

A.S. AMIN

CONFLICTS *of* FITNESS

ISLAM, AMERICA, AND
EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY



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Islam, America, and Evolutionary Psychology

A.S. Amin

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For Mr. Lulu and Gigi

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P R E F A C E

The initial event that ultimately led to the existence of this book took place almost nineteen years ago. I was flipping through TV channels and stumbled upon a show about something called evolutionary psychology on *The Learning Channel*. It did not take long to realize that this new discipline was capable of offering profound insight into nearly every aspect of human nature.

Over the next several years, I spent an ever-increasing amount of time learning more about evolutionary psychology and analyzing the various aspects of my own life (e.g., my religion, the society in which I lived, the music I listened to, etc.) through this Darwinian framework. I was constantly amazed at the ability of evolutionary psychology to offer elegant, coherent, and parsimonious explanations for what initially appeared to be a bewildering diversity of human beliefs and behaviors. Eventually, I felt I had come up with enough novel arguments to attempt writing a book of my own.

Seven years and countless hours later, my manuscript was complete. After a decade of hard work, all that was left was the “trivial” matter of getting the book published. Unfortunately, a lack of familiarity with all the publishing options available, along with starting a career and a family, led to a long period of procrastination. Before I knew it, eight more years had passed. However, turning forty has the tendency to refocus a person, and the official passing of my youth has provided me the impetus to finally see this project to its completion.

There is no shortage of books about evolutionary psychology; dozens of excellent books are widely available. So what is special about this one? For starters, the extant literature is largely silent when it comes to Islam. American pop culture, particularly hip-hop, is afforded even less attention. Perhaps this is to be expected; I doubt many evolutionary

psychologists have spent a lot of time studying Islamic law or watching *Yo! MTV Raps*. Yet both Islam and American pop culture, because they occupy opposite ends of the reproductive spectrum (more on this later), bring the logic behind the totality of human reproductive behaviors into sharper focus. Beyond offering a unique perspective on topics routinely covered in other books, this book develops a number of original theories as well. Due to the multidisciplinary nature of this work, it is my strong conviction that anyone with an interest in Islam, evolutionary psychology, or American history and culture will find this book both edifying and engaging.

The long interval between the writing and publishing of this book explains why present-day events are not mentioned; for this shortcoming, I ask the readers' indulgence. Nevertheless, I believe that recent events in the Middle East provide stark confirmation of the theories set forth in this book, particularly those found in chapter four.

I would not have been able to write this book without the help of many others, all of whom I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. First of all, I would like to thank my mother and father. Without the education and free time their largesse provided, this book would never have been written. The entirety of the Columbia University library system was an invaluable aid in my research. Dozens of friends offered copious amounts of their limited time to evaluate the manuscript, and their feedback and criticisms improved this book greatly. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife. Inexplicably, she does not agree with everything in this book, particularly the ideas set forth in chapter one. Nonetheless, preparing this book for publication took up a lot of time that otherwise would have been spent with her and the kids, and her (mostly) unflagging support is greatly appreciated.

A.S. Amin
September 2015

INTRODUCTION

The past several decades have witnessed the formation of a revolutionary view of human nature, thanks to developments in the field of evolutionary psychology. Synthesizing evolutionary biology and cognitive psychology,¹ evolutionary psychology attempts to explain human behavior under the premise that the underlying function of the human brain is the maximization of its owner's *fitness*, or genetic legacy in future generations.²

Although this book will deal with a variety of topics, an underlying theme runs throughout its entirety. Attempts to maximize fitness inevitably cause conflicts of interest to arise. These conflicts manifest themselves in a seemingly endless variety of ways, on levels ranging from the individual to the civilizational. Examining these “conflicts of fitness” will be the subject of this book.

This book focuses on two civilizations: the Muslim world and the West (particularly the United States). It is our conviction that the study of one often offers insight into the other. Furthermore, the pursuit of maximal fitness involves various compromises and trade-offs, and the different ways these issues are addressed in each civilization has important implications for humanity as a whole.

This book limits itself to certain topics of interest, and does not attempt to discuss the tenets of Islam or evolutionary psychology in a comprehensive manner. Readers may find the books listed in the bibliography useful to remedy this situation.³

¹ Evans, D. and O. Zarate, *Introducing Evolutionary Psychology*, 3.

² Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 28.

³ Two books are especially recommended. They are *The Moral Animal* by Robert Wright and *Speaking in God's Name* by Khaled Abou El Fadl.

CHAPTER 1

Polygamy

The origins of this book lie in a discussion I once had with a friend who was sharing her views on religion. It was her opinion that *polygyny*⁴ has no place in a civilized society, deeming it an inherently misogynistic institution set up to cater to the perverted fantasies of men.

Islam's allowance of polygyny is just one thing among many that is cited as proof of its misogynistic nature. The first chapter of this book examines polygyny from a biological standpoint. This chapter will also allow us to introduce some of the conceptual foundations for the topics that are discussed in the rest of this book.

* * * * *

A wide range of reproductive strategies can be observed throughout the animal kingdom. For example, reptiles and fish generally produce large quantities of offspring but invest little or no time in raising them, relying on the probability that a small percentage will survive predation and other causes of death and reach maturity. Other animals, including mammals and birds, have fewer offspring but invest a significant amount of time and energy in their upbringing in order to increase the likelihood that they survive.⁵

⁴ Polygyny is defined as the state or practice of having more than one wife or female mate at a time. Polygamy is a more general term that encompasses polygyny and its antonym, polyandry.

⁵ Daly, M. and M. Wilson, *Sex, Evolution, and Behavior*, 185–187, 199–202.

Focusing on animals that invest heavily in raising their young, different reproductive strategies between the genders are commonly observed. This difference results mainly from differing amounts of *parental investment*.⁶ To begin with, males' sex cells are sperm, which can be produced in a nearly limitless supply at almost no cost. Conversely, females' sex cells, eggs, are relatively small in number and non-replenishable, making them much more valuable. Furthermore, it is generally the female who must deal with the hardships of gestation, delivery, and oftentimes being the sole provider for her offspring. Contrast this with the male, whose investment is often limited to the sperm he uses to impregnate a female.

Let us now look at how the different reproductive needs of males and females translate into the mating patterns of mammals. A commonly observed pattern involves an alpha male who exclusively mates with a group of females. Why this is so becomes clear if we look at how the participants benefit in such an arrangement. For the male, mating with multiple females gives him the ability to sire many offspring, all of whom will carry half of his genes. As for the females, this situation gives them access to the best genetic material possible, which is exceedingly important.

If an individual member of a male's progeny does not survive to adulthood, what does the male lose? For many mammals, the answer is: only the sperm with which he impregnated the female. Contrast this to a female who allows herself to be impregnated by a genetically inferior male. As mentioned previously, females expend an immense amount of energy to ensure their offspring's survival. To lose this offspring on the basis of a male's inferior genes is a reproductive catastrophe, given the limited number of future attempts females will have to raise their young. This is the reason why females are generally much more selective than males when choosing their mates.⁷

* * * * *

The reproductive patterns discussed above also have implications for human men and women. As with males of many other species, a man has a nearly limitless quantity of sperm that he could theoretically use to impregnate multiple women daily for as long as he lives. Therefore, a man's

⁶ See Trivers (1972).

⁷ See Orians (1969).

reproductive fitness is maximized by having as many mates as possible. It is also ideal for him to offer as little in the way of commitment and resources as possible, as offering these things hampers his ability to attract other mates. Women, on the other hand, obtain no intrinsic benefit from being promiscuous. Whether a woman sleeps with one man or a hundred, she still can only get pregnant the same number of times. As with females of many other species, it behooves a woman to be choosy when selecting a mate, given the huge investment of time and energy she must make in order to raise a child.

Good genes are not the only thing a woman wants in a man. In many species, females are the sole providers for their offspring. Although a human female is often capable of raising a child completely on her own, her task is made easier if the father also plays a role. Furthermore, considering that humans have spent the overwhelming percentage of their history in hunter-gatherer groupings,⁸ often under harsh conditions, having a man help out was usually much more important to the survival of children than it is today. A woman likely would have found it difficult to deal with pregnancy and providing for herself and her children without the help of a mate. Therefore, finding a man who has the means and desire to provide for his family is also a major component in a woman's quest to maximize her reproductive fitness.

Understanding the reproductive goals of men and women leads to the realization that a conflict necessarily ensues in their dealings with one another. The male ideal is realized by being promiscuous and offering as few resources as possible. The female ideal is realized by being in a long-term relationship in which the man shares everything he has with her and her children. Therefore, we can expect human reproductive behaviors to involve some sort of compromise between the two differing agendas.⁹

* * * * *

The institution of marriage plays a central role in human society. Every known culture on the planet has some form of marriage.¹⁰ A defining characteristic of Islam is its uncompromising position that sex is to take place only within the confines of a legally recognized bond such as

⁸ Symons, D., *The Evolution of Human Sexuality*, 35–36.

⁹ See Walsh (1993).

¹⁰ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 57.

marriage.¹¹ Therefore, in order to have sex, one must generally assume the many obligations that come with marriage. Islam also calls for strict penalties for people caught having illicit sexual relations.¹² The severity of these punishments indicates the importance Islam places on minimizing non-committed relationships.

It is interesting to note who benefits reproductively when a society forbids non-committed sexual relations. Although promiscuity can benefit members of both genders in certain situations, certain generalizations can be made. As we have previously seen, a man's reproductive fitness is maximized by mating with as many women and by offering as few resources as possible. Therefore, forbidding men to have sex while offering little or no commitment is to their reproductive detriment. Furthermore, forcing men to make a commitment to their mates and to support any children that result approximates the reproductive ideal for women.

So, certain aspects of Islam appear to benefit the reproductive needs of women at the expense of men. However, although Islam forbids men the opportunity to mate without commitment, it does make some allowances for the benefit men obtain by having as many mates as possible. Perhaps it is in this framework that Islam's allowance of polygyny can best be understood.

* * * * *

¹¹ However, it is important to note here that Islam allows men to have sex with their female slaves. We will address the topic of slavery in greater detail later in this book.

¹² The majority of Muslim jurists are of the opinion that the punishment for illicit sexual intercourse (*zinā*) is either to be flogged with one hundred lashes or to be stoned to death (depending on whether the perpetrator was single or married). A minority of jurists believe the punishment for *zinā* is flogging regardless of the individual's marital status, as the punishment of stoning is not mentioned in the Qur'an but relies on the existence of *āḥādī ḥadīth* (see chapter 3). It should be noted that jurists have stipulated that four upright individuals must actually witness the act of penetration before any punishment can be applied, and that an individual who accuses someone of *zinā* but then cannot provide the necessary amount of evidence can be flogged for the crime of slander. Jurists have also differed on a variety of other issues related to the punishment for *zinā*, including whether or not a single woman becoming pregnant can be used as proof of fornication, whether repentance can substitute for punishment, and whether such punishments should be applied in morally lax societies. For an excellent overview of this subject, see Kamali (1998).

It is a natural assumption that polygyny is a concession to men's reproductive needs that has a detrimental effect on women. Further analysis reveals this assumption to be overly simplistic. Assume the existence of a village with ten men and ten women who are ready to get married. Furthermore, assume that each person can be objectively ranked in terms of his/her desirability. In a society with a monogamous marriage institution, we would expect the most desirable man to marry the most desirable woman. The second most desirable man would marry the second most desirable woman and so on, culminating in the least desirable man marrying the least desirable woman.

Now assume the Islamic form of polygyny is introduced into this village. Assume the most desirable man is the manliest man the village has ever seen. He is extremely personable, exceedingly handsome, and unbelievably wealthy. Man #2, a desirable man in his own right, nevertheless pales in comparison to Man #1. Again, we would expect Woman #1 to marry Man #1. Woman #2, however, now has a couple of options. She could choose to monopolize Man #2 or share Man #1. Let us assume that, after careful consideration, she deems sharing Man #1 to be in her best interest, and that Woman #3 and #4 come to the same conclusion. Our last assumption will be that the rest of the marriages take place in a monogamous fashion.

So who benefited once polygyny was introduced into the village? Looking at the men, we see that Man #1 obviously benefits from polygyny. With monogamy, he was allowed only one wife. Now he has four, theoretically quadrupling his reproductive fitness. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for his fellow males. Man #2, who previously married Woman #2, now has to settle for Woman #5. The same thing happens to Man #3 through #7. As for Man #8 through #10, they are left with no wives at all.

As for the women, Woman #1 has been harmed by polygyny. She used to monopolize Man #1, but now is forced to share him with three other women. Assuming Women #2 through #4 are rational, intelligent people, they have benefited from polygyny. They had the opportunity to marry Man #2 but chose to share Man #1. One would assume, therefore, that this choice is to their benefit. As for Woman #5 through #10, they all *clearly* benefited, as they each were able to marry a more desirable man.

To summarize the effects of polygyny in our imaginary village, only one man benefited, while nine men were harmed. Three of the men do not even have a mate! Conversely, only one woman was harmed by polygyny, while nine women benefited. Although one can feel bad for Woman #1, it

is important to observe that her position has only decreased to the level that Women #2 through #4 deemed as their best option. Ultimately, she is still in as good a position as any woman in the village.

It is obvious that an actual society is very different from our imaginary village and that the previous exercise was filled with unrealistic assumptions. However, some broad generalizations can be deduced from this hypothetical village. The first of these is that polygyny can be expected to harm more men than it helps. Men who are less desirable than men who are able to attract more than one wife will have to settle for less desirable women, wait longer for new women to become available, or not have the opportunity to marry at all.

Conversely, polygyny can be expected to help more women than it hurts. Expanding a woman's choice of potential mates can be expected to be to her benefit. If it is in her interest to marry someone single, she can do that. If her interests are best served by sharing a man, she can do that. Not only does polygyny give less desirable females the option to marry men they would not have access to in a monogamous society, the remaining women benefit as they now have access to more desirable men who would have been taken by the women now in polygynous marriages. And although it is true that the addition of a new wife harms the previous wife, it remains likely that the previous wife will still be in a favorable situation. If the resulting marriage situation were to be so unbearable, the new wife would probably not have agreed to the proposal in the first place.

It should now be clear that the widespread assumption that polygyny benefits men and harms women is applicable only to the most desirable members of each gender. To properly analyze a marriage institution, it is not sufficient to only consider the reproductive needs of men versus women. An equally important distinction occurs *within* the genders. What is good for the most desirable men is harmful for less desirable men, and the same applies for women.¹³ Conventional wisdom states that Islam limits a man to four wives in order to protect women from being neglected. Perhaps this is the case. However, it would seem that the people who benefit most from minimizing polygyny are less desirable men. Unrestricted polygyny increases the likelihood of a situation where it becomes next to impossible for even an average man to find a wife. Having many men who are unable to find a mate can be a destabilizing force in society, and it may be important

¹³ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 96–100.

that a marriage institution works to ensure this type of situation does not occur.¹⁴

* * * * *

Theoretically, polygyny offers society a variety of advantages that monogamy does not. One of these advantages has to do with a society's gene pool. For example, when a TV nature show features a species in which an alpha male mates with numerous females, the narrator often points out that this arrangement helps ensure that the next generation will obtain the best genes possible, which plays an important role in that species' ability to thrive. Applying this type of logic to humans is very uncomfortable for most people. Such feelings are not without basis, as appeals to genetic inferiority have been used as justification for forced sterilization and even genocide.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it is hard to escape the conclusion that a situation in which the least fit men have a harder time finding a mate may be to a society's overall benefit.

Polygyny may also bring about an economic benefit for society. Almost every society has a significant percentage of people who live in poverty. Minimizing poverty poses a particularly difficult problem for any society, regardless of its level of overall wealth. Part of this difficulty stems from the extremely limited benefit wealthy people obtain from helping people who probably will never be able to offer anything in return.

Throughout the world, poverty is an affliction suffered disproportionately by women and children,¹⁶ with wealth remaining predominantly in the control of men. It should also be noted that a society that has the majority of its wealth concentrated in the hands of a small minority is prone to great upheaval; tensions between the haves and have-nots have been a source of civil strife and revolutions throughout history.

Polygyny enables a society to utilize a man's desire to maximize his reproductive fitness to achieve a more balanced distribution of wealth. For example, a man who makes \$500,000 a year can provide financially for ten women twice as well as a man making \$25,000 can for just one woman. A small percentage of men have millions and even billions of dollars,

¹⁴ Ibid., 100.

¹⁵ For a complete account of the sordid history of eugenics, see *War Against the Weak* by Edwin Black.

¹⁶ See Cagatay (1998).

enabling them to provide more for thousands of women than the average man can for just one. In a polygynous society, more women would have access to such wealth if they wanted.¹⁷

For a woman living in the type of severe poverty found in many parts of the world, the opportunity to escape such a lifestyle, ensure a brighter future for her children, and even help out other members of her family might make having to share a wealthy man with someone else a trivial price to pay. Even the women who choose not to enter into a polygynous situation benefit by other women doing so, as more wealthy single men to choose from will remain available as a result. Furthermore, the economic position of a society's children also benefits from polygyny, as a greater percentage of children will grow up in wealthier households. In the long-term, a wealthy man's assets will be inherited by a much larger number of heirs, and may contribute to a more equal distribution of a society's wealth.

* * * * *

Previously, we discussed how men and women have different reproductive ideals. Women are generally best served when men offer a high level of commitment. Men generally benefit by offering as little commitment as possible. This situation obviously leads to a conflict of interests, as one gender's ideal comes at the expense of the other's. Ultimately, the level of commitment generally offered by men will reflect a compromise between the two genders.

The question then becomes, "Which gender will have to do the most compromising?" The answer to this question is dependent on a variety of factors, and we will analyze this topic in more detail later. For now, we will focus on *sex ratio*, which is the abundance or deficit of eligible men to eligible women.¹⁸ Much like the laws of supply and demand, research has shown that:

Men shift to brief encounters when many women are sexually available because the sex ratio is in their favor and they are therefore better able to satisfy their desire for variety (Pedersen,

¹⁷ See Weisfeld (1990).

¹⁸ Buss, D., *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind*, 183.

1991). Among the Ache,¹⁹ for example, men appear to be highly promiscuous because there are 50 percent more women than men (Hill & Hurtado, 1996). When there is a surplus of men, in contrast, both sexes appear to shift toward a long-term mating strategy marked by stable marriages and fewer divorces (Pedersen, 1991).²⁰

If we are of the opinion that stable marriages and fewer divorces are to a society's benefit, then it seems that society is best served when it is the men who must give in to the reproductive ideals of women. This certainly appears to be the Islamic position, with its emphasis on relationships taking place within the confines of marriage.²¹

Returning to the issue of sex ratio, society in general—and women in particular—seem to benefit when women are relatively scarce, forcing men to cater to the relational ideals of women in order to make the best out of a bad reproductive situation. Helping to keep women scarce, even in situations where women outnumber men by a large margin, may be another benefit of polygyny. In polygynous societies, the vast majority of marriages generally remain monogamous, as only a small percentage of men are able to attract more than one wife.²² However, assuming an equal male-female ratio, even a small amount of polygynous marriages will lead to a situation where there are not enough women for all the men looking for a mate. This manufactured scarcity should encourage a high level of commitment in a society's relationships.

The benefit women obtain from being a scarce entity is not limited to having more eligible bachelors to choose from or having men be more likely to offer a high level of commitment. The negative consequences women experience in situations where they are not allowed to be scarce can be severe. For example, the practice of families having to pay large dowries in order for their daughters to marry usually occurs in societies that strictly enforce monogamy. Particularly in societies with a lot of poverty, the scarce reproductive entity becomes men who are able to financially provide a decent life.

¹⁹ The Ache are a people in Paraguay who mostly lived as hunter-gatherers until the 1970s. See Hill and Hurtado (1989).

²⁰ Buss, D., *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind*, 184.

²¹ See footnote 11.

²² Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 91.

Dowry has been viewed as a form of female-female competition for high quality mates, and Gaulin and Boster predict that it should be found where such competition is most acute. What circumstances give rise to such intense competition? When resources held by males differ widely in quality, polygyny is normally favored; yet polygyny itself acts to mitigate these differences because wealthy males have to share their resources among more wives. The fiercest competition among women for desirable men, therefore, should be in societies that are both highly stratified and strictly monogamous. As predicted, Gaulin and Boster's cross-cultural analysis shows that the co-occurrence of stratification with socially imposed monogamy is the best prediction of dowry, although dowry is also found in the upper strata of some extremely stratified polygynous societies.²³

India is a prime example of a highly stratified monogamous society in which many families must assume an enormous financial burden in order to enable a daughter to get married.²⁴ This situation is a contributing factor to the widespread favoring of sons over daughters. The bias against daughters is so pronounced among certain groups that a significantly smaller percentage of girls reach adulthood due to selective abortion, neglect, and even female infanticide.²⁵

* * * * *

Islam certainly allows polygyny. And polygyny seems to offer society certain benefits that monogamy does not. But does this mean that Islam actually promotes polygyny? Although surprising to many, the answer seems to be "no." Islam did not introduce polygyny into a monogamous society. On the contrary, Islam came into a society that set no limit on the number of wives a man could take and restricted the maximum number

²³ Cashdan (1996), 138. Also see Gaulin and Boster (1990).

²⁴ Dowry payments in rural India are often more than 50 percent of a household's assets. See Low (2005).

²⁵ This problem is more pronounced in North India, where dowry payments are generally more expensive. See Sudha and Rajan (1999). Women whose husbands perceive that they have received an inadequate dowry are also more prone to be physically abused. See Rao (1997).

to four.²⁶ Furthermore, both the Qurʾān and the sayings of the Prophet emphasize that although it is nearly impossible to do so, a man must treat his wives equally or expose himself to punishment in the Hereafter.²⁷ It is for this reason that Islamic scholars generally recommend that a man have only one wife, unless necessity dictates otherwise.²⁸

Assume for argument's sake that Islam, like Western civilization, views monogamous marriages as ideal. How then does one account for the fact that Islam allows polygyny? Several plausible justifications exist. Islam may allow polygyny simply because humans are a polygynous species. More than 97 percent of mammals, the class of species that humans belong to, are polygynous.²⁹

Furthermore, it has also been shown that the degree of polygyny in most mammalian species is related to the size difference between its males and females (*sexual dimorphism*). For example, white-handed gibbon males and females, which are monogamous, are nearly identical in size. Southern elephant seals, on the other hand, are highly polygynous, with successful males presiding over harems of up to one hundred females. The males in this species are enormous, weighing almost eight times more than the females. The reason males are bigger than the females in polygynous species is that increased size helps males compete with other males for scarce mating opportunities. Men are 5–12 percent larger than women with respect to length, indicating that humans are a “mildly polygynous” species.³⁰

The anthropological record tells a similar tale; 85 percent of all studied cultures allow polygyny.³¹ Rather than attempting to promote polygyny, Islam's allowance of polygyny may simply be a concession to human nature and a recognition that polygyny will likely be practiced under certain circumstances.

