

MODERN MARRIAGE

Career women set bar too high for Mr Right

High-flyers are struggling to find men with a similar level of education and earning power, but are refusing to 'marry down'

Nicholas Hellen Social Affairs Editor

They outnumber men at university, but a generation of high-flying women are now grappling with an unwelcome outcome: they cannot find enough eligible men whom they consider to be good marriage material.

The problem is not so much the men's lack of commitment or poor relationship skills but the shortage of men with degrees and higher incomes, according to an academic study.

It states: "Unmarried women, on average, are looking for a man who has an income that is about 66% higher and a likelihood of having a college degree that is about 49% higher than what is available."

The lead author Daniel Lichter, professor of sociology at Cornell University, and his co-author Joseph Price, from Brigham Young University, have devised a formula for working out what unmarried women want in a potential spouse.

They have analysed data from 10.5m households surveyed from 2010-13 by the US Census Bureau to establish the characteristics of married couples aged 25-45. In the working paper, Mismatches in the Marriage Market, they assumed that the unmarried women were seeking similar characteristics as the women who were married.

Price said the findings were relevant to Britain because of similar trends here. Official figures show 55% of women enter higher education by the age of 30 compared with 43% of men and the proportion of couples with children where only one adult works has almost halved in the past 40 years from 47%, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

For women, marriage often involves "hypergammy", the process of "marrying up". But it seems many women have failed to adjust their expectations as their personal fortunes have risen.

Harry Benson, research director at the Marriage Foundation, a pressure group, said: "The marriage market may be

further skewed against high-flying women because potential male partners are still predisposed to 'marrying down'."

Susanna Abse, a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, said both sexes had played a part in creating the problem.

"You have got high-status, high-income men who can choose from a market of well-educated women and then you have got a lot of ordinary men whom women don't want because they don't meet their expectations," she said.

"People are not saying 'this is my shopping list', but they may not feel excited by the person who has not been at university and is working in a low-level job.

"Each of us has a kind of fantasy of what we want. We are sold this general ambitiousness which is causing us a lot of problems. We should be a bit more satisfied with being ordinary and having ordinary partners. Nobody likes to hear that."

Lord Willetts, chairman of the Resolution Foundation think tank, said: "This American research is telling us that the days of the conventional male breadwinner are disappearing and this changes relationships between the sexes."

Might women be prepared to adjust their expectations? The academics say some high-flying women may be prepared to "marry down", but caution that the weight of research suggests that, given the choice, most unmarried women choose instead to remain single.

The academics warn: "At a minimum, our results reinforce the view that highly educated women may face increasingly difficult marriage trade-offs when the likelihood of a suitable match is low."

They say that more than a third of women will remain unmarried or, if they do get hitched, will be poorly matched.

Benson said: "Better educated women quite rightly means the bar is rising. Smarter women deserve smarter men."

"But, ultimately, what makes a marriage work has nothing to do with income and education and everything to do with commitment, friendship, interest and kindness. That's a truly smart marriage."

For Lichter and Price, achieving marital bliss has less to do with learning new relationship skills than pushing men to boost their standing in the workplace: "[Finding] good jobs may ultimately be the best marriage promotion policy."

@nicholashellen

HANNAH PETERS/ALBERT NIEBOER/WILLIAM WEST



Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand's prime minister, with Clarke Gayford and their new daughter Neve. Above, Julia Gillard and her partner Timothy Mathieson



The Duke and Duchess of Sussex on a visit to Dublin

MARRYING DOWN

Jacinda Ardern Prime minister of New Zealand Graduate of Waikato University	Partner	Clarke Gayford Presenter of Fish of the Day documentary show
Meghan Markle Actress and duchess Graduate of Northwestern University	Husband	Henry of Wales Prince Passed out from Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
Julia Gillard Prime minister of Australia 2010-13 Graduate of Melbourne University	Partner	Timothy Mathieson Hairdresser



I don't want the cream of the crop, just a guy who can make me laugh

ELLIE AUSTIN



Last weekend I watched a university friend marry a man she met on her third night at Durham University. Crunched into a pew of the pretty Cotswold church, I counted 10 other couples – many now married – who first locked eyes in the city's lecture theatres and sweaty nightclubs.

"Maybe we should have just shacked up with the guys who fancied in first year," sighed my friend Alicia, 28, as

we watched our former classmates canoodle on the dancefloor. "Life would have been so much easier."

My friends and I, all in our late twenties, fall into one of two camps: the long-term couples who discuss wedding hymns and school catchment areas at dinner parties, and the rest of us who roam around with no one to answer to – often happily, sometimes feeling slightly empty.

The latter category is almost exclusively made up of women.

Two years ago I wrote an article for this newspaper in which I interviewed some of my smart, brilliant girlfriends who were single despite wanting relationships. They

complained about flaky men, insincere men, philandering men, but never about men who were too stupid or underqualified to be taken seriously.

