My Baby Daddy is a 10:

Mate Value, Sex Ratio, and the Endorsement of Child Support Laws

by

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ABSTRACT

Life History Theory suggests that, in order to maximize reproductive fitness, individuals make trade-offs between allocating resources to mating and parenting. These trade-offs are influenced by an individual's sex, life history strategy, and environment. Here, I explored the usefulness of a Life History Theory framework for understanding endorsement of child support laws. This study experimentally manipulated sex ratio, and gathered information about participants' endorsement of child support, sexual restrictedness, and mate value. As predicted, women endorsed child support more than men, whereas men favored greater restriction of child support in the form of required paternity testing. However, in general, results do not support an effect of sex ratio, sexual restrictedness, or mate value on endorsement of child support. Results suggest sensitivity to exploitation in a male-biased sex ratio, reflected by an increase in men's endorsement of paternity testing requirements under a male-biased sex ratio prime. Women, on the other hand, report especially unfavorable beliefs toward paternity testing in a male-biased sex ratio. Although results of the current study are mixed, there remains much to be gained from applying an evolutionary perspective to understanding variability in endorsement of child support.

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My Baby Daddy is a 10: Mate Value, Sex Ratio, and the Endorsement of Child Support Laws

In 1987 Baltimore a husband and wife go through a bitter divorce. The mother receives custody of two small children, and a court orders the father to pay four hundred dollars per month in child support – a mere fraction of his salary. However, the checks come few and far between. Meanwhile, across town, a different custodial mother receives over $50,000 a year in child support payments without issue.

From an evolutionary perspective, purposeful failure to provide resources to your genetic offspring is a puzzling phenomenon. One would expect women and men to uniformly endorse policies that increase the fitness of their children. And yet, a common stereotype exists that men do not like child support in theory or in practice. Perhaps the male counterpart to the 'welfare queen' is the idea of a 'baby daddy' – a promiscuous and irresponsible male who impregnates and abandons his partner, refusing to provide financial assistance. Taken at face value, statistics seem to support the general reluctance of a substantial number of men to pay child support: In 2006, 61% of mothers in the United States who had primary custody of a child were awarded child support, with these awards totaling over $22 billion. Of that 61%, less than half actually received the full amount due (Grall, 2007). Opinion surveys indicate that many men find the child support system 'unfair,' feeling that the financial burden is excessive and expressing concerns that the money received by the mothers is not actually being spent on the children (Arendell, 1995).

However, reluctance or refusal to pay child support does not seem to be uniform among men. Rather, researchers have identified a few individual difference variables, both demographic and psychological, useful for predicting the likelihood that a man will pay child support. Lin (2000) found that compliance with child support positively correlated with the man's income. Women previously married to the child's father are substantially more likely to receive a greater amount of child support, and to receive this support more reliably (Shackelford, Weekes-Shackelford, & Schmitt, 2005). Men with more education are more likely to pay their child support (Shackelford et al., 2005). And, as a psychological variable, perceived quality of the relationship the father had with the mother while they were married appears to be one of the strongest predictors of child support compliance (Meyer & Bartfield, 1998).

Yet there is a bit more complexity to who pays child support and who does not than the above research suggests. Public policy analysts have distinguished between 'turnips' (those who cannot afford to pay child support without incurring severe hardship, named after the phrase 'trying to squeeze blood from a turnip') and 'deadbeat dads' (those who can afford to pay child support but do not). Mincy and Sorensen (1998) found that two-thirds of turnips are African American, half had never married, half had never completed high school, and 89% were unemployed. In contrast, deadbeat dads were higher in age on average, half were white, 70% were employed, and over half had established a new family with children of their own. It is this latter category of men for whom child support compliance becomes a particularly interesting question. For these individuals, the resources are available to allocate towards child support but are instead directed towards other goals.

Many organisms face challenges of trade-offs in resource allocation. An evolutionary perspective has clear relevance for understanding child support in terms of enhancing or harming reproductive fitness, as well as providing valuable insight into which individuals are most or least likely to endorse child support. A particularly useful tool for examining child support endorsement from an evolutionary perspective is life history theory.

Life history theory suggests that due to the finite nature of resources that can be devoted to reproduction, organisms must make trade-offs between growth, mating, and parenting effort to maximize their reproductive fitness (Stearns, 1992). Devoting resources to one of these areas at any given time necessarily means devoting fewer resources to another. Life history theory also suggests that the environment an organism develops in will influence the optimal resource allocation strategy, with desperate environments (those that are harsh and unpredictable) pulling for 'fast' strategies (exemplified by earlier onset of sexual maturity, greater sexual promiscuity and number of offspring), and hopeful environments (those that are resource-rich and stable) pulling for 'slow' strategies (exemplified by delay of reproduction, greater investment in education, and a smaller number of offspring) (Ellis, Figueredo, Brumbach, & Schlomer, 2009).[1] These fast and slow strategies suggest different resource allocation priorities when it comes to investing in parenting effort.

[1] These environments can be thought of as representing two ends to a continuum.

In a child support situation, a couple[2] has produced offspring but any relationship that existed between the partners has dissolved. Far from being a modern problem, some research suggests that the dissolution of unions post-reproducing has been a recurrent feature of our evolutionary history (Shackelford et al., 2005). Using a large ethnological sample of pre-industrial cultures, Broude and Greene (1976) found that 'divorce' occurred in over 70% of these cultures. From an evolutionary perspective, providing resources to your genetic offspring may seem like a biological imperative. However, life history theory suggests that devoting those parenting effort resources necessarily means a lesser ability to devote resources to mating (Anderson, 2011; Trivers, 1972). In human pair-bonds, devoting resources to parenting efforts can in some ways 'count double' towards mating because providing for one's children is likely to function strongly for men as a mate retention technique, potentially ensuring that additional offspring are produced from the union. However, in the child support scenario the union has dissolved. Thus any mating opportunities must be with a new partner, which (presumably) requires an expenditure of resources (Anderson, 2011). Therefore, a trade-off exists between providing resources (parenting effort) towards an existing child or children from a previous union and using resources towards acquiring new sexual partners (and having additional offspring).

The application of slow or fast strategies may influence the nature of these trade-offs. A fast life history strategist would likely prefer to have more offspring (and invest

[2] By using the term 'couple' I do not mean to imply a long-standing relationship. This could also refer to short term mating partners whose only interaction prior to producing offspring was the sex resulting in pregnancy.

less in any single offspring), and would therefore choose to allocate resources towards acquiring a new mate and having additional children. Child support could potentially be seen as a roadblock to this goal. Trivers' (1974) parent-offspring conflict theory suggests that parents end investment in a particular child when the costs (to parents' future reproduction) outweigh the benefits (of the current child surviving to reproductive maturity). For fast life history strategists, the amount of resources (in the form of child support) that would have to be allocated to parenting effort may be more costly than devoting those resources to acquiring a new mate and producing more offspring. (Parent-offspring conflict theory also seems to suggest this would particularly be the case if the child is older, and past the greatest risk for mortality). Alternatively, a slow life history strategist may be less likely to dissolve a union in the first place, and in the event of dissolution may prefer to invest heavily in the already existing offspring and be less willing to expend effort and resources to acquire a new mate. Under these circumstances, child support may facilitate rather than hinder a goal.

Thus far, one researcher has applied life history theory to child support in an empirical study. Anderson (2011) questioned whether paying child support actually reduced men's subsequent marriage and fertility, and found that child support payment was associated with lower probability of subsequent birth. This is supported by previous research in the field of social work that indicates adolescent fathers who pay child support have fewer sexual partners and less frequent sexual intercourse than those who do not pay child support (Huang & Han, 2007). However, Anderson found that child support payment was associated with greater, rather than less, likelihood of remarriage. The author suggested child support may have been serving as a cue to mate quality –

essentially, that willingness and ability to pay child support indicated to future mates that men were 'providers' and as such, desirable partners. This unexpected finding may be reconciled by the work of Bloom, Conrad, and Miller (1998) who found that among less educated, lower income men, child support compliance actually reduced the odds of marriage. Therefore, Anderson's findings may only apply to those men who have readily available resources to devote to child support (the potential 'deadbeat dads' rather than the 'turnips').

Many questions remain about endorsement of child support that can potentially be answered using an evolutionary psychology perspective. Does child support endorsement follow patterns predicted by life history theory? Is it true that women uniformly endorse and men uniformly disaffirm child support? If paying child support reduces men's subsequent fertility, this suggests that child support endorsement is especially unlikely for men adopting a strategy that favors sexual promiscuity and multiple offspring, rather than heavy investment in fewer offspring. Additionally, we should expect that when further mating advantages are present, child support endorsement should be particularly low for these fast strategy males. Such advantages could include a favorably biased sex ratio, in which female partners are plentiful[3], or an enhanced ability to successfully attract and retain desirable mates (Kenrick, Groth, Trost, & Sadalla, 1993)—that is, being of high mate-value.

However, advantages for one group suggests disadvantages for another group. If high mate-value men are more likely to successfully engage in short-term mating

[3] A growing body of research suggests that humans are sensitive to unequal sex ratios, with unfavorable ratios greatly increasing mate competition among members of the disadvantaged sex (e.g., Pederson, 1991).

opportunities that result in offspring requiring child support, in times of heightened mate competition low mate-value men may want these high mate-value men to incur resource costs for reproducing, rather than being able to reproduce with as many mates as possible with no costs for doing so.[4] However, in more favorable sex ratio environments (i.e., more women than men), low mate-value men may be able to similarly take advantage of multiple mating opportunities and would not wish to incur the costs of doing so (in the form of child support). Women, on the other hand, are likely to endorse child support more than men under all circumstances, and even more so under unfavorable sex ratio conditions (more women than men) in which they are particularly likely to incur threats to mate retention. However, high mate-value women may exhibit less endorsement of child support than low mate-value women, as the threat to mate retention is less pronounced for these individuals. Life history strategy, specifically sexual restrictedness (an indicator of fast or slow life history strategy), is likely to influence these relationships, with sexually unrestricted men (those most likely to have child support imposed upon them) endorsing child support the least, and sexually unrestricted women (those most likely to require child support) endorsing child support the most. From this logic, the following hypotheses are derived.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Women will endorse child support laws more than men, especially in a female-biased (relatively more women) sex ratio environment.

[4] This is based on the assumption that women who are reproducing with the high mate-value men necessarily cannot reproduce at the same time with the low mate-value men.

Hypothesis 2: Sexually unrestricted women will endorse child support laws more than sexually restricted women. This effect will be amplified in female-biased sex ratios.

Hypothesis 3: Low mate-value women will endorse child support laws more than high mate-value women, particularly sexually unrestricted low mate-value women.

Hypothesis 4: Sexually restricted men will endorse child support laws more than sexually unrestricted men. This effect will be amplified in female-biased sex ratio environments.

Hypothesis 5: Low mate-value men will endorse child support laws more than high mate-value men, particularly sexually unrestricted low mate-value men.

Hypothesis 6: In female-biased sex ratio environments, low mate-value men will exhibit less endorsement of child support laws.

Hypothesis 7: Sexually unrestricted high mate-value men in a female-biased sex ratio environment will exhibit the *least* endorsement of child support laws of all groups.

Method

Participants

Four hundred three individuals (210 female) were recruited from Mechanical Turk and paid $1.00 for their participation. Mean age of the participants was 37.55 (*SD* = 13.65). Forty-seven percent of participants identified as Democrat, 15.6% Republican, 27.3% Independent, 4.7% Libertarian, 3% Other, 0.7% Green, and 0.5% as Tea Party. Nearly 58% of participants reported that they never attend religious services, with 19.4% describing their religious beliefs as Atheist and 18.4% as Agnostic. The majority of participants were White (78.9%). Just under half of participants reported that they have children (N = 183). Thirty participants reported having paid child support (7.4% of the

sample), and 49 participants reported having received child support (12.2% of the sample).

Materials and Procedure

The design of the experiment was a between-participants 2 (Sex) x 2 (Sex Ratio) x 2 (Mate Value) x 2 (Sexual Restrictedness) design. Participants were told they were completing a study on memory and attitudes. Participants then read an article about sociological research indicating that there is currently either a female-biased or a male-biased sex ratio in the United States. After reading the article, participants responded to a number of questions about their endorsement of child support laws. Participants then completed a personality measure (distractor task), demographic measures, a self-assessment of mate value, a measure of life history strategy, and a measure of sexual restrictedness. Finally, participants were debriefed and paid for their time.

