman gotta be born-again, too. If you a crackhead, your woman gotta be a crackhead too, or the shit won't work. You can't be like, "I'm going to church, where you going?" "Hit the pipe!" That relationship ain't going nowhere. But two crackheads can stay together forever (Rock, 1999, 56:18–56:50).

Opposites may attract, but birds of a feather that flock together stay together. To maximize the likelihood that a couple can thrive long enough to reproduce and raise offspring, natural selection fashioned preferences for like-mindedness in a potential mate. Choosing a partner who has similar values, beliefs, and personality traits reduces conflict and the possibility of incompatible goals (Buss, 1985, 2003). Couples mismatched on these dimensions break-up more readily than those who are aligned (Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976). However, one realm in which men do not necessarily prefer like-mindedness in a potential partner concerns promiscuity:

Gays, never ask a woman how many men she's slept with. 'Cause you don't wanna know. Just be happy you're fucking her now . . . First of all, no matter what she say, it's too much for you! No matter what she say, she can go, "Two," you be like, "Two?! Two?! Two?! No, no, no, two?! Two?! I guess that's how you was raised!" (Rock, 1996, 44:24–45:08).

Men are acutely concerned with a mate's sexual fidelity. Due to internal female fertilization, "a partner's sexual infidelity puts men but not women at risk of incurring cuckoldry costs that include furthering another's genes, losing a partner's reproductive resources, wasted effort devoted to selecting, attracting, and courting a partner, and lowered status and reputation" (Kuhle, Smedley, & Schmitt, 2009, p. 500). As women's past sexual proclivities can predict their future sexual sensibilities, promiscuity is a huge turn-off for men seeking a potential long-term mate, something women realize and attempt to mitigate with creative accounting:

Women will lie . . . Women will lie about how many guys she fucked in court. They don't care . . . Yo, if she says three, that's 10. You gotta give every woman like a seven dick curve . . . And women, y'all think y'all are slick. Y'all ain't slick. I know the game, I watched it unfold. You ask a woman how many guys she's fucked, she's not gonna tell you how many guys she fucked, she tell you how many boyfriends she's had. 'Cause women only count their boyfriends. That's right, they don't count all those miscellaneous dicks they had. Ya know that guy they met at the club . . . or that time they fucked Bobby Brown. Or the guy they fucked in Jamaica; that's another country, it don't count. "I thought we just talking about *domestic* dick" (Rock, 1996, 45:10–46:10).

However, sexual experience is not always a turn-off for men. As a means of solving the adaptive problem of identifying sexually accessible women (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), men pursuing a short-term mating strategy are drawn to women with ample sexual experience (Schmitt, Couden, & Baker, 2001), as Rock implies he is:

I love going to abortion rallies to pick up women. 'Cos you know they'll fuck you. You ain't gonna find a bunch of virgins at the abortion rally "What you doing here, girl?" "Fucked up again" (Rock, 1994, 41:44–42:10).

Mate preferences clearly vary as a function of the mating strategy pursued. They also vary as a function of one's mate value. As women age, their mate value declines (Symons, 1979) and they are forced to become less exacting in their preferences. For example, relative to their higher mate-value counterparts, less desirable women's personal ads specify shorter lists of traits desired in a partner (Pawlowski & Dunbar, 1999). A 29-year-old Rock purports to exploit this shift in women's standards as they age:

I like older women. I'm into older women. Ya know, not Weezy Jefferson old, just older than me. 'Cause young girls are full of shit. They like what they like. "So I want him to be *this* tall, want his hair to be like *this*, want his eyes to be like *this*, want him to walk like *this*, talk like *this*, work *here*." All this bullshit that has nothing to do with *here* [points to heart] and *here* [points to head]. Now you get an older woman, single, and she's like, "Hey, I just want to mate. He got a dick and a job, I'm happy" (Rock, 1994, 18:10–19:09).

Mate Attraction Tactics

Declining mate value aside, women in general are quite discerning in their mate preferences. And generally speaking, women's and men's mate preferences are similar. But in domains in which they recurrently faced different adaptive problems, different adaptive preferences have evolved (Buss, 2003). One realm in which women's and men's preferences diverge concerns resources. "The evolution of female preferences for males offering resources may be the most ancient and pervasive basis for female choice in the animal kingdom" (Buss, 2012, p. 109). Cross-culturally and cross-generationally, women value good financial prospects in a long-term mate about twice as much as men do (Buss, 1989a; Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001). Women's stronger preference for resources renders its accrual and display more important for men when attracting mates.