London's dating pool is teeming with well-heeled City types and hipsters who worship Louis Theroux and read The Economist. It's not traditional intelligence that is lacking – it's the emotional kind.

I couldn't give two hoots whether a man went to university or how much he earns as long as he is trustworthy and makes me laugh. In an age when British women between the ages of 22 and 29 out-earn their male counterparts, a relationship

is no longer a stepping stone to financial security, meaning we can be more open-minded than ever.

This includes accepting that we might not end up in a relationship at all. If I'm single in my mid-thirties I will figure out a way of having a child on my own, a fact that I recently announced to my parents.

"But who would pay the mortgage while you were looking after the baby?" yelled my dad in panic.

In the meantime, I won't be writing anyone off. Yes, I might meet the love of my life at the next Durham wedding but he could just as easily be hiding somewhere a lot less predictable.

Scots hops brew up better lives

Julia Horton

Herbal teas made from home-grown hops are being used by one of Scotland's most deprived communities to fight insomnia, depression and anxiety.

The pioneering project, Communita, is led by the Grass Roots Remedies co-operative in Edinburgh and involves residents of Wester Hailes growing, harvesting and foraging for herbs and other plants.

Once the plants are dried, residents learn how to make herbal teas at workshops, before distributing them free to people in the community. The plants used include St John's wort and hops.

Some of the hops have been used by herbalists to make treatments for patients who attend a weekly clinic run by Grass Roots Remedies. The initiative is credited with helping people to overcome debilitating conditions linked to sleep deprivation.

"The majority of our patients at the Wester Hailes herbal clinic have some level of life trauma, causing a range of health problems and conditions including depression, anxiety and a lot of issues with sleeping," said Ally Hurcikov, from Grass Roots Remedies.

"The hops they are harvesting are the same as those you would use to make beer. They are very sedative and bitter and are used in many sleep mixes."

Rhona Donaldson, a fellow member of the co-operative, a gardener and part of the Health Agency, a Wester Hailes community group,



Plants are foraged to make the teas in the Grass Roots Remedies project

originally planted the hops to screen the community garden fence.

"They have quite a strong smell, which can have quite a calming effect. People always ask if it's cannabis, and when we tell them it's hops, they are curious but sceptical," said Donaldson.

"A lot of people who go to the clinic get interested in plants, and we can tell them they don't need to buy exotic herbs from China – they can grow alternatives here.

“They have quite a strong smell. People always ask if it's cannabis

"Every few weeks now volunteers who have grown seeds on allotments or other gardens are bringing in their harvest, which we're drying."

The clinic is at the NHS Healthy Living Centre in Wester Hailes, which offers health and social services to promote better integrated care.

Dr Peter Cairns, whose Wester Hailes medical practice is based at the centre, refers patients to the clinic. He said herbal

medicine provided a "genuine, evidence-based alternative" to numerous predictable and preventable ailments suffered by people in deprived areas.

"As a GP I can tell patients to stop smoking, but I think they are better able to take on those kinds of messages around wellness and looking after themselves from the herbal clinic, which has a different culture [from a traditional doctors' surgery]," said Cairns.

Leonard under fire in anti-semitism row

John Boothman

The Scottish Labour leader, Richard Leonard, is under pressure to move against a councillor who accused Britain's leading Jewish newspapers of acting as agents for the Israeli secret service to keep Jeremy Corbyn out of Downing Street.

Mary Lockhart, a Labour councillor in Fife, provoked outrage after posting remarks on Facebook when three Jewish newspapers published a joint front-page article condemning Labour over anti-semitism.

Leonard has not commented, but last night a senior party figure described it as "a major test" for the Scottish Labour leader, who "must be seen to take action". Former Dunfermline Labour MP Thomas Docherty has written to Labour's

Scottish secretary Brian Roy calling for Lockhart to be expelled.

The Fife councillor challenged the articles, saying: "If it is a Mossad-assisted campaign to prevent the election of a Labour government pledged to recognise Palestine as a state, it is unacceptable interference in the democracy of Britain."

"Israel is a racist state and since the Palestinians are also semites, it is an anti-semitic state."

A spokesman for Leonard said he had made it clear since being elected that there was zero tolerance of, and no room for, anti-semitism or any form of racism in the party.

However, Paul Masterton, the Conservative MP for East Renfrewshire, criticised Leonard's failure to address the issue. Masterton, whose constituency contains one of

Scotland's largest Jewish populations, has called on Leonard to clarify his position.

"The anti-semitic rhetoric that has been coming from the Scottish Labour party has been appalling, yet Richard Leonard has refused to break his silence," he said.

"We once again had one of his councillors peddling ignorant and horrific views on Jewish people, revealing the deep-rooted problems Scottish Labour have on this issue."

"We have seen no action from Richard Leonard to show that he is taking these issues seriously."

It is the latest in a series of rows involving the Labour party and Corbyn, who refuse to accept the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-semitism, which includes over-sweeping condemnation of Israel.



Docherty is calling for Lockhart to be expelled from the Scottish Labour Party