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Press Article

Thoughts from the Savanna: Female Safety

Our evolutionary history designed us for life on the savanna...

Female chimpanzees mate with any male around – including their own sons. Males have no role in child-rearing. For a male chimpanzee, sex is a pleasurable act without consequences – so he does not care who does what to whom, sexually.

In contrast, an alpha-male gorilla goes ballistic if another male sniffs around his females. Powerful hormones trigger feelings of insane jealousy. He flies into a terrible rage and mangles the intruder.

In a state of nature, the human species is closer to the gorilla. In our Pleistocene past, mothers needed a man to protect them and their children. But the man needed to be sure about paternity; otherwise he won't make the investment. So, instinctively, he has a visceral horror of being duped – of unwittingly raising another man's genes.

Why is this reticence programmed into male brains as a deep instinct? As I wrote in an earlier article about stepfathers, it is a logical paradox that men who are altruistic and raise another man's genes, do not therefore have any (or as many) offspring of their own. Therefore, genes that promote generous feelings for investment in another man's children die out. On the whole, we are all descended from a line of men who fiercely protected their own offspring and were less caring about another man's.

It follows from this that there is an advantage for the man who can cause another man to do the work for him. That is why husbands have evolved to be such jealous guardians of their wives' sexuality. In some later societies this jealousy has reached paranoid proportions. We all hear of traditional communities where womenfolk can only go outside the home in the company of a male member of the family. Often they have to be covered head-to-toe in shapeless and unattractive garments.

In our Pleistocene past, the fertile women (some fifteen of them) went foraging together in a loosely knit group. They chatted to each other the whole time about inconsequential matters. They did so, not so much to exchange information as for reassurance. Each one needed to feel the comfort that other members of the group were nearby: they needed to feel the safety of numbers.

That way they made sure that they had not strayed too far away from the others. They stayed together not because they were worried about snakes and lions – oh no! Their greatest danger was from marauding ravishers from an out-group – a nearby band.

In addition, every woman had a minder – her man. Should anything untoward happen to her, her man would deal out terrible retribution to the defiler.

The upshot was, in this balance of power, women were pretty safe from violation.

Today we have unwittingly upset this equilibrium. Women expect to be able to walk the streets on their own; women do not expect to need a male protector. Moreover, our laws forbid men from carrying out fearful retribution.

Today, the vast majority of men behave themselves. Nevertheless a small percentage either cannot do so, or do not see why they should. The temptation of a free lunch overwhelms social conditioning. As with the recent Worboys case in London, we hear every day of rapists being caught only after years of molesting females.

I have no answers to this example of modern society malfunction except to observe that the female rape victims were, without exception, alone. They were not in a group with 15 other women; they did not have a male protector.

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Geoff Bond is a nutritional anthropologist and a recognized authority on what it means to be human in lifestyle terms. American hospitals employ him to give in-service training to their doctors about mastering the lifestyle diseases like cancer, heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. The Walter T Stec Foundation supports Geoff in bringing his message into American schools. He is on the health panel of the UK think-tank Reform. Geoff's latest book, *Deadly Harvest*, is the reference work for lifestyle anthropology and the connection with degenerative disease. All good bookstores stock it.

Geoff is available for the occasional talk to interested groups.

More information about Geoff's work on his website: www.naturaleater.com.

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