Men, you must get your money right It is important for men to get their money right. Women, it is important for you to get your money right, but it is not as important for you, as it is for us. Why, women? 'Cos no one will ever not fuck you . . . 'cos you're broke. Your pussy will never be turned down for financial reasons. It ain't gonna happen. That's right, pussy's like VISA: *accepted everywhere*. Next time you don't got no cash, go, "Do you take pussy?" "Of course we take pussy. Who doesn't take pussy? How much pussy you got?" (Rock, 2008, 56:19–57:10).

Resources are central to a man's mate value, a point Rock's character's boss makes to him in *I Think I Love My Wife*: "You know, Cooper, you can lose a lot of money chasing women. But you'll never lose women chasing money" (Rock, 2007, 52:39–52:46). Rock is keenly aware that his resources attract women:

Women see me, occasionally they wanna fuck me, but when women see me and they wanna fuck me they get real practical about it. Women go, "You know what? I bet you if I fucked Chris Rock, I could get him to pay my VISA bill." I have paid so many college loans in my day. I have put more girls through school than the United Negro College Fund! Shit, I should have my own dorm at Howard (Rock, 1994, 1:08:56 – 1:09:48).

Another dimension upon which men's and women's mate preferences diverge is physical appearance. Cross-culturally and cross-generationally, men rate physical attractiveness as being significantly more important and desirable than do women (Buss, 1989a; Buss et al., 2001). This sex difference exists because in ancestral times, women's but not men's looks served as honest signals of their reproductive value and fertility. In modern times, this is not always the case:

Masters of the lie, the visual lie. Look at you. You got on heels; you ain't that tall. You got on makeup; your face don't look like that. You got a weave; your hair ain't that long. You got a Wonderbra on; your titties ain't that big. Everything about you is a lie, and you expect me to tell the truth? Fuck you! (Rock, 1999, 53:14–53:41).

Conflict Between Romantic Partners

After courting each other, men and women often come into conflict over the occurrence and timing of sex (Buss, 2003). This is because the mating strategy pursued by one sex often interferes with the strategy employed by the other sex (Buss, 1989b). As a means of gaining sexual access to a variety of partners, men pursuing a short-term mating strategy look to expedite sexual intercourse after meeting a desired female (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Rock discusses a particularly blunt method of minimizing the amount of time elapsed before seeking sex from a sought after partner:

Every man in here that's with a woman he hasn't fucked yet is all thinking the same thing: When do I whip it out? Do I just shove her hand down there when we start kissing good night and watch her move it like she got cerebral palsy or some shit? Do I put it on a tray like a appetizer? Sprinkle some parsley around it: "Bon appétit!" . . . And then once you whip it out, there's always a chance that the woman goes, "Could you put that back?" . . . That never happens to women. Women never whip out a titty and hear, "Hey, put that titty back! If I'd known you was whipping out titties, I wouldn't even have come upstairs. Put the titty back. Are we gonna watch this movie or what?" (Rock, 2008, 1:04:46–1:06:14).

Although both men and women pursue both short-term and long-term mating, the former looms larger in men's than in women's mating repertoire (Buss, 2003, 2012). Due to sexual asymmetries in obligatory parental investment, the ancestral reproductive benefits of short-term mating were greater and the costs lesser for men compared to women (Symons, 1979; Trivers, 1972). Modern men often struggle over which mating strategy to pursue:

Every man's got a choice to make And you know what the choice is: commitment or new pussy. That is the question: commitment or new pussy. Ya know, commitment will give you a headache every now and then; new pussy always clears your mind (Rock, 1996, 49:00–50:30).

Rock notes that even after adopting a long-term strategy, men are still reluctant to foreclose short-term mating opportunities by committing to one partner:

Women always ready to settle down. Shit, a woman go on four good dates, she like, "Why are we bullshitting? What are you waiting for?" Men, *never* ready to settle down. Men don't settle down. We *surrender*. "All right I'll marry your ass. All right, all right, damn, okay, just tell me the day before, I'll be there" (Rock, 1996, 47:41–48:10).