²⁶ It is reported that when a man who had ten wives converted to Islam and came to the Prophet, he informed him that he could have only four wives and instructed him to divorce the rest. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 303-304.

²⁷ Qurʾān, 4:3, 4:129. Al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 361.

²⁸ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Markaz al-Mar'ah*, 118-119.

²⁹ See Kleinman (1977). Roughly 82 percent of primates, the order of species humans share with animals such as monkeys and apes, are polygynous. Hrdy, S., *The Woman That Never Evolved*, 36.

³⁰ See Alexander et al. (1979).

³¹ See Low (2005) and Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 90.

Enacting laws is one thing. The likelihood of people actually following those laws is something else entirely. In general, the more restrictive people find a law, the less likely they will be to abide by it. With respect to laws governing marriage, this axiom can be restated in the following manner: The more a law restricts beneficial reproductive behaviors, the less likely people will abide by it, and the more likely people will attempt to circumvent the law in order to obtain their reproductive needs.

It is important to keep in mind the reasons humans practice polygyny. Men obtain an inherent benefit from being in a polygynous relationship, as men with multiple wives are likely to have an increased number of offspring. However, if women refused under any circumstance to be involved in a polygynous relationship, the theoretical benefits men could obtain from polygyny would be largely irrelevant.

Women do not obtain any inherent benefit from sharing a man. In fact, polygyny has an inherent disadvantage as it forces a woman to share a man's resources with others. However, a polygynous marriage might be a woman's best reproductive option if the man involved is desirable enough to compensate for his already being married. Ultimately, barring coercion, it is the degree that women want access to a society's most desirable men and are willing to be polygynous in order to obtain that access that determines how polygynous a society will be.

* * * * *

There are several ways in which polygynous impulses can manifest themselves in purportedly monogamous societies. The most obvious of these is adultery. A man may cheat on his wife in order to satisfy his desire for multiple women, while a woman may agree to be a mistress in order to have a relationship with a man who would otherwise be inaccessible.

Another more subtle way in which monogamy is circumvented occurs when people delay getting married or forgo marriage altogether. Consider the current situation in most Western societies, which has been termed *serial monogamy*.³² Even though the following is intuitive, research has shown that men whom women find desirable generally start having sex at an earlier age and have more partners over time than undesirable men.³³ It

³² Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 101, 104.

³³ Buss, D., *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind*, 184.

is not out of the ordinary for an eligible bachelor to have slept with dozens of women before he finally decides to settle down. Even if we naively assume that these bachelors were monogamous at every given point in time with these women, the result is still similar to a polygynous society in that the most desirable men obtain a disproportionate amount of sexual access to a society's women, in terms of both quantity and quality. With serial monogamy, a society's most desirable men retain the ability to have relationships with multiple women, and many women obtain access to men who would have been unavailable to them had they demanded a long-term monogamous commitment.

* * * * *

A situation which monogamy is particularly ill equipped to deal with results from the different degree that age diminishes the desirability of women and men. To give an illustration of this phenomenon, a magazine in the 1990s once gave the title of sexiest man and woman to Patrick Stewart (Jean-Luc Picard from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) and Cindy Crawford.³⁴ Choosing a famous supermodel as the sexiest woman seems plausible enough. But how can someone who is bald and middle-aged be considered the sexiest man? Many women complain about the double standard in which men become "distinguished" as they grow older while women just grow "old." Why does this double standard exist?

For women, the relationship between age and fertility (and therefore desirability) is very direct. Women typically reach peak fertility in their early twenties³⁵ and maintain this fertility for a decade or so. Around age thirty, women begin to have more difficulty conceiving a child and bringing fetuses to term.³⁶ Incidences of chromosomal defects also significantly rise with advancing maternal age.³⁷ And once a woman reaches menopause, excepting her ability to care for her or her kin's children, her reproductive value approaches zero. It should therefore be no surprise that age is a very

³⁴ I am now unable to recall or find the magazine that awarded these titles. For another illustration of this phenomenon, *People* magazine named fifty-nine-year-old Sean Connery "The Sexiest Man Alive" in 1989. The 2006 winner was forty-five-year-old George Clooney.

³⁵ Williams, G., *Sex and Evolution*, 128.

³⁶ See van Noord-Zaadstra et al. (1991).

³⁷ See Snijders et al. (1999).

important factor in choosing a long-term mate for men,³⁸ who find youthful characteristics appealing and are able to detect subtle changes in a woman that suggest advancing age and decreased reproductive utility. It is also not surprising that women go to great lengths to mask any signs of aging, spending billions of dollars on hair coloring, makeup, and even surgery to avoid looking old.

For men, the relationship between age and desirability is more complicated. Obviously, the physical deterioration and increased susceptibility to sickness and death that occurs with advancing age work to diminish a man's desirability. However, a woman's reproductive ideal is realized by finding a man offering superior genes and resources. As for the genetic aspect, men are able to father children well into old age. If anything, a man who ages in good health signals his longevity and vigor.³⁹ Older men also tend to have more resources than younger men since they have had more time to accumulate wealth. They also tend to be more willing to offer long-term commitments to compensate for their age. Therefore, unlike women, it is possible for men to remain highly desirable to members of the opposite sex—even at advanced ages.

So what does any of this have to do with polygyny? Fortunately perhaps, the combination of advancing age and financial commitments to an existing wife and children make it impossible for the majority of older men to attract a younger woman. However, a minority of middle-aged men, by means of maintaining themselves physically and/or accumulating wealth and status, may be as desirable to women as they were in their youth, if not more so. Moreover, many of these men find themselves married to middle-aged women, whose reproductive utility and therefore desirability has dropped dramatically due to their age.

A situation where some of a society's most desirable men find themselves in a situation that offers them little further reproductive benefit is problematic for a couple of reasons. Such men have a strong biological impetus to attempt to improve their reproductive situation. However, the only options for such improvement in a monogamous society are adultery

³⁸ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 65.

³⁹ However, the quality of a man's sperm declines with age, and the children of older men are at greater risk for a variety of genetic disorders. Fisch, H., *The Male Biological Clock*, 2-4.

and divorce. Obviously, both options are harmful—not only to the wives involved but also to any children the couple may have together.

Polygyny offers desirable men the opportunity to improve their reproductive situations without seriously compromising their existing marriages.⁴⁰ The older man is able to marry a younger, more desirable wife. The new woman gains access to a desirable man. And the first wife retains the option to remain with her husband. Although not ideal, her advancing age and decreasing desirability make it highly unlikely she will be able to attract another man comparable to her husband. In many instances, remaining with her husband will be an older woman's best option, for her and her children.

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Ultimately, the validity of the previous arguments revolves around the reasons polygynous relationships take place. If humans have no inherent inclination toward polygyny and base their relationships solely on the cultural norms of the societies in which they live, and one assumes monogamy as ideal, then allowing polygynous marriages is an obstacle to the ideal.

On the other hand, if polygynous relationships result from the combination of human nature and certain societal conditions that promote polygyny, the pertinent question may not be “How can society repress polygynous impulses?” as much as “How will polygynous impulses manifest themselves?” A polygynous marriage institution, although not necessarily ideal, increases the likelihood that polygynous relationships still retain the ideal of being long-term in nature. Furthermore, a polygynous marriage institution makes it possible for polygynous relationships to take place without necessarily undermining or destroying a polygynous man's preexisting marriages.

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Many people find it to be an indefensible double standard that Islam allows polygyny but forbids polyandry. Examining the issue from a biological perspective offers insight into why this may not be the case. Polyandry is

⁴⁰ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 87.

exceedingly rare among human cultures.⁴¹ The main reason for this rarity is related to the issue of *paternity confidence*.

Men face a critical reproductive issue that women do not have to worry about. When a woman gets pregnant and has a child, she obviously knows who the mother of that child is. But who is the father? A man can never be absolutely sure. Investing time and resources on another man's child is a reproductively useless endeavor. Therefore, having a high degree of certainty regarding the paternity of a child is of the utmost importance for men who are in long-term relationships and who play a role in their offspring's upbringing.

Polyandrous marriages are almost always unacceptable for men since they offer the men in such relationships little paternity confidence. Furthermore, polyandry usually does not benefit women either. Having multiple husbands does not increase the number of children a woman can have, and men who are aware of her other mates are less likely to continue to offer their resources to her and her children. Issues relating to paternity confidence play a primary role in the makeup of human societies, and we will return to this topic repeatedly throughout the course of this book.

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In conclusion, the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise between men and women, the most desirable members of a gender and their less desirable counterparts, individuals and society, and idealism and reality all ensure that a marriage institution that is reproductively ideal for all involved parties cannot exist. Every type of marriage institution has its unique set of benefits and drawbacks, and gives different parties varying degrees of preferential treatment at the expense of others. In particular, strict monogamy and unrestricted polygyny offer differing sets of reproductive benefits, but they also result in differing sets of reproductive drawbacks. The argument can be entertained, therefore, that Islam's allowance of a restricted form of polygyny represents a compromise between these two extremes in an attempt to flexibly obtain benefits found in both systems while avoiding the most exaggerated forms of their drawbacks.

⁴¹ See Weigel and Weigel (1987). Humans are the only mammals in which polyandry has been observed. Symons, D., *The Evolution of Human Sexuality*, 26.

Our discussion began by noting that Islam's allowance of polygyny has been taken as indisputable proof of its inherent misogyny. However, an analysis of this issue from a biological perspective seems to indicate that this assumption is exceedingly rash. The argument can be made that polygyny helps more women than it hurts, and that by giving women access to more desirable mates and by creating a situation where men are more likely to offer long-term commitments, polygyny may work to actively promote the female reproductive ideal.

CHAPTER 2

The Reproductive Climate

Attitudes and behaviors related to reproduction in different societies can be astonishingly diverse. The manner in which an individual goes about finding a partner in Los Angeles is likely to differ significantly from the same pursuit in Riyadh, for example. Furthermore, individual societies are not static entities. Profound changes in a society's sexual mores can take place in a relatively short period of time, as evidenced by the United States over the past century. Accounting for this aforementioned diversity and identifying the factors responsible for changing how individuals of a given society work to maximize their fitness is our next focus.

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In most mammals, mating is a brief event, with little or no observable display of affection between the mating couple. The male mounts, transfers his gametes, and moves on. On the other hand, many bird species manifest long, drawn-out courtships that appear to involve genuine displays of affection. The term *lovebirds* being used for an affectionate human couple attests to this phenomenon. Pairs in some species often form monogamous bonds that last for life!⁴² Why are affectionate long-term bonds between mates found in some species and absent in others?

⁴² See Black (2001).

A determining factor for the presence of affection among mates in animals is whether the parents need to work together in order to raise their young to maturity.⁴³ For example, female tigers raise their cubs by themselves, with males playing little to no role.⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, mating among tigers can hardly be described as affectionate, and has almost predatory overtones.

In contrast, pairs of wandering albatrosses must work in tandem in order to raise a chick. Not only does the chick need to be fed, it initially needs to be guarded at all times. Obviously, it is impossible for one bird to search for food and guard the chick at the same time. Therefore, both parents are directly involved, taking turns guarding the chick and flying away to find food. A strong bond between the pair is necessary if the chick is to survive.⁴⁵ The biological means by which this bond is created involves a long courtship⁴⁶ and the presence of affection between the pair. This ensures the necessary level of commitment needed to pass on their genes.

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So, what type of child-raising strategy is necessary to raise human children? Are we more like tigers or albatrosses? Like tigresses, women usually take on a greater role in raising their children, and they are capable of raising them by themselves. Nevertheless, fathers usually help raise their children, and they are sometimes integral to their survival. Humans can be said to occupy the entire spectrum between tigers and albatrosses with respect to paternal investment in their children. Sometimes, fathers play no role at all (like tigers), sometimes they are vital for their children's survival (like albatrosses), and at other times, they play important but nonessential roles (somewhere between tigers and albatrosses).

A long-term, loving relationship is of the utmost importance to the female reproductive ideal. As stated previously, a woman's ideal man not only offers quality genes, but also the necessary resources to take care of her and their children. Raising children alone is obviously much more difficult and—particularly before modern times—could have been expected to adversely affect the likelihood of children's survival. Therefore,

⁴³ See Wittenberger and Tilson (1980).

⁴⁴ MacDonald, D., *The Encyclopedia of Mammals*, Volume One, 20.

⁴⁵ See Wittenberger and Tilson (1980).

⁴⁶ See Pickering and Berrow (2001).

the prevalent notion that women generally are very concerned with love and romance is to be expected since the presence of these elements signals a strong bond between a couple.

Love also has a reproductive benefit for men. If a man lives in an environment where it is unlikely a woman will be able to raise a child on her own, it makes sense to commit to her and help her raise their children. Furthermore, if a man lives in a society where short-term mating opportunities are scarce and he would be unable to obtain a partner unless he offers a long-term commitment and the sharing of all his resources, then being in a loving relationship is his best reproductive option. An added benefit is that any woman who is in love with him is less likely to have sex with other men, thereby increasing his paternity confidence. Not surprisingly, we find men throughout the world who both love and are completely devoted to their wives and children.

On the other hand, we also find men who are not particularly interested in love or long-term relationships. The increasing percentage of single mothers, which in certain groups has reached 60 percent, is a clear testimonial to this phenomenon.⁴⁷ In certain societies, the idea of a man abandoning his children would be almost unimaginable. Yet in others, it has almost become the norm. What might explain this dichotomy?

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A brief analysis of the English language yields an interesting discovery. There are many words used to demean women. Terms such as *bitch*, *slut*, and *whore* are just a few of the less vulgar words which are in common use, most of which denote a high level of promiscuity. Analogous words for men are much less insulting, if they exist at all. This observation holds true for other languages also, suggesting a universal need to express hatred for women. Why might this be?

As we have stated previously, there are certain situations in which a man's fitness is best served by a long-term commitment to his partner; this is why men have the capability to express love. However, other situations exist where a man's fitness is not served by a long-term commitment. In these situations, men are likely to express misogyny. If a man is in a situation where a long-term commitment is not beneficial, then his

⁴⁷ See Ellwood and Jencks (2004).

reproductive interests dictate that he not offer one. However, there is a good chance this will hurt the woman he is with. In this situation, misogyny enables a man to avoid being swayed by the interests of the woman and ruthlessly maximize his interest at her expense.⁴⁸

Perhaps the most eloquent expression of this mentality can be found in hip-hop artist Jay-Z's hit single, "Big Pimpin'." The following will be the first of several hip-hop verses to be quoted in this book. Some readers may find these excerpts disturbing, as many of the verses are quite profane. However, it is our contention that hip-hop, thanks partially to its ethos of "keeping it real," offers an undiluted look into the mind-set of men employing short-term reproductive strategies that is otherwise exceedingly rare in public discourse. Furthermore, the argument can be made that given the meteoric rise in popularity of hip-hop in the United States and abroad over the past couple of decades, the most popular/skilled rappers are among the most important and influential cultural icons on the planet.⁴⁹ These two points alone justify giving serious attention to hip-hop lyrics, in my opinion. I have provided my own definitions for terms some readers might find obscure.

Many chicks wanna put Jigga's⁵⁰ fists in cuffs,⁵¹
divorce him and split his bucks.
Just because you got good head,⁵² I'ma break bread, so you can
be livin' it up?
Shit, I parts with nothing, y'all be frontin'.⁵³ Me give my heart
to a woman?
Not for nothing, never happen, I'll be forever mackin'.^{54, 55}

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⁴⁸ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 73–74.

⁴⁹ *Time* magazine included Jay-Z in its list of the world's 100 most influential people in 2005.

⁵⁰ One of Jay-Z's many nicknames.

⁵¹ Note this reference to marriage, where he likens it to being shackled and arrested.

⁵² Fellatio.

⁵³ Out of your mind.

⁵⁴ Involved in the activity of attracting and having sex with women.

⁵⁵ Jay-Z, "Big Pimpin'," *Vol. 3... Life and Times of S. Carter*.

As stated earlier, human males can be observed occupying the spectrum between tigers and albatrosses with respect to their roles in raising children. What point on this spectrum a society's men can be expected to inhabit depends largely on what can be called a society's *reproductive climate*. If it behooves men to act like albatrosses, then chances are that is how they will behave. The same can be said for men behaving like tigers.⁵⁶ In fact, the difference between men in a given society either being caring, providing husbands and fathers or abandoning those who depend on them most is largely attributable to the circumstances in which men find themselves. Men can be expected to act in a manner that furthers their reproductive interests. Whether this pursuit strengthens a society or harms it depends largely on how attempts to maximize fitness are manifested.

The following is a summary of the main factors that shape a society's reproductive climate and determine the role its men will play in the long-term support of their mates and children.

Ability of Men to Obtain Short-Term Mating Opportunities

If a man lives in a society where women will not even consider getting involved with a man outside of marriage, then a short-term strategy is useless and a man must be willing to commit to a long-term relationship if he is to have any genetic legacy at all. On the other hand, if the women in a society are generally receptive to short-term relationships, then men will likely avail themselves of such opportunities, thereby weakening their desire to assume all of the responsibilities of a long-term relationship.

Amount of Paternity Confidence Women Offer

If a man decides to take care of children, it is of the utmost biological importance to him that they are his. Therefore, the more confident a man feels about being the father of a child, the more likely he will assume the responsibility for providing for the child and the mother.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 74.

⁵⁷ See Apicella and Marlowe (2004); Gaulin and Schlegel (1980).

Ability of Women to Raise Children on Their Own

A man can impregnate a hundred women, but if none of these children reach adulthood, he obtains no reproductive benefit. Therefore, it is to be expected that men will be more willing to care for their families in societies where a woman raising a child by herself is difficult or impossible. However, the more likely it is that women can take care of children on their own, the less impetus men have to help them. Although the mother and children might suffer from this neglect, it may make more reproductive sense for a man to use the resources that would be spent on raising a family that can probably survive on its own toward attracting more mates.⁵⁸

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Now we will evaluate how these same factors influence women.

Ability of Men to Obtain Short-Term Mating Opportunities

When a woman finds herself in a society where long-term relationships predominate, it generally is very harmful to enter into a short-term relationship because doing so could lead to the loss of one's reputation and the ability to get married. However, this all changes when there are a significant number of women willing to engage in short-term relationships. The presence of such women poses numerous problems. These women make the chances of men as a whole offering long-term commitments less likely. Whoever said "Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?" actually had a good understanding of evolutionary psychology.

To make matters worse, the most desirable men will be the least likely to offer a commitment since they will be the most able to take advantage of the available short-term opportunities. In such a situation, the level of commitment a man can be expected to offer will be inversely related to his overall desirability, with commitment being offered as a concession to a woman's reproductive ideal in an attempt to overcome his deficiency. A

⁵⁸ See Cashdan (1993), Miller (1994), and Gangestad and Simpson (2000).

verse in which the rapper 50 Cent is insulting another man illustrates this clearly:

Your bitch a regular bitch,
You calling her wifey.⁵⁹
I fucked and feed her fast food,
You keeping her icy.^{60, 61}

Amount of Paternity Confidence Women Offer

From a female point of view, offering a high degree of paternity confidence is only useful if there are men pursuing long-term reproductive strategies. The more short-term the reproductive climate, the more paternity confidence becomes unimportant. In fact, being viewed as prudish is likely to drive men away.⁶²

Ability of Women to Raise Children on Their Own

A woman's ideal is realized by a man who offers good genes and plentiful resources over the long-term. In an ideal world, there would be a limitless amount of men who offer the optimum amount of both these needs—and choosing a man would be simple. Unfortunately, the real world is quite different. Each individual man has a set of unique strengths and weaknesses, leaving women with complicated decisions. Should she forgo good genes in order to secure a good provider? If so, to what degree? Or should she make good genes her priority even if that means choosing a mate who is less likely to offer a long-term commitment?⁶³ In societies where women are highly dependent on their husbands to provide for them, long-term resources seem to win out.⁶⁴

Societies where women have a greater degree of independence, on the other hand, enable women to be less compromising. The more independent the woman, the more she can focus on entering into relationships with the

⁵⁹ Long-term girlfriend.

⁶⁰ You routinely buy her diamonds.

⁶¹ 50 Cent, "Patiently Waiting," *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*.

⁶² See Cashdan (1993).

⁶³ See Mikach and Bailey (1999).

⁶⁴ See Kasser and Sharma (1999).

most desirable men possible.⁶⁵ Such men are less likely to offer a long-term commitment, but this is not prohibitive because the woman can provide for herself. In such a situation, actively pursuing a short-term mating strategy may be a woman's best reproductive option.⁶⁶ The first verse of R & B supergroup Destiny's Child's smash hit "Independent Women Part I" offers a clear illustration of how self-sufficiency can shape a woman's reproductive strategy:

Tell me what you think about me.
I buy my own diamonds and I buy my own rings.
Only ring your celly⁶⁷ when I'm feeling lonely.
When it's all over, please get up and leave.⁶⁸

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As we have shown, the reproductive climate people find themselves in dictates the strategies they employ to maximize their fitness. Therefore, the ability to accurately determine the prevailing reproductive climate is of paramount importance. However, making this determination is more problematic than one might think. Unlike all other social animals, people almost never have sex in public.⁶⁹ Furthermore, people often make

⁶⁵ See Koyama, McGain, and Hill (2004).

⁶⁶ It should also be noted that a short-term strategy, though not ideal, can still offer women the ability to obtain significant resources from men. If a long-term commitment is unlikely, the long-term earning potential of a man becomes irrelevant. Instead, women can aim to extract as many resources as possible in the short time the relationship can be expected to last. Then when it does end, the cycle can be repeated with someone else. Women employing such a strategy are usually attracted to men who demonstrate extravagance, which acts as an indicator that the man has the ability to offer a lot of resources in a short period of time. Men employing a short-term strategy quickly understand this and act accordingly. This is clearly demonstrated in rap music, where entire songs are dedicated to the amount of diamonds or platinum a rapper has on his watch or necklace. 50 Cent states the importance of ostentatiously displaying wealth (in this case by wearing diamonds) in attracting women employing short-term strategies with the following: My wrist icy/ keep my ears icy/ keep my neck icy/ that's why your bitch like me. 50 Cent, "Fuck You," *Guess Who's Back?* Also see Buss and Schmitt (1993); Draper and Harpending (1988).

⁶⁷ Cell phone.

⁶⁸ Destiny's Child, "Independent Women Part I," *Charlie's Angels: Music from the Motion Picture*.

⁶⁹ Diamond, J., *The Third Chimpanzee*, 78.

concerted efforts to conceal whom they are having sex with. If people never get a chance to directly see the sexual behaviors of others, how do they go about figuring out the type of reproductive climate in which they live?

The inability to directly visualize the sexual behaviors of others forces people to use indirect and imprecise sources of information in order to formulate an accurate assessment of the prevailing reproductive climate. One of these sources is gossip. Few topics are more interesting than hearing the latest gossip about how promiscuous a certain person is or who is seeing whom, particularly if those people are trying to keep their relationship a secret. Engaging in such talk is widely considered a vice practiced by the small-minded. However, such gossip may serve a very important function.⁷⁰ Although far from completely trustworthy, gossip can offer at least some information on the reproductive strategies being employed by others and, by extension, on the reproductive climate as a whole.