Sex Ratio Manipulation. Participants read a fictional article describing new sociological research that suggests the existing ratio between the sexes is no longer equal. The female-biased version of the story states that current demographic statistics released by the U.S. Census indicate that significantly more than half of individuals across the country are women, such that "we are overflowing with women." The story continues to say that most people do not appear to notice the skew unless it is made explicit to them. The story suggests that this trend is likely to continue into the near future, and will influence the lives of men and women. The story ends by reiterating that people today should expect to be surrounded by an abundance of women. The male-biased version of the story is identical except males, rather than females, are indicated as the plentiful sex. A similar manipulation used in previous research on the psychological effects of biased

sex ratios was shown to influence economic decisions, with male-biased environment primes leading men to discount the future and desire immediate rewards, two indicators of a 'fast' life history strategy (Griskevicius et al., 2011). On the other hand, female-biased sex ratios led women to seek high-paying careers and to delay starting a family (Durante, Griskevicius, Simpson, Cantú, & Tybur, 2012). In the current study, participants were randomly assigned to sex ratio condition.

Child Support Endorsement. After the manipulation, participants' endorsement of child support was assessed using novel items created for this study, as well as items adapted from previous research on child support endorsement (Ellman, Braver, & MacCoun, 2012). The scale first introduced and defined child support, and instructed participants to assume that the father is the person responsible for paying child support. Participants then responded to items measuring several facets of child support endorsement, including *belief about income percentage that should be devoted to child support* ("What percentage of an obligated father's income should be devoted to child support payments?"); *beliefs about disparity between father and child* ("The father should be required to pay enough child support to make sure that his child lives as well as he does" and "If the father has a lot more money than the mother has, the father should pay enough child support to make sure the child lives at about the same standard of living as he does"); *beliefs about father's obligation regardless of circumstances* (e.g., "The father should be required to pay child support even if he is living in poverty"); *beliefs about policing child support* (e.g., "Child support laws are necessary to get fathers to pay their child support obligations"); *beliefs about system unfairness to men* (e.g., "The current child support system favors women"); *beliefs about system unfairness to women*

(e.g., "The current child support system favors men"); *belief in paternity testing* ("Child support should only be required after a paternity test determines that the father really is the biological parent"); and *beliefs about acceptability of reducing child support payments in favor of additional offspring* ("It is acceptable for the father to reduce child support payments after he has children with a new partner" and "A father's children with his current partner should not suffer because of child support payments to children from a previous partner"). Each scale item was assessed using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree)", with the exception of beliefs about income percentage, which was measured on a slider scale ranging from zero to 100 percent. After analyses assessing the psychometrics of constructs, items were aggregated to form a single or multiple composite scale score(s) (see Table 1).

Personality Index. Participants responded to 44 items from the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). These items assessed five personality factors: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. These items were intended to function as a distractor task for participants, to address concerns that the sex ratio manipulation would influence self-perceived mate value and sexual restrictedness[5]. Responses to these personality items were not analyzed.

Demographic Measures. Participants reported their age, gender, marital status, number and age of children, childhood socioeconomic status, and current socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status was measured in two ways. First, subjective socioeconomic status was measured with four questions (e.g., "I have enough money to buy the things I

[5] Analyses indicate that mate value and sexual restrictedness were not influenced by the sex ratio manipulation (see "Additional Analyses").

want") using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Participants were also asked about their objective childhood socioeconomic status (e.g., responding about their family's income on a scale ranging from 1 = $15,000 or less to 8 = $150,000 or more).

Mate Value Measure. Participants responded to eight questions from the Landolt mate-value scale (Landolt, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 1995). These questions assessed participants' ability to attract a mate (e.g., "Members of the opposite sex are attracted to me") and were aggregated into a single composite.

Life History Strategy Measure. Participants responded to questions adapted from the Mini-K short form (Figueredo et al., 2006). These items measured cognitive and behavioral indicators of life history strategy (e.g., "I avoid taking risks"). Reliability analyses indicated that this was a particularly poor measure (Cronbach's alpha = .51), and thus this measure was discarded.[6]

Sexual Restrictedness Measure. Participants responded to nine questions from the revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). These items are intended to assess the participants' tendency to engage in sexual relationships without deeper emotional commitment (e.g., "I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying casual sex with different partners") and their actual sexual behavior (e.g., "I frequently engage in casual sex"). These items were used to assess how willing the participant is to engage in short-term mating opportunities, that is, how sexually

[6] Note that this Cronbach's alpha did not increase with the deletion of any items. Additionally, only two items on the scale produced a positive correlation ("I like to make plans for the future" and "I often make plans in advance"). The other items did not correlate whatsoever.

unrestricted the participant is. The responses to this measure were aggregated into a single composite.

Results

Hypothesis 1A: Gross Endorsements of Child Support

I predicted that, in general, women would endorse child support laws more than men, as a result of women being the biologically higher-investing sex. To examine the effect of sex on endorsement of child support, I conducted a series of 2 (Sex) X 2 (Sex Ratio – see Hypothesis 1B) Analyses of Variance (ANOVA). Not surprisingly, data suggest support for this prediction across a variety of measures. When asked what percentage of income should be devoted to child support, women reported significantly higher income obligation percentages (M = 27.97%) than men (M = 22.12%), $F(1, 394) = 17.73$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .043$. Women were also more likely (M = 5.56) than men (M = 4.84) to believe that a child's standard of living should be equal to the father's, i.e., that there should be no disparity in standard of living, $F(1, 394) = 31.90$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .075$. Women were more likely (M = 5.18) than men (M = 4.19) to agree that a father is obligated to pay child support regardless of the circumstances, $F(1,392) = 69.73$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .151$. Additionally, women (M = 6.23) were more likely than men (M = 5.45) to believe in the necessity of policing child support laws, $F(1, 395) = 52.48$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .117$.

Men and women also disagreed in the fairness of the child support system. Men (M = 5.13) were more likely than women (M = 3.97) to believe that the child support system is unfair to men, $F(1, 393) = 76.16$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .162$, whereas women

(M = 3.66) were more likely than men (M = 2.92) to believe that the child support system is unfair to women, $F(1, 390) = 42.48$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .098$.

However, when it came to child support regulation in the form of paternity testing, men (M = 5.84) were more likely than women (M = 5.14) to agree that paternity testing should be a prerequisite of receiving child support, $F(1, 394) = 21.55$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .052$. Men (M = 4.22) were also more likely than women (M = 3.34) to favor reducing child support payments after having additional offspring, $F(1, 395) = 48.24$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .109$.

In sum, these findings provide support for Hypothesis 1A: women endorse child support more than men. Conversely, men are more likely to endorse restrictions to child support, such as requiring paternity testing and allowing for reductions in payment after having offspring with a new partner.

Hypothesis 1B: The Effect of Sex Ratio on Endorsement of Child Support

In a female-biased sex ratio, it is more difficult for women who lose a mate to find a new partner to provide resources to existing offspring. Thus, I predicted that the relationship between sex and endorsement of child support would be influenced by sex ratio, such that female endorsement of child support should be especially greater than men's in a female-biased sex ratio. The data provide mixed support for this prediction. There was a significant Sex X Sex Ratio interaction in participants' beliefs about the amount of income that should be devoted to child support, $F(1, 394) = 3.69$, $p = .056$, partial $\eta^2 = .009$, such that the difference in income obligation between women and men is greater in the female-biased condition (women M = 29.14, male M = 20.63) than in the male-biased condition (women M = 26.80, male M = 23.62); see Figure 1.

When examining beliefs about system unfairness toward men, there was a marginally significant main effect of sex ratio, such that those in the female-biased sex ratio were somewhat more likely to agree that the system is unfair to men ($M = 4.67$) than those in the male-biased sex ratio ($M = 4.44$), $F(1, 393) = 3.23$, $p = .073$, partial $\eta^2 = .008$. This is a very weak effect, however, and there was no Sex X Sex Ratio interaction, $F(1, 393) = .041$, $p = .84$.

No effects of Sex Ratio, or Sex X Sex Ratio, were found in beliefs about disparity, father's obligation, system unfairness toward women, need for policing, paternity testing, or reducing payment in favor of additional offspring.

In sum, there was limited support for the Hypothesis 1B—that women's endorsement of child support would be especially greater than men's in a female-biased sex ratio. This hypothesis was supported in belief about the amount of income that should be obligated to child support; however, no other dependent variables exhibited a similar pattern.

Hypothesis 2: The Effect of Sexual Restrictedness on Endorsement of Child Support in Women

Being high in sexual unrestrictedness suggests a greater willingness to engage in casual sex, thereby increasing the likelihood of producing offspring outside of a stable relationship. For women, this can be a somewhat risky endeavor without the reassurance of resources from the father. Sexually restricted women, on the other hand, are unlikely to engage in sex outside of a committed relationship. This suggests that their partners are more willing to invest in the offspring's resources, and that sexually restricted women are less likely to need to rely on child support. Therefore, I predicted that sexually

unrestricted women would endorse child support more than sexually restricted women. As mentioned above, under circumstances in which the competition for a new partner is fierce, and the likelihood of acquiring a new partner is low, those more likely to need child support should increase their endorsement of child support. Thus, I predicted that the described effect of sexual restrictedness would be amplified in a female-biased sex ratio. To examine these predictions I conducted a series of linear regressions with the female participant data, regressing the dependent variables onto sexual restrictedness (as operationalized by the SOI), sex ratio, and the interaction.

In general, results do not support these predictions. No effects of Sexual Restrictness or of the Sexual Restrictedness X Sex Ratio interaction were found in women's beliefs about percentage obligated income, disparity, system unfairness to men, system unfairness to women, need for policing, or reducing payment after having additional offspring. Results of beliefs about father obligation indicated a marginally significant main effect of sexual restrictedness, such that unrestricted women reported less agreement with the belief that a father is obligated under any circumstances than did sexually restricted women (b = -.02, p = .061, model R^2 = .04). However, there was no Sexual Restrictedness X Sex Ratio interaction (b = .003, p = .827). These results run contrary to predictions, suggesting it is sexually restricted women who perceive a general obligation on behalf of the father toward child support, regardless of circumstances.

On the other hand, sexually unrestricted women were more likely than sexually restricted women to disagree with a paternity testing requirement (b = -.047, p = .003), and especially so in a male-biased environment (b = .052, p = .013, model R^2 = .05). Indeed, when examining the data separately by condition, sexual restrictedness is only a

significant predictor of paternity testing beliefs in a male-biased environment (b = -.047, p = .002, model R^2 = .086) (in female-biased sex ratio, b = .005, p = .723, model R^2 = .001) (see Figure 2). This suggests that although sexual restrictedness is influencing concerns about paternity testing in the predicted direction, it is unexpectedly occurring in the male-biased, rather than female-biased, condition.

It is noteworthy to mention that there are few women in this sample reporting objectively 'high' sexual unrestrictedness (i.e., women whose scores on the SOI are in the upper third of possible scale scores) (n = 4 of 204, approximately 2% of female participants). Considering that this is a relatively affluent, older United States MTurk sample, such skew is not surprising. Most women in the sample were below the midpoint (33) on the SOI scale (M = 23.57, SD = 11.18). Such restriction of range may have led to difficulties in finding sexual restrictedness effects within the female sample.

In sum, sexual restrictedness has limited impact on women's endorsement of child support. In line with Hypothesis 2, sexually restricted women favor paternity testing more than sexually unrestricted women. Contrary to predictions, this effect occurred in the male-biased, rather than female-biased, environment.

Hypothesis 3: The Effect of Mate Value on Endorsement of Child Support in Women

Mate value, by definition, provides an advantage in attracting and securing a potential mate. For women, this implies that high mate-value women should be less concerned about losing a current partner and/or replacing resources towards offspring with the acquisition of a new partner. Low mate-value women, on the other hand, are likely to have difficulty finding another partner, and should therefore be more willing to endorse child support laws that ensure resources are provided to offspring. Additionally,

it is low mate-value, sexually unrestricted women who should be especially concerned about the need for child support due to the unlikelihood of an existing stable union. Thus, I predicted that low mate-value women endorse child support more than high mate-value women, especially low mate-value, sexually unrestricted women. To test these predictions, I conducted a series of linear regressions with the female participant data, regressing the dependent variables onto mate value, sexual restrictedness, and the interaction.

In general, results do not support the hypothesis that low mate-value women endorse child support more than high mate-value women. There were no effects of mate value, or interactions between sexual restrictedness and mate value, for beliefs about percent income obligation, father obligation, system unfairness to men, system unfairness to women, need for policing, or paternity testing. There was also no main effect of mate value for beliefs about disparity (b = -.009, p = .348), but a significant Sexual Restrictedness X Mate Value interaction did emerge (b = -.001, p = .05, model R^2 = .026). High mate-value women were less concerned about disparities in father and child standards of living if they were more sexually unrestricted, whereas low mate-value women were more concerned about these father-child disparities if they were more sexually restricted (see Figure 3).

Findings also indicated a marginal main effect of mate value for beliefs about the acceptability of reducing child support payments in favor of additional offspring, such that as mate value increased, agreement with the need to make such trade-offs also increased (b = .016, p = .099, model R^2 = .018).

In sum, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. The relationship between mate value, sexual restrictedness, and child support endorsement in women seems tenuous at best. However, in line with predictions, low mate-value women appear to express less willingness to make compromises when it comes to child support, both in accepting disparity in standard of living and in favoring additional, rather than current, offspring.