Parenting

After committing to a partner, humans confront a host of new adaptive problems including the suite of challenges surrounding parenthood. Although parents and children typically share 50% of their genes in common, they also differ genetically by 50%. This genetic discrepancy provides fertile ground for parents and children to come into conflict, particularly in the mating realm (Salmon, 2007; Trivers, 1974). For example, daughters who attempt to gain benefits from short-term mating (e.g., resources) may come into conflict with parents who are concerned with the reputational damage such behavior can have on the family and their daughter's value as a long-term mate. According to the daughter guarding hypothesis, parents possess psychological adaptations to defend their daughter's sexual reputation, preserve her mate value, and protect her from sexual victimization (Perilloux, Fleischman, & Buss, 2008). Evidence in support of this hypothesis indicates that parents are more likely to control their daughters' than their sons' mating decisions, mate choice, and sexual behavior. Parents also report greater upset over their daughters' than their sons' sexual activity (Perilloux et al., 2008). Rock provided biographical evidence in support of this hypothesis four years before it was advanced:

Sometimes I'm walking with my daughter, I'm talking to my daughter, I'm looking at her, I'm pushing her stroller, and sometimes I pick her up and I just stare at her and I realize my only job in life . . . is to keep her off the pole. Keep my baby off the pole! I mean they don't grade fathers, but if your daughter's a stripper, you fucked up. Yeah. You went mighty wrong there, baby. You thought you had a household? No, you got a ho camp (Rock, 2004, 2:40–4:03).

Infidelity

A second suite of adaptive problems men and women face after committing to a partner revolves around preserving that commitment. Given the direct reproductive benefits that short-term mating afforded ancestral men, modern men often find it hard to "keep their eyes narrowly focused on their partners and away from the multitude of potential partners on the periphery" (Friedman, 2002, p. 5). Rock jokes that men often need to seek professional treatment to stay faithful, a phenomenon recently illustrated by Tiger Woods:

But fellas, when you decide to commit, you got to commit. You got to commit. Can't cheat. Wanna cheat. Can't cheat. Dying to cheat. Can't cheat. Can't wait to cheat. Can't cheat! Shit, sometimes gotta go to rehab not to cheat! (Rock, 1996, 50:41–51:02).

To deter their mates from cheating, some women demand that their husbands publicly display their commitment to them in the form of wedding bands. Paradoxically, however, publicly pro-

claiming one's commitment to someone can make committing to that person quite challenging. This is seen in many nonhuman animals that exhibit mate choice copying: being sexually attracted to someone with whom others are mating (Dugatkin, 2000). In essence, being in a relationship serves as a sexual imprimatur that one is worthy of pursuing a mateship with. An analogous form of mate choice copying may occur in humans as well: Women find a man more desirable when he is surrounded by women than when he is alone or with other men (Hill & Buss, 2008). Women's mate choice copying inclinations can test a man's commitment:

It's hard not to cheat. You know why it's hard not to cheat? 'Cause women like men that are in relationships. Guys know what I'm talking about. When you were single no one was thinking about your ugly ass . . . Now everybody wanna fuck you . . . Now your phone ringing off the hook. Crazy, freaky sex talk, like, "Hey whatcha doing? Ya know me and my girlfriends are having a dick sucking contest, and we thought you'd be a good judge." You never got that call when you were single. Now you get it every Tuesday (Rock, 1996, 51:10–51:50).

Empirical research and newspaper headlines indicate that high mate-value men find commitment a particularly challenging endeavor. Relative to their lower-mate-value counterparts, high mate value men tend to "have sexual intercourse at an earlier age, a greater number of sex partners since puberty, a greater number of partners during the past year, sexual intercourse a greater number of times, and no need to be attached before having sex" (Buss, 2012, p. 199). Moreover, men high in social dominance are more likely to be unfaithful than men low in social dominance and women high on social dominance (Egan & Angus, 2004). Recent experimental evidence indicates that power motivates heightened perceptions and expectations of sexual interest from others (Kunstman & Maner, 2011). When paired with a position of power, a committed man's potent desire for sexual variety (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt et al., 2003) can be toxic to his work and family life. In merely the last five years in the United States alone, the following powerful men have risked their political careers and marriages by committing infidelity: former Governors Eliot Spitzer (Democrat-NY) and Arnold Schwarzenegger (Republican-CA); current Governor Mark Sanford (R-SC); former Senators John Ensign (R-NV) and John Edwards (D-NC); current Senator David Vitter (R-LA); former Representatives Mark Souder (R-IN), Anthony Weiner (D-NY), Chris Lee, (R-NY), Eric Massa, (D-NY), Chip Pickering, (R-MS), Vito Fossella, (R-NY), Tim Mahoney, (D-FL), Mark Foley (R-FL), and Don Sherwood (R-PA). Although extensive, this list fails to include unfaithful state congresspersons, state senators, or other prominent state and federal officials, nor does it include the rash of recently adulterous celebrities in popular culture. It is further limited in listing only those politicians whose cheating has come to light in the press. Although these politicians differ in their party affiliations, position of power held, and nature of infidelity committed, they are united on one telling dimension: sex. All 15 are men. One is hard-pressed to identify a single powerful woman over the same period who risked her power, profession, prestige, and long-term partner for a short-term affair. In a tour de force satirization of the sexual politics surrounding President Bill Clinton's infidelity scandal, Rock riffs on desirable men's struggles with commitment:

A man is basically as faithful as his options. That's how faithful a man is, no more, no less. You see all these fat Republican guys going: "I would never do such a thing. This is a travesty." I'm like, "Nobody's trying to blow you." Ain't no 20-year-old girls trying to blow Orrin Hatch. Ain't nobody trying to give Newt Gingrich some. I don't give a fuck, you ain't never gonna hear Newt Gingrich go: "Man, I wish these hoes would backup off me. I wish they would just back the fuck up off me" (Rock, 1999: 16:45–19:27).

Later, he builds upon this theme by skewering men's tendency to over offer sex to women, a tendency that proponents of error management theory (Haselton & Buss, 2000) might view as a means of minimizing their likelihood of missing potential mating opportunities.

It's damn near impossible for a man to turn down sex . . . It's easy for women to turn down sex . . . Y'all like, "Why can't you turn it down? I do it all the time. Why can't you say 'no'? I say 'no.'" See, it's easy for y'all. You know why? 'Cause every woman in here, ever since you were 13 every guy you met has been trying to fuck you. That's right. Women are offered dick every day. Every woman in here gets offered dick at least three times a week. Three times a day, shit! That's right, every time a man's being nice to you, all he's doing is offering dick. That's all it is. "Can I get that for you? How about some dick?" "Could I help you with that? Could I help you to some dick?" "Do you need some dick?" Nobody offers us shit. We got to fend for ourselves. We can't believe it when we get an offer. We're like, "Damn, this is my lucky day" (Rock, 1999: 16:45–19:27).

Rock's strident take on sex differences in willingness to engage in casual sex is theoretically sound and empirically supported (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt et al., 2003). In one classic study, 75% of men, but 0% of women, consented to a request for sex from a complete stranger (Clark & Hatfield, 1989). Many of these willing men were already in a romantic relationship. To combat men's wandering eyes, women engage in various strategies to minimize their partners' likelihood of cheating. Although evidence suggests that men's marital satisfaction is unrelated to their likelihood of committing infidelity (Buss, 2000; Glass & Wright, 1985), Rock observes that some women futilely attempt to minimize infidelity by maximizing their attractiveness:

Some women are like, "If I lost weight, he wouldn't cheat. If I was more beautiful, he wouldn't cheat." Yes, he would. He would. There ain't nothing you can do, ladies. Ya know the only thing you can do to stop your man cheating? Only thing you can do . . . is be *there*. Where? *There*. Wherever he's thinking about fucking. That's it. Just be right *there*. And even then he still might lose yo ass. "Hey, honey, look, a sale!" Let me go fuck this bitch right now . . . The beauty don't matter. Kobe [Bryant] cheated on his wife and Kobe's wife is fine. Kobe's wife is gorgeous. My God! That's a fuckin' señorita out this motherfucker. A hot tamale out this motherfucker. Kobe's wife is fine shit. I would trade my wife and two aunts for Kobe's, man. I'll throw in a cousin and my momma if I have to. "Come on, Momma, we got to close this deal" (Rock, 1994, 28:56–30:50).

Although husbands tend to pursue extramarital affairs more than wives, men are no strangers to being cheated on (Buss, 2012). Indeed, ample evidence suggests that men are keenly concerned about a woman's sexual infidelity because of the calamitous costs of cuckoldry (Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992). To assuage men's concerns about being cuckolded, new mothers and their relatives frequently note a newborn's resemblance to the

putative father, a resemblance not as frequently noted by dad and his relatives (Daly & Wilson, 1982). Rock makes great use of incongruity (hats are not genetically inherited!) and of the background knowledge his audience shares with him about paternity uncertainty in this bit on cuckoldry:

Who's the biggest liars, men or women? Men lie the most, women tell the biggest lies. Men, we lie all the time. We lie so much, it's damn near a language. To call a man out for lying . . . is like playing basketball with a retarded kid and calling him for double-dribble. You gotta let some shit slide . . . You know what a man's lie is like? A man's lie is like, "I was at Tony's house." "I'm at Kenny's house." That's a man's lie. A women's lie is like, "It's your baby." Oh, we've all heard that one. "Hey! It don't even look like me." "Oh he's got your hat" (Rock, 1999, 51:54–52:56).

