

WESTERN SCIENCE SPEAKS PODCAST SEASON 4, EPISODE 10

EPISODE TITLE

Will you be my Valentine?

PODCAST SUMMARY

Just in time for Valentine's Day, Amanda Moehring and Geoff Wild join Western Science Speaks to discuss mating, courtship, and everything you need to know about love.

INTERVIEW

You're listening to the Western science speaks podcast. Presented by Henry Standage.

Henry Standage 0:29

Hey, welcome to the Valentine's Day edition of the Western Science Speaks podcast. The topic of today's show is courtship, mating and dating professors Amanda motoring from biology and Jeff Wald from applied mathematics make their second appearances on the podcast. Amanda's background is in practical lab work with female fruit flies and studying their social behavior. While Jeff looks at the evolution of behavior, we thought having them on together would be really interesting and we ended up talking about a lot of really relevant issues like dating apps, big money. And more, my housemate Quinten was awesome in the studio to take pictures and videos for us. So that's why I'm referring to a couple different times throughout the podcast. As you may have heard, we're running a contest for this episode. And at one point in the podcast, there will be a really short commercial break where I'll say the secret phrase that you need to dm to Western Science on Twitter, or me on Instagram at Henry Standage. Anyway, here we go.

Henry Standage 1:25

Let's start with first impressions. How much impact can a first impression have in your research? You look at the behavior of female drosophila. What are they immediately more receptive to?

Amanda Moehring 1:37

So, with drosophila, the male approaches the female and does a series of things related to courtship. And so, there's aspects where he'll tap her, he'll put out a wing and sing a song. And so, her impression is very much what are the cues he's giving her, and so she needs some cues. He can't just approach and do nothing. And then what matters is whether he gives her the cues that she likes or not right. So, you can extrapolate that to humans, right? If somebody starts screaming out ACDC, and you're really a soft rock kind of person, that's going to be a turn off, and flaws are the same. So, the song has to be something that they expect. And it has to be a good quality song to, for example, so there's a lot of different cues that the female gets, and then she evaluates them and determines if that's a good male or not.

Henry Standage 2:19

So, for them, it's really based on that song.

Amanda Moehring 2:21

Um, it's partly song. It's also there's some physical interaction. So, he taps her and things like that, there's some pheromones that are involved. So, it's more than just the song. We're also limited when we work with animals, with the things that we've noticed. So, there could be cues that she's getting

that we just don't even know. So, we have to be careful how much we extrapolate from what we're expecting to see into being what the fly is actually seeing.

Henry Standage 2:46

Where do you start to draw parallels between the fly and the human?

Amanda Moehring 2:50

Well, first, you have to be very careful drawing parallels between flies and humans, especially for things that are so complicated and variable like mating behaviors, right? So, the things that we can draw are that you have a series of inputs, cues that are evaluated in some way. And whether or not a female is treating those cues as positives or negatives really depends on her internal state, right? So, what's the wiring in her brain to think of those cues as being good or not good. And those things I think are very similar in terms of how lots of different organisms respond to cues.

Henry Standage 3:27

Jeff, you don't look at flies. How can we judge somebody's sincerity about who they are showing themselves to be when we meet them for the first time?

Geoff Wild 3:38

The idea goes like this, okay. So if we're going to expect to see a signal about my quality to a female as a mate, we're going to expect to see that in nature, then it's going to have to be a reliable indicator of my quality, because if it's not a reliable indicator, then my potential mates are just going to ignore it in the long run.

Henry Standage 3:58

So, what would be an unreliable indicator?

Geoff Wild 4:01

An unreliable indicator would be anything that's not costly. So, you have to think you have of this like a bit of a thought experiment, okay? So, if I'm going to signal or if I'm going to advertise my, my quality, I have to do that in a reliable way. Right? Otherwise I'm going to be ignored. And if I do it in a reliable way, then at least from a theoretical perspective, natural selection is going to sharpen a female's acuity or a female's ability to decode my advertisement and turn the information I'm giving her into sort of a measure of my own quality. And if I as a male have found the best level of advertisement, then as my thought experiment goes, and I shouldn't, shouldn't pay me to advertise a little bit more. It shouldn't pay me to sing my soft rock song a little more loudly or play my ACDC.