Hypothesis 4: The Effect of Sexual Restrictedness on Endorsement of Child Support in Men

Whereas I predicted sexually unrestricted women to be most desiring of child support, I predicted sexually unrestricted men to be least desiring of paying child support. Men who adopt a sexually unrestricted strategy likely prefer to have a greater number of offspring and invest less in any single child, rather than having few offspring but investing heavily in each. Being forced to pay resources to previous offspring necessarily makes it harder to devote those resources to producing additional offspring. Thus, I predicted that sexually unrestricted men would endorse child support less than sexually restricted men. Because the ability of a sexually unrestricted male to find multiple partners is easier in a female-biased environment, I predicted that sexually unrestricted males' unfavorability toward child support would increase in a female-biased sex ratio. To examine these predictions I conducted a series of linear regressions with the male participant data, regressing the dependent variables onto sexual restrictedness, sex ratio, and their interaction.

In general, the hypotheses are unsupported. No significant effects of sexual restrictedness, sex ratio, or the interaction terms were found in men's beliefs about

percent income obligations, disparity, father obligation, system unfairness to men[7], system unfairness to women, or need for policing.

However, interesting effects emerged for beliefs about paternity testing and reducing payments in favor of additional offspring. For beliefs about paternity testing, there was a significant Sexual Restrictedness X Sex Ratio interaction, such that in the male-biased sex ratio, sexually unrestricted men were more likely to agree that paternity tests should be required than were sexually restricted men (b = -.026, p = .027, model R^2 = .042). However, in the female-biased sex ratio, there was no effect of sexual restrictedness on beliefs about paternity testing (b = -.004, p = .670) (see Figure 4).

A significant Sexual Restrictedness X Sex Ratio interaction also emerged for beliefs in child support payment reductions favoring additional offspring, such that in a male-biased sex ratio, unrestricted men were more favorable toward reducing payment (e.g., that children with a new partner should not suffer because of child support payments to a previous partner) than were sexually restricted men (b = -.028, p = .021, model R^2 = .039). However, in the female-biased sex ratio, there was no effect of sexual restrictedness on beliefs about acceptability of reducing child support in favor of additional offspring (b = -.008, p = .354) (see Figure 5).

In contrast to the sexual restrictedness distribution among women, average scores on the SOI among men fell above the midpoint (33) of the scale (M = 36.59, SD = 14.91). 15% (n = 27) of the men reported objectively 'high' sexual restrictedness (scoring in the upper third of possible scores on the SOI).

[7] For system unfairness to men, there was a 'trending' pattern that sexually unrestricted men see the child support system as more unfair than sexually restricted men, but this effect was not statistically significant, b = .019, p = .121, model R^2 = .109.

In sum, Hypothesis 4 was mostly unsupported. Sexual restrictedness and the sex ratio manipulation did not affect men's endorsement of child support for the majority of dependent variables. However, in line with predictions, sexually unrestricted men did report more unfavorable beliefs about paternity testing, and more favorable beliefs about reducing child support payments in favor of new offspring and partners. Yet, unexpectedly, this occurred in the male-biased rather than female-biased sex ratio condition.

Hypothesis 5: The Effect of Mate Value on Endorsement of Child Support in Men

For men, the ability to easily attain sexual partners (i.e., being high mate-value) makes sexual unrestrictedness a more viable and successful strategy. If high mate-value men are more likely to be sexually unrestricted, it stands to reason that they are also more likely to be in the position of being required to pay child support. Low mate-value men, on the other hand, may adopt a more sexually restricted strategy by necessity as a means to compete (e.g., "I may be unattractive, but I won't cheat on you or leave you") – therefore making paying child support less undesired (and less likely to be required). Thus, I predicted that low mate-value men would endorse child support more than high mate-value men, particularly sexually unrestricted high mate-value men. To test these predictions, I conducted a series of linear regressions with the male participant data, regressing the dependent variables onto mate value, sexual restrictedness, and their interaction.

Results generally do not support the predictions. No significant main effects of mate value, or interactions between mate value and sexual restrictedness, were found in beliefs about percent income obligation, father obligation, system unfairness to men,

system unfairness to women, or paternity testing. A main effect of mate value was found in beliefs about the need for policing child support laws, such that low mate-value men were more likely than high mate-value men to favor policing of child support (b = -.020, p = .043, model R^2 = .028). However, there was no interaction with sexual restrictedness (b = .001, p = .386).

Marginal main effects of mate value were found in beliefs about disparity and beliefs about reducing payment in favor of additional offspring. As mate value increased, so did agreement that there should not be disparity in standard of living between father and child (b = .020, p = .07, model R^2 = .062). However, high mate-value men reported greater favorability toward reducing payment in favor of additional offspring than low-mate value men (b = .019, p = .061, model R^2 = .039). Neither of these findings was qualified by a Sexual Restrictedness X Mate Value interaction.

In sum, Hypothesis 5 was mostly unsupported. However, in line with predictions, high mate-value men generally favored greater restriction on child support than low mate-value men, such as requiring paternity testing, allowing payment reductions that favor new offspring, and limited policing of child support laws. Contrary to predictions, sexual restrictedness did not shape these beliefs.

Hypothesis 6: The Effect of Sex Ratio and Mate Value on Child Support Endorsement in Men

In female-biased sex ratio environments, low mate-value men are better able to acquire sexual partners. Thus, I predicted that low mate-value men would exhibit less endorsement of child support in female-biased sex ratio environments than in male-biased sex ratio environments. To test these predictions, I first conducted a series of

linear regressions with the male participant data, regressing the dependent variables onto sex ratio, mate value, and their interaction.

Data suggest mixed support for these predictions. In reporting beliefs about percentage of income that should be devoted to child support, there was a marginal main effect of sex ratio, such that men reported a higher percentage of income that should be devoted to child support in a male-biased than female-biased sex ratio, b = -.343, p = .061, model R^2 = .027. However, there was no Sex Ratio X Mate Value interaction, b = .203, p = .221. In reporting beliefs about disparity, findings indicate a marginal main effect of sex ratio, such that men in a female-biased environment reported more agreement that there should be no disparity between father and child, as compared to men in a male-biased environment, b = .321, p = .085. However, this was qualified by a marginally significant Sex Ratio X Mate Value interaction, such that low mate-value men were more favorable toward disparity, and especially so in a male-biased environment, b = -.029, p = .102, model R^2 = .074 (see Figure 6).

Men indicated a marginally significant main effect of sex ratio in beliefs about system unfairness to men, such that men in a female-biased environment think the system is more unfair to men than men in a male-biased environment, b = .311, p = .094, model R^2 = .041. This was not qualified by a Sex Ratio X Mate Value interaction, b = -.015, p = .373. However, there was a significant Sex Ratio X Mate Value interaction in men's beliefs about system unfairness to women, b = .031, p = .029, model R^2 = .049. In a male-biased, but not female-biased, condition, as mate value increases, beliefs that the system is unfair to women decreases (see Figure 7).

Men's reported beliefs about paternity testing also revealed a Sex Ratio X Mate Value interaction, $b = -.033$, $p = .058$, model $R^2 = .077$. In a male-biased, but not female-biased, condition, as mate value increases, so does desire for paternity testing (see Figure 8). Similarly, in the male-biased, but not female-biased condition, low mate-value men are especially unfavorable toward making payment reduction favoring additional offspring, as compared to high mate-value men, $b = -.041$, $p = .013$, model $R^2 = .077$ (see Figure 9).

No significant effects of Sex Ratio or a Sex Ratio X Mate Value interaction were found in beliefs about father's obligation or need for policing child support laws.

To test my predictions about low mate-value men's endorsement of child support in a more direct, albeit simpler, way, I created a median split of mate value and conducted *t*-tests examining the difference in endorsement between sex ratio conditions, in the low mate-value men only. Again, I was predicting that low mate-value men would exhibit decreased endorsement of child support in female-biased, as compared to male-biased, sex ratios. I found a pair of nonsignificant trends in support of these predictions. Low mate-value men expressed lower income percentage that should be devoted to child support in female-biased, as compared to male-biased, sex ratios, $t(87) = 1.645$, $p = .104$. Low mate-value men also expressed greater agreement with reducing payment in favor of additional offspring in the female-biased sex ratio, as compared to the male-biased sex ratio. $t(87) = -1.594$, $p = .115$. However, there was no difference between sex ratios in low mate-value men's reported beliefs about father obligation, system unfairness to men, system unfairness to women, need for policing, or paternity testing. And, in contrast to predictions, low mate-value men actually reported more agreement that there should be

no disparity between father and child in the female-biased, rather than male-biased, sex ratio. This effect was not statistically significant, however, $t(87) = -1.507$, $p = .135$.

In sum, support for Hypothesis 6 is mixed—the effects of mate value and sex ratio in men are somewhat ambiguous. Low mate-value men are decreasing the perceived amount of income that should be devoted to child support when the sex ratio is favorable (i.e., female-biased). Additionally, low mate-value men exhibit greater willingness to reduce payment in favor of additional offspring when the sex ratio is favorable. Men in a female-biased sex ratio also perceive the system as more unfair to men as compared to men in a male-biased sex ratio. Each of these findings coheres with predictions. However, low mate-value men in a female-biased environment actually increase their beliefs that there should be no standard of living difference between father and child. And, although (as predicted) high mate-value men exhibit higher desire for paternity testing than low mate-value men, this unexpectedly occurs in the male-biased, rather than female-biased, environment.

Hypothesis 7: Sexually Unrestricted, High Mate-Value Men in a Female-Biased Environment Exhibit Least Endorsement of Child Support

My final hypothesis summarizes much of the previous logic into a single prediction. Sexually unrestricted men want to engage in casual sex with multiple partners. Being high mate-value increases the likelihood of attaining sexual partners. Being in a female-biased environment also increases the likelihood of attaining female partners. Combining these factors suggests that the likely strategy for unrestricted, high mate-value men in female-biased environments is to reproduce often and with multiple partners. Under such conditions, child support payments may be especially viewed as a hindrance.

Thus, I predicted that these men would exhibit the least child support endorsement of all groups.

To test these predictions, I first simplified the analysis by dichotomizing mate value and sexual restrictedness. This allowed me to run a 2 (Sex: male, female) X 2 (Sex Ratio: male-biased, female-biased) X 2 (Sexual Restrictedness: restricted, unrestricted) X 2 (Mate Value: low, high) ANOVA with a planned contrast, comparing the 'male, female-biased, sexually unrestricted, high mate-value' group to the average of the remaining 7 male groups[8].

In general, findings do not support the prediction that the sexually unrestricted, high mate-value men in a female-biased environment (hereinafter referred to as 'the predicted group') endorse child support less than the other male groups combined. Planned comparisons revealed that the predicted group did report significantly higher beliefs that the system is unfair to men when compared to the other male groups (M = 5.49 vs. M = 5.16), $t_{contrast}(171) = 2.31$, $p = .022$. However, the predicted group did not differ significantly from the other male groups in reported beliefs about what percent of income should be devoted to child support, disparity between father and child, equal father obligation regardless of circumstances, system unfairness to women, need to police child support laws, or beliefs that current offspring should not suffer because of child support payments to previous offspring.

In sum, Hypothesis 7 is mostly unsupported—sexually unrestricted, high mate-value men in a female-biased sex ratio do not exhibit less child support endorsement than

[8] I excluded the female groups from this analysis because females typically report significantly higher child support endorsement than men. This would inflate the average mean for the other groups, leading to spurious significant differences when compared.

the average of the other male groups combined, across a variety of dependent variables. However, sexually unrestricted, high mate-value men in a female-biased sex ratio do perceive greater system unfairness to men than male participants in the remaining groups.

Additional Analyses

Did the Sex Ratio Manipulation Affect Sexual Restrictedness and Self-Perceived Mate Value?

To examine whether the sex ratio manipulation had an effect on participants' self-reported sexual restrictedness and mate value, I ran a series of ANOVAs using sex ratio as the independent variable and sexual restrictedness or mate value as the dependent variable. For men, there was no effect of the sex ratio manipulation on sexual restrictedness (Male-biased $M = 36.02$, Female-biased $M = 37.13$), $F(1, 178) = 0.25$, $p = .620$, or mate value (Male-biased $M = 34.39$, Female-biased $M = 32.78$), $F(1, 185) = 1.056$, $p = .306$. Women exhibited similar findings—no effect of condition on sexual restrictedness (Male-biased $M = 23.69$, Female-biased $M = 23.43$), $F(1, 202) = 0.03$, $p = .866$, or mate value (Male-biased $M = 33.25$, Female-biased $M = 33.82$), $F(1, 206) = 0.15$, $p = .701$.

Does Having Children Affect Endorsement of Child Support?

One might argue that individuals with children will respond differently to child support endorsement items than individuals without children. This could occur as a function of individuals with children having a better idea of how much child care costs, more sympathy toward child welfare, etc. To determine whether including having children or not having children significantly altered endorsement of child support, I selected what I believed to be the clearest measure of child support endorsement—

measurements of belief in the amount of income that should be devoted to child support—and reran my analyses to examine whether including 'having children' as a moderator significantly altered the results.