Divorce

Infidelity is one of the biggest predictors of divorce worldwide, followed closely by lack of economic support from husbands (Betzig, 1989). In the following two bits Rock notes that men's failures to provide for them often provokes women to leave them for someone who can:

Men cannot go backward sexually; women cannot go backward in lifestyle. Can't fucking do it . . . Fellas, you ever been going through some hard times with your woman, you lose your job or something, and your woman tries to console you, say, "Hey, baby, don't worry; we gonna get through this. We gonna get through this. I know we got some bills. But if we got to get rid of some of this shit, we will get rid of some of this shit." She's talking about *you!* Fellas, if you lose your job you gonna lose your woman. That's right, she may not leave the day you lose it, but the countdown has begun" (Rock, 2008, 1:08:00–1:09:00).

Women have their own fucking money now. And women are like, "Hey, if you don't take me on a nice vacation, I'm a find me a cute guy, and I'm a pay for shit." But that only lasts for like 30 days. 'Cause women don't like paying for shit. That's right. Pussy costs money; dick is free. Any money you spend on dick is a bad investment. 'Cause when it comes to women and money, I tell you right now, nothing dries up a pussy quicker than a woman reaching for her wallet. There's something about a woman reaching for her wallet that dries up the vagina. It's almost like the wallet is sending a signal to the pussy that this man is not worthy of getting wet for. And even later on, when you go the gynecologist he's like, "Oh my god, you've been paying for shit. Another \$500 you gonna be in menopause" (Rock, 2008, 1:10:57–1:12:10).

Abundant evidence suggests that women allocate sexual access toward men willing and able to invest in them (Buss, 2003). Rock shines a comic light on this exchange of resources with this absurd take on men's provisioning of resources in exchange for sexual access *after* a relationship has dissolved:

You know what else, O.J. [Simpson] was paying \$25,000 a month in alimony. Twenty-five thousand dollars! And \$4,000 a month for food. For food! What the fuck was she eating for four grand a month? I guess she's like, "I gotta get some extra cheese on my Whopper." Y'all women, you got it good, boy. When it's time to get a divorce, women got it made. You go to court, you start talking that shit, "Your Honor, I'm used to this. I'm used to that. I'm accustomed to this." Yo, what the fuck is *accustomed*? What that got to do with shit, eh? You go to a restaurant, you're accustomed to eating. You leave, you ain't

eating no more. They don't owe you a steak. Now women go to court, talk that shit, "Your Honor, I'm used to this, I'm used to that. I want some money. Give me some money." And they get the money. What about what the man's used to? What about what the man's *accustomed* to? Now that might not be money, but during the course of the relationship, a man grows accustomed to a few things. And I would love to see a man go to court and say, "Your Honor, check this out: Now, I'm accustomed to fucking her four times a week. Now I feel like I should be able to fuck her at least twice a week. And then she can have the alimony, but I want some pussy payments" (Rock, 1996, 21:37–23:05).

Rock Brings the Funny Because He Brings the Truth

From his 1996 classic *Bring the Pain* to his 2008 Emmy Award winning *Kill the Messenger*, Rock continually brings the funny because he always brings the truth. A truth his audience shares because they, like he, have inherited millions of years of evolved wisdom from ancestors long forgotten. Rock is able to connect with audiences around the globe because much of his humor taps into universal desires and fears that have sustained *Homo sapiens* for thousands of generations. Although Rock dedicates much of his stand-up to riffs on race, class, and politics, he closes each of his five *HBO* specials with evolution-grounded relationship humor. He seems to know that this, his best material, has broad appeal that reaches back through the eons and will bring his audience back in the future.

Given humor's abilities to reduce anxiety toward difficult material (Berk & Nanda, 1998; Ziv, 1988) and to stand-out amid the information-overload of modern student life, weaving Rock's bits on romantic relationships into discussions of the primary literature may be an effective means of increasing students' interests in and grasp of the psychological consequences of sex differences in obligatory parental investment. Popular culture like Rock's comedy prompts scientific findings to pop-off the page. As a modern-day Darwin might say, Rock's routines can "tickle their minds" by tapping into their evolved mental mechanisms. If *Dallas* is the pinnacle of evolutionary televised drama (Fisher, this issue), then Chris Rock is the pinnacle of evolutionary stand-up comedy.

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AUTHOR QUERIES

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