Another, usually more reliable, source of information about the prevailing reproductive climate is provided by a society's women. This is because the reproductive strategy a woman is utilizing is usually discernable through several aspects of her behavior and appearance. We will focus on three of these aspects.

Clothing

How a woman decides to clothe herself, particularly at social events, reveals a great deal of information about the reproductive strategy she is employing. The more conservatively a woman dresses, the more she informs others about her long-term reproductive strategy. Conversely, women who decide to wear tight clothing and/or show a lot of skin are sending the message that they are employing a short-term strategy.⁷¹

Makeup

The effects of makeup on a woman's looks can be striking. How do things like lipstick, blush, and eye shadow have the ability to transform a woman's appearance? Were it just a matter of fashion, we might expect the kind of makeup women wear to change with the times. This, for the most part, has

⁷⁰ See Barkow (1992).

⁷¹ See Cashdan (1993).

not been the case. For example, women in ancient Egypt and Greece made their faces up in a manner that is very similar to the women of today,⁷² suggesting that the reasons makeup causes a woman to look more attractive have a biological basis.

It turns out that when a woman becomes sexually aroused, certain physiologic changes take place. Among these changes are dilation of the pupils and the blood vessels in the cheeks and lips. What this means is that the eyes look bigger and the cheeks and lips get redder as the capillaries in those areas become filled with blood. This altered appearance is artificially simulated by the use of makeup. Lipstick and blush make the lips and cheeks redder, while eye shadow makes the eyes look bigger. Makeup therefore acts as a signal of sexual receptivity, similar to the enlarged, red genitals of a baboon when she is in heat.⁷³ The more makeup a woman wears in public, the more exaggerated the signal becomes that she is pursuing a short-term reproductive strategy.

Behavior

Much of a woman's behavior is influenced by the reproductive strategy she is employing. This is especially the case in her dealings with men. A woman pursuing a long-term strategy will usually be soft spoken and shy around men, particularly ones she has just met. This discomfort around unfamiliar men indicates that she does not spend much time around men, and advertises a high level of paternity confidence. On the other hand, women employing a short-term strategy must display their sexual receptivity. Such women are not shy around men. On the contrary, they are often forward and flirtatious.⁷⁴ If dancing is involved, their movements are more gyratory and sexually suggestive in nature. Even a woman's behavior during sex itself yields a lot of information. Frigidity indicates a degree of discomfort that speaks to lack of experience and therefore high paternity confidence. Uninhibitedness or "freakishness" indicates the opposite.⁷⁵

⁷² Riordan, T., *Inventing Beauty*, 15–16, 34.

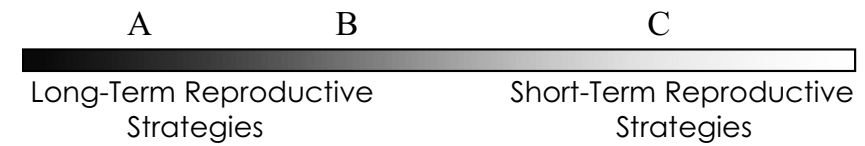
⁷³ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 70.

⁷⁴ See Cashdan (1993) and Simpson, Gangestad, and Biek (1993).

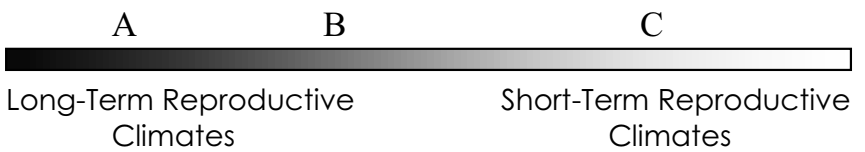
⁷⁵ For a rap song that chronicles the differences in the lovemaking of women employing long-term strategies versus women employing short-term strategies, see "Splash Waterfalls" by Ludacris on the album *Chicken-N-Beer*. Also see Simpson and Gangestad (1991).

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So far, we have been lumping people into two categories: those who employ long-term reproductive strategies and those who employ short-term reproductive strategies. We have proceeded in this manner in an attempt to explain things clearly. However, this is not meant to suggest the existence of only two fixed reproductive strategies. The ultimate long-term strategy and the ultimate short-term strategy are just two ends of a spectrum; most people’s strategies fall somewhere in between. Therefore, there are theoretically an infinite number of reproductive strategies a person can employ. The following diagram may prove useful.⁷⁶



In this diagram, Person A is employing a reproductive strategy that is more long-term in nature than Person B, who in turn is employing a reproductive strategy that is more long-term in nature than Person C. By extension, there are also an infinite number of potential reproductive climates, defined as the entity that exists due to the aggregate reproductive behaviors of a society’s inhabitants. This also can be represented in diagrammatic fashion.⁷⁷



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⁷⁶ Please also see the color version of this diagram located on the back cover of this book.
⁷⁷ In this diagram, Society A has a reproductive climate that is more long-term in nature than Society B, which in turn has a reproductive climate that is more long-term in nature than Society C.

All women face a conundrum. Before a woman can hope to get a man to commit to her, she must first attract him. Attracting a man is made easier by displaying sexual receptivity, thereby appealing to his need for promiscuity and low commitment. On the other hand, getting a man to commit is made easier by displaying sexual restraint, thereby appealing to his need for paternity confidence. This is the source of the conundrum. If a woman presents herself in a manner that clearly displays her sexual receptivity, her chances of attracting a man increase, but the chances of him desiring a long-term commitment with her decrease. Conversely, if she presents herself in a manner that does not clearly display her sexual receptivity, her chances of attracting a mate decrease. An ideal solution to this problem is impossible.

Women therefore have to walk a very fine line in order to maximize their reproductive fitness. A woman must have enough short-term appeal to attract a man—and simultaneously have enough long-term appeal to obtain a commitment. In the same vein, she cannot have so much short-term appeal that the man starts to view her as someone who offers little paternity confidence—or have so much long-term appeal that the man begins to think that starting a relationship with her would take up too much of his time and resources.

A woman therefore has a lot of complicated decisions to make. Exactly how revealing should her clothes be? How much makeup should she put on? How shy or flirtatious should she be? At what point in a relationship should she agree to express her affection physically, and to what degree? The answers to these questions depend heavily on the prevailing reproductive climate. In a more short-term reproductive climate, it is more important to appeal to a man's need for promiscuity and low commitment. In a more long-term reproductive climate, it is more important to appeal to a man's need for paternity confidence. However, a woman's fitness is usually maximized by simultaneously appealing to both needs to a certain degree, no matter what the reproductive climate is.

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Let us again assume the existence of an imaginary village. This small village has a long-term reproductive climate, and sexual relationships almost never occur outside of marriage. We would expect women in this village to employ long-term reproductive strategies and to present

themselves in a manner that indicates they offer a high degree of paternity confidence. The women wear modest clothes, use little or no makeup, and are shy around men.

Let us now look at the situation from the perspective of an individual woman in this village (Woman A). Woman A does not have to worry about obtaining a commitment. However, she does have to worry about attracting a desirable man. Unfortunately for her, every other single woman in the village has the same agenda. If she can come up with a way to make herself appear more attractive, she can gain an advantage over these other women. One way Woman A can attempt to obtain this advantage is by making a subtle appeal to a man's short-term reproductive needs. This strategy is not without risk, however. If her short-term appeal is too pronounced, her plan could backfire—and the men in the village will deem her unsuitable for marriage.⁷⁸ But if done discreetly, perhaps by wearing shin-length skirts⁷⁹ or a little makeup, she may be able to attract a man she otherwise would not have without decreasing the likelihood of obtaining a commitment.

Let us assume that Woman A employed her strategy successfully, and the extra attention she received led to her marrying a desirable man. Having noticed this, a few other women in the village decide to present themselves in the same manner, hoping to obtain a similar result. Eventually, all the women in the village have to make a choice. If they find that being more conservative does not lead men to favor them as potential wives, then their comparatively lower short-term appeal puts them at a reproductive disadvantage. In order to prevent this, they too will likely feel compelled to present themselves in the same manner as Woman A did a little while before.

Now let us assume a generation has passed. Now all the women in the village dress like Woman A started dressing a generation ago. But despite women wearing shin-length skirts and a little makeup, not much else has changed. The reproductive climate is still quite long-term in nature, and relationships outside marriage are still as rare as they were a generation earlier. Now Woman B comes along. Woman B has the same problem that Woman A had earlier. She would like to attract the most desirable man

⁷⁸ Woman A also has to worry about the negative repercussions her strategy might engender from the other women in her village, who are unlikely to appreciate their own reproductive agendas being undercut in this manner.

⁷⁹ Assuming the other women in the village wear skirts that reach the ground.

possible. She therefore decides to employ the same strategy Woman A did, appealing to men's short-term needs, but not to the extent that she begins to be viewed as someone who offers low paternity confidence. However, Woman B can't just wear a shin-length skirt and some makeup the way Woman A did. Every woman does that now. Woman B must do something more. She decides to wear knee-length skirts and more makeup. She also is more approachable to men than her counterparts, and she can occasionally be somewhat flirtatious. Again, let us assume that Woman B successfully employs this strategy and marries a more desirable man as a result. Once again, the other women are put in a position where they must keep up or get left behind.

And so it progresses. The women's clothes become more and more revealing, and women begin to have more interactions with men. These interactions eventually lead to dating and the formation of couples. The older people in the village disapprove of all this, but they are viewed as a bunch of dinosaurs who are too old-fashioned to know what they are talking about. After some more time, different types of foreplay enter the dating picture.

Intrinsic to the word foreplay is the notion that it is a precursor to something else. Inevitably, one young couple gets caught up in the moment and ends up having sex. After some time passes, premarital sex becomes part of the courtship ritual. However, the reproductive mentalities of the young villagers are still relatively long-term in nature. If unmarried couples sleep together, it is only after they have been dating for a long time and feel they are in love. Such couples usually get married soon afterward. Courtship is seen as a means to an end; the end being getting married and starting a family.

So far, we have been following this story from the women's perspective. Let us now focus on the men. In the past, the men were employing a long-term strategy, deeming paternity confidence as more important than promiscuity and offering little commitment. However, the progressively shorter-term appeals that the women have been making to the men are now leading to a previously unforeseen consequence. Young men in the village begin shifting their reproductive priorities. Paternity confidence begins to take a backseat to promiscuity and low commitment. At first, this change is subtle, and can only be noticed among the youngest men in the village. Gradually, the viewing of courtship as a means to an end begins to fade, and it becomes an end in and of itself. Men begin to pursue

women with no intention of offering commitment. They start to focus more on the sexual aspect of a relationship. They are less likely to fall in love, and they put off marriage for a longer period of time. Some men decide to forgo marriage altogether. Even when they do get married, they are less likely to stay married and more likely to cheat on their spouses. Where marriage was once something to look forward to, it now is viewed as restrictive and confining. Even the paternal instinct begins to be blunted, and an increasing number of men play little or no role in their children's upbringing.

In an environment such as this, the women in the village no longer have to concern themselves as much with presenting themselves in a manner that advertises paternity confidence because the men are focusing on promiscuity and low commitment. The women's behaviors, therefore, become increasingly short-term in nature, which in turn serves as an impetus for the men to employ even more short-term reproductive strategies. Although the changes took place incrementally, the village's reproductive climate has become decidedly different from the climate Woman A inhabited several generations earlier.

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Once again, the village we created is exceedingly simplistic. However, the process whereby the village's long-term reproductive climate over time transformed into a short-term reproductive climate parallels what has generally taken place in American society over the past century or so. One hundred years ago, the reproductive climate in America was very different from what it is today. Chastity and modesty were considered important values, and sex before marriage was viewed very unfavorably. The manner in which women dressed was also very different. Women generally wore loose clothing that covered their entire bodies and often covered their hair also.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the public wearing of makeup had a huge stigma attached to it, and was generally restricted to prostitutes trying to attract clients!⁸¹

As the decades passed, conservative values slowly began to be modified. By the 1950s, American society had changed substantially. Although

⁸⁰ For example, see photographs in Ward, G. and K. Burns, *Not for Ourselves Alone*.

⁸¹ Peiss, K., *Hope in a Jar*, 53–54.

conservative by today's standards, the tighter sweaters and skirts young women often wore were much more revealing than the clothes of decades past. Makeup had lost its previous taboo, and its use was widespread. Furthermore, the practice of young unmarried couples going out on dates and forming couples had become firmly established. Premarital sex also seems to have become widespread at this time. However, the overall long-term nature of the reproductive climate was still apparent. Having a child out of wedlock was still taboo, and couples in which the woman inadvertently got pregnant would usually quickly get married.⁸²

If a society's long-term reproductive climate continues to become increasingly short-term in nature, a point will eventually be reached where a high level of paternity confidence is valued less than the ability to have sex in a promiscuous manner with low commitment. This juncture heralds the formation of a short-term reproductive climate. In American society, one could argue that this event took place in the 1960s. This decade was a period of profound societal change. Young adults began to question the lifestyles of their elders, and many found their ways to be restrictive and stifling. It was during this time that what is now known as the sexual revolution took place.⁸³ Not only did premarital sex lose almost all of its previous taboo, many began to regard promiscuity and casual sex as a form of enlightenment and rebellion from the repressed and confining ways of the past.⁸⁴ Not surprisingly, the emergence of a short-term reproductive climate was soon followed by a previously unknown instability in the traditional American family structure, a phenomenon that continues to the present day.⁸⁵

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A nearly universal aspect of American family life over the past few generations is the strain in the relationship between parents and their adolescent children, particularly their daughters. Parents often feel their daughters are trying to grow up too quickly. Issues related to makeup, clothing, dating, and sex become very divisive and the source of countless arguments. The parents disapprove of their daughter's behavior at such a

⁸² See Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz (1996).

⁸³ See Hofferth, Kahn, and Baldwin (1987).

⁸⁴ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 136.

⁸⁵ See Bumpass and Lu (2000); Castro Martin and Bumpass (1989).

young age, and the daughter feels her parents are unnecessarily strict and old-fashioned. This scenario has become so common that it is believed by many to be an inevitable part of growing up. However, in many parts of the world, a child arguing with and disobeying her parents in such a manner would be inconceivable. What accounts for this generation gap when it is present?

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When a goose hatches out of its egg, it instinctually follows its mother and looks to her for protection. The process by which this occurs is called *imprinting*. A newly hatched goose has no inherent concept of what its mother should look like. It just imprints on the first moving thing it sees that answers its distress calls. In the wild, this is almost always its mother, so the system works well. But when a zoologist removed some goose eggs from their mother and provided the necessary stimuli when they hatched, the geese imprinted on the zoologist, taking *him* as their mother.

The window for imprinting in geese is relatively short. If a goose is kept away from its mother during this critical period, it will not imprint on her, regardless of how much time it subsequently spends with her.⁸⁶ Imprinting is a good example of how certain brain functions are operational only in the fixed time period when they are necessary.

An example of this phenomenon in humans is the ability to learn language. Those who have tried to learn a foreign language in adulthood know how difficult and frustrating this endeavor can be—even with the help of books in their native language that enable them to translate vocabulary and explain grammar by comparing it to the grammar of the language they already know. Even with all these aids, very few people are able to attain the fluency of a native speaker, even after decades of practice. The difficulty adults encounter in learning a new language makes the ease in which babies learn language seem even more remarkable. Babies, who start speaking their first words around their first birthday, approach fluency two or three years later. Obviously, babies do not have the ability to use dictionaries or read grammar books. Furthermore, babies have no previous frame of reference for any of the new information with which they are being bombarded.

⁸⁶ Lorenz, K., *Evolution and Modification of Behavior*, 54–57.

The complexity of human languages is one of the things that set us apart from all other species. Language plays a central role in an individual's ability to interact with others. Therefore, babies' brains are configured in a manner that allows them to master the complexities of language quickly and accurately in a short period of time.

Like any other biological process, the function of the brain involves the consumption of energy. In order to conserve resources, living organisms are designed to be highly efficient in their use of energy. Once a young child learns the language of his or her people, the ability to learn a language becomes less important. This would be especially true in the distant past where coming into contact with people who spoke different languages was less likely. Therefore, it is not surprising that children gradually lose the ability to learn a language as they grow older. Adults can still reach a high level of fluency through hard work, but the ability to speak and think in a language in the same way as a native speaker is eventually lost.⁸⁷

Maximizing one's reproductive fitness requires having an accurate understanding of the prevailing reproductive climate and acting accordingly. Considering that the ability to reproduce begins at adolescence, it is important that a proper reproductive mentality be in place by this time. In the distant past, it would have been far less likely that a society's reproductive climate would change significantly over the course of an individual's lifetime. Therefore, the need to be attentive to the aspects of a society that indicate the prevailing reproductive climate diminishes as a person advances into adulthood. As with its ability to learn a language fluently, the brain seems to slowly lose its ability to determine the nature of a reproductive climate it comes in contact with after a certain time period.

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The whole biological purpose of having children is that they are the means through which parents ensure the continued survival of their own genes. Therefore, parents raise their children in a manner that they believe will maximize their children's fitness. This entails teaching children the correct reproductive strategy for the reproductive climate in which they live and disapproving of actions that would be reproductively detrimental.

⁸⁷ Pinker, S., *The Language Instinct*, 265–301.

Let us assume a man and a woman were born in 1920 and eventually married each other. As they grew up, they subconsciously observed their society in order to formulate an ideal reproductive strategy. For this couple, this process would have been taking place in the 1920s and 1930s. As they became adults, their ability to adapt to the prevailing reproductive climate diminished; eventually, their reproductive mentalities became set and unchangeable. For the sake of ease, we will say they ended up with a reproductive mentality consistent with the reproductive climate of 1940. When this couple turned thirty, they had a daughter.

The daughter grows older, and eventually she reaches adolescence. As she has been growing up, she too has been subconsciously observing her society in order to formulate an ideal reproductive strategy. However, as we discussed previously, the last century in this country was witness to a profound change in the reproductive climate, which became progressively more short-term in nature. Therefore, the daughter would have grown up in a society that was very different than that of her parents.

Now it is 1967, and the parents and the daughter are not getting along. The daughter feels she is an adult and should be free to run her life as she sees fit. The parents disagree. Much of their fighting revolves around the daughter's social life. The parents find the manner in which their daughter presents herself in public unacceptable. She wears too much makeup and her clothes are too revealing. Even worse is her choice of boyfriends and her nonchalant attitude about dating and sex, which leads her to often mock her parent's opinions as old-fashioned and outdated.

The reason for this strife is that the parents and the daughter have very different opinions about how the daughter should go about maximizing her reproductive fitness. Even though it is 1967, the parents judge their daughter as if it still was 1940. In 1940, a girl who dressed and acted the way their daughter does would have been deemed a tramp, which would have made obtaining a long-term commitment highly unlikely. The parents feel their daughter is following a strategy that is too short-term in nature and therefore is compromising the reproductive fitness of all three of them. They therefore do their best to coerce her to follow a more appropriate reproductive strategy.

What the parents cannot see is how outdated their reproductive values have become. If the daughter actually listened to her parents and did what they wanted, her behaviors would likely be too long-term in nature for the climate she lives in, which could be a reproductive detriment to them all.

This is why she does not listen. Both parents and child will continue to fight for what they believe is in their best reproductive interests. And if the gulf between their views is large enough, permanent damage to their relationship can result.

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This generation gap can become especially large when parents emigrate from a country whose reproductive climate is much more long-term in nature than their new country of residence. In a country with a very long-term reproductive climate, it is of the utmost importance that girls present themselves in a manner that leaves no doubt about the high degree of paternity confidence they offer. Seemingly trivial things such as a girl going out at night with her girlfriends or simply talking to boys can potentially have severely negative reproductive consequences, particularly if other girls do not engage in such activities. Therefore, parents try to make sure their daughters do not jeopardize their reproductive future by being very strict with them if they do not realize the proper way to behave on their own. This strictness can cause a lot of grief if the parents move and raise a daughter in a country like the United States. Basing their rules on the reproductive climate of their youth, parents often set rules that their daughters find ridiculously restrictive. This can seem especially appalling when these girls are refused requests that their peers' parents would have absolutely no objection to. Once again, permanent damage to the parent-child relationship can result from this reproductive misunderstanding.

Parents from long-term climates are usually less strict when it comes to raising their sons. Boys generally enjoy a greater freedom when it comes to socializing or curfews. If the parents come to find out their son has a girlfriend, the response is generally milder than it would be if their daughter had been secretly dating somebody. Attitudes such as these can lead young women to resent their families and cultures, as it seems that boys are given preferential treatment due to their perceived increased worth.

Perhaps this double standard is to be expected. Parents set rules and raise their children in a manner they feel will maximize their fitness. If the parents grew up in a long-term reproductive climate, they will set rules for a girl that ensure her being viewed as someone who offers high paternity confidence. However, women do not have to worry about maternity

confidence, which is why a mate's previous chastity is not as important an issue for women as it is for men. Therefore, there is less reproductive benefit in being strict with a son. A young man known for being a womanizer in a long-term reproductive climate might have a difficult time finding a wife, so parents still have reason to be somewhat strict.⁸⁸ However, pursuing short-term reproductive opportunities that present themselves can be very beneficial for a young man. Such behavior therefore can be very beneficial for his parents also, so it makes sense for parents to be more tolerant of their son's indiscretions.⁸⁹

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The past century has been witness to profound changes in American society that are the result of its reproductive climate becoming significantly more short-term in nature. And to varying degrees, a similar process over the same time frame has been taking place throughout most of the world. Examples abound of long-term reproductive climates that had been stable for centuries being drastically altered in a matter of decades. What aspects of modernity are behind this worldwide phenomenon? Although the causes are myriad and vary from place to place, we believe three are of particular importance.

Urbanization

Urbanization is a process that has been taking place for millennia. However, increases in population growth, coupled with advances in agricultural technology that decrease the need for farmers, have accelerated this process exponentially over the past several generations. By 2008, it is predicted⁹⁰ that the number of people living in cities will equal the number in rural areas,⁹¹ which will be a first in human history.

⁸⁸ See Buss and Schmitt (1993).

⁸⁹ See Low (2005).

⁹⁰ The writing of this book was completed in 2007.

⁹¹ By 2030, it is estimated that this number will climb to 60 percent. In 1900, only 13 percent of the world's population lived in cities. See United Nations Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision*.

Women (who generally are the rate-limiting factor with respect to the formation of short-term relationships)⁹² are often deterred from engaging in short-term reproductive behaviors by the many negative consequences such behaviors can lead to. One of these consequences occurs if a woman starts to be viewed as someone who offers a low degree of paternity confidence, which renders her a poor choice as a long-term mate. For the majority of human history, people spent their entire lives among a small group of people who would have known each other very well.⁹³ Even today, villages and small towns are known for being places where everyone knows everyone else's business. This is especially the case when it comes to relationships. In such situations, women often have to be very careful about their reputations; rumors of promiscuity can severely compromise a woman's ability to find (or keep) a spouse.

