



Next Stop: Maxim

Growing up, I had always heard of Jane Goodall, knew that she had something to do with primate research, and that she was famous. So when my second-grader came home from school and announced that she had chosen to do a presentation about Goodall, I thought it would be a nice opportunity for me to learn something, too. And did I ever.

I learned that Goodall discovered that chimpanzees use tools, which had previously been thought to be an exclusively human capacity. I learned that Goodall did very important early work in assessing chimpanzee social structure. I learned that Goodall found remarkable similarities between aspects of chimpanzee personality and human personality, demonstrating that chimps exhibited a range of emotions and character traits much like humans, including compassion, sociability, cruelty, and violence.

And — if it can be called that — I learned that during the 1960's, when Goodall was lionized through a series of National Geographic television specials, she was an extremely beautiful young woman.

Tall, slim, with a shock of blond hair and classically high cheekbones, Goodall was perfect for television. And the media obliged, featuring her in a series of nationally televised specials and making sure to promote several [quasi-cheesecake shots](#), aided by ubiquitous short shorts, that showed off enough skin to keep viewers coming back.

Goodall wasn't the only celebrity scientist of the period: [Jacques Cousteau](#) was also a media darling, and no one would compare him to Brad Pitt. But Cousteau had been doing his work for decades: he had developed the Aqua-Lung and written several award-winning scientific books by the time the networks got to him. And he was a film-maker as well. At the time she became famous, Goodall was a 26-year-old who had not even gone to college.

Don't get me wrong: Goodall was and is an excellent scientist. Her research was pathbreaking. [The institute she founded](#) is doing amazing work and she is a rightfully genuine inspirational figure. I'm delighted that my daughter looks up to her. But if you think that that is why she became famous, I've got a bridge in Brooklyn to sell you.

So what's the moral of the story? If, say, climate advocates want to develop international spokespeople to speak out on climate issues, then focusing on resume, or even verbal articulateness, might not be adequate. They might want to look at...er...*other things*. It's crass. It's shallow. It's sexist (although let's not discount the beefcake possibilities). It

undermines the scientific and moral urgency of the issue.

And it might save the planet. 