

**Why I prefer to date White Women** (Evening Standard, Fri 1 November, 2002)  
by David Matthews

*About half of black men in Britain are in interracial relationships. One writer explores the reasons which run deeper than skin colour*

BBC2's new series of *Babyfather* spells bad news for black men. Apart from rehashing the same old racial stereotypes (we're still flaky, can't commit, etc), the show's subplot about a relationship between one of the protagonists and a white woman is guaranteed to make life extremely uncomfortable for cosmopolitans everywhere. Especially me.

As a 35-year-old black man who has been sexually active for almost 20 years, it's fair to say I've dated more than my fair share of white women. I was married to one, had a child with another, and am now dating a woman who has red hair and happens to be Jewish. The majority of my long-term relationships have been with white women.

I'll probably get lynched by black women for writing about why, over the years, I've dated so many white females, but here goes. I've heard every cliché there is on the subject and have been accused of "selling out" enough times to have the strength of character to define myself by who I am, not who I choose to sleep with.

Do I have an unhealthy predilection for white flesh; do I have identity issues; am I ashamed of my "race"; or am I on the make (as a struggling author and because of the media circles I move in, most of the women I meet are well-heeled professionals)? None of the above. But as a black man living in a predominantly white environment, what am I supposed to do, don a bow tie, flog *The Final Call* outside Brixton Tube and build myself a mud hut in order to "keep it real"?

Black women in particular give me a hard time when they see me out with my white girlfriend. On the rare occasions that I have been to a black event with a white woman on my arm, I have felt tension, and had some dismissive looks. They accuse me of acting like a Premiership footballer just because I've had one or two blonde girlfriends.

They tell me I've "got a thing for white girls" because they're an "easy ride". Believe me, no woman is an easy ride, but I have to admit there is a grain of truth in this statement. Black women do tend to give us a hard time.

When I have dated black women, I've been dumped for demonstrating a lack of "consciousness" - ie, I don't hate white people enough and I've had my advances spurned by numerous headwrap-wearing "black sisters" after admitting to "tupping the white ewe", as Iago put it in *Othello*.

Black men are usually a lot less critical of interracial relationships, mainly because at any given moment 50 per cent of them are in one.

I'm often asked why so many of us date white women. Undoubtedly there are those who have a preference for white women, much as they might have a fetish for tall women, or busty ones. White women are as exotic to black men as say Asian or oriental women are to white men. But I cite approachability as a factor when it comes to why I date white women. They just don't have as many hang-ups.

Despite the bump-and-grind sexual posturing of innumerable hip-hop videos, which

portray black women as living, breathing sex toys, they tend to be conservative and surprisingly old-fashioned.

White women are reaping the benefits of the feminist movement far more than their black peers - they appear to have a greater freedom and control over their sexuality. Black women, specifically Afro-Caribbean ones, good Christian girls that they are, are pretty strait-laced when it comes to sex.

They expect you to pick them up, pay for dinner, and drop them off at the front door with no more than a peck on the cheek. Whereas white women are often more daring, adventurous and self-assured in the bedroom.

THIS conservatism also extends to the dating ritual. Most of the black women I come into contact with are obsessed with how much money you earn; they have bought into the American claptrap spouted by the likes of Destiny's Child in *Independent Woman*. Most black men find they have to jump through burning hoops to get with a black woman. If you ain't got the car, the yard, the career, the bling-bling then don't think about asking me out.

Of course, there is a tradition of black women being financially responsible: they are often the sole or main breadwinner, perhaps because black men don't always get the career breaks that they do. Black women tend to buy into the propaganda that portrays us as being useless, and don't always cut us a lot of slack.

Judging by this week's episode of *Babyfather*, the BBC has no problem reinforcing the stereotype that black women are demanding, confrontational and belligerent. I asked a white colleague (who's never dated a black woman) what he thought of them.

His impression (doubtless based on crud like *Babyfather*) was that they are "scary". There is some truth in this image; I wish they would chill out a bit. I was going out with a black woman for a couple of months, and she asked me what my intentions were; now that is truly scary.

Going out with a white woman isn't, for me, some kind of trendy boho fashion statement. When I had a daughter with a white woman, it brought home to me the consequences of my actions: that I had brought a child into a world that is far from reconciling its racial and cultural differences.

Perhaps when my daughter is my age she'll have other, less daunting moral imperatives to deal with.