The situation in big cities is quite different. The anonymity that a city provides makes it much more likely that a woman can employ a short-term mating strategy without suffering any long-term consequences. A promiscuous woman in a small village is likely to be realized as such. On the other hand, a woman in a city has much less chance of being discovered. And even if the people around her do come to know of her behavior, her ability to secure a long-term mate is not necessarily compromised. A woman in a city can easily escape a bad reputation by simply meeting new people. Suburbs also offer a lot of anonymity, as people often hardly know their neighbors.⁹⁴ The tendency of city life to erode traditional sexual mores is a well-known phenomenon. While discussing the fall of Rome, philosopher Will Durant wrote the following:

Urban congestion multiplied contacts and frustrated surveillance; immigration brought together a hundred cultures whose differences rubbed themselves out into indifference.

⁹² Symons, D., *The Evolution of Human Sexuality*, 299–300.

⁹³ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 38.

⁹⁴ Ironically, urbanization in its initial stages (hunter-gatherer groups adopting sedentary lifestyles) likely played an important role in forming the long-term reproductive climates that predominated throughout the world until relatively recently. Fixed, small settlements would have made it much harder for women to employ short-term strategies without being discovered and would have afforded men the ability to monitor and sequester their mates to a degree that would have been previously impossible. For a discussion of the effects the agricultural revolution had on the relationship between men and women, see *The Creation of Patriarchy* by Gilda Lerner. Also, see Smuts (1995).

Moral and esthetic standards were lowered by the magnetism of the mass; and sex ran riot in freedom while political liberty decayed.⁹⁵

Contraception

The most obvious negative consequence for women employing short-term strategies is getting pregnant without the long-term commitment of a man. Such women usually have a much more difficult time raising their children. Furthermore, having a child out of wedlock can cause great damage to a woman's social standing and desirability as a spouse, particularly in long-term reproductive climates.⁹⁶ Obviously, the ability of contraception to decrease the likelihood of such unwanted outcomes leaves less impetus for people to delay sexual gratification.^{97, 98}

Contraception is by no means a new invention. Besides more conventional methods such as withdrawal, various potions, pessaries, and plugs have been in use for thousands of years.⁹⁹ However, readily available, reliably effective methods of contraception did not become widespread in the United States until the first half of the twentieth century, culminating in the development of birth control pills and intrauterine devices in the late 1960s.¹⁰⁰

People's use of contraception, despite its detrimental effect on reproductive fitness, illustrates an important point. The expectation that an animal's behavior is generally to its reproductive benefit is only valid when the animal inhabits the environment for which it is designed. New environments often lead to behavior that is pointless or even harmful from a biological point of view.¹⁰¹ A perfect example of this phenomenon is humans' propensity to enjoy sweet-tasting foods. For our hunter-gatherer

⁹⁵ Durant, W., *The Story of Civilization*, 667.

⁹⁶ The same can be said for men, although this is invariably to a lesser degree.

⁹⁷ See Akerlof, Yellen, and Katz (1996).

⁹⁸ Certain forms of contraception also decrease the likelihood of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, which further lessens the risks of short-term sexual behaviors.

⁹⁹ For example, papyrus scrolls from ancient Egypt describe a contraceptive plug made partly of crocodile dung! McLaren, A., *A History of Contraception*, 26–27.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 216–237.

¹⁰¹ Symons, D., *The Evolution of Human Sexuality*, 31–36.

ancestors, this sweet tooth would have encouraged them to eat ripe, nutritious fruits. In the modern world, our desire for sweets helps fuel an epidemic of obesity and health problems such as heart disease and diabetes.¹⁰²

Humans obviously do not have an irrepressible, conscious desire to have as many children as possible. However, in our natural, contraceptive-free environment, such a desire would have been unnecessary. The desire for sex, along with a strong parenting instinct, are all that would have been required to ensure that human behavior served the goal of maximizing reproductive fitness.

We are designed to love sex and then to love the consequences that materialize nine months later- not necessarily to anticipate loving the consequences... Only in the wake of contraceptive technology has this design faltered.¹⁰³

The widespread use of contraception should not lead to the underestimation of how profoundly reproductive concerns affect human societies, even in the present day. It is true that people often consciously decide to subvert their fitness via contraception. However, people's more subconscious attempts to maximize fitness (via mate choice or developing value-judgments consistent with their reproductive strategies) continue unabated.

Media

Let us take a small detour and turn our attention to horror movies. Many people who watch horror movies become very frightened, to the point they can't bear to watch anymore. Any rational adult knows there is no imminent danger and that the people in the movie are just actors playing out their roles. Yet despite this, people can't help but be afraid. Why can a movie have such an effect on a person?

When a person feels that he or she is in danger, the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system elicits a number of systemic changes, including the acceleration of the heart rate, the release of adrenaline, and

¹⁰² Ibid., 73.

¹⁰³ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 388.

the preferential redistribution of blood flow to the skeletal muscles.¹⁰⁴ These changes are commonly referred to as the “fight-or-flight response.”

The question then becomes how people determine whether they are in danger. This process is controlled by the interpretation of sensory stimuli. For example, seeing a menacing person in a dark alley or hearing footsteps in your house when nobody is home will likely lead to a sympathetic discharge. This sympathetic discharge also occurs in most people when they watch horror movies. The higher brain centers understand that the movie is just make-believe. However, other portions of the brain can’t make this distinction and interpret the scenes from the movie as a serious threat, therefore initiating what it believes to be an appropriate response. This should not be surprising when we consider that movies did not exist for the overwhelming majority of human existence. If you saw a psychopath with an axe, that meant you were in serious danger—and you had better pick up something to fight back with or run for your life. It is only in the last century or so where people could see fictitious images such as these on a screen or in a box. Since such a situation never used to arise, one could see why the brain would be poorly equipped to act properly once it does.

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Following the same line of thinking, we turn our attention to pornography. One would be hard pressed to come up with a single tangible benefit a man obtains from viewing pornography. Despite this, pornography is a multibillion-dollar industry. Why might this be?

Just as people can become frightened when watching horror movies, people also can become aroused when viewing pornography. The reason, again, is that the brain on a certain level is not aware that the sensory stimuli being presented has no reality attached to it, which leads it to initiate what it believes to be an appropriate response. Throughout human history, a man alone with a naked woman giving him a seductive look could almost be certain he would be able to have sex. Obviously, becoming aroused in such a situation is of paramount biological importance. The pornography industry is able to take advantage of this situation, manipulating the male desire to reproduce for financial benefit.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, N., *Biology* (Fourth Edition), 1012–1013.

Previously, we discussed how people tailor their reproductive strategies based on the reproductive climate they are in. Choosing the correct mating strategy is obviously conditional on having an accurate understanding of the prevailing reproductive climate. Returning to pornography, we can observe how it is able to excite men by fooling their brains on a certain level into believing a sexually receptive woman is present. It is therefore plausible that pornography also has the ability to have a much more long-term effect on its viewers, providing the brain with false information which it then uses to come up with an inaccurate assessment of the prevailing reproductive climate.¹⁰⁵

If pornography has the ability to influence men's ability to determine the reproductive climate in which they live, it can be expected to act as a powerful stimulus for the adoption of short-term mating strategies.¹⁰⁶ One can hypothesize on the thought processes of a male brain that is partially fooled into believing the pornographic images it is looking at are actual women in the same place as the viewer. "Look at this! This woman wants me. And I just met her. I didn't have to get to know her or anything! And she isn't the only one. Dozens of other women have acted the same way."

In discussing pornography, we have thus far proceeded by implicitly using the layman's definition of pornography. However, this definition is quite arbitrary. To say an image of a woman who is 100 percent naked is pornographic but an image of a woman who is 90 percent naked is not is somewhat absurd. A more comprehensive definition of pornography is any sensory stimuli designed to elicit sexual excitement in the viewer. Under this definition, significant portions of the imagery in our present-day media occupy a place on the pornographic spectrum. Whether it is cheerleaders at sporting events, models on billboards, or music videos, boys growing up today are constantly inundated with a barrage of stimuli telling them that they live in a world filled with promiscuous, accessible women.

Of course, women are exposed to this imagery also. And a female brain observing all of this is likely to think, "With so many attractive, promiscuous women out there, the likelihood of finding desirable men offering long-term commitments must be very small." Thus, we can

¹⁰⁵ See Shepherd and Reisman (1985).

¹⁰⁶ One study showed that men rated themselves as less in love with their wives after exposure to *Playboy* centerfolds. See Kenrick, Gutierrez, and Goldberg (1989).

expect modern media to induce both men and women to adopt short-term reproductive strategies, ultimately leading to a reproductive climate that is more short-term in nature.

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That media has a short-term reproductive bent is to be expected. The fact that sexual excitement in men is heavily dependent on visual stimuli acts as a powerful impetus for media to be inundated with short-term imagery. By displaying beautiful, scantily clad women, programmers and advertisers offer a powerful incentive for men to tune in.

Previously, we created an imaginary village in which Woman A, by appealing to men's short-term needs, was able to attract the attention of men to her reproductive benefit. A similar dynamic takes place between media and society. By displaying women in a manner that appeals to men's short-term needs, programmers are able to attract more viewers and advertisers are able to attract more customers, to their financial benefit.

We also discussed how Woman A had to make sure she did not appeal too strongly to men's short-term needs since doing so may have invited the scorn of both men (who could have perceived her as offering inadequate paternity confidence) and women (who could have resented her for hurting their own chances of obtaining a commitment from a desirable man). Media outlets, particularly mainstream ones, must also be wary of the long-term reproductive sentiments of their viewers. Displaying content that is much more short-term in nature than the prevailing reproductive climate runs the risk of offending viewers, leading to a backlash or even a boycott of the programmers and advertisers responsible.¹⁰⁷

We then turned our attention to Woman B, who had to make an even stronger short-term appeal in order to grab the attention Woman A previously received employing more conservative measures. Returning to the media, the fierce competition between networks, advertisers, magazines, etc. creates a constant impetus over time to push the envelope

¹⁰⁷ A prime example of this phenomenon occurred after the Super Bowl halftime show in 2004, where singer Janet Jackson momentarily exposed one of her breasts. This ignited a firestorm of criticism and led to more than 542,000 complaints to the FCC, which then levied a fine of \$550,000 on Viacom (then the parent company of CBS). See *BBC News*, Nov. 9, 2004.

and outdo competitors by making as much of a short-term appeal as they can get away with without offending viewers' long-term sensibilities.

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In conclusion, the behaviors individuals of a given society employ to maximize their fitness lead to the formation of that society's reproductive climate. This reproductive climate in turn shapes the reproductive mentalities of the individuals in the following generation. As humans advance technologically, reproductive climates appear to be increasingly shaped by forces that were not present in the environments for which human mechanisms to maximize fitness were designed. Nevertheless, the diversity of attitudes and behaviors related to reproduction noted cross-culturally are ultimately the result of humans' ability to tailor their reproductive strategies to suit local conditions.

CHAPTER 3

Women and Islam

People in the West generally believe that the lives of women in non-Western countries are restricted by patriarchal societies whose views toward women are often backward and unenlightened. This view is particularly applied to Muslim women, who are generally regarded as the most oppressed women on earth. Many believe the source of this oppression is Islam and its misogynistic teachings. In contrast, Muslims often argue that Islam elevates the status of women. Why do different groups view the same situation so differently?

Maximizing one's reproductive fitness entails the adoption of certain behaviors that are dependent on the prevailing reproductive climate. Ideal behavior in one climate may have disastrous consequences in another. People are therefore inclined to think highly of behaviors that are reproductively beneficial in the climate they inhabit while finding reproductively detrimental behaviors repugnant. This leads people to view other cultures through the lens of their own reproductive climates.

For many Westerners, *ḥijāb*¹⁰⁸ is proof enough of Islam's misogyny. However, many nuns wear clothing analogous to *ḥijāb* and they are not viewed as oppressed. In fact, women generally wore clothing similar to *ḥijāb* for a significant portion of American history. Even today, men going to work usually wear clothes that expose only their head and hands. Is the

¹⁰⁸ *Hijāb* refers to the headscarf many Muslim women wear. The majority opinion of Muslim scholars is that Muslim women should only display their hands and faces while in public. Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 232.

addition of a headscarf that heinous a thing? Detached logic would seem to say no, but detached logic is not the basis on which people form their opinions on a matter such as this.

People's attitudes toward women's clothing are shaped by the reproductive climates in which they live. In a long-term reproductive climate, women benefit by dressing in a manner that advertises paternity confidence. This entails dressing conservatively. Women are designed to want to present themselves in the manner that best suits their reproductive interests. Therefore, women in a long-term reproductive climate will view modesty as an important virtue. They will also view revealing their bodies in public as vulgar and undignified. Women living in a place where all the other women wear *hijāb* are unlikely to view the *hijāb* as oppressive. On the contrary, such women will likely believe that it is Western women who are oppressed, as they feel compelled to apply makeup and wear skimpy clothing so they can be ogled and have their bodies judged by all the men who see them.

For women in a short-term climate, the situation is different. Such women maximize their fitness by advertising sexual receptivity and a low need for commitment. Dressing too conservatively is likely to turn men off, as it signals the desire for a long-term commitment that men pursuing short-term strategies are averse to. Wearing revealing clothing in this situation is unlikely to be viewed as vulgar. On the contrary, exposing one's figure becomes a healthy and liberating expression of one's femininity and sexuality. After all, the body is a natural and beautiful thing. Why should one be ashamed of it?

The manner in which Muslim women generally get married is also often viewed as oppressive. Throughout history, Muslim women have usually married in their teenage years. Men, who usually do not marry until they are financially stable, are often significantly older.¹⁰⁹ Women in the West tend to find this situation abhorrent, viewing the practice of women getting married at a young age as a means for men to dominate women and mold them to their liking.

At what age should a woman want to get married? The answer depends on the prevailing reproductive climate. In a society where relationships generally do not take place outside of marriage, men are forced to offer

¹⁰⁹ Of course, this state of affairs is not limited to Muslims, and is seen in many parts of the world.

commitment in order to secure a mate. Such men can be expected to make this non-ideal situation as reproductively beneficial as possible. This entails looking for women who offer the possibility of having the most children over the course of the relationship. A seventeen-year-old woman, therefore, has much greater long-term utility than a twenty-seven-year-old since she will likely be able to bear more children in the future than her older counterpart. Not surprisingly, men in long-term reproductive climates place great emphasis on youth, preferring women who still have most of their reproductive years ahead of them. In such a climate, a woman can be expected to want to get married at a young age, as getting married when she is most desirable to men gives her the best chance to marry a desirable man.

In a short-term climate, men are less likely to offer commitment. This is especially true for desirable men, who are more able to engage in short-term relationships. Therefore, it often behooves women in short-term climates to spend their prime reproductive years pursuing a short-term strategy. A woman can then try to parlay whatever youth and long-term reproductive utility she has left into a long-term commitment when she is older.

The more short-term the reproductive climate becomes, the more averse women become to marrying early. For a woman to get married in her early twenties is viewed as odd; getting married in one's late teens becomes disgusting. After all, how can someone so young be expected to be mature enough to make such a life-altering decision? Youth is the time for enjoying oneself and focusing on one's career, not burdening oneself with the responsibilities of settling down.¹¹⁰

Men in short-term reproductive climates do not put the same emphasis on youth that men in long-term reproductive climates do. This is often viewed as enlightened, since such men seem to be focusing more on

¹¹⁰ The age a daughter should get married is a source of a lot of friction in many households where the parents emigrated from places with long-term reproductive climates. Understanding how important it is for a woman to offer a high level of long-term reproductive utility in a long-term climate, well-intentioned parents (with the encouragement of relatives and random family friends) often begin to relentlessly harass their daughters to hurry up and get married. However, the daughters, whose reproductive strategies partially reflect the society in which they grew up, are often adamant about postponing marriage. Unfortunately, when many of these women finally do agree to seriously look for a spouse, they often find that they underestimated the importance the potential suitors from their subculture place on youth, making their quest to find a spouse much more difficult.

the woman herself rather than her baby-making abilities. However, the real reason men in short-term climates do not place the same emphasis on youth is they have less reason to concern themselves with long-term reproductive utility. Instead of focusing on long-term reproductive utility, men pursuing short-term strategies are more concerned with signs of immediate fertility.¹¹¹ For example, the difference between a twenty-year-old woman and a thirty-year-old woman in terms of long-term reproductive utility is quite large. Men with long-term reproductive mentalities will therefore prefer the former. However, in terms of immediate fertility, the two women are nearly equal, so men who don't plan on sticking around for long have little reason to favor one over the other.

Another aspect of Muslim culture that Westerners find very peculiar and often take a condescending attitude towards is that Muslim marriages are usually arranged. Men and women are usually introduced through their respective families, and extended family and friends often offer to help someone find a spouse. For Westerners, the amount of outside interference necessary to find a partner in this system is exceedingly odd. Why does such an institution exist?

We will begin our attempt to answer this question by quoting some verses from the late Tupac Shakur's song "I Get Around." In this ode extolling his short-term reproductive mentality, Shakur at one point says:

You don't know me, you just met me, you won't let me,
Well if I couldn't have it, silly rabbit, why'd you sweat¹¹² me?

However, an earlier verse in the same song is very interesting:

Lady, take it easy! Hate to sound sleazy, but tease me,
I don't want it if it's that easy!¹¹³

Initially, the two verses seem to contradict one another. At one point, Shakur voices his annoyance with a woman who for some strange reason is letting the fact that they just met dissuade her from sleeping with him. But then he also is annoyed when a woman throws herself at him, not wanting it "if it's that easy." What was his problem?

¹¹¹ See Buss and Schmitt (1993).

¹¹² Come on to.

¹¹³ 2Pac, "I Get Around," *Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z...*

The preceding verses illustrate a couple of important points. The first of these is that the pursuit of short-term reproductive benefits (the ability to have sex quickly and without commitment) and the pursuit of long-term reproductive benefits (obtaining a high degree of paternity confidence) are not mutually exclusive endeavors. A man following a short-term reproductive strategy will focus primarily on short-term reproductive benefits, but this does not mean that long-term reproductive considerations will be entirely ignored. For example, Shakur's pursuit of a short-term strategy leads to his annoyance with the woman who does not quickly give in to his sexual advances. However, he still wanted at least some assurance of paternity confidence, which manifested itself in his irritation with women who threw themselves at him. In other words, a woman should "put out" quickly, but at least play a little hard to get to reassure a man that she isn't *that* promiscuous.

The verses illustrate how it is in a woman's interest to show a degree of restraint when faced with a man's advances, even when that man is pursuing a short-term strategy. Of course, as men's reproductive strategies become more long-term in nature, the need to show restraint becomes more pronounced. In a long-term reproductive climate, a woman even showing interest in a man's overtures may lead him to have misgivings about her suitability as a long-term mate. This can put a woman in a no-win situation. She can either completely reject any man's advances and risk ending up alone or respond to advances and risk being viewed as offering an inadequate amount of paternity confidence.

Men in long-term reproductive climates face a similar problem. Boldly approaching a woman and saying things she might like to hear in an attempt to start a relationship is an important skill for a man to have in a short-term reproductive climate.¹¹⁴ However, the same tactics when dealing with women following a long-term reproductive strategy are likely to be extremely counterproductive. Such women are likely to be offended when approached in a manner that indicates a man is attempting to initiate a short-term relationship with her. Furthermore, a man's boldness may alert women looking for long-term commitment that the man is likely following a short-term strategy and should thus be avoided. In a long-term climate,

¹¹⁴ This is often referred to as *running game*. "I spit a little G man, and my game got her/ An hour later, had that ass up in the Ramada." 50 Cent, "P.I.M.P.," *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*.

being shy benefits both men and women when dealing with the opposite gender.

Obviously, a situation such as this makes the formation of new relationships quite difficult. Arranged marriages offer a solution to this problem. Rather than meddlesome interference, matchmakers play a vital role in bringing together couples whose long-term reproductive strategies act as an impediment to starting a relationship by themselves. The fact that parents often play a primary role in this matchmaking is to be expected, as helping their children find the best possible mates not only furthers their children's reproductive success, but their own.¹¹⁵

Yet another reason Muslim women are often viewed as oppressed has to do with their role in society. Traditionally, most Muslim women have been housewives, spending the majority of their time running their households and raising their families. Although a similar setup was present in Western societies until relatively recently, a marked change in thinking has taken place over the past several generations. Being "just a housewife" is now often looked down upon as a lifestyle that is unfulfilling and boring. The new female ideal is the working woman who manages to successfully juggle her career and household at the same time.

Multiple reasons account for the change in women's attitudes toward having a career. For example, being a housewife is a lot less time-consuming than in the past, thanks to modern appliances. Modern sanitation and medicine ensure that the majority of babies survive, and contraception decreases pregnancies. Women are therefore raising children for only a fraction of the time that they devoted in generations past. Furthermore, the breakup of traditional social groupings, where women perform their daily activities with other women, makes modern domestic life a much more lonely and isolated endeavor.¹¹⁶

However, a mostly ignored contributor to how much importance women place on their careers is the prevailing reproductive climate. In a long-term climate, the need for women to earn money is diminished, as men can be expected to provide for their families. The more short-term a reproductive climate becomes, the less likely it is that men can be relied on, making it extremely important for women to be economically independent.

¹¹⁵ However, circumstances can arise where the parents may have interests other than what is entirely best for their child when it comes to that child's marriage. See Trivers (1974).

¹¹⁶ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 137–138.

Therefore, women in short-term climates place a huge value on their careers, feeling sorry for women who do not have the same opportunities that they do. Women in long-term climates tend to see things differently. Such women are often glad they have husbands who provide them the opportunity to stay home and take proper care of their children, pitying women who are forced to play the role of provider and caretaker at the same time.

* * * * *

So far, we have been discussing how some of Muslim women's perceived oppression can be attributed to viewing various behaviors that are beneficial in a long-term climate through the lens of a more short-term reproductive mentality. However, this phenomenon does not seem to explain why many Muslim women lack basic freedoms most other women in the world now take for granted. High rates of illiteracy and an inability to play a meaningful role in society outside the home are just a couple of the obstacles millions of Muslim women face. Why might this be?

In attempting to maximize their reproductive fitness, the men in any given society are faced with a conundrum. On one hand, part of the male reproductive ideal is realized when men are able to be promiscuous. However, such relationships generally offer a low degree of paternity confidence, which comprises the other portion of the male reproductive ideal. Unfortunately for men, the price they must pay in order to attract women who offer high paternity confidence is commitment. A society of men will find it exceedingly difficult to realize both ideals at the same time, and therefore are forced to a certain extent to focus on one aspect of the male reproductive ideal at the expense of the other.

Multiple aspects of Islam work to foster the emergence of long-term reproductive mentalities in Muslim men. Islam forbids men from engaging in non-committed sexual relations and demands that men provide for the needs of their wives and children. These dictates forbid the pursuit of a significant portion of the male reproductive ideal. Therefore, practicing Muslim men usually only have one reproductive avenue open to them: the pursuit of paternity confidence. Women wearing conservative dress such as *hijāb* only works to strengthen the formation of long-term mentalities in Muslim men, increasing their desire for high paternity confidence.