Amanda Moehring 5:01

Another way to phrase the reason why in the animal world, a lot of traits are costly are the ones that females evaluate because it's hard to cheat on those, right. So, if it's the largest males get the most mates, it's hard for a smaller male to pretend that he's a larger male. So, it's really hard to cheat on those most of those quality indicators. To get back to your question about dishonesty and humans. So how do you know if someone's honestly presenting themselves? This sort of feeds back into that notion of it's hard to relate some of the things we find in animal models back to humans, because humans have the ability to consciously alter the behavior that otherwise we're somewhat programmed to have that they can override that and so we have more complexity and a lot of ways in those mating signals, because humans have the ability to cheat on some of these subtle indicators because we use a lot of more subtle indicators in human mating.

Henry Standage 5:55

So, somebody who's had say a lot of bad experiences with the not being able to spot a facade early on is probably more likely to be better at judging a mate. Is that fair?

Amanda Moehring 6:06

Maybe I don't know if that's fair, it might mean an indication that they aren't very good at that. So it's hard to know. But what it might mean is they might look then for even stronger cues than they would otherwise. So, they're not going to be satisfied with those sort of lower level cues, they're going to want the ones that are hard to fake, to convince them that this is the real deal.

Henry Standage 6:25

Yeah. And I want to talk to you about portion of your work that looks at the genetic and cellular basis for a lot of behavior. I'm interested to know how the receptivity of a female or their aggression to courting a potential mate can evolve over their lifespan.

Amanda Moehring 6:42

Yeah, so essentially, how within a single individual, does that change over time? Is it always the same or does it shift? It changes a fair bit, right. So, if a female has already mated, she's going to be far less receptive than if she's never mated. And this makes sense in terms of fitness. If you have to make offspring. You got to get some help mating to get there. So, females are going to be much more willing to mate when they're virgin than when they've already been mated and have fertilization occurring. But also, it changes with age. So, females as they age have a shift in how receptive they are. And there's this really fascinating aspect that even in flies, we see aspects of the social environment, influencing their mating. So, if a female observes a male mating another female, she's more likely to mate with that male than a random male. So, there's some social learning even in flies, which is really fascinating.

Henry Standage 7:33

Just recognizing a face or?

Amanda Moehring 7:36

Yeah, well, and that they've been successful. So essentially, it's that if that male was successful with that other female, well, he must be pretty good. I'll take her assessment to flavor my own assessment. Right. So, it's interesting that that's possible even within something as simple as a fruit fly.

Henry Standage 7:51

Is there a chance an element of that might be subconscious? Maybe it's not somebody who you know, blatantly saw. And you kind of went: "oh, that's that person." Somebody who maybe you don't fully consciously recognize that you know, but just kind of sensing it somehow.

Amanda Moehring 8:08

But if you know that somebody has been desired by many other people, you might then raise them in your evaluation compared to a random person, right? This is often how celebrity works, right? Somebody who's a celebrity automatically looks a little bit more attractive because well, if everyone else likes them, maybe I should like them too. And so, we certainly have a lot of evidence in humans that that how other people perceive somebody influences how we also perceive them.

Henry Standage 8:34

Yeah, that's massive. my housemates, they always ask, what do you think about this girl, and it matters that has real stock.

Geoff Wild 8:41

Aspects of social environment that interests me most are the ones related to genetic kinship. The whole mating endeavor, often will perhaps not surprisingly brings males and females into conflict, right? Conflict over whether the fertilization or the copulation is actually going to take place and if it takes place, you know the extent to which the mating is going to damage one of the other parties and the social environment or whether you're in nature engaged in some level of inbreeding is going to align.

Henry Standage 9:15

What impact do you think our experiences in courtship play in future interactions?

Geoff Wild 9:20

That's a good question, again, I suppose I can speculate as a theoretician. I can think of examples where the result of previous courtship has a huge impact on future success. I guess one of the more spectacular ones would be the bedbugs. What I know about that bedbug mating is that a male will actually pierce the abdomen of the female in order to inseminate her that so there's a physical wound, right. And that could really have detrimental effects on female's future success.