First, a 2 (Children: yes, no) X 2 (Sex: male, female) ANOVA indicated a significant difference in beliefs about income obligation to child support between those with children and those without, $F(394) = 3.83$, $p = .051$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. Those with children reported higher income obligation ($M = 27.26$) than those without children ($M = 23.23$). However, when analyzing separately by sex, this difference is only found in females, $t(207) = 2.103$, $p = .037$, and not males, $t(187) = .630$, $p = .530$. Women with children report higher income obligation beliefs than females without children ($M = 29.80$ vs. $M = 25.41$), but there is no difference in income obligation beliefs between men with children and men without children ($M = 22.86$ vs. $M = 21.68$). There was not a significant Children X Sex interaction.

However, the majority of my previously observed effects (and null findings) remained unchanged. The only instance in which an interaction effect emerged was for Hypothesis 4 (original prediction: sexually restricted men endorse child support more than sexually unrestricted men, especially in a female-biased environment). For Hypothesis 4, findings indicate a marginally significant Sexual Restrictedness X Children interaction in men, $b = -.243$, $p = .064$, model $R^2 = .032$, such that sexually unrestricted men with children believe that less income should be devoted to child support than sexually restricted men with children. Interestingly, sexual restrictedness did not influence belief about income obligation for men without children (see Figure 10).

In sum, having children had surprisingly little effect on endorsement of child support. Not unexpectedly, women with children reported higher amount of income that should be devoted to child support than women without children. For men in general, having children had little bearing on perceived amount of money that should be paid to child support. However, sexually unrestricted men with children do report lower income percentage obligation than sexually restricted men with children. This is in line with the prediction that sexually unrestricted men prefer devoting resources to producing additional offspring rather than to existing offspring, and thus likely do not want to be heavily burdened by child support.

Does Receiving (or Paying) Child Support Affect Endorsement of Child Support?

One could argue that personal experience with the child support system might influence endorsement of child support laws. From an economic self-interest framework, individuals who have received child support might report greater favorability to child support laws, and individuals who have been ordered to pay child support might report lesser favorability to child support laws.

In my sample, 7.4% of participants with children (N = 30, almost exclusively male) reported having paid child support, whereas 12.2% of participants with children (N = 49, almost exclusively female) reported having received child support. To examine if personal experience with paying or receiving child support influenced endorsement of child support, I conducted a series of *t*-tests, comparing beliefs of those with personal experience with the child support system to those without on a variety of child support endorsement constructs.

Results indicated surprisingly little effect of personal experience with the child support system on beliefs about child support laws. Women who have received child support reported greater beliefs that a father is obligated to pay under any circumstances than women who have not received child support, $t(112) = 2.88$, $p = .005$ ($M = 5.70$ vs. $M = 5.12$). Women who have received child support also reported greater beliefs that policing child support laws is necessary than women who have not received child support, $t(114) = 2.63$, $p = .01$ ($M = 6.62$ vs. $M = 6.27$). Additionally, women who have received child support were less likely to agree that the system is unfair to men than women who have not received child support, $t(113) = -2.25$, $p = .027$ ($M = 3.67$ vs. $M = 4.22$). However, women's personal experience with the child support system did not affect beliefs about percentage of income that should be obligated to child support, disparity in standard of living between father and child, paternity testing requirements, acceptability of reducing payments after having additional offspring, or system unfairness to men.

When comparing men who have paid child support with men who have not, only beliefs in acceptability of reducing payments after having additional offspring produced a marginally significant difference. Men who have paid child support reported greater beliefs in acceptability of reducing payments after having additional offspring than men who have not paid child support, $t(61) = 1.91$, $p = .06$ ($M = 4.57$ vs. $M = 3.92$). There were no significant differences between men who have paid child support and men who have not on any of the other child support constructs.

In sum, personal experience with the child support system had surprisingly little effect on endorsement of child support. Women's endorsement of child support was more

affected by personal experience than men's, though only in respect to beliefs about father's obligation to pay, necessity of policing child support, and system unfairness to men. The nature of these constructs suggests that women who have received child support might also have struggled with father noncompliance, and thus are more favorable to regulation and enforcement of child support orders. Men, on the other hand, appear to share similar non-endorsement of child support regardless of personal experience with the system.

Does Using an Aggregate Measure of Child Support Endorsement Affect Results?

Although the child support endorsement items were designed to test separate constructs, it could be argued that the majority of items reflect a similar underlying variable (favorability toward child support) and thus it is appropriate to aggregate these constructs to form a composite 'child support endorsement' dependent variable.

To create the aggregate dependent variable, I recoded each item such that higher scores reflected greater child support endorsement (see Appendix B). A composite was then created to include beliefs about disparity between father and child, father obligation under any circumstances, necessity of policing child support laws, paternity testing requirements, and acceptability of reducing child support payments after having additional offspring. Not included in this composite were beliefs about income percentage that should be obligated to child support and beliefs about system unfairness.[9]

[9] These scale items were excluded because income percentage was reported on a different scale (0-100% rather than disagree - agree), and it is unclear how beliefs about system unfairness reflect endorsement of child support (e.g., one may highly endorse child support laws but also believe the system is unfair).

After creating the new variable, I reran each of my analyses with 'aggregate child support endorsement' as the dependent variable.

In general, predictions remain unsupported. Here, I highlight the few instances in which use of the aggregated child support endorsement dependent variable did not produce null results.

Findings again indicate that women (M = 5.08) were more likely than men (M = 4.90) to endorse child support, $F(1, 390) = 7.98$, $p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. However, there was no Sex X Sex Ratio interaction, $F(1, 390) = .22$, $p = .64$.

When reexamining the effect of sexual restrictedness on women's endorsement of child support, use of the aggregated measure indicates surprising results: as sexual unrestrictedness increases, endorsement of child support decreases, $b = -.017$, $p = .004$, model $R^2 = .05$. This was not qualified by a Sexual Restrictedness X Sex Ratio interaction, $b = .01$, $p = .14$.

When reexamining the effect of mate value on men's endorsement of child support, use of the aggregated measure revealed a significant Mate Value X Sex Ratio interaction, $b = -.019$, $p = .027$, model $R^2 = .052$ (see Figure 11). Low mate-value men report less endorsement of child support than high mate-value men, but this effect occurs only in the male-biased, not female-biased sex ratio.

In sum, using an aggregated measure of endorsement child support endorsement does affect several results. Many of the effects reported in the main analyses are wiped out, and an effect of sexual restrictedness in women runs counter to predictions – sexually unrestricted women actually report less endorsement of child support than sexually restricted women. (Note again, however, that the lack of truly 'unrestricted'

women in the sample limits interpretation of these findings). Men continue to appear to be sensitive to the male-biased rather than female-biased sex ratio. However, results again run counter to predictions – it is low mate-value, rather than high mate-value, men who report lower endorsement of child support.

The Relationship between Sexual Restrictedness and Mate Value for Men

It could be argued that the logic of a few of my predictions assumes a relationship between sexual restrictedness and mate value for men, such that being high mate-value increases the likelihood of adopting a sexually unrestricted strategy. This is an area of potentially interesting future research. In an initial exploration of this question, I investigated whether there was a positive correlation between sexual restrictedness and mate value in my male participant data. Indeed, I did find a positive relationship between these variables, $r = .31$, $p < .001$. This correlation was marginally stronger in the male-biased ($r = .41$) than female-biased ($r = .22$), condition, $z = 1.40$, $p = .08$.

There was not a significant correlation between sexual restrictedness and mate value for women in either a male-biased, $r = .16$, $p = .11$, or female-biased, $r = .11$, $p = .288$, condition.

For further probing, I split the SOI scale items into those that measured actual behavior (e.g., frequency of casual sex) versus those that measure attitude (e.g., beliefs that casual sex is OK). Interestingly, the relationship between sexual restrictedness and mate value in men only remained significant for behaviors, $r = .45$, $p < .001$, but not for attitudes, $r = .08$, $p = .272$. This suggests that, unsurprisingly, high mate-value men are more likely to *receive* more sexual opportunities, but attitudes about *wanting* unrestricted sexual opportunities are shared by low and high mate-value men alike.

Although sexual restrictedness and mate value are moderately correlated in male participants, these remain distinct constructs. Sexual restrictedness and mate value patterns are not identical in regression models that contain both variables (see, e.g., Hypothesis 5, in which there was a main effect of mate value in beliefs about policing child support laws, but no effect of sexual restrictedness). However, because they are moderately correlated variables, finding a significant Sexual Restrictedness X Mate Value interaction is somewhat more difficult due to slight inflation of standard errors.

Discussion

Summary of Findings and Conceptual Implications

Beliefs about child support seem to fit predictions in a few ways, but not most. Gross endorsement of child support follows predictions. From an evolutionary framework, because women are the greater-investing sex and the primary offspring caregiver, securing resources is extremely important and should lead to a greater endorsement of child support. This is unequivocally supported in the current study's data: women endorse child support more than men across a wide range of child support constructs. Additionally, when it comes to restricting child support, men more than women favor paternity testing requirements and the choice to reduce payments in favor of new offspring.

However, the effects of sex ratio on child support endorsement are less clear. Only one dependent variable – belief about the amount of income that should be devoted to child support – produces the predicted pattern of women increasing child support endorsement in a female-biased environment. Additionally, men in a female-biased

environment perceive the child support system as more unfair to men than in a male-biased environment, suggesting concerns about system abuse in an unfavorable sex ratio.

Most of my predictions focused on men exploiting a favorable female-biased sex ratio, but many results instead indicate sensitivity to the unfavorable male-biased sex ratio. In other words, men seem more attuned to potential threats posed by a competitive male-biased environment than to opportunities available in a female-biased environment. For example, men (and, more particularly, high mate-value men) increase their endorsement of paternity testing requirements under a male-biased sex ratio prime. Women also appear more sensitive to a male-biased, rather than female-biased environment. For example, sexually unrestricted women are especially unfavorable toward paternity testing in a favorable (male-biased) sex ratio.

In general, sexual restrictedness and mate value had fewer effects on child support endorsement in women than in men. As mentioned above, sexually unrestricted women were unfavorable toward paternity testing compared to sexually restricted women, and low mate-value women were less compromising in their endorsement of child support than high mate-value women. However, the limited influence of sexual restrictedness in women might be related to restriction of range in the female sample.

For men, on the other hand, mate value did appear to influence endorsement of child support across several dependent variables. High mate-value men, as predicted, generally favored greater restrictions on child support than low mate-value men. However, sexual restrictedness did not shape these beliefs. The results are somewhat supportive of the notion that high mate-value men are more likely to be required to pay child support, either as a result of attracting more partners (particularly short-term

partners) and thus producing more offspring, or of greater likelihood of being targeted as the father by women who wish to take advantage of a high mate-value man's status or resources.

Interestingly, many of the findings described above seem to indicate that men are more concerned about child support in a male-biased, rather than female-biased, sex ratio. Although contrary to my initial predictions, these findings accord with an alternative evolutionary account. If women can have their choice of partners in a male-biased environment, and additional female partners are difficult to acquire, unwittingly providing financial resources to a non-biological child is particularly undesirable. From an evolutionary perspective, investing resources into a stranger's reproductive fitness rather than one's own is extremely costly. One might thus expect men to be particularly attuned to concerns of paternal uncertainty in a male-biased environment. Indeed, results suggest that men's endorsement of paternity testing requirements increases in a male-biased environment.

However, in line with predictions, it is the sexually unrestricted high mate-value men in a *female*-biased sex ratio that perceive the greatest system unfairness. I predicted that men in this group would least desire strong child support laws and yet be most likely to have them imposed upon them, a circumstance likely to foster resentment and feelings of system unfairness. This prediction also demonstrates the potential nuances of the framework, as it goes beyond general predictions of male negativity toward child support to focus on a *specific* group of men.

Overall, the above findings provide mixed support for the specific hypotheses outlined in the Introduction, but successfully demonstrate that certain aspects of child

support endorsement may be influenced by life-history-theory-relevant variables such as sex ratio, mate value, and sexual restrictedness.

Limitations

There are several potential limitations to this study. Perhaps of greatest concern is the likely inefficacy of the sex ratio manipulation. At the end of the study, participants were given the opportunity to comment on anything about the study they found 'strange or unusual.' A disconcertingly large number of participants (N = 42) mentioned the fake *New York Times* article, with 14 participants explicitly stating that they did not believe the information presented in the article was true. (Note: this skepticism occurred approximately equally between the two sex ratio conditions.) Although this manipulation has been used successfully in previous research (e.g., Griskevicius et al., 2011), it might be less effective with an older, more educated MTurk sample. Unfortunately, all participants received a sex ratio prime, so I was not able to analyze child support endorsement unadulterated by sex ratio manipulation.