In general, women benefit when men focus on paternity confidence, as it increases the likelihood of men offering long-term commitments and sharing what they have with their families. Various societal ills, such as fatherless homes and the sexual objectification of women, have increased in the West as Western reproductive climates have become more short-term in nature. However, when men forgo the pursuit of short-term reproductive behaviors, women are predisposed to suffer from another set of problems. Most men's reproductive mentalities represent some sort of compromise between the need for promiscuity and the need for paternity confidence. When all avenues to promiscuity are closed, there is no longer any counterweight to balance the desire for paternity confidence, which can lead to a male preoccupation with paternity confidence that can be characterized as extreme.

Most of the social ills Muslim women are subject to can be attributed to the extremely long-term reproductive mentalities of many Muslim men. For example, women in some parts of the Muslim world are forced to completely veil their faces in public.¹¹⁷ We previously discussed how women attempt to dress in a manner that has enough short-term appeal to attract a man but enough long-term appeal to advertise paternity confidence. Exactly how conservative or revealing women's attire is depends on the prevailing reproductive climate; clothes that might be too conservative in one climate might be too revealing in another. The more long-term the reproductive climate is, the more conservatively women must dress. When men are employing extremely long-term reproductive strategies, the need to advertise any short-term receptivity approaches zero. In fact, a woman simply showing her face might be perceived by men as someone who offers low paternity confidence, which acts as the impetus for like-minded men to enact laws that mandate women be completely veiled in public.

A study was conducted in which couples were asked not to have sex for a period of time. During this period, different couples were separated for different percentages of time. Once the allotted time had passed, the couples resumed having sex and the number of sperm in the men's ejaculate was measured. Amazingly, the men who were separated from their partners for longer periods produced significantly more sperm than the men who were hardly separated from their partners at all.¹¹⁸ It is postulated that this

¹¹⁷ Saudi Arabia requires Saudi women to be veiled in public. Veiling was also required by law in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

¹¹⁸ See Baker and Bellis (1989).

increase in sperm production occurs because a woman's absence is a threat to a man's paternity confidence, as there is a possibility that the woman was having sex with someone else while she was away. By increasing sperm production, a man increases his chance of impregnating his partner even if her reproductive tract contains sperm from somebody else.

The preceding paragraph illustrates how men are designed to view a woman's absence as a threat to their paternity confidence. Men whose sole reproductive consideration is the maximization of paternity confidence can be expected to do their best to minimize this threat by restricting the movements of their wives. It is in this context that the presence of societies where Muslim women are hardly permitted to leave their homes unsupervised or are not allowed to drive can be understood.

A woman's reproductive ideal is realized by a man who offers good genes, long-term commitment, and plentiful resources. However, since few men offer all of these things in ideal amounts, compromise is usually necessary. One of the factors determining what type of reproductive strategy a woman will pursue is her ability to obtain resources on her own. The more independent a woman is, the more likely she is to focus on entering into relationships with highly desirable men, even if this necessitates employing short-term strategies with men unlikely to offer commitment. Therefore, a woman having economic independence is a threat to paternity confidence, and a society of men with extremely long-term reproductive mentalities can be expected to want women to be completely dependent on men for support.

This male need for women to be dependent is manifested in numerous ways in many Muslim societies. Islamic injunctions that state that women are entitled to own property and money, which can be disposed of as they see fit, are often ignored. The same can be said for a woman's Islamic right to inheritance.¹¹⁹ Muslim women's ability to obtain employment is often restricted. And as higher education is increasingly necessary for gainful employment, the obstacles many Muslim women face in order to receive an education, as well as the high rates of illiteracy among many Muslim women, should not be surprising.¹²⁰

Previously, we discussed how the age at which women generally get married in a given society is an accurate indicator of that society's reproductive climate. The more men focus on long-term reproductive

¹¹⁹ Badawi, J., *Gender Equity in Islam*, 16-17.

¹²⁰ See United Nations Statistics Division (2005).

considerations, the more it behooves women to marry at an early age. Men pursuing extremely long-term reproductive strategies will focus on finding spouses who offer the highest degree of paternity confidence and long-term reproductive utility possible, even if this means forgoing the more short-term value of immediate fertility. Unfortunately, the time when a female offers the highest amount of both these entities is at or a little before puberty, as her likelihood of being a virgin is nearly certain and her entire reproductive life is ahead of her. This reproductive logic is reflected in the practice of child marriages found in many Muslim societies.¹²¹

People are designed to find reproductively beneficial behaviors pleasurable. Perhaps the most obvious example of this phenomenon is the pleasurable nature of the sex act itself. Much of the pleasure of sex is derived from the many nerve endings found in the genitalia of both genders. The clitoris, which is the female homologue of the penis, is composed largely of erectile tissue that is heavily innervated with sensory nerve endings and plays a central role in the sexual arousal and climax of women.¹²²

People are not designed to consciously attempt to maximize their reproductive fitness. Instead, people generally work to maximize their pleasure, with the maximization of fitness generally occurring as a result. The more a person finds sex to be pleasurable, the more likely he or she will strive to have sex—even if doing so could lead to negative consequences.

For men with extremely long-term reproductive mentalities, women finding sex to be pleasurable can be viewed as a serious threat to paternity confidence. A woman who does not enjoy sex is less likely to want sex, particularly with someone other than her husband. Why would a woman risk so much to engage in an activity she does not find enjoyable? Again, it should therefore not be surprising that female circumcision is practiced among certain Muslims or that this procedure entails partial or complete removal of the clitoris.¹²³

Long before a woman becomes a wife, she is a couple's daughter. Parents are supposed to want what is best for their daughters. Why is it that it is often the parents (mothers included) who are against educating their

¹²¹ See UNICEF (2001).

¹²² In fact, the clitoris is believed to be the only organ in either gender that has no other purpose except sexual stimulation. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, 574–576. Marieb, E., *Human Anatomy & Physiology*, 1085. Masters, W. and V. Johnson, *Human Sexual Response*, 45.

¹²³ See Toubia (1994).

daughters or who subject them to being circumcised—a procedure often done in a brutal manner that leads to severe lifelong medical problems?¹²⁴ Again, the biological purpose of having children is that they are the vehicles in which one's genes are passed to succeeding generations. Parents will raise their children in the manner they believe will maximize their children's (and hence their own) reproductive fitness. If the prevailing reproductive climate is such that educated or uncircumcised women are viewed as offering low paternity confidence, then parents can be expected to internalize these societal pressures and act accordingly, in order to ensure that their daughters will be able to marry the best men possible.¹²⁵

* * * * *

Non-Muslims are not the only ones who find the status of many Muslim women to be objectionable. Many Muslims agree that Muslim women are often oppressed, but they object to the widely held belief that Islam is the source of this oppression. On the contrary, such people believe the real source of the problem is Muslims' disobedience and distortion of many of Islam's teachings. A commonly heard phrase is "There is a big difference between Muslims and Islam."

Many practices found throughout the Muslim world are in direct contradiction to Islamic dictates. Examples include the widespread inability of Muslim women to claim their stipulated share of inheritance or to freely dispose of their personal wealth. In situations such as these, the validity of the statement, "There is a big difference between Muslims and Islam" is obvious. Unfortunately, the difference between Muslims and Islam is usually more obscure.

A detailed explanation of Islamic law is beyond the scope of this book. However, the two main sources of Sunni Islamic law are the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* (the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad).¹²⁶ Interpretation of the *Sunnah* is particularly complex for a variety of reasons. To begin with, the *Sunnah* is comprised of many thousands of *ḥadīth* that

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Female genital mutilation is predominantly practiced in Africa. Although this practice is thousands of years old and is found in many religious communities, it is now particularly associated with Islam. It is estimated that 100–130 million women have undergone these procedures. See Abusharaf (1998).

¹²⁶ Kamali, M., *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 44.

are found in numerous collections. Furthermore, the authenticity of a *ḥadīth* is not taken as a given.¹²⁷ Complicated Islamic disciplines were developed in order to judge the veracity of individual *ḥadīth* based on the text of the *ḥadīth* and its chain of transmitters, with the gradations ranging from *ḥadīth* whose authenticity is unquestioned to those believed to be fabricated.¹²⁸

Scholars attempting to deduce the Islamic position on a subject are confronted with many questions. What does the Qur'ān say about this issue? How many *ḥadīth* address this issue? When multiple *ḥadīth* seem to offer conflicting evidence on a certain issue, how should preponderance be assigned? What is the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* being used as evidence? Is the advice offered by the *ḥadīth* meant to be followed for all times or is it directed to a particular set of circumstances? Is the *ḥadīth* to be taken literally or metaphorically?¹²⁹ Not surprisingly, Muslim scholars often have different opinions about a particular issue, and often use the same *ḥadīth* to support their opposing viewpoints.

For example, the Prophet is reported to have said, “A woman should not travel except with a *maḥram*.”^{130, 131} Why did the Prophet say this? According to the renowned Islamic scholar Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, the reason is in order to protect women from harm. Travel in the time of the Prophet often entailed weeks of traversing long distances by camel over difficult terrain in extreme heat. Furthermore, brigands waiting to ambush unsuspecting travelers often made travel routes even more dangerous. A woman who traveled alone in such a situation was putting herself in great danger. However, modern travel takes much less time, entails little hardship, and is much safer than travel in the past. Therefore, al-Qaraḍāwī argues that women traveling alone in modern times is permissible because the reason for the prohibition no longer exists.¹³²

¹²⁷ This is in contradistinction with the Qur'ān, which Muslims believe is the unadulterated Word of God.

¹²⁸ Kamali, M., *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 68–82.

¹²⁹ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Kayf Nata'āmal ma'a al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 93–171.

¹³⁰ A *maḥram* is a spouse or a person that marriage is forbidden to, such as a father or brother.

¹³¹ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 349.

¹³² Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Kayf Nata'āmal ma'a al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 128–129.

In the two-part volume *The Muslim Woman*, the Indian scholar Ahmed Bemat offers a different interpretation of the preceding *ḥadīth*. Translated from Gujarati into English, he writes:

Besides being weak physically, the woman is also deficient in wisdom and religion. She cannot control her sentiments. Being imbued with magnetic qualities, she attracts men towards her. Hence the Holy Prophet (pbuh.!) has forbidden the woman to undertake a journey without a *mahram* (consanguineous relative, within the prohibited degrees). she has been prohibited to go even for hajj, which is an obligatory and great devotion, without a mahram.¹³³

It is possible that Bemat's interpretation accurately reflects what the Prophet intended and clearly elucidates Islam's position on the nature of women. However, another possibility exists. The opinion of many Muslim scholars that a woman is forbidden to travel alone due to her sexual untrustworthiness may stem more from a reproductive mentality that views a woman's absence as an unacceptable threat to paternity confidence than it does from an unbiased interpretation of Islamic sources of law.¹³⁴

Before continuing the present discussion, we will quote an excerpt from *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* by Mohammed Hashim Kamali:

There is no dispute over the occurrence of extensive forgery in the Ḥadīth literature. The ulema¹³⁵ of Ḥadīth are unanimous on this, and some have gone so far as to affirm that in no other branch of Islamic sciences has there been so much forgery as in the Ḥadīth. The very existence of a bulk of literature and works by prominent ulema bearing the title *al-Mawḍū'āt*, or 'fabricated Ḥadīth', bears witness to extensive forgery in this area.¹³⁶

¹³³ Bemat, A., *The Muslim Woman*, Part II, 72–73.

¹³⁴ The opinions put forth in *The Muslim Woman* consistently point to the author's preoccupation with paternity confidence. Under the heading "Women's liberty is harmful to men," Bemat writes, "In respect of women the greatest emphasis of Islam is on their chastity, modesty and immaculacy so that there may be no mischief in the world and the woman may be helpful to man in breeding good offspring." Bemat, A., *The Muslim Woman*, Part II, 136.

¹³⁵ Scholars of eminence in one or more of the Islamic sciences. Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 308.

¹³⁶ Kamali, M., *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 65.

Political, sectarian, theological, and juristic differences that arose in the generations following the Prophet's death are some of the commonly cited reasons for this phenomenon.¹³⁷

Were reproductive differences yet another source of distortion in the *ḥadīth* literature? More specifically, can the existence of certain *ḥadīth* be attributed to attempts by men with extremely long-term reproductive mentalities to co-opt the authority of the Prophet in order to serve their reproductive needs? To our knowledge, Muslim jurists have not discussed this issue in such a Darwinian manner.

However, this does not mean that this issue has not been discussed. On the contrary, heated polemics have emerged where Muslim jurists attack the pronouncements of Muslims with extremely long-term reproductive mentalities and cast doubt on the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* used to support their claims.

The following paragraph is a translation of an excerpt from the late Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's controversial book, *al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah*.

We (Muslims) present Islam in a manner that arouses disgust. One of the famous *dā'ī* (literally someone who calls people to Islam) said in a sermon, "The woman leaves her house to her husband or her grave!" Then he mentioned the *ḥadīth*: A woman's father was on his deathbed so she asked her husband for permission to visit him but he refused! Then when he died she asked her husband for permission to witness the death and to be with her family when the funeral procession set off but he refused... Then when she mentioned this to the Prophet, he said, "God has forgiven (the sins) of your father because you obeyed your husband!!" Is this how we present our religion? As a prison for women....

Al-Ghazālī then footnotes the following:

And the *ḥadīth* which was mentioned was not recognized by the transmitters of authentic *ḥadīth*, as it leads to the dissolution of that which God has commanded to remain connected!¹³⁸ And it devalues the importance of fulfilling one's obligation to one's parents. And its goal is that women never leave their house,

¹³⁷ Ibid., 66-68. Amīn, *Fajr al-Islām*, 337-342.

¹³⁸ A reference to the ties of kinship.

a goal which Islam rejects, (as is evidenced by the following) authentic *ḥadīth*, “God has permitted you women to go forth to discharge your needs.”¹³⁹

The extremely long-term moral of the aforementioned *ḥadīth* is obvious. Even a father’s death is not sufficient reason for a woman to compromise her husband’s paternity confidence by leaving her house. Furthermore, the woman’s obedience pleased God to the extent that He forgave her father’s sins! Numerous *ḥadīth* exist that provide men religious justification for employing an extremely long-term reproductive strategy. Some examples include:

A wife should not stir out of the house without the husband’s permission; if she does, the sky will curse her; and the angels of mercy and the angels of torture will also keep cursing her as long as she does not return home.¹⁴⁰

For a woman there are two veils’: the husband and the grave and among them the one that hides better is the grave.¹⁴¹

It is even reported that the Prophet insinuated that a woman’s voice is part of her ‘*awrah* (private parts)¹⁴² and that he forbade teaching women how to write!¹⁴³

Perhaps the most outspoken critic of the interpretation of Islam through the lens of an extremely long-term reproductive mentality has been Khaled Abou El Fadl. In his book *Speaking in God’s Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women*, Abou El Fadl analyzes numerous fatwas that he considers demeaning to women. Most of these fatwas were authored by the official institution in Saudi Arabia entrusted with

¹³⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 51.

¹⁴⁰ Bemat, A., *The Muslim Woman*, Part II, 82.

¹⁴¹ Commenting on this *ḥadīth*, Bemat writes, “Certainly the safety of the women’s honour and respect and her modesty and bashfulness lies in the grave only;... It is also a fact that the home alone is good for the woman and not the cinema-house, garden, shop or bazar.” Ibid., Part I, 78.

¹⁴² This would mean that it is forbidden for a woman’s voice to be heard in public.

¹⁴³ Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God’s Name*, 185–188. Bemat, A., *The Muslim Woman*, Part II, 245.

issuing legal opinions (C.R.L.O).¹⁴⁴ The content of these fatwas is very similar to the excerpts we have quoted from *The Muslim Woman* and includes the prohibition of women driving, visiting graves, mixing with men, and showing their faces in public.¹⁴⁵ Abou El Fadl alleges that in reaching these determinations, these jurists abuse the authority vested in them in a variety of ways, including the selective presentation of evidence.

It is difficult to reconcile the traditions of *fitnah*¹⁴⁶ and exclusion with the numerous reports about the active participation of women in public life during the life of the Prophet and after his death as well. In fact, the reports that document incidents of seclusion of women are few in comparison with the reports documenting the opposite. The reports of public participation are too numerous to recount here, but they include the Prophet racing his wife in public, ‘Ā’ishah and other women watching sports in Medina, women asking and complaining to the Prophet about a variety of problems, and women participating in Islamic battles in a variety of capacities... Furthermore, men and women visited each other and exchanged gifts. Several reports state that women would come to the Prophet in the street take him by the hand, sit with him, and discuss their problems. In none of these reports about the historical practice is there a hint of obsession about *fitnah* or the affect of *fitnah*.¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, Abou El Fadl examines the *ḥadīth* that are often used to support these types of fatwas. He suggests that Muslim scholars occasionally allowed their biases to influence their judgments on the authenticity of certain *ḥadīth*. Regarding a *ḥadīth* that is often used as evidence that Islam prohibits women from assuming leadership roles¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God’s Name*, 173.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 272–297.

¹⁴⁶ “*Fitnah* connotes the notion that certain things or acts produce the type of sexual arousal that is conducive to the commission of sin.” Ibid., 233.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 239.

¹⁴⁸ The Prophet is reported to have said “No people will succeed that entrust their affairs to a woman.” Ibid., 111. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1435.

despite one of its transmitters (Abū Bakrah) having been punished for slander, Abou El Fadl writes:

Was the patriarchal message of this tradition responsible for its wide dissemination and acceptance in various interpretive communities? Was the evidentiary burden lowered by the jurists and scholars of tradition because Abū Bakrah's report seemed to make sense in terms of their context and communities of practice? In other words, did the juristic communities, and other communities, treat this tradition with uncritical favoritism because it struck a chord with their contextual subjectivities? Did this lead them not to evaluate the authorial enterprise with the requisite degree of diligence and scrutiny?¹⁴⁹

In another paragraph, Abou El Fadl questions the authenticity of the type of *ḥadīth* we have been discussing as a whole, considering them to be incompatible with Islam's overall message.

Quite aside from the issue of the technical, chain-of-transmission-focused, authenticity of these traditions, they are indicative of a dynamic and highly negotiative historical process. In fact, I believe that as to the overwhelming majority of the traditions dealing with the role of women in society, the role of the Prophet in the authorial enterprise is minimal. If one adopts the faith-based conviction that the Prophet was not sent by God to affirm and legitimate conservative and oppressive power structures, traditions that affirm the hegemony of patriarchy would have to pass the strictest level of scrutiny. However, applying this level of scrutiny to these traditions would reveal that there were too many patriarchal vested interests circulating, advocating, and embellishing these types of reports. Consequently, one would have to conclude that the voice of the Prophet in the authorial enterprise behind these traditions is hopelessly drowned and muted.¹⁵⁰

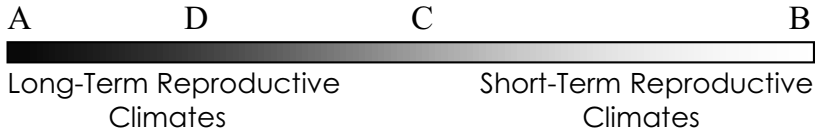
To summarize, certain Muslim jurists argue that women have no place in the public sphere and offer fatwas that cite *ḥadīth* to support their

¹⁴⁹ Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 114.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 246–247.

position. Other Muslim jurists contest these types of fatwas, cast doubt on the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* being used to support these fatwas, and cite different *ḥadīth* to support their arguments. Ultimately, and regardless of whether the participants recognize it as such, this debate revolves around the question, “What types of reproductive climates can be considered Islamic?”

Consider four different reproductive climates.



Men in Reproductive Climate A, being at the extreme end of the long-term portion of the reproductive spectrum, are only concerned with maximizing paternity confidence. Their ideal woman will be an exceedingly conservatively dressed young virgin who will stay at home and raise their children. The men in Climate B, being at the other end of the spectrum, are only concerned with the ability to have sex with as little commitment as possible. Their ideal woman will be scantily clad and exceedingly promiscuous. Furthermore, they will prefer women to have a very public presence, which facilitates them meeting as many women as possible.

The men in Climate C, being at the midpoint of the spectrum, will employ a strategy that attempts to equally balance both short-term and long-term considerations. While the men in Climate A look for an innocent wife and the men in Climate B look for a one-night stand, the men in Climate C generally look for a girlfriend. Their ideal woman will not wear very conservative clothes, but she won't walk around half-naked either. They will expect a woman to be faithful once they are dating, but won't really mind if she has had sex with other men in the past. They won't mind the woman demanding a degree of commitment before agreeing to sleep together, but will not expect (or accept) a woman refusing to have sex until they are married.

It should be noted that employing an intermediate reproductive strategy has its benefits and drawbacks. The men in Climate C obtain more paternity confidence than the men in Climate B and get to offer less commitment than the men in Climate A. However, they have to offer more commitment than the men in Climate B and obtain less paternity confidence than the men in Climate A. Such is life, I suppose.

Like the men in Climate C, the men in Climate D employ a strategy that attempts to balance both short-term and long-term reproductive considerations. Unlike the men in Climate C, however, the men in Climate D do not balance these considerations equally. For the men in Climate D, long-term considerations predominate. Like the men in Climate A, the men in Climate D will be looking for a woman who offers a high degree of paternity confidence.

So in what way does the fact that the men in Climate D have reproductive mentalities that are partly shaped by short-term reproductive considerations manifest itself? In terms of actual sexual behavior, the answer may be, “Not at all.” Like the men in Climate A, the men in Climate D’s main reproductive goal will be to find a chaste woman to marry and start a family with. The only manifestation of the men in Climate D having reproductive mentalities that are more short-term in nature than the men in Climate A may be their increased tolerance of slight threats to their paternity confidence.

Though this may initially seem insignificant, this increased tolerance can have far-reaching implications. For example, being less zealous in their pursuit of paternity confidence makes the men in Climate D less likely to demand women be veiled or to obstruct them from playing a role in public life or receiving an education. Furthermore, while their primary focus will be on the long-term reproductive consideration of long-term utility, the men in Climate D will also place some importance on the short-term consideration of immediate fertility. So while they can be expected to want to marry a woman who would be considered young by current Western standards, they likely would be averse to marrying girls in their early teens, as such girls have diminished immediate fertility compared to their older counterparts.¹⁵¹

Returning to the issue of what types of reproductive climates can be considered Islamic, many Muslims’ opinion on this matter can be diagrammed in the following fashion:

Islamic		Un-Islamic	
Extremely Long-Term Climates		Long-Term Climates	Short-Term Climates

¹⁵¹ A woman’s long-term reproductive utility peaks in her mid-teens, while her immediate fertility peaks in her early to mid-twenties. See Buss and Schmitt (1993).

