

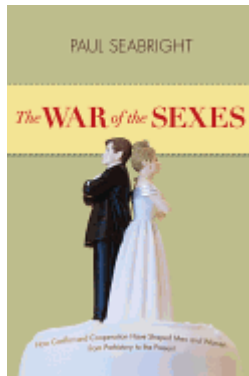


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The War of the Sexes: How Conflict and Cooperation Have Shaped Men and Women from Prehistory to the Present

Paul Seabright. Princeton Univ., \$24.95 (240p) ISBN 978-0-691-13301-0



Seabright (*The Company of Strangers: A Natural History of Economic Life*) draws from economics, biology, sociology, and anthropology in an attempt to reconcile men and women's propensity to disagree with their ability to cooperate. He argues that the origin of conflict between the sexes derives from the span of time during which partners must cooperate to raise a child from birth to independence--for humans, this period is much longer than for other animals. But of course, men and women disagree about more than just child-rearing. Seabright zooms out and across history in an accessible mix of scholarly prose and chatty anecdote to explain why inequalities and disagreements persist beyond potty-training. The first section explores how males of many species use different strategies to manipulate females into reproducing with them, and how females control the males in return. Turning to today, Seabright investigates everything from the effects of technology on gender-bias, to the various benefits of tallness, talent, and charm in the workplace. But though rife with food for thought, Seabright's offering resembles a buffet more than a thought-out meal--each morsel is understandable enough, but getting a grip on his overall argument is a chore. He writes that "[l]ucidity is hard to come by," and unfortunately that's true of this book, too--but that doesn't mean it isn't worth the effort. Photos (May)

Reviewed on: 09/17/2012

Other Formats

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