

Ask A Genius 107 – The Headless Chicken and Reward (Part 3)¹
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This session has been edited for clarity and readability.

[Beginning of recorded material]

S: This plays out throughout evolutionary history. It plays out throughout modern dating dynamics. Not in every case, but if you look at the large scale trends, the trends are obvious. And if you don't know, then you probably haven't looked at the data.

R: And you can take it all the back to—I know there are problems with sociobiology, but there's a lot right about sociobiology, E.O. Wilson's deal. E.O. Wilson is a guy who studied a lot of insects, and based on his study of insects extended his idea to how biology influences humans as well as animal behaviour. One of the big truths of sociobiology is eggs are expensive and sperm is cheap.

A woman has to be more selective in sex partners because she's the one who is going to get pregnant, and be the one who will be raising the kid and wants a male who doesn't flake. The male wants to flake. He wants to impregnate as many women as he possibly can. Well, depending, that's not like—there are different strategies, but the male strategy tends to reward flaky behaviour more than the female strategy.

There are strategies where the male sticks around and he's sure the offspring are his own, which is a big deal in terms of passing on your genes. Though still, if he is raising kids who he knows are his own, if he can sneak off and impregnate other people, and have those kids raised by other people, that's not unheard of.

S: Some thoughts come to mind. The first thought that comes to mind. I can see some branches of some feminist critiques of sociobiology or evolutionary psychology from the fact that the pill came in, I guess, 1960?

¹ Four format points for the session article:

1. Bold text following and including “Scott Jacobsen:” or “S:” is Scott & non-bold text following and including “Rick Rosner:” or “R:” is Rick.
2. Session article conducted, transcribed, edited, formatted, and published by Scott.
3. Footnotes & in-text citations in the interview & references after the interview.
4. This session article has been edited for clarity and readability.

For further information on the formatting guidelines incorporated into this document, please see the following documents:

1. American Psychological Association. (2010). Citation Guide: APA. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28281/APA6CitationGuideSFUv3.pdf>.
2. Humble, A. (n.d.). Guide to Transcribing. Retrieved from <http://www.msvu.ca/site/media/msvu/Transcription%20Guide.pdf>.

R: Yup.

S: So that can attenuate the cultural pressure. The genetics and the developmental structure also interacts with the surrounding culture, so the input is reinforced. So there will be attenuation, but not elimination, of these capacities, like we were talking about the XX-XY cognitive packages we get from genetics, which probably keep a lot of human thinking, conscious or unconscious—non-conscious—on a tight leash.

R: I've known a couple of guys who were really good at hooking up with a bunch of women. I've read some books on how to do that just because I think it is an interesting, if creepy, subject. One of the major principles of being that guy is letting women know that it is not going to be a problem. You talked about the pill, which over time has the idea of female contraception. Now, it is widely spread and easily available and takes many forms.

After 50 years, it has, kind of, to some extent become a part of society and along with that, in terms of selling yourself, as a guy, if you're going to be a pickup artist, you have to sell, "This is going to be fun and I'm not going to be a problem." We're going to fool around. You're going to like it, and I'm not going to create any life problems for you, which overcomes—on the other hand, a woman who wanted to be a pickup artist doesn't have to do that kind of thing to any great extent.

A woman can say, "We're going to have sex." A lot of guys, once they get over their initial shock and fear, will be like, "Oh, okay." "And by the way, I'm crazy." Guys would be like, "Well, uh, how crazy?"

[Laughing]

But women need—the sociobiological basis you could argue—to be soothed, but that's patronizing; women need to be assured that this sexual encounter is going to be worthwhile. Where guys don't really need that assurance, so even with the pill, even with contraception, it doesn't overcome the basic—and there are other reasons for that. Generally, the on average greater strength and aggression of guys versus women.

A woman who is 128 pounds is like, "Yea, let's have sex," and the guy who is 188 pounds is like, "Yea, okay." A lot of guys would not imagine the woman has a switch blade packed away and will go stab-stab-stab-stab during the sex. Guys don't tend to think of being in danger during a casual sexual encounter; whereas, I would think many women take the potential danger into account—sociobiology aside. So you said you had another thing. You had two thoughts.

S: The second thought is, there will be cognitive aspects, of choice. Some men will choose, in ancestral environments, to impregnate as many women and possible. So quantity over quality. Other men will choose to invest in one partner and set of offspring for better chances. Both have their advantages and disadvantages in terms of the survival of that particular person's genes. One, you create high quality children with lots of nurturing. The other, you create many, many children who will have less chances of passing on the genes in ancestral environments per child, but over all—just summing them up—you might have

equivalent or better chances than investing in one partner and family. So that's the other thought.

R: Women don't have—those strategies aren't as available to women. A woman is stuck with carrying a kid for 40 weeks and, you know, during that time a guy could knock up any number of women. Also, she's going to be that kid's food supply for many months and, whether she likes it or not, she's more invested and more constrained in terms of her investment in the kid. Biologically, it is up to her to carry the kid.

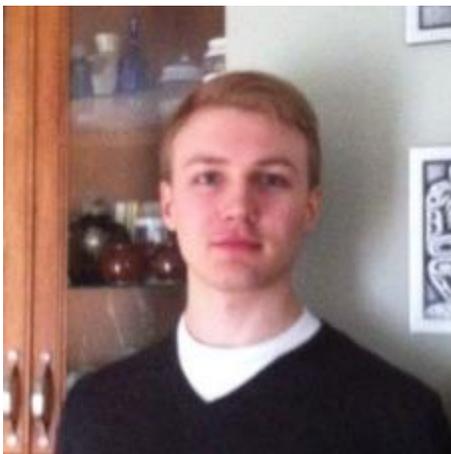
It is likely she'll be the one nursing the kid. It is likely she'll be taking care of the kid's needs during the first few years of the kid's life.

[End of recorded material]

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