

## *Supplementary Material*

# **Evolutionary theories and men's preferences for women's Waist-to-Hip Ratio: Which Hypotheses Remain? A systematic review.**

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### **Collection methods**

I searched for scientific articles and book chapters using Google Scholar. Searches included various combinations of the keywords: “WHR”, “waist”, “hip”, “men's preferences”, “human mate choice”, “mating preferences” and “physical attractiveness”. Next, an extensive review of the references of relevant articles was carried out. I only include published research where the primary language is English. Articles and book chapters are included if they address men's preferences for women's WHR, based on an evolutionary approach.

The final dataset consists of 104 papers from 58 different first authors, including 13 review papers and chapters, from 1993 to 2017. There are a few references to the adaptive role of preferences for curvaceousness or roundedness before 1993, but this collection starts with the first paper explicitly mentioning WHR as a cue of mate value (Singh, 1993a).

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria of the hypotheses**

Hypotheses concerning men's adaptive preferences toward women's WHRs, waist size or hip size are included. Descriptive information about WHR (e.g., “WHR is sexually dimorphic”, or “WHR decrease at puberty in women”) and proximal mechanisms for a low or high WHR (e.g., effects of hormones on fat storage and distribution), are not listed as hypotheses for men's adaptive preferences (but they are included in figure 1 and supplementary table, for the record). Hypotheses concerning the evolutionary benefits of preferences for fat quantity (and not distribution) are excluded as they are not specific to WHR.

Hypotheses assuming that WHR is only an indicator of BMI are not included. According to this idea, preferences for a certain WHR would be an artefact of preferences for a certain BMI. This argument is mostly targeting specific studies using stimuli confounding the two measurements (for example, by increasing WHR through the manipulation of the waist only). It is true that WHR and BMI are correlated, but the correlation varies greatly according to the focus population (including or excluding pre-pubertal or post-menopausal women, pregnant, obese or anorexic women, etc. Sugiyama, 2015). Overall, there is enough evidence that WHR conveys information which is different from BMI (Sugiyama, 2015).

It is also important to make the distinction between hypotheses regarding the selection of men's preferences toward a certain WHR (what we are interested in here) and hypotheses about the evolutionary origin of a specific female WHR in the human species. The origin of human's female WHR and men's preference for female WHR can be related, but the link is not consequential (i.e., the

selection of a low WHR does not necessarily lead to a selection of the preferences for a low WHR). Hypotheses concerning the evolution of a specific WHR in humans by natural selection are not included, unless they are described as hypotheses for the selection of men's preferences as well.

Non-adaptive hypotheses are not included here (e.g., sociocultural explanations and the super-stimuli hypothesis; see the discussion section).

### Coding of the hypotheses

First, all the hypotheses used to explain an adaptive preference for a certain (low, high or average) WHR are listed. Then, each paper from the dataset is reviewed individually to see which of these hypotheses was mentioned (see supplementary table S1). The hypothesis is coded as present even if mentioned very briefly using a few words only. For example, the sentence "WHR is a cue of youth and fertility" is sufficient to validate the presence of the hypotheses "WHR as a cue of (reproductive) age" and "WHR as a cue of fertility or potential reproductive success" (see supplementary table S1). Synonyms are accounted for. For example, the terms "Reproductive capability" and "Reproductively viable" are recorded within the "WHR as a cue of fertility or potential reproductive success" hypothesis. To be coded as present, a hypothesis only needs to be mentioned, not endorsed by the author (the hypothesis is coded as present even when the author is conveying doubts about its plausibility, although this case is very rare).

In a few cases, references to a hypothesis are ambiguous. For example, the term "reproductive status" is used in two papers, without further explanation. This term is large and could, in theory, include disparate hypotheses such as "WHR as a cue of fertility or potential reproductive success", "WHR as a cue of current pregnancy", "WHR as a cue of (reproductive) age" and "WHR as a cue of parity", for example. Without any additional information nor references associated to the term, all the potential hypotheses are recorded as present (but indicated with an interrogation mark in supplementary table S1). Similarly, in one chapter (Little, 2015), "indirect benefits" are very briefly mentioned, which, at least in evolutionary biology, usually implies genetic quality (the hypothesis "cue of genetic quality" is recorded in that case).

**Supplementary Table S1. References to the different hypotheses of men's adaptive preferences for women's WHR in the literature in the past 25 years.** This table includes the papers collected for this review: scientific papers and chapters exploring the relationships between WHR and female attractiveness with an evolutionary perspective. In a few cases, the reference to the hypothesis was unclear and represented with an interrogation mark. Reviews are signaled with a striped background. Characteristics related to women's fertility are represented in blue. In green: characteristics related to women's health. In yellow: characteristics related to women's environment. In orange: characteristics related to the descendants' quality.

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