An additional limitation of the study is the difficulty of detecting mate value and sexual restrictedness interactions in men, due to the correlation between these variables in the male participants. Although this correlation does not affect the interpretation of any existing interactions, and is not strong enough to suggest that the two are actually a single construct, resulting inflation of standard errors make detection of the interactions tested in Hypothesis 5 more difficult.

Value of an Evolutionary Approach

One might argue that an evolutionary approach is unnecessary and does not provide additional insight into such a modern concern as 'child support laws.' Indeed, it

could be suggested that a model of economic self-interest alone may be sufficient in explaining differences between men and women's endorsement of child support.

Evolutionary psychologists have faced similar criticisms since the field's inception. Part of the misunderstanding may be due to differences in a 'scientific aesthetic' – that is, preferred level of analysis. As pointed out by Kenrick and Cohen (2012), there are multiple levels of analysis from which to examine scientific phenomena. Much of the previous literature on child support has focused on proximate explanations for beliefs and attitudes about child support. Studies examining how socioeconomic status and race affect child support endorsement are important contributions to our understanding of the phenomenon. However, I suggest that considering a functional explanation, by examining the *ultimate adaptive purpose* of providing or withholding resources to or from one's offspring, is also an important contribution. Although "child support" as a legal policy is a relatively new state of affairs, the notion of trade-offs in resource allocation is a challenge that has existed before the origin of our species. Our ancestors were repeatedly faced with the problem of determining whether to invest resources in parenting existing children or devoting those resources to additional mating opportunities. Individual reproductive success depended on making good choices—have many offspring and hope that some survive, or have few offspring and hope that the extra investment leads to greater fitness, with the ultimate goal that said offspring successfully reproduce and pass on genetic material to their own offspring. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assert that humans would have developed psychological adaptations for strategies and behaviors as related to these challenges of resource allocation. Additionally, an evolutionary account inherently suggests that these strategies are

sensitive to relevant features of the environment, features that likely influence the functionality of particular strategies. In sum, I argue that the 'modern' features of child support do not belie the usefulness of an evolutionary perspective, and that such a perspective approaches the scientific question of child support endorsement from a different (but not better or worse) level of analysis.

To directly address the potential criticism that my findings (few and far between as they may be) can just as easily be explained by economic self-interest, I point to this finding as an example: When it comes to women's endorsement of child support, results suggest that women do increase the amount of income that they think should be devoted to child support when they are in an unfavorable (female-biased) sex ratio. The logic behind this prediction is that when there are lots of other women, there is more competition for mates and more at stake if one loses a partner (and more specifically, his resources). This prediction would be difficult to generate *a priori* from a purely economic self-interest standpoint. There would be no reason for predicting that the sex ratio in an environment would influence the economics of child support endorsement. Of course, it is easy to generate post hoc explanations for this and all findings described above. (Indeed, I might suggest that economic self-interest approaches are especially good at generating post-hoc speculations.) Yet, without an evolutionary framework, one would be hard pressed to argue the economic relevance of mate value, sex ratio, and sexual restrictedness – each of which I find to affect endorsement of child support.

Future Directions

There are several potential avenues for follow-up research. First, to address the current study's limitations, it would be desirable to seek an alternative sex ratio

manipulation, such as a guided visualization task or participation on a fake dating website. Additionally, it would be informative to seek a younger, college-aged sample likely to include sexually unrestricted women.

Given the effects of men's beliefs about paternity testing requirements, one might investigate whether paternity testing increases child support compliance among sexually restricted men. This particular category of men has arguably the most to lose from substantial investment in a non-biological child, and thus paternal uncertainty should be a greater concern. On the other hand, fast life history men likely favor having multiple offspring rather than investing heavily in few offspring. My data suggests that sexually unrestricted men find it acceptable to reduce child support payments in favor of additional offspring: to what extent does this explain child support non-compliance? Is there a way to design policies that increase compliance if this is the case?

Finally, the application of a fundamental motives framework (Kenrick, Neuberg, Griskevicius, Becker, & Schaller, 2010) might be interesting for examining child support endorsement. Does activation of a kin-care motive increase child support endorsement? Does activation of a mating motive increase child support endorsement for women, but decrease child support endorsement for men? These and other questions may be worthwhile future pursuits.

In conclusion, careful consideration about the implications of a life history theory approach to child support is likely to generate nuanced, novel predictions, and results that have important implications for the design and implementation of child support policies.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE AND FIGURES

Table 1. Scale Descriptives.

Scale	**Cronbach's Alpha**	**Female Mean**	**Female Standard Deviation**	**Male Mean**	**Male Standard Deviation**
Mate Value	0.93	33.52	10.68	33.57	10.73
SOI	0.90	23.57	11.18	36.59	14.91
Disparity in standard of living between father and child	0.79	5.56	1.21	4.85	1.30
Father obligation regardless of circumstances	0.87	5.17	1.13	4.19	1.23
Need for policing	0.85	6.23	0.97	5.45	1.18
System unfairness to men	0.80	3.98	1.33	5.13	1.27
System unfairness to women	0.67	3.67	1.21	2.92	1.03
Trade-offs favoring additional offspring	0.51 ($r = .34$, $p < .001$)	3.35	1.28	4.22	1.22

Figure 1. Participants' beliefs about the percentage of income that should be devoted to child support, as a function of participant sex and manipulated sex ratio.

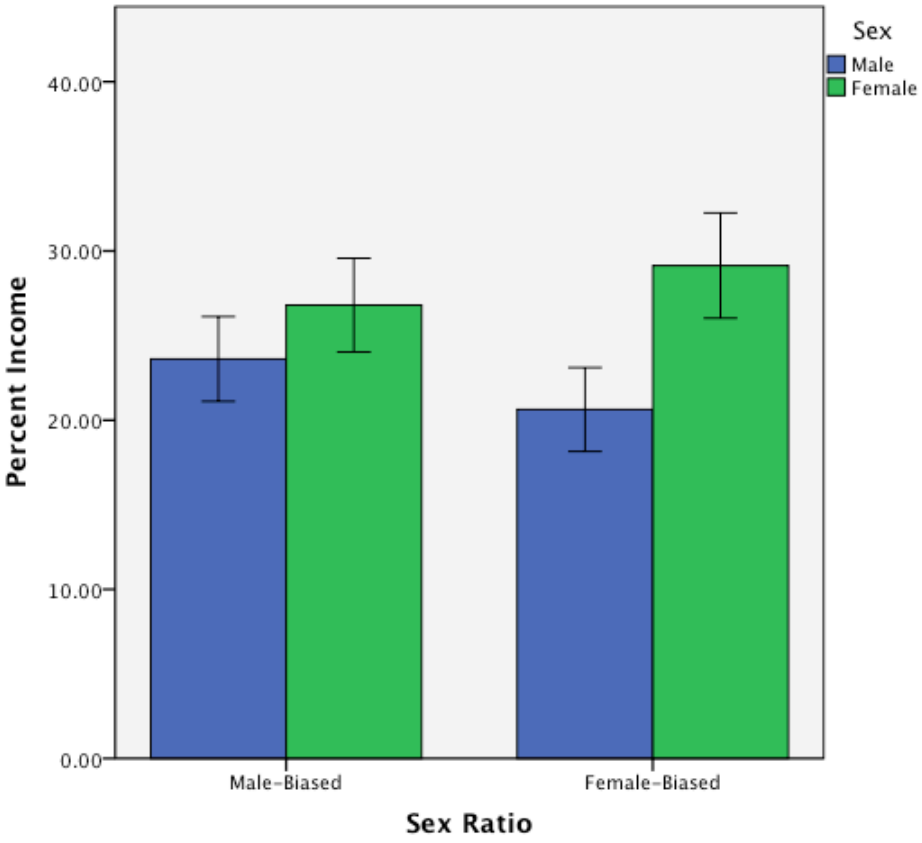


Figure 2. Women's beliefs about paternity testing requirements, as a function of participant sexual restrictedness and sex ratio condition. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater favorability toward paternity testing requirements.

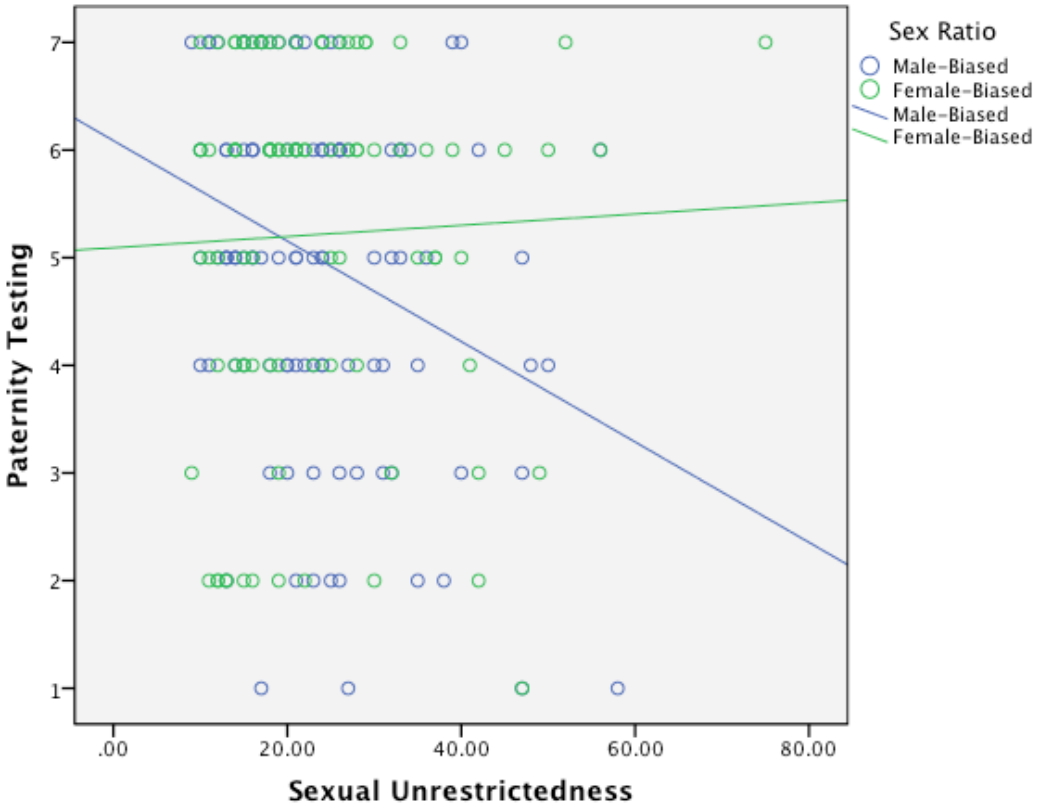


Figure 3. Women's beliefs about disparity in standard of living between father and child, as a function of sexual restrictedness and mate value. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater agreement that there should be no disparity between father and child.

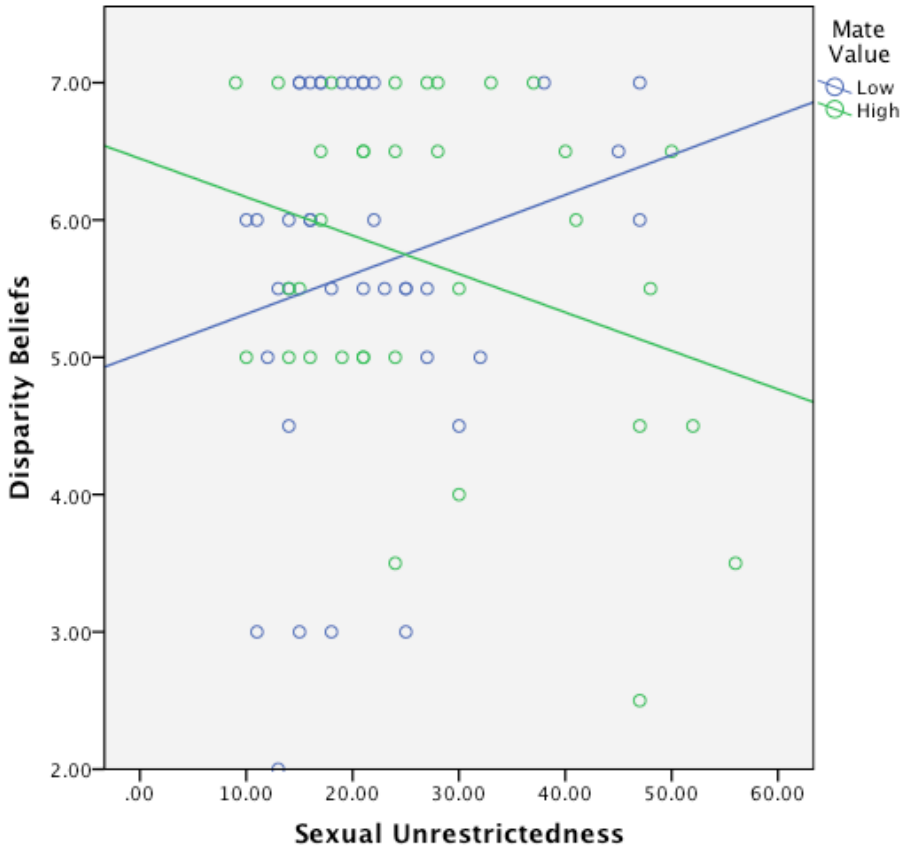


Figure 4. Men's beliefs about paternity testing requirements as a function of sexual restrictedness and manipulated sex ratio condition. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater favorability toward paternity testing requirements.

