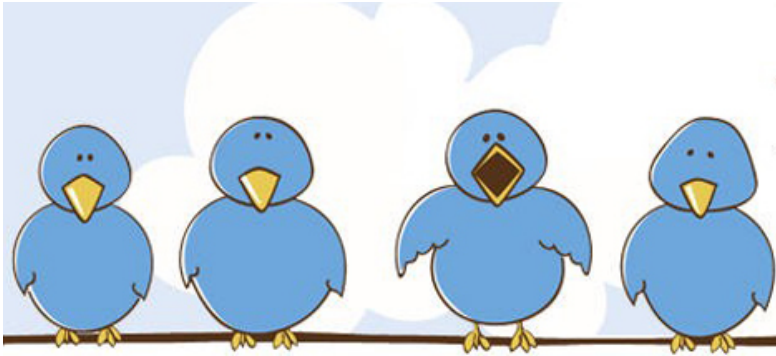


Birds of a Feather

Written by Jack Sparacino

Tuesday, 17 September 2019 12:38 - Last Updated Wednesday, 18 September 2019 05:04



"And if you call me at 4 am, too sad to even say hello, I will listen to your silence until you fall asleep." - Anonymous

There's an old saying about how opposites attract. Old but wrong.

While individual examples abound ("hey, my mousy aunt Bertha married a genuine bigmouth, um, extrovert"), in real life, couples form up based on innumerable similarities. Height, relative weight, eye color, moral development, intelligence, compassion, education, religion, soda preference (ok I made the soda one up but don't bet against it), outgoingness, political bent, and so forth.

I passed a very large, middle aged black woman hustling handouts for Dunkin' Donuts last week. I reached into my wallet for a belated donation, but only had a ten. When I handed it to her and said 'don't ask me again,' she hustled across the street with the money without saying a peep. 'You're welcome, ma'am.' Just like some of the birds, the "scavengers" as my homeless friend Carrie calls them.

Hit and run. Like when you give the sparrows and their pals a doughnut or muffin. They strafe, dive bomb and karate chop the darned thing into rapid oblivion. Often they grab a huge hunk and fly off with it. Come to think of it, they don't thank me either, at least not in so many words. But a simple nod from Dunkin' Lady would have gone a long way with me. And yes, she did emerge from that fine establishment with a tray of coffee and pastry. I didn't see where she flew off to. Maybe she went where the birds go with doughnuts. Coffee, anyone?

Back in the park the next morning I noticed four half-court pickup games of basketball

underway. The girls and I stopped under a tree to watch. Three of the games were mixed race, mostly black with a scattering of white kids and one Asian. The fourth was all black, a teen boy and girl and jeepers was she good. Nailed a series of free throws before rimming a few more as she drove right against his defense. Spectators ringed the courts, mostly black with some whites and several Asians. Several of the black lads had their shirts off, showing off perfectly formed torsos. They traded standard issue trash talk like candy. I'll keep checking for mixed race (or age) pickup groups but won't hold my breath.

Couples passing through are still a horse of a different color, if I may mangle a colloquial expression. Blacks, whites and Asians form mixed couples here and there, maybe five per cent of the total. Almost always they are young. They smile and hold hands, converse and stare at their phones like any other couples. Tuck into restaurants and bars, coffee shops. No one seems to pay any attention. (*'What, are you nuts? The Sox are playing New Yawk this afternoon for Gawd's sake!'*)

For someone like me, having not lived in a mixed neighborhood since Chicago, it's refreshing. If the couples like and respect each other, I'm all in. If they don't, well then sister, get the heck out. Yeah, I'm talking to the more sensible sex. Even if you're the disrespecter and he's the disrespectee (or is it jerk and jerky?).

Okay, speaking of couples. They look to me like someone sorted them into pairs, like socks, knowing that women in particular often trade their looks for an attractive mate. Handsome? Learned? Sitting on some cash? Speaks a couple languages? Likes my mother? Sign him up!

Here's a perfect example from last week. Two lovely Asians, he an inch or two taller perhaps, white shirt and black pants, ball cap. She a regal vision in a long white dress adorned with silkscreen flowers, red and blue. They slid into the back seat of their Uber like two cheese knives into a wedge of warm brie. Are they as happy as they are photogenic?

Women prefer taller men for the most part. The fact is, men are on average five inches taller than their mates though many women say they prefer their ideal mate to be a solid eight inches taller. Makes for kind of slim pickings for gals over 5'10, it would seem. I've seen several couples go for the disparity record. In each case the (white only so far) woman came up to her partner's elbow. I imagined them kissing each other good night and him getting a crook in his neck from bending over, her a pulled hamstring from too much time on her tiptoes.

Other physical similarities with couples extend far beyond height. A woman with severe acne was accompanied by a fellow with equally bad skin. ‘You know what it’s like, bro, dealing with this for years. Hey where can we get some good sushi here?’ For months, Ken and Barbie sat in front of me in church. Tall, youthful, symmetrically featured, beaming parents. Their (cute, of course) seven year old, brown eyed daughter melted into dad’s lap and drifted off before sliding into mom’s. Hallmark stuff.

The brainiacs pair off as do the Christians, Jews, Mormons, Buddhists. Doughnut freaks. MAGA’s and never Trumpers. The Fox News and CNN crowds. Dog lovers. Sox and Clemson fans. Blue collars. Fitness buffs and squishy slugs. Opposites attract? Not much in this world. It’s birds of a feather every airborne day. Comedic legend Phyllis Diller once noted that, “Whatever you may look like, marry a man your own age — as your beauty fades, so will his eyesight.” Did I mention that couples are highly similar in age, but only mostly? I saw an ancient Chinese couple, been together since smelting began. Both under five feet. Crawling up the street would require acceleration. They each carried a bag of vegetables from the Chinese market a block away. Ciao, [🐦](#) [🐦](#), sweeties.

At my age, most American women are younger than me. The average American woman is 52, or sixteen years my junior. Fact is, my lady dining companions are younger than that. After rehearsing snappy responses to any questions about the age gap, I planned to keep it simple. “She’s my niece. OK, my daughter. Kid sister. Way kid. Client. Manager. Style consultant. Yeah, that’s it. *Styl*econsultant.” What a disappointment. No one has asked me anything like that. But I’m ready.

The fact is, people just don’t care in many places—and increasingly so – about all this appearance stuff. If you can fit in the booth, don’t mind sitting in the bar, like lobster, have eaten crackers in your life, please come in. Let me tell you about our specials.

As for “opposites attract,” they generally don’t but when they do it’s practically front page news. People notice things that are different, out of place. Things that don’t “match” or “go together.” Like a place setting or parlor room décor.

As for the birds, they should continue to flock together. I’m just not ready for sparrows and pigeons to marry and start having pigarros or speoms. At least not until the folks at Sesame

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Street can weigh in.