For such Muslims, an Islamic society is one that has no tolerance for even the slightest threat to a man's paternity confidence. One of the ways this preoccupation with paternity confidence manifests itself is some Muslim jurists' concern with eradicating all potential sources of *fitnah*.¹⁵²

The most pronounced feature of the legal determinations that exclude women from public life is the obsessive reliance on the idea of *fitnah*. In these determinations, women are persistently seen as a walking, breathing bundle of *fitnah*. One can hardly find a *responsa* that deals with women without the insertion of some language about the seductions of womanhood. So, for instance, according to the C.R.L.O, women may attend mosques only if it does not lead to *fitnah*; women may listen to a man reciting the Qur'ān or give a lecture, only if it does not lead to *fitnah*; women may go to the marketplace only if it does not lead to *fitnah*; women may not visit graveyards because of the fear of *fitnah*; women may not do *tasbīh* or say amen aloud in prayer because of the fear of *fitnah*; a woman praying by herself may not raise her voice in prayer if it leads to *fitnah*; a woman may not even greet a man if it leads to *fitnah*; and every item and color of clothing is analyzed under the doctrine of *fitnah*.¹⁵³

For other Muslims, the range of Islamic reproductive climates is as follows:

Un-Islamic	Islamic	Un-Islamic
Extremely Long-Term Climates	Long-Term Climates	Short-Term Climates

Such Muslims also put emphasis on values such as modesty, chastity, and guarding against potential sources of *fitnah*. However, even as their reproductive mentalities remain predominantly long-term in nature, the tempering of this mentality with vestigial short-term reproductive considerations leads to an increased tolerance, and even endorsement, of various societal threats to paternity confidence that their opponents find unacceptable.

¹⁵² See footnote 146.

¹⁵³ Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 235.

The ending of seduction must be weighed against the principles of Islamic justice. Consequently, if the core of the problem is in the promiscuities of men, then women should not be made to suffer for the faults of men. Furthermore, in all cases higher values, such as education or health, cannot be sacrificed in order to guard against the dangers of *fitnah*.¹⁵⁴

* * * * *

The terms *sharī'ah* and *fiqh* have both been translated to mean Islamic law. However, Muslims have made a distinction between the two entities. *Sharī'ah* is sometimes used to refer to Islamic law in an abstract and perfect sense. *Sharī'ah* can be thought of as Islamic law as it would be if it could be directly obtained in its unadulterated form from God Himself.¹⁵⁵ *Fiqh*, on the other hand, represents Muslim jurists' attempts to deduce Islamic law by examining its sources. However, given mankind's inherent limitations, any given aspect of *fiqh* may or may not reflect God's will on a particular matter.¹⁵⁶ *Uṣūl al-fiqh* is a discipline that concerns itself with the methodologies jurists employ in creating *fiqh*.

To deduce the rules of *fiqh* from the indications that are provided in the sources is the expressed purpose of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. *Fiqh* as such is the end product of *uṣūl al-fiqh*; and yet the two are separate disciplines. The main difference between *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* is that the former is concerned with the knowledge of the detailed rules of Islamic law in its various branches, and the latter with the methods that are applied in the deduction of such rules from their sources. *Fiqh*, in other words, is the law itself whereas *uṣūl al-fiqh* is the methodology of the law. The relationship between the two disciplines resembles that of the rules of grammar to a language, or of logic (*manṭiq*) to philosophy. *Uṣūl al-fiqh* in this sense provides standard criteria for the correct deduction of the rules of *fiqh* from the sources of *Sharī'ah*.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 238.

¹⁵⁵ Abou El Fadl, K., *The Great Theft*, 150.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 150. Also see Ali (2003).

¹⁵⁷ Kamali, M., *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 1–2.

Through the examination of the content of various fatwas made with respect to the societal role of women, we have been exploring the possibility that the content of *fiqh* has been influenced by reproductive considerations. Have reproductive considerations influenced *uṣūl al-fiqh* as well?

One of the ways that *ḥadīth* are categorized relates to the number of chains by which a given *ḥadīth* was transmitted. A *mutawātir ḥadīth* is one that was reported by such a large number of people that the possibility of it being fabricated is considered to be nonexistent. The majority of Muslim scholars maintain that with respect to the formulation of Islamic law, a *mutawātir ḥadīth* has the same level of authority as the Qur'ān.¹⁵⁸ An *āḥādī* or solitary *ḥadīth* is one whose number of transmissions are not sufficiently large enough to allow it to be classified as *mutawātir*.¹⁵⁹ The overwhelming majority of *ḥadīth* fall into the *āḥādī* category.¹⁶⁰

One of the fields of inquiry in *uṣūl al-fiqh* is the degree that *āḥādī ḥadīth* can be used in the formulation of Islamic law. A diversity of opinions have been promulgated regarding this issue over the course of Islamic history. Some schools of thought considered *āḥādī ḥadīth* to have the same legal value as the Qur'ān. Others would not rely on *āḥādī ḥadīth* at all because their authenticity could not be definitively ascertained. However, the majority opinion of Muslim jurists was to use *āḥādī ḥadīth* in the formulation of Islamic law given the fulfillment of certain stipulations, with the exact nature of these stipulations varying from school to school.¹⁶¹

The debate over the legal authority of *āḥādī ḥadīth* has continued up to the present. *Ahl al-ḥadīth*, or literalist narrators of traditions, maintain that an *āḥādī ḥadīth* creates certain knowledge and can be used without restriction in the formulation of Islamic law.¹⁶² This opinion has been challenged, perhaps most notably in modern times by Muḥammad al-Ghazālī in *al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*. In this book, he argues that an *āḥādī ḥadīth* must be in conformity with the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* as a whole before it can be relied on for legal determinations. Furthermore, he argues that an *āḥādī ḥadīth* whose content is incompatible with the overall

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 68-70.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 70-72.

¹⁶⁰ The exact number of *mutawātir ḥadīth* is disputed, but some scholars have limited them to less than ten *ḥadīth*. Ibid., 70.

¹⁶¹ Amīn, *Fajr al-Islām*, 384-386.

¹⁶² Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 221.

message of Islam should not be used to formulate legal determinations regardless of how sound scholars of *ḥadīth* believe its chain of transmission to be.¹⁶³

The debate over the legal weight that should be given to *āḥādī ḥadīth* may initially seem to be a technical issue that has no bearing on this book whatsoever. However, a closer inspection reveals that this methodological issue has profound reproductive implications. As we have been discussing, a heated debate continues to this day over the type of reproductive climate that Islam aims to implement. In this debate, the *Sunnah* takes center stage, with different groups of Muslims all using *ḥadīth* as evidence to support their differing reproductive claims.

It should be noted that Muslims who use the *Sunnah* to support the formation or maintenance of an extremely long-term reproductive climate usually adopt the *Ahl al-ḥadīth* position that *āḥādī ḥadīth* create certain knowledge and can be used in an unrestricted fashion in the determination of Islamic law. If one accepts this methodological premise, then the argument that Islam intends to create an extremely long-term reproductive climate becomes much more convincing, considering the existence of numerous *āḥādī ḥadīth* (many of which scholars of *ḥadīth* have determined to be authentic) with an extremely long-term reproductive message. So, for example, if *ḥadīth* deemed to be of sufficient authenticity inform us that the angels curse women who leave their homes without their husbands' permission or that a woman's voice is part of her '*awrah*,¹⁶⁴ then the angels curse women who leave their homes without permission and a woman's voice is part of her '*awrah* and that is that. Reports of Muslim women playing an active societal role during the life of the Prophet are explained away as having occurred before Islam's rules on such matters were fully elucidated.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, any inquiries into the authenticity or legal force of such *ḥadīth* can be construed as an insult to the authority of the Prophet and can even bring the faith of the inquirer into question.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, Muslim jurists attempting to refute the claim that Islam aims to create an extremely long-term climate stress methodological premises

¹⁶³ Al-Ghazālī, *al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*, 24, 205.

¹⁶⁴ See footnote 142.

¹⁶⁵ Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 239.

¹⁶⁶ Abou El Fadl, K., *The Great Theft*, 153.

that allow them to diminish the legal weight of *ḥadīth* they consider to be incompatible with Islamic teachings.

* * * * *

Another aspect of Islamic law that may be heavily influenced by the long-term reproductive considerations of men is the issue of divorce. The majority opinion of Muslim jurists throughout Islamic history regarding divorce can be summarized as follows: Men are entitled to seek a divorce without restriction.¹⁶⁷ For men, obtaining a divorce is a relatively easy procedure. Some jurists would even allow a man to irrevocably divorce his wife by simply telling her “I divorce you” three times in succession.¹⁶⁸ Some jurists gave such pronouncements legal validity even if they were said in a moment of anger or in jest!¹⁶⁹

For Muslim women, obtaining a divorce is a much more difficult endeavor. The majority of Muslim jurists have decreed that women do not have an unqualified right to divorce.¹⁷⁰ Muslim women may be able to obtain a *khulʿ* divorce if they are able to return the dowry they received.¹⁷¹ Otherwise, a woman is obligated to bring her request for a divorce to a judge, where she must demonstrate a sufficient degree of ill treatment to justify a divorce.¹⁷² However, many judges are reluctant to intervene in what is usually seen as a domestic matter. Therefore, obtaining a divorce is exceedingly difficult for many Muslim women.¹⁷³

Muslim jurists justify women being restricted in their ability to obtain a divorce in a variety of ways. Several *ḥadīth* are quoted to support this position. For example, it is reported that the Prophet said:

The fragrance of Paradise is forbidden (*haram*) for a wife who seeks divorce from her husband without any reason.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Abou El Fadl, K., *Conference of the Books*, 271.

¹⁶⁸ See Ali (2003).

¹⁶⁹ Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 105-106, 149.

¹⁷⁰ However, some jurists did allow women to create marital contracts where they could stipulate the ability to obtain a divorce unconditionally. Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Markaz al-Mar'ah*, 113.

¹⁷¹ However, some jurists have stipulated that this type of divorce can only take place with the husband's permission. Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 168.

¹⁷² Some jurists have also allowed a woman to seek a divorce if the husband is poor or impotent. Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Markaz al-Mar'ah*, 114-115.

¹⁷³ For example, see *Frontline*, 2002.

¹⁷⁴ Bemat, A., *The Muslim Woman*, Part II, 89. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, 322.

Furthermore, Muslim jurists argue that women would abuse the right to a divorce if given the opportunity. Under the heading, “The Divine Tortures for a Wife Who Demands Divorce,” Ahmed Bemat writes:

Since a woman is more sentimental than reasonable and is not so wise, she has not been given the right of divorce. Being all emotion and having less intelligence, an ordinary tiff over something disgusts her so much that in her tantrum she begins to urge her husband to divorce her separate her or send her to her parents’ house... Even if the husband is oppressive, she should bear the oppression with fortitude. knowing that the fruit of patience is sweet, Allah’s mercy would surely appear soon and she would be able to win her husband’s love and admiration.¹⁷⁵

Even Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, who is often criticized by Muslims for being too liberal, has a similar opinion on this matter:

And they say: “Why has divorce been placed solely in the hands of men?” And we say: The man is the master of the family and the provider, and is primarily responsible (for the family), and it is he who pays the dowry, and (the expenses) after the dowry, to the point that the familial edifice is built on his shoulders. And for anyone in this position, it is difficult on him that this edifice collapse except for overwhelming reasons and overpowering necessities that make him sacrifice all his expenditures because of them. Furthermore, men have more insight into the consequences (of their actions), are more deliberate, and less excitable than women. Therefore, men are more qualified to have the (marital) contract in their hand. As for women, they are quickly excitable and extremely emotional; and if divorce were in their hands, they would rush to divorce for the flimsiest of reasons whenever a small argument arises.¹⁷⁶

Perhaps Muslim jurists are correct in their assumption that Muslim women would file for divorces for no good reason if given the chance, leading to societal chaos. However, from a Darwinian perspective, such a state of affairs would be exceedingly unlikely. If anything, one would expect

¹⁷⁵ Bemat, A., *The Muslim Woman*, Part II, 89–90.

¹⁷⁶ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Markaz al-Mar’ah*, 111–112.

women to resort to divorce only in the most unfavorable of circumstances. The reason for this is that women invariably leave marriages with less reproductive value than they had when the marriages started. For men, the ideal woman with whom to start a long-term relationship offers high levels of both long-term reproductive utility and paternity confidence. Advancing age decreases a woman's long-term reproductive utility. And a woman who has been in a previous relationship and is no longer a virgin is deemed to have lower reproductive value, particularly in long-term climates. The presence of children from a previous marriage lowers a woman's reproductive value even more. Therefore, for most married women, their current situation represents their best reproductive option. That many women are unwilling to leave their husbands despite repeated acts of infidelity, emotional abuse, and even physical abuse is an unfortunate manifestation of this reality.

For men, the consequences of ending a marriage are not as bad. Since women do not have to worry about maternity confidence, a man's previous relationships are not as much of a concern. And aging does not diminish a man's reproductive value to the degree it does to a woman.¹⁷⁷ In fact, a man can have significant reproductive incentive to end a marriage in certain situations. For example, if a man is able to accumulate a lot of wealth or status, he may be able to maintain or even increase his reproductive value as he gets older. If this man is married to a woman whose reproductive value is rapidly dwindling and has older children who no longer require his support, the incentive to divorce his wife can be very strong. That many successful men divorce their wives after many years and then marry someone younger is an unfortunate manifestation of this reality. Even if one accepts the soundness of the principle that a gender should have its access to divorce restricted for the greater good, it would seem to make more sense that the restricted gender be men.

Attitudes toward divorce have varied widely over time and place in Western civilization. However, the general trend over the past few centuries has been that obtaining a divorce has become progressively easier. This is particularly true for women.

In England female plaintiffs, who were required to prove aggravated adultery (adultery compounded with some other marital offense such as physical cruelty), were all but shut out

¹⁷⁷ See chapter 1.

of the divorce process except for formal separations. Of the 325 complete divorces that Parliament granted between 1670 and the legal reforms of 1857, only four went to women.¹⁷⁸

English men, on the other hand, only had to prove simple adultery to qualify for a divorce during that time period. It was not until 1923 that English women could also obtain a divorce by proving simple adultery, leaving them on an equal footing with men.¹⁷⁹

Expanding the recognized legal grounds for divorce was an important issue for early American feminists. Although Americans today might find it hard to believe, calls in the nineteenth century for women to have the legal right to divorce an alcoholic husband were met with vociferous opposition.¹⁸⁰ It was not until the 1960s that no-fault divorces began to become prevalent in Western societies.¹⁸¹

The changes that have occurred over the past few centuries in Western societies suggest that attitudes toward divorce are heavily affected by the prevailing reproductive climate. As Western reproductive climates became more short-term in nature, divorces became easier to obtain. Furthermore, the unequal access Western women had to divorce began to diminish. Perhaps this trend is to be expected. For men whose sole reproductive focus is to get married and raise a family, the ability of a woman to leave and try to find someone better can be seen as an unacceptable threat. On the other hand, men pursuing short-term strategies benefit by having as many women available to them as possible. Seen in this light, the increasing sympathy Western men have shown toward women stuck in unhappy marriages as Western climates became more short-term in nature is not that surprising.

We have already used Khaled Abou El Fadl as an example of a Muslim jurist whose interpretations of Islamic law are indicative of him having a reproductive mentality that is more short-term in nature than most of his counterparts. This mentality also manifests itself in his opinions on divorce. In an essay where he recounts the plight of a Muslim woman unable to obtain a divorce from her abusive husband, he analyzes the issue of divorce in Islam. Reviewing many of the Qur'ānic verses used to justify women's restricted access to divorce, he concludes that the full implications of these

¹⁷⁸ Basch, N., *Framing American Divorce*, 23–24.

¹⁷⁹ Phillips, R., *Untying the Knot*, 191–192.

¹⁸⁰ Ward, G. and K. Burns, *Not for Ourselves Alone*, 67–69, 92.

¹⁸¹ Phillips, R., *Untying the Knot*, 215.

verses have not been fully considered and intimates his opinion that Islam gives women the same access to divorce as it does to men. However, Abou El Fadl seems somewhat troubled that his opinion is in disagreement with the majority of Muslim jurists throughout Islamic history.¹⁸² The question becomes, is the majority opinion the result of the unequivocal evidence found in the sources of Islamic law, or a manifestation of the reproductive climates in which those opinions were formulated?

* * * * *

So far, we have been exploring the ways in which the content of Islamic law may have been influenced by the long-term reproductive considerations of Muslim men. Are short-term reproductive considerations manifest in Islamic law as well?

Slavery was prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia. Islamic teachings stressed the importance of treating slaves well and made the freeing of a slave one of the most meritorious acts a Muslim can perform.¹⁸³ However, the fundamental institution of slavery was left intact.¹⁸⁴ Islam also continued to allow Muslim men to have sexual relations with their female slaves, who are referred to in the Qur'ān as those whom the right hands possess.¹⁸⁵

Previously, we discussed the topic of a woman's 'awrah (what a woman must cover in the presence of non-related men, excluding her husband). The majority of Muslim jurists have decreed that a woman's 'awrah is her entire body, with the exception of her face and hands. A minority of jurists claim a woman's face and hands are also part of her 'awrah, which necessitates that women be completely veiled when they go out in public. However, these opinions relate to the 'awrah of free women. Interestingly, the majority of jurists throughout Islamic history argued that the 'awrah of slaves is different. As with free women, Muslim jurists differed on the exact nature of a slave woman's 'awrah. Some jurists believed a slave may leave her hair, arms, and calves uncovered in public. Others stated a slave woman's 'awrah is what is between her navel and her knees, which would allow her to publicly expose her breasts!¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Abou El Fadl, K., *Conference of the Books*, 265–277.

¹⁸³ Qur'ān, 2:177. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 474.

¹⁸⁴ Gordon, M., *Slavery in the Arab World*, 19.

¹⁸⁵ Qur'ān, 23:5–6.

¹⁸⁶ Abou El Fadl, K., *And God Knows the Soldiers*, 125–127.

Jurists often justified their distinctions between a free woman and a slave's '*awrah*' by claiming slaves led a more active life that necessitated a less restrictive dress code in order to remove hardship.¹⁸⁷ However, a skeptic might have a hard time accepting such justifications at face value. It initially seems odd that Muslim jurists, especially in light of many of their other edicts, would be particularly concerned with the comfort or convenience of any women, let alone slaves. And one wonders what kind of work slaves used to do that required the exposing of their breasts. Besides, what happened to closing the door to potential sources of *fitnah*?

As we discussed previously, men obtain reproductive benefit by being sexually promiscuous and offering little commitment to their partners. On the other hand, men also benefit by obtaining a high degree of paternity confidence. Unfortunately for men, women who afford men the opportunity to have sex without commitment usually offer low paternity confidence. And women who offer high paternity confidence usually demand a high level of commitment. The degree that men will focus on short-term versus long-term reproductive considerations will be heavily affected by the prevailing reproductive climate. However, regardless of the exact nature of the prevailing reproductive climate, men often attempt to solve this reproductive conundrum by employing a mixed reproductive strategy.¹⁸⁸ By having short-term relationships with women who require little commitment and having long-term relationships with women who offer paternity confidence, some men are able to obtain the reproductive equivalent of having their cake and eating it too.

Examples of men employing mixed reproductive strategies abound. Men in long-term reproductive climates usually focus most of their energies on marrying a wife and raising a family with her. However, many of these same men actively seek more short-term relationships with mistresses. Many men also visit prostitutes. The ubiquitous nature of prostitution, even in the most long-term reproductive climates, attests to the importance men place on short-term reproductive opportunities.

In the same vein, men employing predominantly short-term reproductive strategies do not entirely neglect the pursuit of paternity confidence. Hip-hop

¹⁸⁷ Jurists also argued that the prevailing customs that dictated what slave girls wore were also to be taken into account. Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 241.

¹⁸⁸ For examples of how males in other species utilize a mixed reproductive strategy, see Trivers (1972).

offers an interesting example of this phenomenon. Rappers often rap about their “wifey,” which may be defined as a serious girlfriend. Unlike an actual wife, a man having a wifey does not mean the two are actually married. Nor can the wifey realistically expect her man to be faithful.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, a wifey is entitled to a long-term commitment, affection, and expensive gifts. This is in contrast to the average “ho”, who is entitled to nothing.

In order for a man to successfully employ a mixed reproductive strategy, he must separate women into those who would be suitable for a long-term relationship and those who would be suitable for a short-term relationship. Attempts to start a short-term relationship with a woman pursuing a long-term strategy are unlikely to be successful. And starting a long-term relationship with a woman employing a short-term strategy is an unnecessary waste of resources and may result in an unacceptable threat to a man’s paternity confidence. The male need to separate women in this fashion explains the commonly heard expression “There are the type of women you bring to bed, and there are the type of women you bring to Mom.”

Once again, Jay-Z offers an eloquent example of this thought process in his song “‘03 Bonnie & Clyde”, where he voices his irritation with men who are inept in their attempts to employ a mixed reproductive strategy and assures his girlfriend that he will not make the same mistake.

The problem is you dudes treat the one that you lovin’
With the same respect that you treat the one that you humpin’¹⁹⁰...
If ever you mad about somethin’,¹⁹¹
It won’t be that, oh no it won’t be that.^{192, 193}

So how do men separate women into potential short-term and long-term mates? One way is to observe the way a woman dresses and behaves in order to make an educated guess on the type of reproductive strategy she is employing. Men sometimes also use different groups of women for different purposes. For example, immigrants or first-generation Americans

¹⁸⁹ However, a wifey is expected to remain faithful regardless of her man’s indiscretions. See Ghostface Killah, “Back Like That,” *Fishscale*.

¹⁹⁰ Just having sex with.

¹⁹¹ He now is addressing the girlfriend.

¹⁹² The next verse (omitted due to copyright issues) then assures the girlfriend that he would never bring some ordinary bitch to any place he and the girlfriend might frequent!

¹⁹³ Jay-Z, “‘03 Bonnie & Clyde,” *The Blueprint²: The Gift & The Curse*.

often avail themselves of the relatively plentiful opportunities for short-term relationships that are present in the United States. However, when it is time to get married, many of these same men decide to return to the long-term climates of their original countries in order to find a “good girl” who would make a better choice with whom to settle down and raise a family.

The existence of concubines has been exceedingly common throughout recorded human history. Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and Rome were just some of the civilizations that sanctioned male slave owners having sex with their female slaves.¹⁹⁴ One can make the argument that along with cheap labor, a primary reason for the existence of slavery throughout human history has been the reproductive benefit that slavery provides for slave owners.

More specifically, men throughout history have used slaves to satisfy their short-term reproductive needs. A prime example of this phenomenon is antebellum America, where white slave owners would marry free white women but often had sex with their female black slaves.¹⁹⁵ Islamic law, by allowing men to sell their female slaves and placing no limit on the number of slaves a man could possess, also encompasses provisions that make slavery beneficial from a short-term reproductive standpoint.¹⁹⁶

Al-Jāḥiẓ (776–869 CE), a famous writer of Arabic prose, lived during the Abbasid caliphate. Known for writing on a diverse array of subjects, one of his most well-known works is *Risālat al-Qiyān*, or *The Epistle on Singing Girls*. Singing girls were slaves trained to entertain their masters and their clients.¹⁹⁷ Besides discussing the singing girls, al-Jāḥiẓ uses the epistle to discuss women and their role in society on a more general level. The following excerpt deals with societal attitudes toward free women who would remarry:

Equally, in the past they used not to see any harm in a woman transferring herself to a number of husbands in turn, and not ceasing to do so until prevented by death, so long as men still desired her. Whereas today they censure this, or in some cases regard it as [at least] unseemly. They cold-shoulder a free woman

¹⁹⁴ See Betzig (1992).