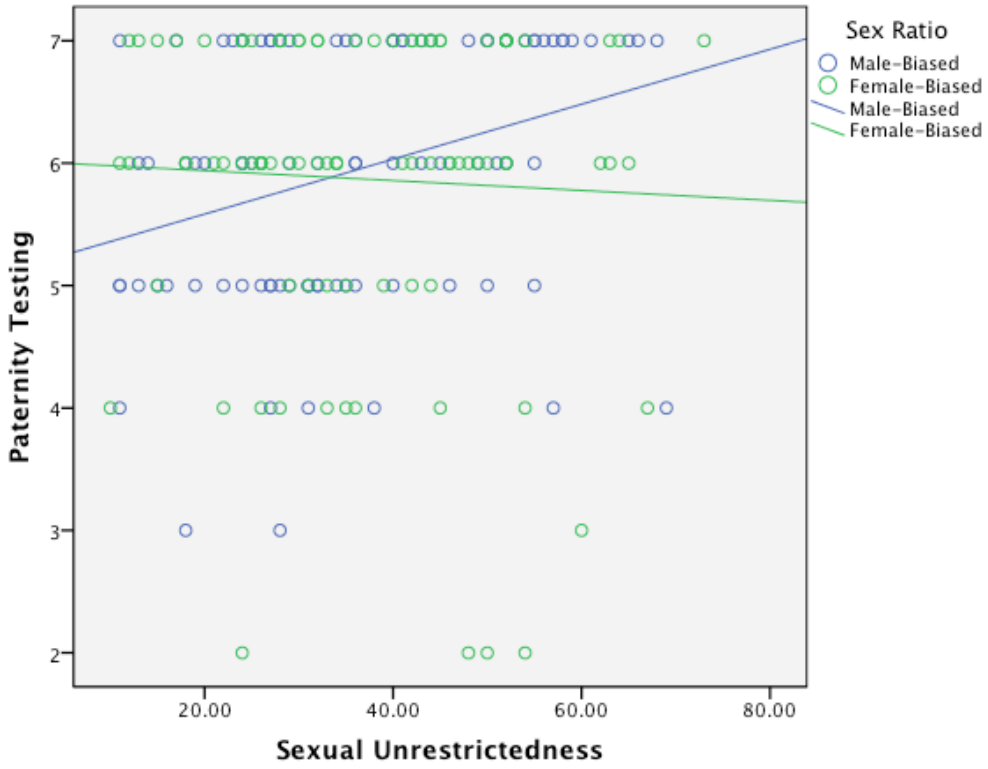


Figure 5. Men's beliefs about reducing child support payments in favor of additional rather than current offspring, as a function of participant sexual restrictedness and manipulated sex ratio condition. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater favorability toward reducing payments.

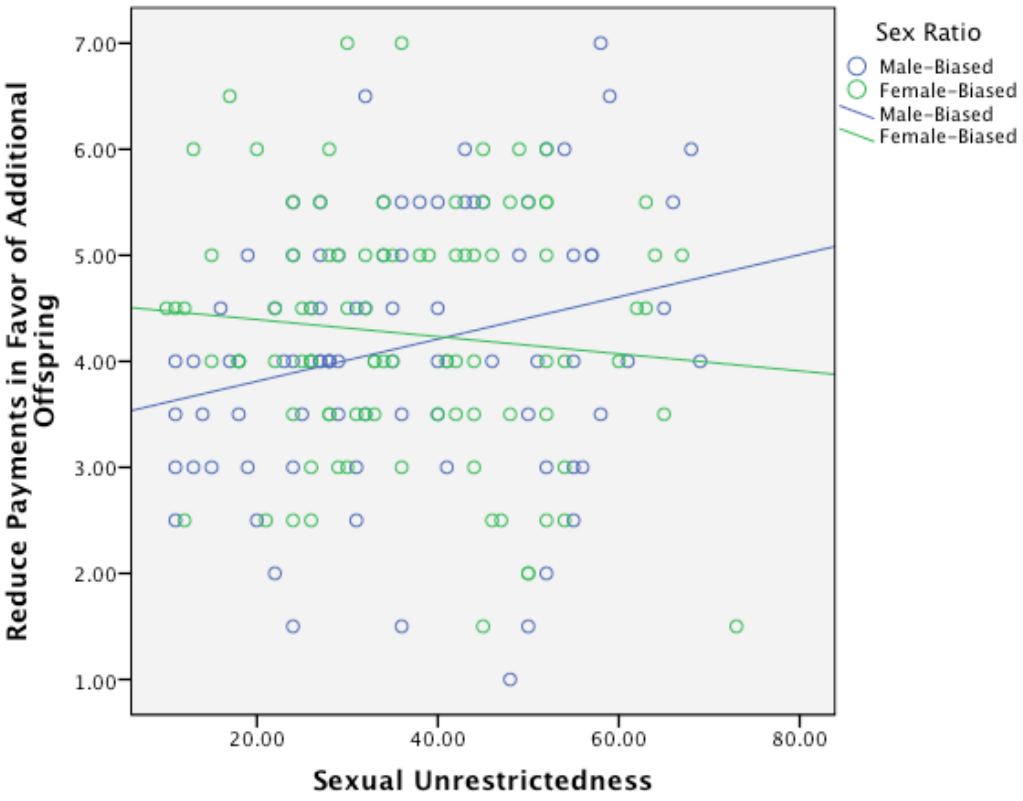


Figure 6. Men's beliefs about disparity in standard of living between father and child, as a function of participant mate value and manipulated sex ratio condition. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater agreement that there should be no disparity between father and child.

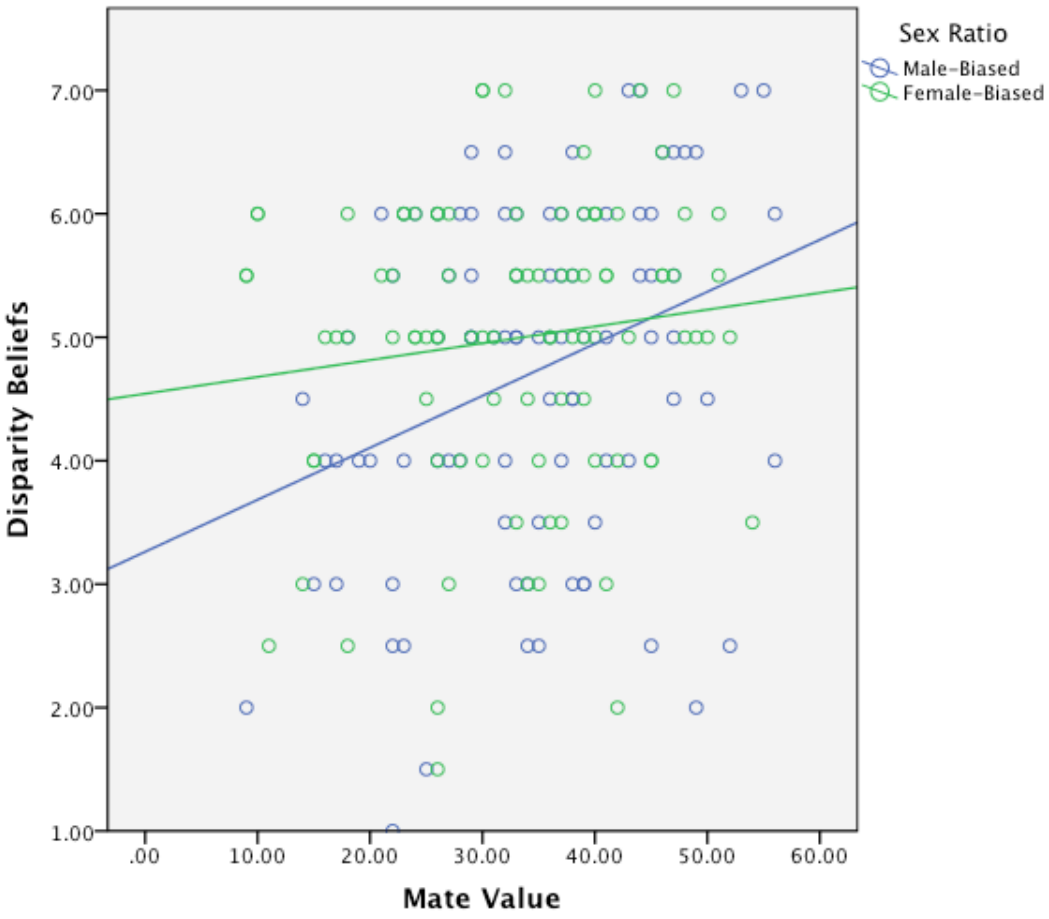


Figure 7. Men's beliefs about system unfairness to women, as a function of participant mate value and manipulated sex ratio condition. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater belief that the system is unfair to women.

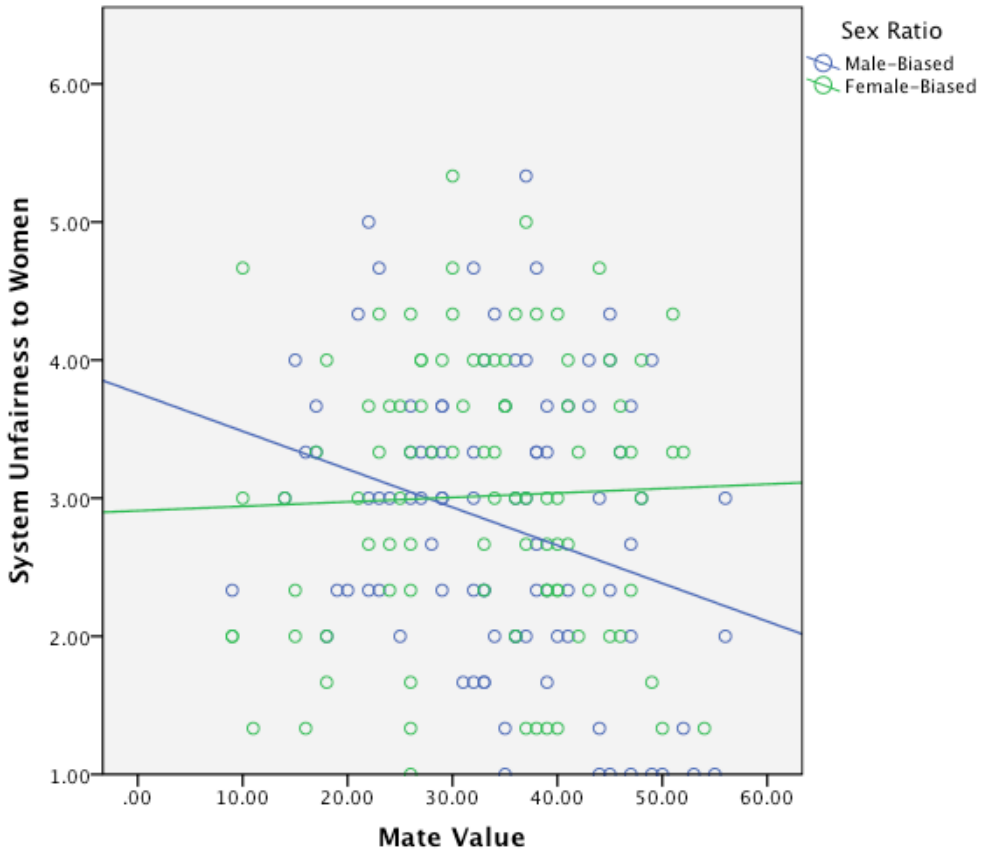


Figure 8. Men's beliefs about paternity testing, as a function of participant mate value and manipulated sex ratio condition. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater favorability toward paternity testing requirements.

