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Passion for sexual pleasure, the measurement of selection, and prospects for eugenics

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Vining's is an important contribution in the quest for a better scientific understanding of human sociobiology. I wish to make brief comments on (1) the "novel environments" hypothesis, (2) how to measure selection, and (3) prospects for eugenic selection.

The passion between the sexes for erotic pleasure is probably the major proximate cause of offspring. Socioeconomic changes associated with modernization have caused children to shift from being economic assets to expensive liabilities for parents in many societies (Caldwell 1982). Advances in contraceptive and abortion technology have made it easier for individuals to separate the procreative and recreative (erotic) functions of sexual intercourse. Many scholars have contended that the "novel environment" created by costly children, more effective technological means for separating the procreative and recreative dimensions of sexual intercourse, and so on, has generated selection producing an inverse relationship between socioeconomic power and reproductive success (see Bajema 1976).

Selection is produced by the ecological interactions organisms have with the physical conditions of their environment, with individuals of other species, and with members of the same species. Because selection is a function of the environment, the direction and intensity of selection are as changeable as the social environment and the interspecific and physical environment. Whether a given human phenotypic characteristic such as social status or intelligence is selected for or against may very well be a function of the social practices prevailing at the time (Bajema 1963). Consequently there is no reason to expect that selection will always favor the reproductive success of humans having such phenotypes as socioeconomic power and intelligence. Foresight about the parental costs of reproducing in a given socioeconomic environment, for example, may well be the major reason why individuals in the upper socioeconomic classes are restricting their fertility more than others and thus generating selection against intelligence (Hardin 1968).

Studies that measure only certain components of selection may lead to erroneous conclusions about both the direction and intensity of selection, particularly with respect to socioeconomic power or intelligence, because the observed relationships with reproductive success are quite low. For example, the Minnesota (Higgins, Reed & Reed 1962), Michigan (Bajema 1963), and Massachusetts (Bajema 1971) studies all found that the proportion of individuals not reproducing at all was inversely correlated with IQ. Studies that (1) exclude nonreproductive individuals, never-married individuals, or those not currently married or that (2) report the fertility of individuals who have not completed their childbearing years must be analyzed with extreme caution. The life table method, which involves computing the intrinsic rate of natural increase, provides the only means currently available whereby all of the biological variables (differentials in mortality, fertility, and generation length) can be taken into account simultaneously. The intensity of selection against individuals in the 80–94 IQ range compared to individuals in the IQ $\geq$ 120 range decreased by 22.5% when generation length was taken into account in addition to completed fertility by Bajema (1963).

Hermann J. Muller (1934), Julian S. Huxley (1936), and other have contended that eugenic environments are a prerequisite for eugenic selection (Bajema 1976). The prospects for eugenic selection appear bleak in Western industrial state democracies unless significant reductions in the cost of child-rearing are made. More intelligent women are more likely to opt for more

children if governments not only provide adequate child allowances but also assume most, if not all, of the costs of child day care and education, including higher education.

Exactly 50 years ago (1935), both H. J. Muller and H. Brewer published proposals that artificial insemination using the sperm of a donor that is not the woman's sexual partner be used to achieve eugenic goals (Bajema 1976). This system of human reproduction has the same effect as a polygynous mating system. The extent to which it is and could be used as a means of eugenic selection needs to be more carefully explored.

It is desirable to investigate reproductive differentials in a variety of human societies at frequent intervals in order to assess the biological consequences of various social practices. The academic community is indebited to Vining not only for doing this but also for discussing scientific questions concerning the applicability of sociobiologiocal theories to contemporary, urbanized societies.