¹⁹⁵ West, E., *Chains of Love*, 126–131.

¹⁹⁶ However, if a master had a child with his slave, most jurists stated that she no longer could be sold to someone else and was entitled to her freedom upon her master's death. Schacht, J. *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 264–265.

¹⁹⁷ Beeston A. F. L., *The Epistle on Singing-Girls of Jāḥiẓ*, 2.

[who remarries] after she has already been married to one husband [previously], and attach social disgrace to the man who espouses her as well, and include both him and her in the blame and shame of such conduct. Yet men will take as a concubine a slave who has been in the hands of innumerable masters. Who, however, can [reasonably] approve of this in a slave and object to it in a free woman? They are not jealous over slaves (who may become mothers of their children or favourites of monarchs), and yet are jealous over free women!¹⁹⁸

The apparently hypocritical position of these ninth-century Muslim men can be understood if one realizes that these men looked at free women as potential long-term mates and slaves as potential short-term mates. When choosing a long-term mate, paternity confidence becomes paramount. In such a setting, the fact that a woman has slept with other men, even in marriage, lessens her value as a long-term mate, which explains why men might find a woman remarrying objectionable. As for a short-term mate, paternity confidence takes a backseat to the opportunity for sex with little commitment. In such a situation, a woman's previous relationships are of little significance, which explains why slave girls having sex with many men was not considered to be particularly blameworthy.¹⁹⁹

Returning to the issue of a woman's *'awrah*, the assertion of most premodern Muslim jurists that a slave girl's *'awrah* is different from that of a free woman may also be explained by the realization that Muslim men viewed slave girls primarily as short-term mates. When looking for a short-term mate, men look for and are pleased by cues that suggest a woman is employing a short-term strategy. As such cues include showing more skin, the leniency Muslim jurists allowed with respect to what a slave girl must cover in public is no longer surprising.²⁰⁰

Slavery is now (for the most part, at least) a defunct institution.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, the manner in which the short-term reproductive considerations of Muslim jurists influenced their opinions on what

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 22.

¹⁹⁹ See Buss and Schmitt (1993).

²⁰⁰ Similarly, the Assyrians (an ancient Mesopotamian dynasty) required that the wives and daughters of free men cover their heads while outside, but they prohibited prostitutes, temple slaves, and servants from doing so. See Dickemann (1981).

²⁰¹ Although slavery is no longer legal in any country, an estimated twenty-seven million people are still enslaved worldwide. See *National Geographic*, Sept. 2003.

constitutes a slave girl's 'awrah underscores the possibility that the discourses that continue to the present day regarding a woman's 'awrah may be influenced by long-term considerations.

As stated previously, the majority of Muslim jurists throughout history have held that a woman must cover everything except her face and hands when in public. A minority of jurists believe that a woman must be completely veiled. What is less known is that more lenient opinions were advanced in Islamic history, which allowed free women to expose their arms, calves, and hair in public.²⁰²



The aforementioned diversity of opinions suggests that the Islamic textual sources regarding this matter are amenable to multiple interpretations. Is the belief that a woman must be completely veiled in public ultimately the result of men interpreting Islamic sources of law from point A on the reproductive spectrum? Is the opinion that a woman must publicly cover everything except her face and hands the majority opinion because it is the opinion with the strongest basis, or is it a reflection that Muslim reproductive climates have usually been centered at point B? Would more lenient opinions now be considered the orthodox Islamic position if Muslim reproductive climates throughout history had been closer to point C? These are difficult questions without clear answers.

²⁰² Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 257.

CHAPTER 4

Dueling Mentalities

The formation of coalitions by individuals seeking to control resources of reproductive value is characteristic of numerous primate species.²⁰³ Chimpanzee males, for example, form competing coalitions in order to secure mating access to females. These coalitions demonstrate a high degree of political sophistication, and often resort to violence to achieve their ends.²⁰⁴

Human coalitions are in many ways unique, as they are unparalleled in terms of both size and complexity. Nevertheless, human coalitions still ultimately function to secure resources of reproductive value in a world filled with competing interests. In this chapter, we will examine the reproductive benefits various coalitions attempt to secure and the political manifestations of conflicts between competing coalitions.

* * * * *

The process through which Western women obtained the freedom and rights they enjoy today is intimately connected with the phenomenon of feminism. Starting with its beginnings in eighteenth-century Europe, feminists over time have been able to remove much of the institutionalized inequality previously present in Western societies.²⁰⁵ A prime example is the American

²⁰³ This is the case for both males and females. Low, B., *Why Sex Matters*, 186–189.

²⁰⁴ For a fascinating account of the political machinations of a group of captive chimpanzees, see *Chimpanzee Politics* by Frans de Waal.

²⁰⁵ Watkins, S., M. Rueda, and M. Rodriguez, *Introducing Feminism*, 10–17.

movement for women's suffrage, which, although formally beginning in 1848, did not secure the right for women to vote until 1920.²⁰⁶ The active role Western women now play in the spheres of higher education, the economy, and government is also due in large part to the efforts of feminism.

Beyond combating inequality in public life, a hallmark of feminism has been the challenging of various traditional mores that feminists have found oppressive. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the pioneers of the women's suffrage movement, also caused much controversy with her clothing until the outcry caused her to abandon her previous mode of dress.

No matter the weather or the task at hand, women of Stanton's time and class were expected to wear corsets, layered petticoats, and cumbersome floor-length dresses. Stanton appeared onstage instead wearing a loose-fitting skirt that ended just four inches below the knee over capacious "Turkish" trousers. Most men and women found such attire dangerously immodest.²⁰⁷

Feminists have also fought against the "domestic tyranny" that occurs when a woman's only option is to be a housewife, which forces her to be dependent on her husband for support and deprives her of the intellectual stimulation that a career provides.²⁰⁸ Feminists have also been at the forefront in challenging traditional attitudes toward marriage and sex. For many feminists, the institution of marriage has been the means that men use to monopolize a woman's reproductive capability and secure cheap domestic labor.²⁰⁹ Feminists, particularly in the 1960s, also espoused more casual attitudes toward sex, stressing the importance of women obtaining sexual pleasure unfettered by patriarchal Victorian notions that deemed women to have lower sex drives than men.²¹⁰

The timeline for the emergence and expanded influence of feminism coincides entirely with the period over which the American reproductive climate changed significantly. This is not a coincidence. The main

²⁰⁶ Ward, G. and K. Burns, *Not for Ourselves Alone*, 224.

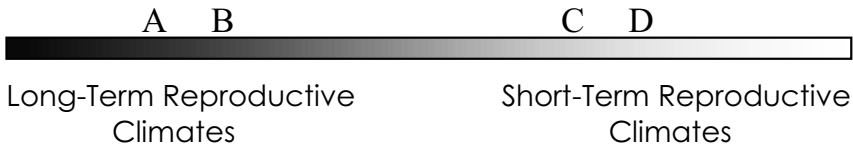
²⁰⁷ This attire was known at the time as "the short dress" although it still loosely covered the entirety of a woman's legs. Suffragists also caused controversy by going out in public and attending meetings without being chaperoned by men. *Ibid.*, 70–71, 3.

²⁰⁸ Watkins, S., M. Rueda, and M. Rodriguez, *Introducing Feminism*, 100.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

²¹⁰ Wright, R., *The Moral Animal*, 135–136.

societal changes feminists have sought—increased roles for women in public life, the ability to be financially independent from men, and more liberal attitudes toward marriage and sex—are all characteristics of reproductive climates that are more short-term in nature. Feminism can actually be defined as a phenomenon whose goal is to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of women employing more short-term reproductive strategies.



Feminists who wore “the short dress” and worked to secure women’s right to vote may have been attempting to move their society’s reproductive climate from point A to point B, while feminists who burned their bras and espoused free love may have been attempting to move their society’s climate from point C to point D. In either case, the operating principle is the same.

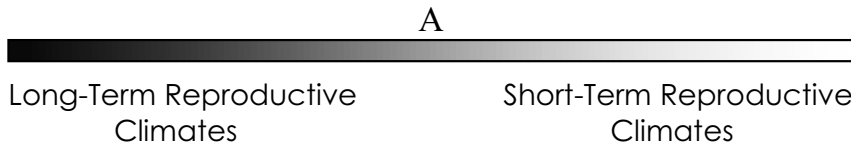
In summary, the institutions and mores of a given society reflect the reproductive mentalities of that society’s population. A society with a long-term reproductive climate will have institutions and mores that reflect the fact that its men desire a high degree of paternity confidence. Beyond simply reflecting a particular reproductive mentality, a society’s institutions and mores actually promote the formation of that mentality in others. For example, a society that limits the ability of women to earn a living not only reflects the fact that men in that society view women’s independence as a threat to their paternity confidence, it also promotes women adopting long-term strategies themselves, as women in that society would find it exceedingly difficult to take care of themselves and their children alone, and must offer a high degree of paternity confidence in order to be viewed as a suitable spouse.

If a society’s reproductive climate starts to change, people will begin to view the institutions and mores that reflect and promote the old reproductive mentality as an impediment, and will work to change them. However, any attempts at change will be resisted by people whose reproductive mentalities have not changed with the changing times. For example, the emergence of feminists in America in the nineteenth century demanding an increased

role in the public sphere was a manifestation of the American reproductive climate becoming more short-term in nature. The initial resistance of American institutions to accommodate these demands reflected the fact that these institutions were dominated by older men whose comparatively long-term reproductive mentalities caused them to view the proposed reforms as an unacceptable threat to their paternity confidence.

However, as the decades passed, such men were replaced by younger men whose comparatively short-term mentalities caused them to view an increased role for women in public life and female economic independence as less of a threat.²¹¹ In fact, for men pursuing short-term strategies, women being independent is actually beneficial because it increases the likelihood of women pursuing short-term strategies. One would therefore expect men and the institutions they continue to dominate²¹² to actively facilitate women being independent in more short-term reproductive climates. So, do the numerous freedoms women now enjoy in American society represent a triumph for human rights secured by countless individuals dedicated to improving the lives of women or the subconscious attempts of powerful men to increase their likelihood of getting laid? It seems that the answer is both!

* * * * *



The above diagram indicates that Society A is in the middle of the spectrum with respect to its reproductive climate. This does not mean that every single individual in Society A is exactly in the middle of the spectrum with respect to his/her reproductive strategy. While the majority of people will likely employ strategies that reflect the intermediate nature of Society A's climate, some people will employ more short-term strategies; others will pursue more

²¹¹ Interestingly, the final vote in the Tennessee House of Representatives that guaranteed the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment was cast by a twenty-four-year-old man, the youngest person in the legislature. Ward, G. and K. Burns, *Not for Ourselves Alone*, 224.

²¹² See Low (2005).

long-term strategies. Because people in the same reproductive climate pursue different strategies, reproductive climates can be referred to as *heterogeneous*.

So what accounts for the fact that people in the same reproductive climate employ different strategies? Hormonal exposure in utero²¹³ and genetic predisposition²¹⁴ appear to play a role. Another reason is that people adjust the strategies they employ by comparing themselves to their peers.²¹⁵ For example, desirable men have more ability to secure short-term sexual opportunities, while less desirable men often attempt to compensate for being less desirable by offering women long-term commitments.²¹⁶

Another reason that people in the same climate pursue different strategies is that people grow up in different family environments. The family is the one reproductive unit that a child has the most intimate knowledge of, so it is to be expected that a child would use this knowledge to help formulate his/her reproductive mentality. In particular, the presence or absence of a father plays a significant role in the reproductive strategy a child ends up employing. For a boy growing up without a father, the reproductive message is “Your father did not see it in his interest to commit to a woman; neither should you.” To a daughter, the message is, “Your mother could not obtain a commitment from a man. Chances are you won’t be able to either. You must be living in a short-term reproductive climate, so act accordingly.”²¹⁷ Not surprisingly, children growing up in single-parent homes generally end up being more promiscuous than their peers who grew up with both Mom and Dad.²¹⁸ Such children are also more apt to create their own broken homes in the future.²¹⁹

As humans have progressed from the small hunter-gatherer groups that have characterized most of human history and formed larger societies, the reasons for having heterogeneous reproductive climates have increased dramatically. A large country may have a certain reproductive climate in one region and a different climate in another. Or a country’s rural areas may have a more long-term climate than its cities. Even a single locality can encompass multiple communities belonging to different ethnic, economic,

²¹³ See Scarbrough and Johnston (2005).

²¹⁴ See Comings et al. (2002); Gangestad and Simpson (1990).

²¹⁵ See Landolt, Lalumière, and Quinsey (1995).

²¹⁶ See Gangestad and Simpson (2000); Waynforth (1999).

²¹⁷ See Draper and Harpending (1982).

²¹⁸ See Ellis et al. (2003); Quinlan (2003).

²¹⁹ See McLanahan and Bumpass (1988).

or social classes, with these differences leading to the pursuit of different strategies. An inner-city area may have one reproductive climate while a totally different climate exists in the suburbs only a few miles away. And if a reproductive climate begins to change, different mentalities will be observed between the youth and their elders.

The reproductive climates in Muslim societies are particularly heterogeneous when compared to other civilizations. This can be explained in large part by Western influence on the Muslim world. Traditionally, Muslim societies have had long-term or extremely long-term climates. However, in a process that began with colonialism, Westerners have imported many of their institutions and cultural values to the Muslim world. These entities reflect and promote the comparatively short-term mentalities of their makers. However, Westernization in the Muslim world has progressed in a very uneven fashion, with the elites in Muslim countries becoming much more Westernized than the general populace. The result is that most Muslim countries have significant groups of people employing everything from extremely long-term strategies to more short-term strategies in the same places.²²⁰

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As we have been discussing, societies form institutions and mores that not only reflect a given reproductive mentality, but also promote this mentality at the expense of others. This promotion and protection of perceived reproductive interests is the reason why a heterogeneous reproductive climate often leads to conflict.

²²⁰ Although colonialism undoubtedly exacerbated this problem, one could argue that Muslims have had problems stemming from a heterogeneous reproductive climate since the *Hijrah*, as many of the Meccan Muslims were unhappy with the boldness and public presence of the women in Medina. The rapid military expansion of Islam in the century after the Prophet's death also led to many different reproductive climates being incorporated into the new Muslim empire. It has been argued that many of the legal pronouncements regarding women and their role in society in early Muslim history were heavily influenced by the customs of the conquered Byzantines and Sassanians. In the previously mentioned *Risālat al-Qiyān*, al-Jāhīz criticizes men who go too far in restricting the public life of women, claiming that the earliest generations of Muslims were not as strict as his ninth-century contemporaries. Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God's Name*, 223, 232. Ahmed, L., *Women and Gender in Islam*, 4–5. Beeston A. F. L., *The Epistle on Singing-Girls of Jāhīz*, 15–17, 22.

Consider a group of men pursuing an extremely long-term reproductive strategy. Such a strategy is only beneficial if they live in a society where they have access to women who offer a high degree of paternity confidence and long-term reproductive utility. Therefore, such men will work to create a society that fosters the development of extremely long-term reproductive mentalities in women. This is achieved by various means, including severely restricting educational and employment opportunities for women and implementing very conservative dress codes.

Now consider a group of men pursuing a short-term reproductive strategy. In this case, such a strategy is beneficial only if they live in a society where they have access to women who are amenable to entering into short-term relationships. Therefore, such men work to create a society that fosters the development of short-term mentalities in women. This also is achieved by various means, such as facilitating women's access to education and jobs and dismantling conservative dress codes.

If both groups of men inhabit the same society, a huge conflict of interest arises. For argument's sake, suppose that the men of a certain society are divided into two groups. Group A is comprised of men pursuing extremely long-term strategies while Group B is made up of men pursuing relatively short-term strategies.

A	B
Extremely Long-Term Strategies	Short-Term Strategies

Now suppose that Group B is the one that is successful in shaping the society's institutions to coincide with its reproductive needs. The end result will be a change in the reproductive climate, with women adopting more short-term reproductive strategies. For the men in Group B, this is a good thing.

For the men in Group A, the change in women's reproductive strategies is a disaster. Recall that men with extremely long-term mentalities work to maximize their reproductive fitness by focusing almost exclusively on paternity confidence and long-term reproductive utility. Unfortunately for such men, women offer less and less of these two commodities as

the reproductive climate becomes more short-term in nature. The more promiscuous a society's women are, the less paternity confidence they offer. Furthermore, even if such women plan to get married eventually, they are generally averse to marriage until they are older, using their youth to pursue more short-term strategies. For men employing extremely long-term reproductive strategies, this means the time period when women have the highest reproductive value (both in terms of long-term reproductive utility and immediate fertility) becomes lost to them. Despite having to offer the same level of commitment as in the past, such men obtain less paternity confidence, less immediate fertility, and less long-term reproductive utility from a prospective spouse. If this is not bad enough, even when women who were previously employing short-term strategies look to get married, the type of men they find suitable is still influenced by their overall reproductive mentality. Such women are likely to find men with extremely long-term mentalities and their ideas on the general role of women to be repugnant, and will likely choose to marry men with reproductive mentalities closer to their own. In such circumstances, the men in Group A will have to increasingly settle for less and less desirable women—if they are able to get married at all.

Similarly catastrophic consequences await men in Group B if it is Group A that is successful in shaping its society's institutions to coincide with its reproductive needs. In this scenario, the end result will be women adopting extremely long-term reproductive strategies, offering maximum amounts of paternity confidence and long-term reproductive utility in order to further their own reproductive goals. Of course, the pursuit of a short-term strategy in such a climate becomes nearly impossible. Even settling on a long-term strategy would be difficult, as women (or their families) working to maximize long-term commitment are likely to realize that the men in Group A are much better choices in this regard.

To summarize, any group with a given reproductive strategy has its reproductive interests severely threatened by the presence of other groups with different reproductive strategies.²²¹ It is impossible for a society to be

²²¹ Women also have their interests threatened by the presence of other women pursuing different reproductive strategies. For example, women with long-term mentalities are harmed by women pursuing short-term strategies, as they make it less likely that men will offer commitment. This helps explain why women are often harshly judgmental toward women more promiscuous than themselves, and often use the same demeaning terms to describe such women that men do.

an ideal climate for people with long-term mentalities and simultaneously be ideal for people with short-term mentalities. Given the central role that the maximization of reproductive fitness plays in human existence, it is not surprising that the presence of different reproductive mentalities in one place can lead to heated disputes and even bloodshed, particularly when the difference in reproductive mentalities is especially wide.

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Obviously, people do not go around saying things like, “Current trends threaten our ability to mate with women offering high levels of paternity confidence” or “Our access to promiscuous women is being compromised.” How, then, does the conflict between differing reproductive mentalities in Muslim societies play itself out?

A major manifestation of this conflict is the debate that rages in almost all Muslim societies over the societal role of women. In a dynamic that started earlier in the West, the presence of people with comparatively short-term mentalities in societies whose institutions continue to reflect a more long-term reproductive outlook has led to the increased influence of feminism in the Muslim world. Proponents of feminism advocate various changes that would eliminate the difference between their reproductive mentality and their society’s overall reproductive climate, allowing them to pursue their reproductive strategies more effectively. Such changes include improving educational and employment opportunities for women, increasing their role in public life, relaxation of conservative dress codes, increased access to contraception, increasing the minimum age at which women can get married, changing divorce laws, removing *hudūd* laws from the penal code, restricting or outlawing polygyny, and modifying traditional Islamic laws pertaining to inheritance.²²² Justifications for such changes are made in the name of reproductively loaded terms such as *human rights*, *women’s rights*, *reform*, and *modernization*.

Vehemently opposing most, if not all, of these changes are people who retain an extremely long-term mentality in an attempt to use their influence to maintain what at some point became the status quo as far as Muslim

²²² A daughter’s inheritance in most cases is half that of a son according to Islamic law. Many view this as being blatantly unfair to women. However, many Muslims justify this position by pointing out that Islam burdens men with much more financial responsibility. Badawi, J., *Gender Equity in Islam*, 16–17.

reproductive climates are concerned. This group has its own lexicon of reproductively loaded terms, making appeals to *family stability*, *tradition*, and *religion*.

Let us now turn our attention to politics. Muslim countries throughout the world are characterized by a high degree of political instability. Much of this instability has its roots in a fundamental dispute over the role religion should play in government. At one end of this dispute are the various secular philosophies, which all agree that religion should have little or no role in the affairs of the state. On the other end are people who believe Islam is not meant to be confined to the private sphere. On the contrary, they contend, Islam's teachings are comprehensive in nature and encompass all aspects of human life. Such people call for the rejection of secular ideologies and the implementation of Islamic law in order to form an Islamic state. In many Muslim countries, a protracted struggle between the secular government and groups attempting to establish a theocracy continues to take place, with the government using methods such as incarceration and restricting political participation to maintain power.²²³ As long as the government retains a firm hold of power, the amount of violence from such conflicts remains comparatively low.

It is when the two groups have similar power bases that the potential danger of the secularism/theocracy debate becomes fully manifested. A clear example of this occurred in Algeria, where a power struggle between the Islamic Salvation Front and the government following the elections in 1991 degenerated into a brutal civil war that left more than one hundred thousand people dead.²²⁴ Similar scenarios playing themselves out in other Muslim countries remain an ominous possibility.

In what way is one's opinion on the role religion should play in public life related to one's reproductive mentality? Before we attempt to answer this question, it should be noted that religions in general aim to foster a long-term reproductive climate, sanctifying the marriage bond and condemning acts such as adultery and fornication as grievous sins. The long-term reproductive bent common to the major world religions is particularly pronounced in Islam.

Previously, we discussed how people's sense of morality is heavily dependent on their perceived reproductive interests; people deem that

²²³ The Egyptian government's treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood is a good example of this phenomenon. See Campagna (1996).

²²⁴ See Quandt (2002).

which is reproductively beneficial as good and that which is detrimental as bad. Religion, with its long-term reproductive bent, is no exception to this phenomenon. The more short-term a society's reproductive climate is, the less importance people generally place on practicing their faith. After all, values such as chastity, abstinence, and fidelity might be good from a religious point of view, but they become increasingly restrictive impediments as a reproductive climate becomes more short-term in nature. The religious sentiments that remain in such societies are usually related to one's personal relationship with God or the security obtained by having a sense of belonging to a group. However, though private or spiritual aspects of religion might continue to flourish, the public or moralistic aspects of religion become increasingly frowned upon and discarded.

