

Sex and Gender: Studyguide and Review Notes #6b

Things to review in Hrdy:

Hrdy: Natural-born mothers

- Many species adjust the timing of fertility if conditions aren't right. When and how do they do this? (Hrdy discusses resource scarcity, inadequate social support, and infanticidal males).
- How does "planned primate style" operate? Review the relationship between a woman's nutritional status, workload, nursing, and fertility (also discussed in lecture).
- How do the events of pregnancy (in 'prenatal power plays') indicate a conflict of interest between mother and fetus? Why should there be such a conflict?
- (from 'liquid assets'): How common was wet-nursing in 18th century Europe? Why would women nurse another woman's child, and what were the fertility consequences for the mother?

Hrdy: Mothers and Others

- Human mothers, *unlike* most other primate mothers, need help in rearing their offspring. Why the difference?
- Review the different sources of aid: "fathers" (review partible paternity), older sibs, and grandmothers.
- It's easy to see how a mother might benefit from having allomothers, but how and why does this make sense for the allomothers themselves?
- Everyone knows that there are significant hormonal changes in new mothers, but what evidence exists showing hormonal changes in new fathers?
- Hrdy notes that maternal abandonment and abuse are more common in humans than in most other primates. Why? What other primates also show this? What circumstances favor it?
- Can daycare substitute for committed kin? What conditions must be met for this to be the case?
- There is some evidence, alluded to here, that babies learn from their caretakers whether that care is reliable; if it isn't, their personality develops accordingly (i.e., if you can't count on others, empathy might be more of a hindrance than a help). This leads her to worry about parenting in modern industrial societies. Do you share her concern, or think it is misplaced?

Hrdy: Three Men and a Baby

- Men have a higher threshold than mothers for responding to infants, but they do respond. Under what circumstances are [these instincts] activated?
- In Hrdy's discussion of why males don't mother more (proximate version) she argues that small initial differences in caring, stemming from birthing and lactation, get amplified through repeated interactions with the child. Understand this argument, which is very similar to that given in the first part of the class for the development of sex differences in childhood (see Draper reading for this).
- Review changes in women's behavior during ovulation.

- Across primate species, and across human societies, “paternal care is most intensive where monogamously-mated men have a high certainty of paternity” (p. 226). Review these extreme cases – Titi monkeys and Aka foragers.
- Hrdy reviews Hawkes’s “show-off hypothesis” for Hadza hunters (which you should be familiar with) and wonders whether male and female shopping habits illustrate the same thing. What do you think? Also possibly apropos is the experiences of microcredit banks (such as the Grameen bank) with male and female borrowers (mentioned in lecture).
- After reviewing Rice’s studies of sexual conflict in fruitflies (see also the Sapolsky reading) Hrdy speculates on how human temperament might evolve if humans could maintain monogamy for many succeeding generations. What might we expect?

Hrdy: Optimal Number of Fathers

- What are the consequences to children of absent fathers? Of stepfathers? Of their mothers being captured in warfare?
- What is partible paternity, where do you find it, and what are the consequences for children?
- As discussed in lecture, matrilineal systems disappear “as soon as farming becomes intensive, when plows, livestock, and paid employment are introduced.” But Hrdy points out that they can be reinvented, even in urban societies. When does this happen, and what does it look like?
- Hrdy says that “among the more common myths of patriarchy is the claim that patriarchal polygynous family structures actually benefit women.” Why does she think this is a myth? Does polygyny ever benefit women?
- How do Dogon men ensure paternity? (menstrual monitoring, clitoridectomy). Is child survivorship among the Dogon higher or lower if the mother is polygynously married? Why? Does polygyny benefit Dogon men? Dogon women?