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The Sensitivity of Preference for Chastity and Sexual Jealousy to Mate Fertility and Paternal Investment in Men

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Dear Editor,

Over the last 100 years, there has been a huge change in human mating strategies. Some examples are equal right legislations of women, the invention of birth control, and changes in sex division of labor [1]. Some mate preferences are known to have cross-cultural consistency and they have shown stability over time [2]. For instance, preferences for beauty and youth are highly rated by men, while women, in different cultures seek resources in a potential mate. In contrast to these consistent sex differences, Buss found that contextual variability exists in some domains, such as preference for chastity [3].

Some mate preferences such as chastity and sexual fidelity can be activated in different circumstances. So it can be argued that a preference may be context-dependent that could be regulated by cultural and contextual variables. The same might be true about mate preferences related to the problem of paternal uncertainty, that is, preference for chastity and sexual jealousy. In humans, as fertilization occurs inside of females, unlike women, men can never be certain that the child is theirs. As a result, they face the problem of paternity uncertainty. Sexual jealousy consists of a set of emotions, activated due to threat to a relationship. Chaste females- the ones with no premarital intercourse- are inferred to be less probable to stray after marriage [4]. So sexual jealousy and preference for chaste mates enables men to solve the problem of paternity uncertainty.

It is also true that there is high amount of parental investment in human males. So, men negligent in cues of paternity certainty, face double penalty. Not only do they waste time and energy on an unrelated child, but they also channel their precious investment to a competitor.

Because fertility is an index for future progeny, it is expected that conscious understanding of mate infertility could cause men to down regulate mechanisms related to paternity certainty, including preference for chastity and sexual jealousy. There is variance in paternal investment. It is reasonable to assume that more investing fathers must be more vigilant about cues of adultery because normally, they have fewer extra-marital mating opportunities. We suggest that context-dependent variables such as fertility and investment on mate or offspring can moderate the mechanisms related to paternal uncertainty. Men whose mates are known to be infertile are hypothesized to decline their sexual jealousy and related mate preferences. Men with higher investment are expected to upregulate their anti-cuckoldry tactics.

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