For people with long-term reproductive mentalities, religious edicts are much more beneficial. This is especially true with respect to Islam since many of its teachings actively promote the formation of a long-term climate, thereby ensuring men with long-term mentalities that they will be able to find women offering the reproductive entities that they focus on. Men with extremely long-term mentalities are particularly zealous about making sure their (and only their) interpretation of Islamic law is implemented. In this manner, the pursuit of maximal paternity confidence proceeds under the guise of complete devotion to God and a desire to make sure His commands are strictly followed.

The link between political philosophies and reproductive mentalities is clearly illustrated by several revolutions that have taken place in Muslim countries over the past century. The establishment of modern Turkey, led by Mustafa Kemal in 1923, is a perfect example of how political power is used to create a reproductive climate that caters to the victors' reproductive mentalities. The Ottoman caliphate, which had ruled for more than six centuries, was abolished in favor of a secular government.²²⁵ This government has historically been quite zealous in denying religion any role in public life.²²⁶ Furthermore, vast social changes were implemented, particularly with regard to women. Women were given the right to vote

²²⁵ See Mardin (1981).

²²⁶ A perfect example of this occurred in 1999, when the Turkish Parliament protested the entrance of a newly elected member who came to Parliament wearing her headscarf. She was ultimately unable to take her oath of allegiance. Turkish secularists see the headscarf as a symbol of a movement that aims to overthrow the secular order and impose an Islamic state. The headscarf is banned in Turkish universities and offices. See Rumsford (2003).

in municipal elections in 1930,²²⁷ and their participation in public life was actively facilitated.²²⁸ The most symbolic of these changes was the attitude toward veiling, which was officially discouraged.²²⁹ The results of the policies pursued in Turkey are clearly evident today; Turkey has one of the most short-term reproductive climates in the Muslim world.

The Pahlavi Shahs, impressed with the Atatürk model of modernization, attempted to pursue similar reforms in Iran.²³⁰ However, Mohammad Reza Shah was overthrown in the Islamic revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. In direct opposition to what took place in Turkey, a secular government was replaced by an Islamic theocracy dedicated to reintroducing religion into the public and political sphere. Interestingly, the position taken on the veil was also completely opposite from what happened after Atatürk came to power, with women being forced to wear the black *chador* that has become a symbol of the revolution in the West.

Besides the imposition of a conservative dress code, numerous policies were enacted that catered to men focusing on paternity confidence and long-term reproductive utility. Many prominent female politicians were dismissed. The minimum age for girls to marry was lowered from fifteen to nine.²³¹ Members of the morals police could jail or beat women who came out improperly covered in public.²³² Perhaps the most blatant example of the new government's concern with paternity confidence was the subjecting of women caught in contact with non-related men to virginity tests!²³³

It should be noted that the revolution did not end the struggle to define the Iranian reproductive climate. The reigning theocracy is coming under increasing pressure by many of its citizens who desire a reproductive climate that is more short-term in nature. Some of the manifestations of this phenomenon include calls for a more secular society, an increased

²²⁷ Women were given the right to vote and run in national elections four years later.

²²⁸ See Toprak (1987).

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ See Najmabadi (1991).

²³¹ Presumably, the age of nine was chosen as it has been reported that this was the age of 'Ā'ishah when her marriage to the Prophet was consummated. Poonawala, I., *The History of al-Ṭabarī Volume IX*, 130–131.

²³² It should be noted that women also served in the morals police and could be as zealous in policing women's clothing as the men were. This is a good example of how the interests of women seeking long-term commitment and men seeking paternity confidence can coincide.

²³³ Wright, R., *The Last Great Revolution*, 138–139.

public role for women, and the reinterpretation of various aspects of Islamic law.²³⁴

A more recent and extreme example of a revolution with clear reproductive implications started in Afghanistan in 1994, with the ascendance of the Taliban.²³⁵ Again, the correlation between political outlook (in this case an ultraconservative theocracy) and reproductive mentality (perhaps the prototype of an extremely long-term mentality) is clearly evident. The story of how the Taliban began their revolution is very telling. Apparently, the takeover began in order to exact vengeance on soldiers who had raped two women; the perpetrators were subsequently caught and hanged from the turret of a tank.²³⁶ Perhaps the Taliban were very concerned about the welfare of women, and the thought of them being abused in this manner made them risk their lives in an act of chivalry. However, their treatment of women while in power tends to cast doubt on this theory. It should be noted that not being able to prevent another man from having sex with your wife is about as severe a threat to paternity confidence as there is. Given their political outlook and treatment of women during their short reign, it is fitting that the Taliban revolution arose out of a threat to paternity confidence.

To summarize, reproductive mentalities are heavily influenced by the prevailing reproductive climate in which people grow up. However, once reproductive mentalities become fully formed, people stop adapting to their reproductive climates and instead attempt to force their reproductive climates to adapt to them. When multiple reproductive mentalities arise in the same society, the seeds of conflict are sown, as an overall reproductive climate cannot be ideal for different reproductive mentalities simultaneously.

The struggle to establish and promote the formation of a reproductive climate consistent with one's reproductive mentality is reflected in the political philosophies people adopt. In the Muslim world, the extremely heterogeneous nature of Muslims' reproductive mentalities has led to the presence of widely different political views, with fanatic secularists and fanatic theocrats often living side by side. When one group manages to come to power, they quickly use this power to promote the establishment of

²³⁴ Ibid., 133–159.

²³⁵ Rashid, A., *Taliban*, 25–30.

²³⁶ Ibid., 25.

a reproductive climate consistent with their reproductive mentality. Recent Muslim history offers vivid examples of this phenomenon, and the violence and upheaval that result from this struggle continue to plague or threaten numerous Muslim countries to this day.

* * * * *

Political conflict that has roots in the presence of differing reproductive mentalities is not a phenomenon limited to the Muslim world. The same dynamic, albeit in a less dramatic form, is also present in the United States. The main political schism in American politics is between Republicans/conservatives on the one hand and Democrats/liberals on the other.²³⁷ Many of the characteristic differences in both groups' positions stem from conservatives having a more long-term reproductive mentality than liberals,²³⁸ and the constant struggle between them can partially be viewed as an attempt by both groups to shape the overall American reproductive climate to their liking.

As discussed previously, attitudes toward the role religion should play in public life are shaped by a society's reproductive climate. Given the relatively short-term nature of America's reproductive climate, its predominantly secular nature should not be surprising. Nevertheless, attempts by groups with comparatively long-term mentalities to retain a role for public displays of religion persist, even if in an attenuated form. Manifestations of this phenomenon include conservatives advocating school prayer or displaying the Ten Commandments in front of courthouses. Liberals, on the other hand, are usually against such policies, claiming they impose religious teachings on people who may not appreciate them and violate the separation of church and state.

Short-term reproductive behaviors are associated with a variety of drawbacks, particularly for women. Two of the most serious are unwanted pregnancies and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. How should society work to combat these ills? People with short-term mentalities

²³⁷ The Democrat/Republican schism is heavily affected by geography. The 2004 presidential electoral map was a clear example of this reality, with the Democrats winning the states on the East Coast and West Coast and the Republicans basically winning all the other states. This division reflects the fact that the reproductive climate in the more secular and urban coastal areas is more short-term in nature than the more rural "Bible Belt" portions of the country.

²³⁸ See Simpson and Gangestad (1991).

(for whom short-term behaviors are an important part of their reproductive strategy) feel it is best to enact policies that aim to mitigate the deleterious effects of promiscuous behavior.

People with long-term mentalities approach the issue very differently. Again, people engaging in short-term reproductive behavior are a serious threat to people employing long-term strategies. Men find it harder to find women who offer a high degree of paternity confidence, and women find it harder to find men willing to offer a long-term commitment. Such people have no incentive to lessen the potential perils of promiscuous behavior. On the contrary, they actually benefit by the costs of promiscuous behavior being as high as possible, as these costs may lead more people to adopt long-term strategies.

For example, consider the issues of teenage pregnancy²³⁹ and the alarming rate at which American teenagers contract sexually transmitted diseases.²⁴⁰ For liberals, these problems can be confronted most effectively by educating young people about the risks of sexual activity and the proper use of the various forms of contraception that are available. Some liberals go beyond this and advocate actively providing teenagers contraceptives to increase the likelihood that they are used. After all, young people are going to have sex, so it is best that they do so in the safest manner possible, right?

Wrong, say most conservatives. For them, encouraging teenagers to use contraception is akin to encouraging people who drive while intoxicated to at least use their seatbelts. If anything, by giving teenagers a false sense of security, encouraging contraception may lead teens to even more promiscuous behavior, making them even less safe. Ultimately, the myriad societal problems associated with teenage promiscuity, conservatives argue, are a reflection of the inherent immorality of promiscuity, and can only be combated through the promotion of monogamous relationships and abstinence.²⁴¹

²³⁹ The teenage pregnancy rate in the United States from 1990–2000 was 84.5 pregnancies per 1,000 teenage women. See Ventura et al. (2004).

²⁴⁰ Of the approximately 18.9 million new cases of STDs that occurred in the United States in 2000, 9.1 million (48 percent) were contracted by persons aged 15–24. See Weinstock, Berman, and Cates Jr. (2004).

²⁴¹ The Republican-dominated Congress passed a bill in 1996 that allocated hundreds of millions of dollars for “abstinence-only” programs that specifically prohibit the provision of information on the use of contraceptives. Funding for these types of programs increased significantly during the Bush administration. See Dailard (2006); Sonfield and Gold (2001).

The issue that most clearly illustrates the political strife that results from differing reproductive mentalities in the United States is abortion. A Martian with an elementary understanding of human biology would probably be baffled by the importance many people place on this issue. If some woman wants to terminate her pregnancy, why would other people (particularly people who don't even know her) want to stop her? Why do they care?

Throughout human history, the potential drawbacks for women employing short-term strategies have been severe. Obviously, the most immediate and serious of these drawbacks was having an unwanted pregnancy. Having to raise a child without the help of a man plus the risk of being ostracized by society acted as strong impediments to pursuing short-term strategies.

By giving women the option to opt out of unwanted pregnancies, abortion helps remove what is perhaps the biggest obstacle toward the adoption of short-term strategies by both genders. This is why groups with comparatively short-term mentalities, such as liberals and feminists, are so passionate about securing its legality and availability. This is also why groups with long-term mentalities, such as conservatives and many religious groups, are so passionate about protecting the rights of the unborn.²⁴²

* * * * *

Perhaps the most influential trend in the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century is globalization. It is often said that the world is rapidly becoming a global village. In the last section, we discussed how the competing reproductive interests that are present in a heterogeneous reproductive climate lead to intra-societal conflict. With the quickening pace of globalization, one might expect this phenomenon to take on an international dimension.

It would be naive to believe that globalization is a process in which every society is affected by every other society in an equal fashion. Globalization can be thought of as a euphemism for Westernization in general and Americanization in particular.²⁴³ From a reproductive point

²⁴² The same logic applies to conservative opposition to embryonic stem-cell research, which potentially could revolutionize the treatment of many diseases.

²⁴³ Barber, B., *Jihad vs. McWorld*, 73–87.

of view, globalization has allowed the entities that have worked to make Western reproductive climates more short-term in nature to be rapidly transplanted worldwide.

Many Muslims throughout the world are upset with the ever-increasing degree of Westernization of their societies, the influences of which are widely believed to lead to people turning away from their religion and toward moral decadence.²⁴⁴ Put another way, many Muslims throughout the world correctly perceive Western influences on their societies as a serious threat to their long-term reproductive way of life. For example, how effective does mandating that women wear *hijāb* in public remain in shaping long-term reproductive mentalities if people just go home, set up their satellite dishes, and watch *Baywatch*?²⁴⁵ Western media, Western educational, legal, and economic institutions, and even Western types of buildings reflect and actively promote the reproductive mentalities of their makers. Seen in this light, a baseline of anti-Western sentiment is to be expected. This is particularly the case among Muslims with extremely long-term mentalities, as they are the ones whose reproductive strategies are most adversely affected by Western influences on their societies.

Although the increasing pace of globalization has predominantly promoted the spread of more short-term values worldwide, important exceptions to the general rule exist. Wahhabism is a school of thought in Islam that originated in present-day Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century.²⁴⁶ Wahhabis are often characterized as being exceedingly conservative and harsh in their interpretation of Islamic law.²⁴⁷ This is particularly the case with regard to the status of women.²⁴⁸ In fact, Wahhabism can be characterized as the prime example of the interpretation of Islam that emerges when interpreted by members of an extremely long-term reproductive climate. Initially, Wahhabism remained relatively

²⁴⁴ Many Islamists also have argued that the concept of “women’s liberation” is a tool that the imperialist West uses to destroy the moral fabric of Muslim societies in order to facilitate their subjugation. See Najmabadi (1981) and Barber, B., *Jihad vs. McWorld*, 210.

²⁴⁵ At one point, *Baywatch* was the most popular television show on the planet, with an estimated weekly audience of 1.1 billion people in 142 countries. See *BBC News*, Mar. 22, 2001.

²⁴⁶ Rashid, A., *Taliban*, 85.

²⁴⁷ Algar, H., *Wahhabism*, 31–37.

²⁴⁸ For a collection of Wahhabi fatwas regarding women, see Abou El Fadl, K., *Speaking in God’s Name*, 272–297.

obscure, and remained largely confined to the Arabian Peninsula.²⁴⁹ However, in the last fifty years, there has been an exponential increase in the number of Muslims visiting Saudi Arabia for the purpose of pilgrimage. Furthermore, the enormous wealth generated by oil has allowed Saudi Arabia to aggressively disseminate Wahhabi teachings worldwide by various means, including mass publishing of Islamic literature, building mosques and *madrasahs*, and funding a variety of Muslim organizations.²⁵⁰ These efforts have enabled Wahhabism to attract adherents and to influence the practices of Muslims throughout the world.

All over the world, small groups of Muslims exist that are dedicated to removing Western political influence on Muslim countries in order to overthrow the ruling government and establish a properly functioning Islamic state. Such groups are not squeamish about using violence against civilians to achieve their goals, leading to Islam being increasingly linked in the Western mind with terrorism. This linkage came to the fore on September 11, 2001, which undoubtedly will be remembered as a defining moment of the twenty-first century. That the acts of that day were perpetrated by Muslims in the name of Islam has led to a heated discussion on the underlying reasons behind the profound hatred many Muslims have for the West in general and America in particular.

Numerous theories attempting to explain the roots of Islamic terrorism have been put forth. Some people believe that certain Muslims simply hate the freedoms found in Western societies;²⁵¹ others point to an inherent savagery in Islam itself.²⁵² On the other hand, some commentators have placed the blame on poverty, repressive Muslim regimes that allow Islamists no legitimate means of political expression, and American foreign policy.²⁵³

It is not our intent to assess the validity (or lack thereof) of the aforementioned theories. Undoubtedly, the roots of Islamic terrorism are complex; many factors play roles in creating the overall picture. However, it seems that one root cause of Islamic terrorism is the difference in reproductive mentalities between the terrorists and their enemies.

²⁴⁹ Algar, H., *Wahhabism*, 44–45.

²⁵⁰ Abou El Fadl, K., *The Great Theft*, 68–74. Algar, H., *Wahhabism*, 47–54. Rashid, A., *Taliban*, 85, 128–140.

²⁵¹ Bush, G. W., *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People*, delivered 9/20/01.

²⁵² See Ibn Warraq (2005).

²⁵³ Abou El Fadl, K., *The Great Theft*, 164–167. Chomsky, N., 9–11, 30–32.

Of course, it would be a gross overgeneralization to say that every Muslim with an extremely long-term reproductive mentality inevitably views the West as Islam's greatest enemy and is willing to use any means necessary in order to resist Western hegemony. However, the linkage between an extremely long-term mentality and terrorism is unmistakable. A constant among Islamic terrorists all over the world is an affiliation with the Wahhabi school of thought.²⁵⁴ While all Muslims with extremely long-term mentalities are not terrorists, all terrorists appear to have either come from extremely long-term reproductive climates, received Islamic education in an extremely long-term climate, or adhere to an interpretation of Islam that originated in an extremely long-term climate.

A striking example of this phenomenon is that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers on September 11 were of Saudi origin—and so was the mastermind of the operation, Osama bin Laden. Furthermore, the group responsible for the attacks (al-Qaeda) had its headquarters in Afghanistan, under the protection of the Taliban government.²⁵⁵ It should be noted that Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan (particularly Afghanistan under the Taliban) are both epitomes of an extremely long-term reproductive climate. Saudi Arabia and Taliban-controlled Afghanistan not only have/had²⁵⁶ the most conservative views of any state on earth regarding the public role of women, they also have/had the world's most conservative theocracies. The link between views on women, views on the nature of government, and views on the West should not be surprising since they all ultimately are manifestations of an extremely long-term reproductive mentality. Especially after September 11, much has been made about the seeming incompatibility between the West and Islam. But even if we are witnessing a "clash of civilizations,"²⁵⁷ the current conflict can also be characterized as a clash of reproductive mentalities.

²⁵⁴ Abou El Fadl, K., *The Great Theft*, 45.

²⁵⁵ Rashid, A., *Taliban*, 139–140.

²⁵⁶ The Taliban were removed from power after the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

²⁵⁷ This phrase was made famous by *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* by Samuel P. Huntington.

CONCLUSION

The utility of using evolutionary psychology as a framework to analyze human behavior appears incontrovertible. Equally pertinent in explaining the misogyny in a rapper's lyrics as it is in explaining the misogyny in a shaykh's fatwas, evolutionary psychology offers profound insight into a wide range of behavior on both an individual and societal level. The final topic we would like to discuss before concluding this book is the possibility of this insight being used to improve the human condition.

There are a variety of extremely difficult obstacles standing in the way of such an endeavor. First of all, evolutionary psychology stresses its impartiality in describing and explaining human behavior, and does not attempt to offer suggestions for how this knowledge could be beneficially used. The following quotes are illustrative of this viewpoint:

Evolutionary psychology provides no moral justification for any political programme. Evolutionary psychology is a science, and science is about discovering facts, not about making value-judgements. A statement about the way in which humans *actually* behave may be true or false, but a claim about how humans *should* behave is neither true nor false- it is just a subjective opinion that stands alone.²⁵⁸

The sciences, including evolutionary psychology, restrict themselves to making factual claims, and leave the business of value-judgements to ethics. Ethical questions cannot be settled by science.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Evans, D. and O. Zarate, *Introducing Evolutionary Psychology*, 162.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 163. Also see Alexander, R., *Darwinism and Human Affairs*, 276.

This desire to keep evolutionary psychology as a strictly neutral discipline is reinforced by the manner social Darwinists and Nazi eugenicists previously used Darwinian theory to justify behavior ranging from neglecting the poor to genocide.²⁶⁰

Another obstacle impeding the use of evolutionary psychology to guide policy is the complicated, multifaceted manner in which reproductive considerations shape an extremely wide range of behavior. As we have been discussing, a society's overall reproductive climate shapes people's opinions on a wide variety of issues. Furthermore, it seems that any given reproductive climate has its own specific set of benefits and drawbacks. For example, familial stability is more likely in a long-term climate while most issues related to women's rights are better served in a short-term climate. Figuring out and assigning relative weights to all the positive and negative aspects of a particular climate and then comparing this climate to another would be an extremely complicated undertaking. This would be the case even if the people involved attempted to be completely objective in their reasoning.

This brings us to another formidable obstacle. People's thoughts on issues related to reproductive climates are mechanisms designed to help them maximize their individual fitness in the particular climate they inhabit—not to pontificate on what would be in the greater interest of the species.²⁶¹ Truly objective thinking on many reproductive matters might simply be beyond human capability. It is quite likely that any attempts to assert the superiority of a given reproductive climate will just reflect the mentality of the proponent, regardless of all attempts to be as objective as possible.

The likelihood of the insights afforded by evolutionary psychology being used in a beneficial manner by Muslims appears even more remote, as it is based on a theory of human origins that appears to directly conflict with the origin of mankind as related by the Qur'ān.²⁶² This is extremely unfortunate, as much of the ugliness associated with the Islamic tradition

²⁶⁰ Evans, D. and O. Zarate, *Introducing Evolutionary Psychology*, 165.

²⁶¹ Alexander, R., *Darwinism and Human Affairs*, 69.

²⁶² Qur'ān, 7:11-25. For an example of the mistrust many Muslims have for the theory of evolution, see *The Evolution Deceit* by Harun Yahya. This book, which has been read by millions and translated into multiple languages, claims that evolution is grounded in the baseless theory of materialism and has led to untold human suffering by being a root cause of racism, communism, fascism, and terrorism.

and the Muslim world ultimately stems from the extremely long-term reproductive mentalities of many Muslim men.

Nevertheless, the potential applications of evolutionary psychology are quite numerous. For example, research could be conducted in an attempt to determine exactly how people's reproductive mentalities develop. (What age does this process begin? When does it end? What are all the contributing factors and their relative importance in shaping an individual's mentality?) Evolutionary psychology could also offer advice on the most feasible and effective ways of changing a society's reproductive climate, regardless of whether the current climate is deemed to be too short-term or too long-term in nature.

Perhaps evolutionary psychology could even offer suggestions on the time frame in which to bring about these changes, ensuring that change occurs in an expeditious manner while avoiding the many societal problems that occur when a society's reproductive climate changes very quickly and people start to feel their reproductive interests being threatened. In this manner, educated attempts could be made to harness people's desire to maximize their fitness in order to obtain the greatest possible individual and societal benefit.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A.S. Amin was born in New York City to parents of Indian descent. After majoring in Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Pennsylvania, an initial exposure to evolutionary psychology inspired a decade of independent research that culminated in the writing of this book. A physician, he now lives with his wife and two children.

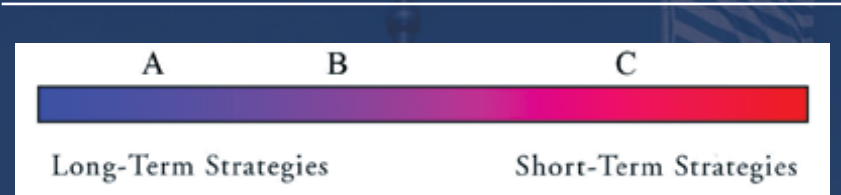


Please visit this book's accompanying blog at:
www.conflictsoffitness.com

In *Conflicts of Fitness: Islam, America, and Evolutionary Psychology*, A.S. Amin examines various aspects of Islamic tradition through a Darwinian framework. Islam’s allowance of polygamy, the underlying reasons for the subordination of women in many Muslim societies, and the seeds of political instability and terrorism in the Muslim world are just a few of the important issues this book addresses.

Amin also offers original insight into many aspects of American society and history. Through the filter of biologically based theories, he explores the reasons behind the monumental changes in sexual mores that have occurred in the United States over the past century, the underpinnings of feminism, and the differences between liberals and conservatives. This text also analyzes the lyrics of many famous rappers, in the belief that hip-hop has arguably become the most influential form of cultural expression in America today.

An astute and entertaining work that compares and contrasts American culture with that of the Muslim world from a perspective inspired by evolutionary psychology, *Conflicts of Fitness* presents many thought-provoking tools to those in search of greater understanding of these two dynamic cultures and worlds.



(color version of diagram on p. 28)

