

Grandmotherhood

The Evolutionary Significance of the Second Half of Female Life

Edited By Eckart Voland, Athanasios Chasiotis, Wulf Schiefenhoewel

Rutgers University Press

By the year 2030, the average life expectancy of women in industrialized countries could reach ninety-exceeding that of men by about ten years. At the present time, postmenopausal women represent more than fifteen percent of the world's population and this figure is likely to grow. From an evolutionary perspective, these demographic numbers pose some intriguing questions. Darwinian theory holds that a successful life is measured in terms of reproduction. How is it, then, that a woman's lifespan can greatly exceed her childbearing and childrearing years? Is this phenomenon simply a byproduct of improved standards of living, or do older women-grandmothers in particular-play a measurable role in increasing their family members' biological success? Until now, these questions have not been examined in a thorough and comprehensive manner. Bringing together theoretical and empirical work by internationally recognized scholars in anthropology, psychology, ethnography, and the social sciences, *Grandmotherhood* explores the evolutionary purpose and possibilities of female post-generative life. Students and scholars of human evolution, anthropology, and even gerontology will look to this volume as a major contribution to the current literature in evolutionary studies.



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August 2005 ✧ 304 pages

ISBN 0-8135-3609-X ✧ Cloth \$75.00

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