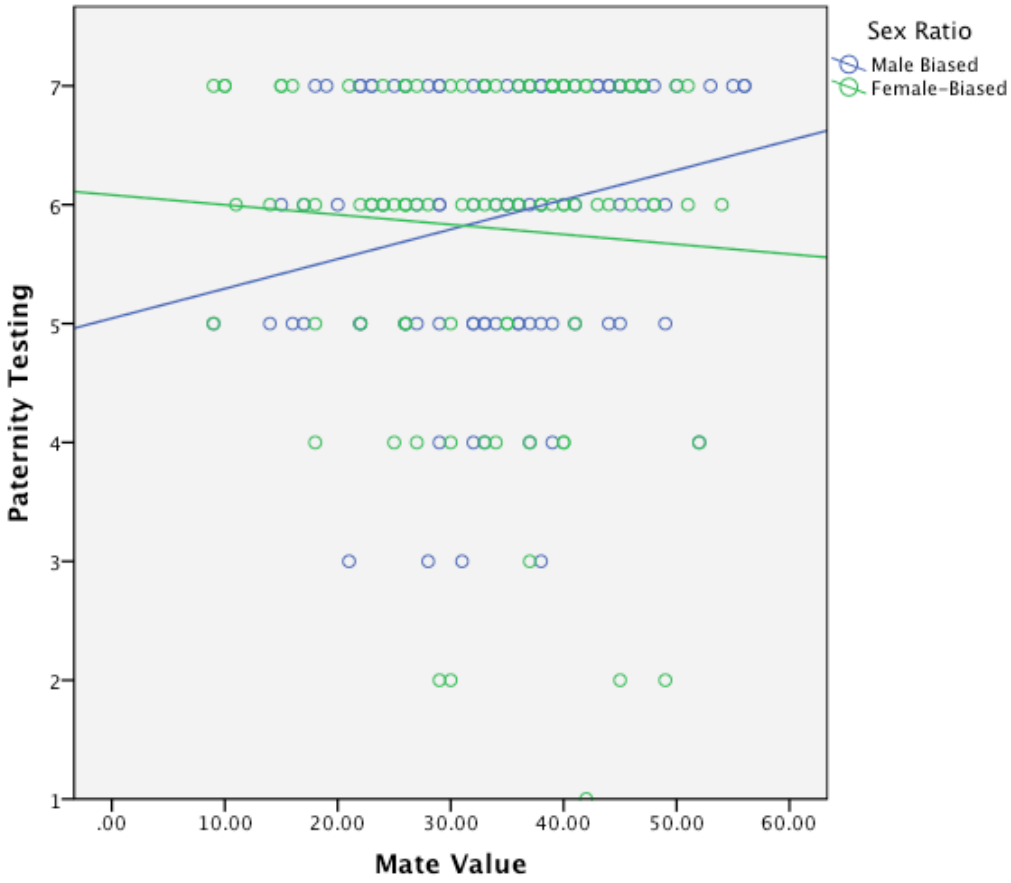


Figure 9. Men's beliefs about reducing payments in favor of additional rather than current offspring, as a function of participant mate value and manipulated sex ratio condition. Higher numbers on the Y axis indicate greater favorability toward reducing payments.

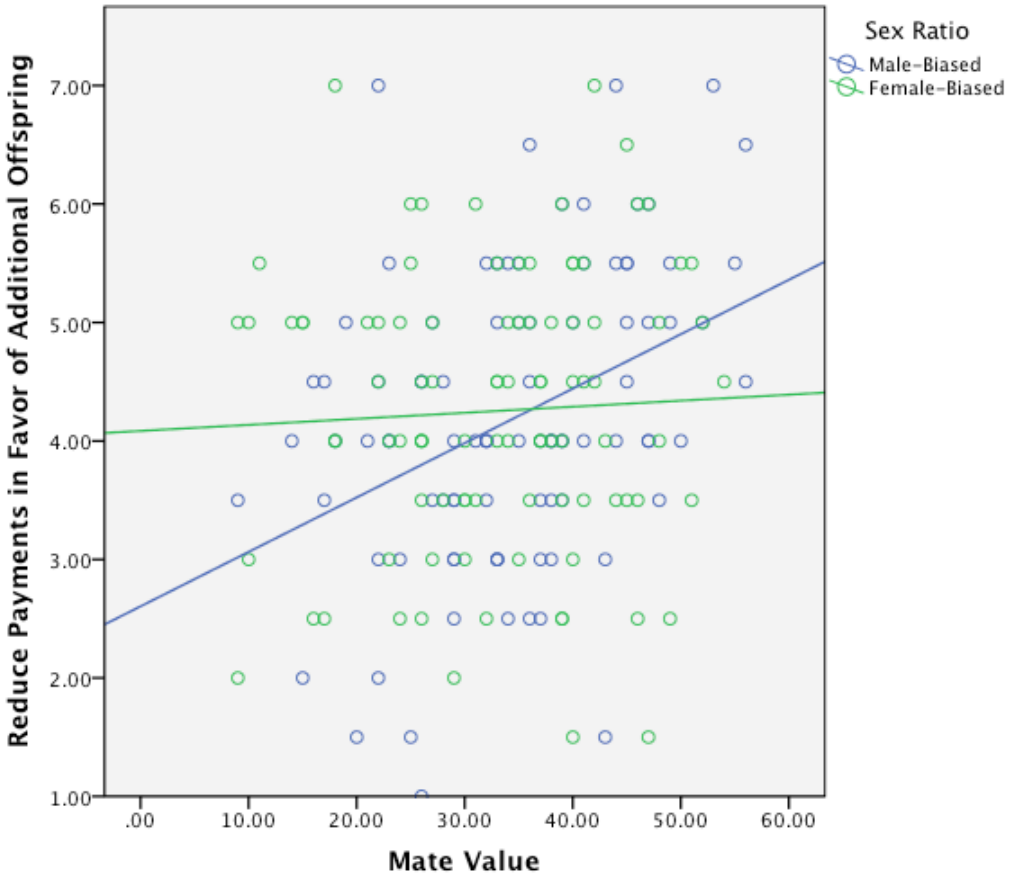


Figure 10. Men's beliefs about the percentage of income that should be devoted to child support, as a function of participant sexual restrictedness and children.

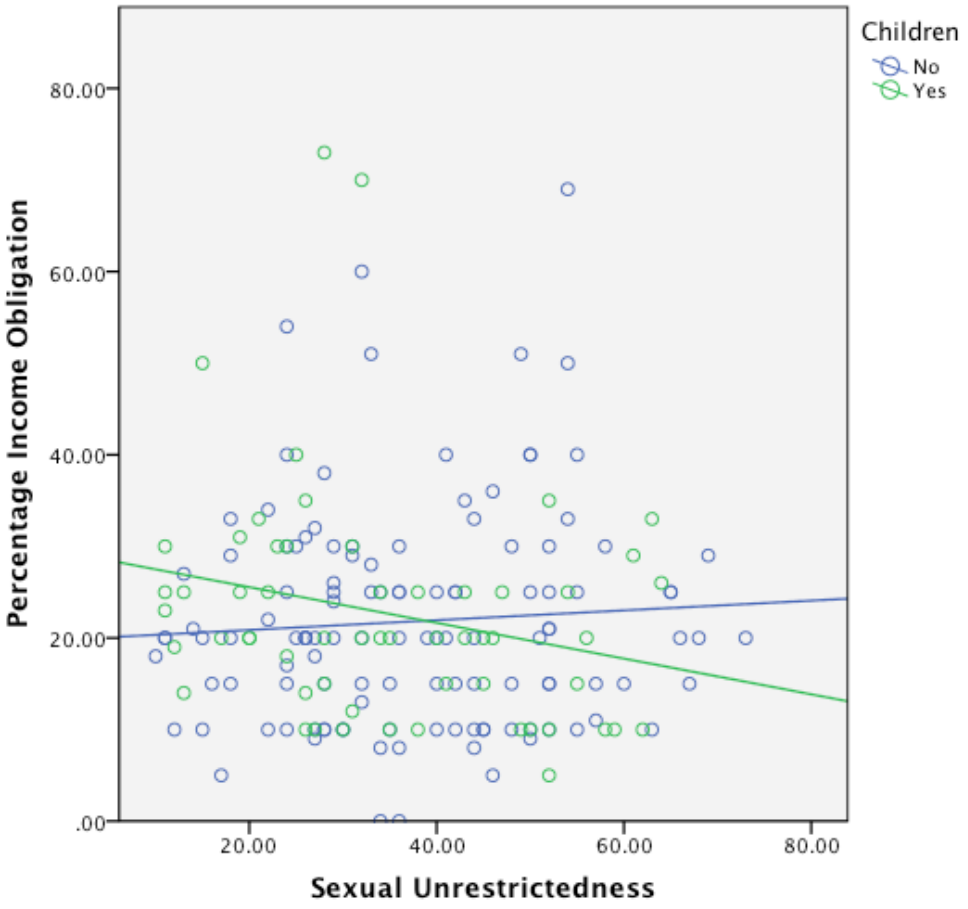
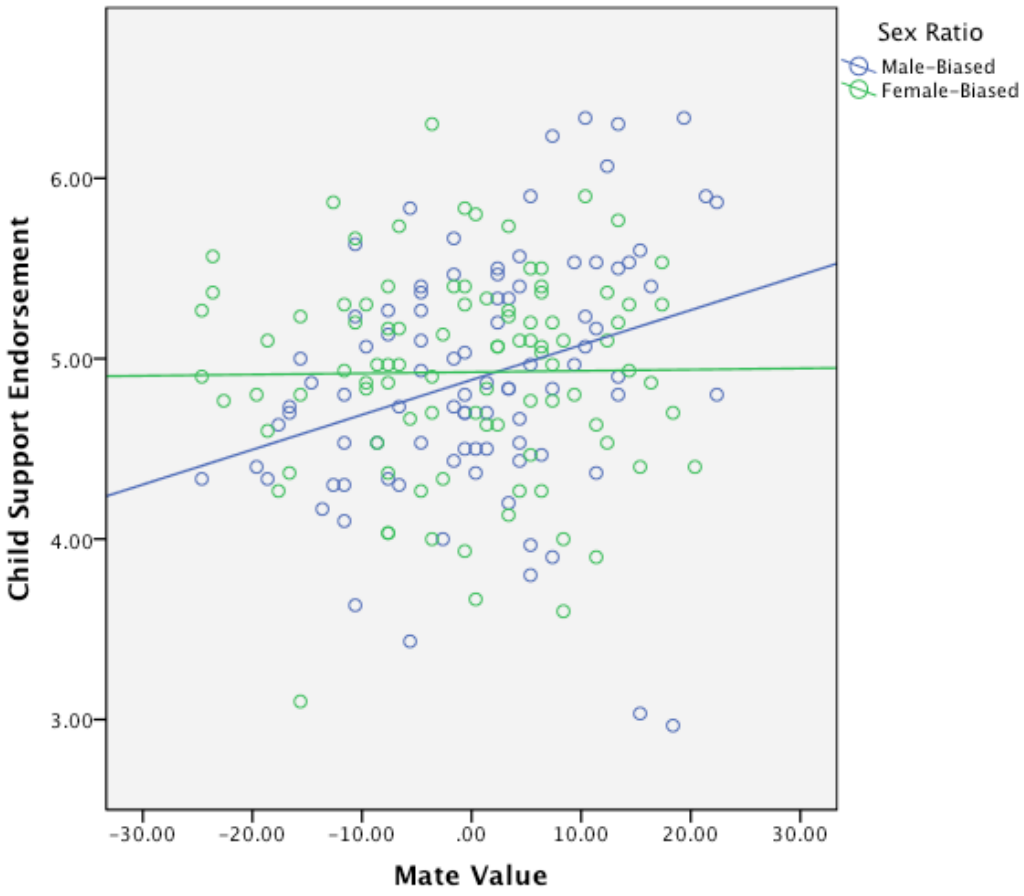


Figure 11. Men's beliefs about aggregated child support endorsement, as a function of participant mate value and sex ratio.



APPENDIX B

MEASURES

I. Male-Biased Sex Ratio

The New York Times

Sex Ratios to Affect Marriage Rates

By LESLIE WAYNE
Published: November 3, 2012

There was once a time when the average American could look around and expect to see equal numbers of males and females. Those times are changing rapidly, however, according to new sociological research. Whether it's at work, on dating websites such as Match.com®, or at the bar, American men today should expect to see fewer women for every guy.

The U.S. Census Bureau recently released statistics of current sex ratios within the United States. The trends show that significantly more than half of individuals across the country are men. "It's astounding," says Susan Rice, a sociologist at the University of Arizona. "Demographics today suggest we are overflowing with men."

Researchers say that even a small difference in sex ratio can have a dramatic effect on marriage patterns. For example, when a sex ratio is .9—nine men for every ten women—there will be hundreds of thousands of "extra" women of marriage age. In this circumstance, men tend to have increased power in the relationship, with one consequence being that they wait longer to commit to marriage. In contrast, when the sex ratio is 1.1—11 men for every 10 women—there will be hundreds of thousands of "extra" men. In this circumstance, it's the women who tend to have increased power in the relationship and men become more willing to marry earlier.

The latest data suggest that the sex ratio is currently 1.2. This very large surplus of men means that young men will have a harder time finding women willing to marry them and will need to compete more with each other to find partners.

Interestingly, most people do not appear to notice the skew unless it is made explicit to them. In Chicago, researchers asked passersby on the street to observe the people around them for five minutes. Chris Jenkins, a first-year commodities trader, quickly noticed the trend. “Everywhere I looked, there were groups of men,” said Jenkins. “I was intrigued that there were so many guys and so few women. I guess I need to get used to this.”