Amanda Moehring 9:57

Yeah. So, what's really cool about the bedbug story is that females have evolved counter responses to that, that they actually have evolved at the puncture site that then encapsulates that ejaculate, that the male inserts to contain it and keep it from infecting her body. And then she can control whether or not it's used for fertilization. And so, this comes back to your earlier comment about arms races, between men, males and females and the conflicts that can occur between their different motives. And so potentially eventually, male bedbugs will have a different strategy to try and bypass the female's ability to reject his copulation.

Geoff Wild 10:32

The insects have these weaponized penises.

Amanda Moehring 10:37

Yeah, Google beetle penises and it will disturb you for a very long time.

Henry Standage 10:41

It's already an open tab on my laptop. When we talk about mating, I think just naturally our brains kind of go to the idea of a male trying to impress a female. But I'm interested to know Amanda, how do male drosophila respond to an aggressive female?

Amanda Moehring 10:59

Unfortunately, historically, a lot of researchers have viewed females as these passive players that either accept or reject male courtship. And of course, we've learned more recently, that is absolutely not the case. And so, females have all sorts of rejection responses, they'll kick the male's face, they'll just run away. And in some cases, they'll be aggressive towards the male. So, what's interesting is that when females show aggression towards a male, his state can really impact how he responds. So, if he hasn't had successful meetings, even though she's beating him up, he will continue trying to court and meet with her. If, however, he's had a lot of recent mating's, then he'll back off a bit. So, there's some aspect of that. What's interesting with the males is that if they have tried courting a female for a very long time and continue to get rejected, it actually makes them then less likely to try and port a brand-new female.

Henry Standage 11:54

He lost his Mojo.

Amanda Moehring 11:56

He's essentially gotten the message, I am going to have nothing but rejected, so I'm just not going to try. So, we certainly see the males respond to what the female gives them as her signal of response to accepting him or not really does impact his later behavior.

Henry Standage 12:13

Jeff and I did a podcast probably about 18 months ago about how being nice is actually a surprisingly underrated evolutionary trait. But specifically, regarding mating, do you believe this still to be the case?

Geoff Wild 12:27

Well, yeah, again, I just go back to the example of kinship and the potential for inbreeding. And I mean, I know, there's not as much inbreeding among humans as there is in nature. But certainly, I think there's a lot of inbreeding that happens in nature. And that inbreeding means that you are potentially related to your mate and the shared ancestry means that you have some interest in the success of your mate so I think it may not completely eliminate the conflict that we expect to see between the sexes, but it certainly will mean that there's a selective advantage towards reducing that conflict.

Amanda Moehring 13:10

And there's some added aspects with species like humans that have offspring that require a huge amount of care. And the case that being nice, the cooperation is necessary in order to have successful offspring. So, if you have birds, or a common model for looking at this, because when you have these, what's called bi-parental care systems where you need both parents to contribute to raising. If you have only one, then the offspring don't succeed. And that's not good for you, even if you're trying to be selfish by not contributing. So, in a lot of cases, that cooperation aspect is critical for your own fitness, even though it costs you the extra energy of contributing and being nice. It's a requirement to be successful. So, it's interesting that there are certain systems where there's a very strong selection separately from even the inbreeding aspect of your genes, but even in terms of just having offspring that can make it you need to cooperate in order to have that happen. So, then there would be selection for traits that enhance that cooperative nature between the sexes.

Henry Standage 14:14

Unselfishness, things like that.

Amanda Moehring 14:15

Yeah, I mean, it's still a little bit selfish because you care about your own success, right? So, it's not even that you have to behave altruistically to have that work, which is great that cooperation is good, even if you're selfish.

Henry Standage 14:27

Alright, for engaged and loyal listeners, here's the part where you can win a \$75 gift card to Jack Astor's. Once again you can DM Western science on twitter at westernscience, or me on Instagram at Henry Standage. The phrase is we love science. Back to the podcast.

