

## 10 | ARE FEMINISTS LESS ATTRACTIVE THAN NORMAL WOMEN?

Feminism is just a way for ugly women to get into the mainstream of America.

**Rush Limbaugh** 1951- American radio host and conservative political commentator

Many years ago, as a young man, I went to a nightclub late one evening, and made an observation which mystified me at the time, but which suddenly made sense when I came to write this chapter. There were perhaps 20 to 30 young women in the club, many of them inebriated in the British manner, which tends to shock those of the American persuasion. The behaviour of the young ladies ranged from attention-seeking on the dance floor to being slumped moodily in the darker corners of the room.

If I'd lined up the ladies in a line reflecting their apparent levels of confidence – an action to which they might have objected, to be fair – the line would have accurately displayed a spectrum of attractiveness, ranging from the least attractive woman in the room to the most attractive. There was clearly some sort of hierarchy based on attractiveness, in a way that was far less true of the young *men* in the room. Why might this be? We'll return to the question shortly.

Are feminists less attractive than normal women? In general, yes. Oh, come on. A number of feminists contacted me after the publication of *The Glass Ceiling Delusion* to complain that the woman on the cover pandered to the stereotype of feminists being unattractive.

Ironically, they themselves were reinforcing the stereotype. It hadn't occurred to me that anyone might think the woman was

a feminist. The image had simply been one of more than 7,000 photographs on an internet photograph library<sup>1</sup> which appeared after I'd employed the keywords 'angry woman'. From memory it was the only photograph which showed an angry woman looking upwards into the viewer's eyes, thereby intimating that she was looking *through* the glass ceiling at the viewer, by implication a senior executive. The responses I received from a number of the feminists to this explanation might best be described as unladylike.

The fact that *some* feminists are physically attractive doesn't alter the fact that most aren't. There often seems to be a link between the degree of a feminist's unattractiveness and her commitment to feminist ideology. The late Andrea Dworkin comes inevitably to mind. Until and unless we accept the link between unattractiveness and feminism we can't begin to understand one of the prime reasons feminists are so angry, unless there's some truth in an alternative explanation I outline in the next chapter, that feminists might suffer from PPS (Permanent Premenstrual Syndrome).

British author Steve Moxon in his book *The Woman Racket* (2008) describes the male dominance hierarchy ('DH'). In the pre-industrial world a man's position in the DH was largely dictated by physical prowess or access to men and arms, while in the modern developed world it's largely dictated by actual or potential financial resources. Women seek partners as high up the hierarchy as possible and have their own dominance hierarchy, as Moxon explains:

'So how does a female DH form if it does not involve physical contest? Mostly it's simply by inheritance – including in primates and human societies. The physical attributes of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://bigstockphoto.com>

females that are attractive to males in signalling fertility of youth and beauty are predominantly genetically based, so are well conserved from one generation to the next. Attractive women will tend to have attractive daughters. 'The key attribute of youth is an even more pronounced 'given', in that older age cohorts are simply not 'in the game'.

In traditional societies a woman's position in the DH is largely a product of nature, as youth and beauty are the main factors. However the existence in modern societies of multi-billion dollar cosmetics, fashion and plastic surgery industries shows that beauty can be enhanced and the ravages of age can at least be postponed. The rocketing sales of celebrity and beauty magazines show that women are indeed keen to rank themselves according to a uniquely female DH; but the great difficulty involved in attempting to overcome the limitations of nature has manifested itself in the form of modern female epidemics such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, slimming disorders being rare in males.

Perhaps the sheer difficulty of the task of climbing the female DH (males simply have to work harder or take extra risks) explains the fascination of Victoria Beckham to a female audience – her strange elfish features and cyborg-style cartoon body are more frequently found on the front covers of women's magazines than anyone else. If such an odd-looking creature is attractive to an über-alpha male like her husband David, then women are understandably eager to re-assess their *own* DH ranking in the light of this.

Females also tend to compete by doing down other females in terms of sexual propriety – hence the common playground 'ho' and 'slag' derogations. This alerts men to a woman's propensity to indulge in extra-pair sex, and consequently might well put them off considering her as a long-term partner.'

While women bemoan societal pressures to be attractive and slim, for example by exposure to advertisements for cosmetics and skincare products, you have to ask why they respond to those pressures so much more readily than men would. The use of such products as 'manscara' and skin products for men appear limited to fashionable 'metrosexuals'. The answer is

clear. Women receive special treatment in proportion to their degree of attractiveness — mainly, but not solely, special treatment from men. There's a high financial and emotional return on attractiveness for women, a great deal higher than the returns enjoyed by attractive men.

The higher up the female dominance hierarchy a woman can manage to climb, the better her chances of attaining and retaining a high status male. The 'attaining' element typically results in marriage, and given the crippling financial implications of divorce to men, women have little incentive to remain slim and attractive after they marry; which perhaps goes some way to explaining the near-universal phenomenon of women putting on weight in the months and years after they marry. While their husbands remain in fine physical condition throughout their lives, obviously...

But what of the women towards the bottom of the female dominance hierarchy, the *least* attractive women? For many of them, even a superhuman effort won't move them far up the hierarchy, so they inevitably feel a resentment towards not only the men who pay them less attention than they pay more attractive women, but also towards the women able to exploit their attractiveness. It shouldn't come as a surprise that such women will tend to have a bitter outlook on the world, and seminars on 'Celebrating and Experiencing Fatness' (which we'll be coming to later in this book) make sense in this light.

There's an intriguing irony here. The women who come the closest to attaining equality with men are the *least* attractive women, because they share men's challenge to improve their lives through the medium of work rather than relying on their attractiveness to exploit the earning power of a partner. It's little wonder unattractive women are unhappy so much of the

time, or that they make up such a large proportion of the feminist sisterhood.

A final thought. I've long been puzzled at the lack of serious criticism of feminists from the vast majority of women who are not themselves feminists, and whose interests are harmed by them. What might account for this? On the one hand, there's a strong class identity among women, who typically derive much of their self-esteem simply from being women. Men, conversely, typically acquire self-esteem from what they achieve in life, often through work.

But I suspect also that attractive women are conscious that unattractive women aren't enjoying the special treatment that they themselves enjoy, and feel some guilt about that reality. Also, I suspect, many women simply find some feminists *terrifying*.