Demographers such as Ryan Connick note that this trend will continue into the near future. Connick explains that this trend is a result of the number of males and females born in a given generation. “We had a series of years a while back when more men were born. There is nothing wrong with this; it just happens every so many generations. But it will have an impact on people’s lives.”

The high numbers of men are likely to influence many aspects of the lives of men and women. Researchers across the country note that the sex ratio has looked different in the past, and will likely look different again in the future. People today, however, should expect to be surrounded by an abundance of men.

II. Female-Biased Sex Ratio

The New York Times

Sex Ratios to Affect Marriage Rates

By LESLIE WAYNE
Published: November 3, 2012

There was once a time when the average American could look around and expect to see equal numbers of males and females. Those times are changing rapidly, however, according to new sociological research. Whether it's at work, on dating websites such as Match.com®, or at the bar, American women today should expect to see fewer men for every woman.

The U.S. Census Bureau recently released statistics of current sex ratios within the United States. The trends show that significantly more than half of individuals across the country are women. "It's astounding," says Susan Rice, a sociologist at the University of Arizona. "Demographics today suggest we are overflowing with women."

Researchers say that even a small difference in sex ratio can have a dramatic effect on marriage patterns. For example, when a sex ratio is .9—nine men for every ten women—there will be hundreds of thousands of "extra" women of marriage age. In this circumstance, men tend to have increased power in the relationship, with one consequence being that they wait longer to commit to marriage. In contrast, when the sex ratio is 1.1—11 men for every 10 women—there will be hundreds of thousands of "extra" men. In this circumstance, it's the women who tend to have increased power in the relationship and men become more willing to marry earlier.

The latest data suggest that the sex ratio is currently .8. This very large surplus of women means that young women will have a harder time finding men willing to marry them and will need to compete more with each other to find partners.

Interestingly, most people do not appear to notice the skew unless it is made explicit to them. In Chicago, researchers asked passersby on the street to observe the people around them for five minutes. Chris Jenkins, a first-year commodities trader, quickly noticed the trend. "Everywhere I looked, there were groups of women," said Jenkins. "I was intrigued that there were so many women and so few guys. I guess I need to get used to this."

Demographers such as Ryan Connick note that this trend will continue into the near future. Connick explains that this trend is a result of the number of males and females born in a given generation. "We had a series of years a while back when more women were born. There is nothing wrong with this; it just happens every so many generations. But it will have an impact on people's lives."

The high numbers of women are likely to influence many aspects of the lives of men and women. Researchers across the country note that the sex ratio has looked different in the past, and will likely look different again in the future. People today, however, should expect to be surrounded by an abundance of women.

III. Child Support Questions

For the purposes of the following questions, child support is defined as ongoing, periodic payment made by a parent for the financial benefit of a child following the end of a marriage or other relationship. Usually the parent obligated to pay child support is a non-custodial parent—that is, the parent the child does *not* live with.

The vast majority of the U.S. parents who are obligated by legal decision to pay child support are fathers. For the remainder of this survey, please assume that the person responsible for paying child support is the father.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

1. Child support laws are important.
2. Child support laws are necessary to get fathers to pay their child support obligations.
3. What percentage of an obligated father's income should be devoted to child support payments? (slider scale)
4. The current child support system is fair to men.
5. The current child support system is fair to women.
6. The current child support system is fair to children.
7. Jail time is a reasonable punishment for fathers failing to pay child support.
8. Garnishing a father's employment wages—that is, taking child support directly from a father's earnings, before he receives his paycheck—is a reasonable way to collect money from a father who refuses to pay child support.
9. It is necessary for a father to pay child support, even if it causes him financial hardship to do so.
10. At what age of the child should child support obligations begin? (slider scale)
11. At what age of the child should child support obligations end? (slider scale)
12. If a woman remarries, the father's child support obligations should end.
13. Fathers have a moral obligation to pay child support.
14. The current child support system favors women.
15. The father should be required to pay enough child support to make sure that the child lives as well as he or she did when the parents were together.
16. If the father has a lot more money than the mother has, the father should pay enough child support to make sure the child lives at about the same standard of living as he does.
17. The mother should receive child support payments from the father even if she can meet the child's basic physical and educational needs without them.
18. Child support should not be limited to the amount needed to make sure a child's basic physical and educational needs are met. If the father can afford it, he should be required to pay more.
19. The father should be required to pay child support even if he lives in poverty.
20. The more income the mother earns, the less the father should have to pay in child support.
21. When the mother has enough money to support the child fully, the father should not have to pay child support at all.
22. The father should be required to pay only the child support amount needed to make the child completely comfortable, even if the father has a high income and lives much better than the child.
23. Parents should support their children, but the law should never force one parent to pay child support to the other.

24. The father should not have to pay so much child support that his children live better than he lives.
25. It is acceptable for the father to reduce child support payments after he has children with a new partner.
26. Child support should only be required after a paternity test determines that the father really is the biological parent.
27. Women often abuse the child support system.
28. Money paid for child support is often spent on the mother, not the child.
29. A father's children with his current partner should not suffer because of child support payments to children from a previous partner.
30. State-funded support of children is appropriate only if parental support is impossible.
31. Both parents have an equal moral obligation to support a child, no matter who the child lives with.
32. A noncustodial father should be required to contribute his fair share to the child's support, even if the child's well-being is secure without his contribution.

IV. Big Five Personality Index

How I am in general

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others*? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which **you agree or disagree with that statement.**

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Disagree Strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly

I am someone who…

1. _____ Is talkative
2. _____ Tends to find fault with others
3. _____ Does a thorough job
4. _____ Is depressed, blue
5. _____ Is original, comes up with new ideas
6. _____ Is reserved
7. _____ Is helpful and unselfish with others
8. _____ Can be somewhat careless
9. _____ Is relaxed, handles stress well.
10. _____ Is curious about many different things
11. _____ Is full of energy
12. _____ Starts quarrels with others
13. _____ Is a reliable worker
14. _____ Can be tense

15. _____ Is ingenious, a deep thinker

16. _____ Generates a lot of enthusiasm

17. _____ Has a forgiving nature

18. _____ Tends to be disorganized

19. _____ Worries a lot

20. _____ Has an active imagination

21. _____ Tends to be quiet

22. _____ Is generally trusting

23. _____ Tends to be lazy

24. _____ Is emotionally stable, not easily upset

25. _____ Is inventive

26. _____ Has an assertive personality

27. _____ Can be cold and aloof

28. _____ Perseveres until the task is finished

29. _____ Can be moody

30. _____ Values artistic, aesthetic experiences

31. _____ Is sometimes shy, inhibited

32. _____ Is considerate and kind to almost everyone

33. _____ Does things efficiently

34. _____ Remains calm in tense situations

35. _____ Prefers work that is routine

36. _____ Is outgoing, sociable

37. _____ Is sometimes rude to others

38. _____ Makes plans and follows through with them

39. _____ Gets nervous easily

40. _____ Likes to reflect, play with ideas

41. _____ Has few artistic interests

42. _____ Likes to cooperate with others

43. _____ Is easily distracted

44. _____ Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature

V. Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. In terms of income, how would you describe your family's socio-economic status while you were growing up? (Please check only one)

_____ Upper class
_____ Upper middle class
_____ Middle class
_____ Lower middle class
_____ Working class

Please rate your agreement with the following statements on a scale from

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

4. My family usually had enough money for things when I was growing up.
5. I grew up in a relatively wealthy neighborhood.
6. I felt relatively wealthy compared to the other kids in my school.
7. My family struggled financially when I was growing up.
8. I currently have enough money to buy things I want.
9. I don't currently need to worry too much about paying my bills.
10. I don't have to worry about money too much in the future.
11. I will be able to buy the things I need and want later in life.

12. What was your household income growing up?
Less than $15,000
$15,001-$25,000
$25,001-$35,000
$35,001-$50,000
$50,001-$75,000
$75,001-$100,000
$100,001-$150,000
$150,000+

13. What is your current household income?
Less than $15,000
$15,001-$25,000
$25,001-$35,000
$35,001-$50,000
$50,001-$75,000

$75,001-$100,000
$100,001-$150,000
$150,000+

14. Think of this ladder as representing where people stand financially. At the top of the ladder are the people who are the best off, those who have the most money, most education, and best jobs. At the bottom are the people who are the worst off, those who have the least money, least education, and worst jobs or no job. Please place an 'X' on the rung that best represents where you stand on the ladder relative to other people.

- 10th rung (top of the ladder)
- 9th rung
- 8th rung
- 7th rung
- 6th rung
- 5th rung
- 4th rung
- 3rd rung
- 2nd rung
- 1st rung (bottom of the ladder)

15. What is the highest level of education you have received?
Less than high school
High school diploma
Some college
Bachelor's
Master's
Professional (MD, JD, etc.) or PhD
Unknown

16. Which political party do you most closely identify with?
Democrat
Republican
Independent
Libertarian
Tea Party
Green
Other

17. How often do you attend religious services?
Never
1-5 times each year
6-11 times each year
Once a month
A couple times each month

Once a week
Many times each week

18. How would you describe your religious beliefs?
Catholic
Christian (Non-Catholic)
Jewish
Hindu
Buddhist
Muslim
Native American
Agnostic
Atheist

19. What is your race or ethnicity?
African-American
Asian/ Asian-American
Latino/ Latina/ Hispanic
Native American
Middle Eastern
Caucasian/ White
Other

20. What is your marital status?
Married
Single
Divorced
Widowed

21. How many daughters do you have?
22. What are the ages of your daughters?
23. How many sons do you have?
24. What are the ages of your sons?
25. Have you ever paid child support?
26. Have you ever received child support payments?
27. What is your zip code?

VI. **Gender role beliefs scale (Brown & Gladstone, 2012)**

1. Women should have as much sexual freedom as men.
2. Women with children should not work outside the home if they don't have to financially.

3. The husband, more than the wife, should be regarded as the legal representative of the family.
4. Except perhaps in very special circumstances, a man should not allow a woman to pay the taxi, buy the tickets, or pay the check.
5. Women should be more concerned with childbearing and house tending responsibilities, rather than with desires for professional and business careers.

VII. Mate value

Please rate your agreement with the following items:

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree

1. Members of the opposite sex that I like, tend to like me back.
2. Members of the opposite sex notice me.
3. I receive many compliments from members of the opposite sex.
4. Members of the opposite sex are not very attracted to me.
5. I receive sexual invitations from members of the opposite sex.
6. Members of the opposite sex are attracted to me.
7. I can have as many sexual partners as I choose.
8. I do not receive many compliments from members of the opposite sex.

VIII. Life History Strategy (revised, taken from Mini-K)

1. I can often tell how things will turn out.
2. When I was a child, life was very predictable.
3. I often make plans in advance.
4. I avoid taking risks.
5. While growing up, I had a close and warm relationship with my biological mother.
6. While growing up, I had a close and warm relationship with my biological father.
7. I like to make plans for the future.
8. I often make decisions impulsively, without worrying about all their future implications.

IX. Sexual restrictedness scale (SOI-R)

1. With how many different partners have you had sex within the past 12 months?

2. With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse on *one and only one* occasion?
3. With how many different partners have you had sexual intercourse without having an interest in a long-term committed relationship with this person?
4. Sex without love is OK.
5. I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying "casual" sex with different partners.
6. I do not have to have sex with a person until I am sure that we will have a long-term, serious relationship.
7. How often do you have fantasies about having sex with someone with whom you do *not* have a committed romantic relationship?
8. How often do you experience sexual arousal when you are in contact with someone with whom you do not have a committed romantic relationship?
9. In everyday life, how often do you have spontaneous fantasies about having sex with someone you have just met?

X. Aggregate Child Support Endorsement Scale

Aggregate Child Support DV

*The father should be required to pay enough child support to make sure that his child lives as well as he does

* If the father has a lot more money than the mother has, the father should pay enough child support to make sure the child lives at about the same standard of living as he does

* The father should be required to pay child support even if he is living in poverty

* The higher the mother's income, the less the father should have to pay in child support (R)

* Even if the mother has enough money to support the child fully, the father should still have to pay child support

* It is necessary for a father to pay child support, even if it causes him financial hardship to do so

* A noncustodial father should be required to contribute his fair share to the child's support, even if the child's well-being is secure without his contribution

*If the mother marries a wealthy man, the father's child support obligations should end. (R)

* Child support laws are important

* Child support laws are necessary to get fathers to pay their child support obligations

* Garnishing a father's employment wages—that is, taking child support directly from a father's earnings, before he receives his paycheck—is a reasonable way to collect money from a father who refuses to pay child support

*Child support should only be required after a paternity test determines that the father really is the biological parent (R)

*It is acceptable for the father to reduce child support payments after he has children with a new partner

*A father's children with his current partner should not suffer because of child support payments to children from a previous partner (R)

not included: percent income dv, system unfairness to men or women

* The current child support system is fair to women (R)
    * The current child support system favors men
    * Men often abuse the child support system
* The current child support system is fair to men (R)
    * The current child support system favors women
    * Women often abuse the child support system