Henry Standage 14:50

Why is it that fathers seem to invest more in sons and likewise mothers with daughters? Does seeing yourself more and offspring really affect the relationship that much?

Amanda Moehring 15:00

Well, so I can't speak to humans. Flies don't see their offspring. So, there's not a physical resemblance like there would be in humans. But there is some aspect of what your genetic material that's passed on, and how related you are to your offspring. A mother is more related to her son than the father is because the X chromosome is larger than the Y chromosome. So, you might have a differential parental investment due to genetic relatedness. But of course, that would be opposite to what you just said, that you think that fathers might invest more in sons. So, in the literature, what we see is that that case of which parent invest into which offspring really varies depending on what the environmental conditions are, and what the species is that you're looking at. So what we do see is that there are trends that the mother will skew her offspring production towards daughters when conditions are poor and skew towards sons when conditions are good. So, it hasn't

had to do with relatedness the offspring, it has to do with the environmental conditions. And that's because males to be successful at mating, again, those cues of what was going to allow them to look good to other females often are related to body size, and in poor conditions, you're going to make smaller sons. So, if you're not going to have successful sons, well invest in your daughters, then make more daughters because you're more likely to have grandchildren the next generation in those circumstances. It's hard to relate those kinds of studies back to humans, because we don't have any evidence that humans have a shift in sex ratios. At least I don't think so. I don't think there's any evidence that occurs in humans. So, there might be other ways that parents invest outside of those. So again, we have to be careful with what we find in animals and how much of that we can relate back to humans.

Henry Standage 16:52

I mean, it's a cliché that the father always sees himself in the son. Dad it's not my dream. It's your dream. But, Jeff, when you emailed back; selection has shown that ultimately there's one male for every female. I didn't totally know what you meant, but it sounded very interesting.

Geoff Wild 17:10

Well, it has to do with some of the points. Amanda just brought up that. I mean, the idea that in many circumstances, you would expect roughly 50/50 sex ratio goes back a long way. And at first glance, it might seem to be obvious or an obvious consequence of having, say, an x y system of sex determination. But as evolutionary biologists, I think Amanda will agree that we often go beyond say, these proximate explanations. So, for lack of a better term, obvious explanations ask why would such a system like the x y system evolve? What would happen if we had sex determined in a different way, say, like in lizards with temperature? Anyway, the idea itself basically starts with the recognition that in most species, individuals have exactly one mother and exactly one father, at least one biological mother, one biological father. The implication of that is that males as a group have the same or make the same evolutionary contribution to future generations as females as a group. So, you could think of these contributions as like, half of a pizza or something pie-like. So, you could think of all the success that is going to be given to males is half of the pie, and the other half of the pie is going to represent all the success given to females. Now, these halves of the pies have to be divvied up among the females and among the males in particular ways and if, if there's more males and females, then every male is going to get a smaller slice of the male half of the pie, whereas every female is going to get a slightly larger slice of that pie, right. And so, there's some selective advantage to producing that, in that particular case, daughters because they would get a bigger slice of the evolutionary pie. Flip it around. And if there are more females than males and daughters are going to get a smaller slice of the evolutionary pie, sons are going to get a larger slice of the evolutionary pie. So, the shift will go in the opposite direction. You could imagine that ping ponging back and forth until neither sex is rare. They're equally common, a 50/50 sex ratio. A lot of my research is aimed at trying to sort of break some of those tacit assumptions and say, Well, what if? What if we can subdivide the female half of the pie among high quality females and low-quality females? And that's, kind of this idea that Amanda was hinting at that if there are high, if there are high quality females out there, and you yourself are a high quality female and you can produce high quality daughters, then perhaps you would as a mother want to invest more in producing daughters if they can somehow inherit some of your high quality. And you could you could make an analogous argument with fathers and sons or mothers and sons, you could kind of connect them.

