

Genetics: Do Persistent Close-Cousin Marriages Have Consequences?  
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The great scientist Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) was the first to systematically explore how heredity plays out. He worked with peas, plants with a variety of inheritable qualities, so that Mendel was able to see the results of certain mating, discovering dominant and recessive genes over many generations of these plants.

Recently, there has been a cosmic leap forward in genetic sciences, thanks to the bold independence of mapping the genomes of a number of creatures, and finally some work on human beings. We are learning more about the effect of genes on behavior (such as those people genetically unable to resist narcotics or alcohol). Our judicial system is based on the notion that, with the exception of raving lunacy, people make decisions, both good and bad. However, the notion of total human volition is now teetering on the brink, a realization that will eventually require revision of our judicial systems. Certain criminals are simply badly wired. They still need to be locked up, but not punished for what they cannot help.

A close examination of the Muslim world (since the emergence of violent militant Islam) has spawned new interest in the genetic makeup of people living in the Middle East, where first-cousin marriage is the norm, not the exception. In the western world, close-cousin marriages were frequent among Europe's royalty, with notorious bad results among Queen Victoria's descendants. In Russia, a royal birth anomaly (hemophilia) played a role in the Russian Revolution.

Animal breeders have long known what we see with humans today: gene pools too small can have dire consequences. Villages across the world have had too many close-cousin marriages due to lack of other candidates, not choice. The consequences may in part explain the seeming differences in IQ between peasant and urban populations. (Remember country bumpkin jokes.) There has not, to my knowledge, been much scientific study of this phenomenon; it is simply universal in folklore and we may be seeing the consequences today in the flood of ill-equipped peasants flowing into megacities. Are they genetically ill-equipped mentally or are they merely ill-equipped by lack of mental stimulation? We do not know.

Anecdotal observations come from American military trainers in the Middle East, observations not generally made public. A Lockheed pilot with three assignments to Saudi Arabia noted that most Saudi pilot trainees had very limited night vision and very weak memories. This made pilot training exceedingly difficult. Trainers in Afghanistan are finding the same problem in memory and ability to learn. Trainers burn out trying to work with such trainees.

A Danish psychologist, Nikolai Sennels, has researched the disastrous results of Muslim inbreeding brought about by 1400 years of first-cousin preferences in marriage. Sennels notes that close to half of all Muslims in the world are inbred. In Pakistan, the numbers approach 70%, and in Denmark, that of Pakistani immigrants is about 40%. In every Arab Muslim country, the numbers are all well over 50% close-cousin marriages. In Britain, Pakistani families are 13 times as likely as others to have children with recessive genetic disorders. Pakistanis comprise only 3% of births in England, but account for 33% of children with genetic birth defects.

In Denmark, says Sennels, non-Western immigrants are more than 300% more likely to fail the intelligence test required for entrance into the Danish army. Is this truly a genetic flaw, or can a case be made that culture plays a role? In a culture that disapproves of questioning authority (family, clan, or Koran), how is intelligence cultivated?

Despite these dreadful outcomes, there are some exceedingly intelligent people in the Middle East and I have a theory about that too. The upper classes in the Muslim world had the same culture promoting marriage of first cousins, but polygamy was a corrective. Choices of wives after the first marriage were volitional. Polygamy infused villages with new genes, and every noble family benefitted from such infusion. This infusion further widens the gap between the upper classes and the lower, rural and pious, who maintain the Islam-approved close-cousin marriages.

Salvation for Muslims today will come from marrying outward. Will they do it?

681 words

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