Amanda Moehring 20:28

So, what's interesting about the different sexes in terms of reproduction is that in most cases, females are the limiting resource. There's only so many eggs that can be produced because they're very expensive to make overall. And of course, there's exceptions to this. To make an offspring you need a single egg and a single sperm, that sperm takes far less energy to make than the egg because eggs are much larger it requires more proteins. It's much larger gamete and of course again, there's exceptions to this and in different people. So, this is just on average. So, in that case you can have a female maybe can make. So, I think the largest number of offspring for human female was something

like 60 offspring, which is a bit mind blowing. But the largest number of offspring, was something like 800 offspring, because that male when he mates with multiple females, each of those females can potentially reach their maximum number of offspring was a single female mating with multiple males can't increase her number of offspring to the same amount, right. So, there's, so there's a different limitation on female reproduction than there is on male reproduction. So, this comes into that selection aspect. So, you are a female, you have some limited resources of how many offspring you personally can make. Well, you want them to be the best. You want to make the best offspring you can make because you don't have unlimited trials. Here. So if there's one rock star, fantastic, amazing male, well, yeah, you're going to choose that male. And the female next to you might also choose that male, and the female next to her might also choose that male. So even though like we were talking earlier about the pie divided between males and females, even though it's possible that each male could get their own slice of that reproductive pie, it's also possible a single male can get that entire half of that reproductive pie, if all the females choose him. And so we see this sometimes in species, like elephant seals, you'll have one breeding male that has it's called a harem, all of these females and the other males that aren't the ones that dominated that don't get mating's, or maybe they'll rarely get mating's, if they sneak one in. And so, you can even have literally a single male, be the one that fertilizes all of the offspring within that group. Whereas for females, again, they're more limited so it's not set up the same way.

Henry Standage 23:01

There's a Vince Vaughn movie about this, where he's the father of 530 children. I haven't seen the movie. But I remember seeing the trailer at 14 and thinking it was the greatest idea for film I'd ever seen.

Geoff Wild 23:23

What do you think now?

Henry Standage 23:25

Yeah, I don't know. True or false compared to all the other species out there that enjoy mating and courtship? We are not shallow; we are deeper than them in how we go about it?

Amanda Moehring 23:37

You could answer that question both ways. So, on the one hand, we have consciousness, right. So, we have a lot of thought about the decisions we make. We aren't just beholden to our impulses, right? At least most people aren't. So, on that perspective, yes, we have a lot of a deeper thought process involved in who we're going to mate with. On the other hand, at least in modern times. Not every mating is reproduction. Right. So, with the advent of birth control, those mating decisions do not have to be linked to offspring fitness. And so, from that perspective, we can be incredibly shallow about it. Because it's purely about sex. It doesn't have to be about reproduction. So, I think you could argue for both sides of that.

Henry Standage 24:17

That's a really good point. Do you think in some ways we are as predictable as drosophila?

Amanda Moehring 24:22

No, no, again, because we have consciousness, right. So, people have their past experience and can use that past experience to let flavor their current behavior, or they can consciously override that past experience and have it not affect their current behavior. And flies don't do that, right, their past experience in a relatively predictable way in their behavior. So, while there's still variation in behavior, I think it's far more predictable in something like an insect than it is in humans. We're complex. Humans are messy.

Henry Standage 24:56

Yeah. But at the same time, say, say me and Quinten go out, and I know for a fact that Quinten has a history with girls with green hair and tattoos. And I see a girl at the bar with green hair and tattoos, I'm probably going to feel pretty sure that he's going to be interested in her.

Geoff Wild 25:11

That's crazy specific.

Amanda Moehring 25:15

But again, what if he approaches her and she just stinks to high heaven? Right? He might be like, okay, No, I'm good. Right? Or maybe he's liked those girls all in the past but the last one he was with really broke his heart. So now he sees her he's like, I'm going to hesitate on that because I'm too raw. Right? So again, humans are messy.

Geoff Wild 25:34

Right? What? What's the didn't in your research where that you've got the headless? Is there a headless female fly?

Amanda Moehring 25:41

Now we have some other stuff we've done recently with aggression, where we can make females hyper aggressive by stimulating certain neurons in their brain and they'll beat up males that approach them. It's actually amusing to watch but we will even put headless males in there with them and she will kick the crap out of those males.

Geoff Wild 26:02

So, does that say to you that there's just that a hard, almost hardwired aspect to fly behavior that we at least like to think we don't always fall prey to as humans, that there's this evidence that we're clearly more complex than fly's?

Amanda Moehring 26:21

Oh, I don't even think you need that as evidence. I think there's lots of evidence that humans are more complex. So certainly, we can activate certain neurons and cause behaviors to occur in flies. It's hard to say whether that's different than in humans because we don't have the ability to do those same experiments in humans or the ethics to do it to humans. So, it is possible that if you stimulate a certain neuron and a human brain, you might also get a very particular response. I think what's more complicated is there's far more neurons and neural connections. So whether that neuron gets stimulated or not, it is going to be much more variable in a human because it's not just going to be, did you get that particular cue or information, it's also going to be how you process it as either a positive or negative thing, the context of that is going to be much more complicated in a human brain than in a fly brain. So, I don't know, actually, that we can say for sure that we wouldn't see that same response in humans, because we haven't done that experiment. So, we don't know.

Henry Standage 27:23

In some ways, the dating apps are kind of testing these things. And Jeff and I were talking about them a little bit on the way here. But the way the dating app distinguish themselves from one another is actually really interesting. So there's obviously Tinder which is you've probably heard of the most classic one, swipe right if you find them attractive, swipe left if not, then there's one called Bumble, where if you match with someone, the female has to message the guy first. The guy can't message her first. So, it's one where girls are asked to show more aggressiveness, because usually it's the guy who sends the first message.

Amanda Moehring 28:06

I don't know if I'd call sending a message aggressive. It's just communicating.

Geoff Wild 28:10

It also matches our assumptions. I think the females are the choosier, they're making the greater investment.

Amanda Moehring 28:18

And I mean, the reason why Bumble exists is because males are more likely just message everything that looks good. Yes. And females don't like receiving all of those messages from a bunch of males they wouldn't be interested in so exactly; it fits exactly that concept of who's going to be more assertive and putting themselves forward. And again, on average, right, of course, there's a lot of very assertive females and a lot of non-assertive males. So, in humans, right, we see a lot of variation in that.

Henry Standage 28:49

I'm interested to know how courtship or mating has changed pre and post the internet revolution.

Amanda Moehring 29:00

The interesting thing with the internet is that people are increasingly meeting people digitally first. So again, we talked about those cues that people get the signals, are they honest? And it's a way for someone to be kind of dishonest about their signals if they want to use filters to make themselves look better, for example, but of course, again, in terms of things like reproduction, eventually you have to meet in person, right is for the deed to occur. So that only goes so far. And I think even in that case, then you might get an even stronger rejection because of the dishonesty. Right? When it becomes clear that that was a dishonest cue that was given online, then the moment you meet in person, the person is going to be even more shocked and put off by the absence of filter than they would have been if they just had the honesty up front. Another interesting aspect about the internet is that it's changed what people consider normal in relationships. Because I'm not sure if this can be part of this broadcast or not. But because of internet pornography, it has really changed the way that people view sexual relations with other people in a way that's largely negative because a lot of pornography is quite violent towards women. And that's really concerning, that this is without the context of knowing kind of more broadly, what relationships and what sexual interactions should look like in a healthy relationship. If people don't have that context, then they might think that that's what they should be expecting in a relationship. So, I worry, especially for, you know, younger people where this is their entire context. If they don't get that extra information, that it's, it's very concerning, then what that will it do to their perception of relationships as they move forward.

Henry Standage 30:50

Yeah. The roles of men and women differ in traditional courtship rituals, to what degree are they universal and are their evolutionary theories about such roles?

Geoff Wild 31:02

Or there's a tradition of thought in evolutionary biology that says that, you know, there's a, there's a role for manipulation and deceit in animal communication, including communication over mating. However, in the long run, I think we have good reason to expect that signaling, especially signaling of quality is going to be honest. Now, whether it's going to become honest on the timescales that we were talking about, or the timescales that are relevant to one's experience with dating apps, is a separate question. But say over millennia. Perhaps I perhaps have too much confidence in natural selection, but over millennia, I think we can expect it would sort itself that, you know, if a cue that my qualities reliable, females are going to respond to or respond to that cue or that signal, right? And they should be responding to the signal in the quote unquote, correct way. And if they're responding positively to my signal, and it's not going to just get out of control, I'm not going to be screaming my head off with with ACDC, then it's going to have to cost me something and those costs are going to have to kind of keep up with with the benefits that signaling brings me. And so I guess that's the base of the handicap principle, right, that these costs are going to accelerate in order to enforce honesty in the long run.

Amanda Moehring 32:37

Yeah, and related back to that cost, also who's going to be the one to expend more costs in trying to get that mating and we often see differences between the sexes and many species, depending on who invest more in the offspring. So, in most species, you see females investing more in the production of the egg. So therefore, the males are going to have to convince them they're the right male, which means the males are going to spend more on that convincing part on trying to show that they're the best male. But we see cases that are the opposite. There's some species where males are the limiting resource, and then females compete with each other to get the male. I think in humans, it's interesting because we've shifted in more recent years towards a far more equal contribution to childcare than what perhaps was occurring hundred years ago even. And I think that has impacted the cues and the traits that are considered favorable in a partner in terms of reproduction, at least. And so, it's been interesting seeing that sort of social shift over the last, you know, 50 years or so. And so, it's going to be interesting to see what happens down the line the further that we go.

Geoff Wild 33:43

Yeah, just speaking from my own experiences, as a parent even though the behaviors related to childcare themselves, signal that it's totally gender dependent. When I take my kids to the park I'm treated as a hero.

Amanda Moehring 34:10

I will say that so I'm the breadwinner in my family. I hear so often how lucky I am to have a husband who contributes to childcare. My husband has never once in his entire life been told how lucky he is to have a wife who provides right, so that that perception in society influences how those different roles are valued within a relationship in terms of the kudos that you get for doing them and they're a lens through which we view these signals these purported signals.

Henry Standage 34:48

I'm interested to look at say arranged marriages, which are kind of used as like this villainous plot device in a lot of movies from Western culture, neither the male or the female needs to be the one who's the aggressor or the initiator.

Amanda Moehring 35:06

Well essentially the parents are evaluating the cues in that case rather than the individuals.

Henry Standage 35:11

Last question, we'll end with this? Is it fair to assume on a first date that somebody else isn't being 100% themselves? And because of that, you don't have a responsibility to either?

Amanda Moehring 35:25

If you are both trying to feel out, is this person a potential partner, you're going to want to present your best side, right? And the best side of you that you think that other person will think is your best side. Again, it's in your interest to have honesty associated with that, because again, if you have any goal towards a longer-term relationship, the real you will come out, right. So, you don't want to be dishonest. But is it dishonest to just try and put your best foot forward? I don't know if I'd go that far. I mean, certainly in job interviews, we do that in lots of areas. So, I commend people who try and show their best selves in interactions.

Geoff Wild 36:07

Yeah, I'd say as someone who's had a lot of first dates, and not many second ones, if there's going to be an opportunity to be dishonest, it's probably going to be most profitable. And in the early stages of a relationship, right, as those as those costs accumulate, I'm committed to this adaptive story that I've been telling. So, as those costs accumulate, it's going to be harder and harder to keep up that facade and the truth will come out I suspect

Henry Standage 36:40

Well take Quinten for instance, Quintin thinks his best side is speaking in a pirate voice on first dates. And we always tell him you shouldn't do that man.

Amanda Moehring 36:54

Well, it depends on who he's trying to convince right if she shows up with an eyepatch and a pirate hat and green hair you that might be a completely winning strategy.

Henry Standage 37:14

Thanks so much for listening to the Western Science Speaks podcast, if you liked it, share it with your friends, or check us out on SoundCloud, Spotify and Podbean for more episodes. We also are biweekly Mondays at 11:30am on Radio Western. We'll announce the winner of the giveaway later this week. So, stay posted for that. I'm Henry Standage, signing out. Have a wonderful Valentine's Day.