

Studyguide # 6: Morality, Conflict, Status

In addition to the specific questions below, you will be responsible for the main points in the assigned chapters 1 through 6 in Daly's book *Killing the Competition*. After you read each chapter, try to summarize the main point, and some of the evidence for it.

A very few edited and added questions are indicated with an asterisk

Morality and religion

- Sosis studied religious communes and found that commune longevity was associated with... what? Why might this be? (lecture)
- Norenzayan article: What is the role of "fasts, food taboos, and extravagant rituals" in developing cooperating groups? Norenzayan calls them "hard-to-fake" behaviors. He is arguing that they are costly (i.e., hard to fake) signals. What are they signalling? (Recall the arguments about costly signalling discussed in lecture)
- Norenzayan article: How do gods in traditional societies differ from those of the large world religions? What role do gods play in the latter, and how does this relate to what we know of evolved psychology – as shown in peoples' behavior in cooperation games such as ultimatum and dictator?
- When people were primed to think of God, did it affect their behavior in the dictator game? how? When secular primes that related to civil order and policing were used, did it have the same effect?
- What do trolley problems and similar studies suggest about the difference between moral intuition and moral reasoning?
- According to Haidt, what 2 aspects of morality are most important to liberals, and what is their evolutionary foundation? What 3 other aspects of morality are also important to conservatives, and what is their likely evolutionary foundation?
- * How might this be useful when trying to convince someone whose politics differs from yours? How did changing the message about pollution affect environmental attitudes (lecture)?
- How does motive (which we infer from our "theory of mind") affect our moral judgments about blame and innocence? Very young children lack a developed theory of mind; is their moral sense also different from that of adults? (Saxe video)
- Do toddlers understand when someone needs help? Do they help spontaneously, or do they need a reward or encouragement? (from the Werneken video).

Aggression and warfare

- Humans tend to favor their own group and discriminate against outsiders. How easy is it to get people to discriminate in this way? This may be the "black lining" in the adaptive

silver cloud of reciprocity and cooperation. What factors enhance, and what factors minimize, inter-group hostility?

- Transcontinental travel is recent in evolutionary time, and some evolutionary psychologists have argued that inter-race contact was probably not very common until recently (e.g., they argue that it is an evolutionary novelty). How does Kurzban (lecture) explain racism, and how did he ameliorate it experimentally?
- Male coalitionary violence against neighboring groups (raiding) is found in humans and what other species? Is homicide an evolutionary novelty? Is the rate increasing? Review the evidence given in lecture about its antiquity and cross-cultural prevalence.
- Men are most often the victims, as well as the perpetrators, of physical violence. What does this suggest about the motives underlying it?
- * Are men really more violent than women? (review the evidence in the text, pp 292-5)
- Why are men more violently aggressive than women? Note both the benefits to men and Campbell's argument about the costs to women (291-2, also discussed in lecture)
- Why is polygyny associated with risky behavior? (text)
- * How does individual variation in physical strength affect a man's proneness to anger, sense of entitlement, and belief in the efficacy of violence? (text and lecture slides)
- Homicide and risk-prone behavior varies a lot across cultures and subcultures. Review the evidence presented by Daly concerning income inequality.
- About what fraction of same-sex homicides are male-male? What are men fighting about? Why do they fight over trivial altercations? Are males more physically aggressive in ways short of homicide?
- At what age do homicide rates peak?
- What is the relationship between warriorship and status? warriorship and reproductive success? (However, remember the data from the Waorani discussed in lecture, where this relationship was not found.)
- Females are more likely than males to use indirect aggression (social manipulation through gossip etc.). When women engage in verbal and indirect aggression, what is the nature of the verbal attack? (text)
- * (caveat to above): But what about the Asante market women? Might you expect differences cross-culturally? Why?
- What is the main cause of male aggression against women? (see especially the study by Wilson, Johnson and Daly reviewed in the text). What is the main cause of extreme female aggression against men?
- Review: What is the most common motive underlying spousal homicides? At what point in a relationship are women at greatest risk of being killed?

- Review: Spousal homicide is spiteful - it is not directly fitness-enhancing. How, then, does evolutionary psychology explain it?
- Warfare most obviously benefits groups, which makes the willingness of men to engage in it a collective action problem and an evolutionary puzzle (why?)
- Men fight more than women and there is sexual dimorphism in physical traits that would facilitate this. What cognitive adaptations are also consistent with this? See also the section on status-seeking.
- What qualities do men and women seek in coalitional allies? (text)
- * A man wants his coalitional allies to be tough, but also supportive. Would you expect men with a lot of coalitional support to be higher or lower in testosterone? See the lecture slides on a study by Flinn (status lecture) for the answer (there wasn't time to discuss it in lecture, but take a look).
- * Note the two explanations within the ev psych field about whether homicide is adaptive. What do you think? Personally, I am not persuaded that we have a "homicide module" or that most instances of homicide (perhaps outside warfare) are usually adaptive in a Darwinian sense, but risk-prone behavior, aggression, and being known as someone who will fight to get what he wants is often adaptive, and can be lethal. I think Buss mischaracterizes this view: it doesn't view homicide as a mistake (a "slip-up") but rather argues that the selective advantage doesn't derive directly from the opponent's death. The answer to this question is also likely to vary with the type of aggression, e.g. spousal homicide vs. warfare.

Status

- Communication depends on honest signals (of competitive ability, mate value, etc) because if a signal is easy to fake, individuals won't pay attention to it. What makes a signal honest? Why? How do individual differences in the costs and benefits of signalling affect optimal signal intensity? (lecture). How is a flamboyant peacock's tail an honest signal of good condition? What other risky or costly human behaviors make sense as honest signals?
- Theories about signal need to consider the audience. Are masculine secondary sexual characteristics likely to be primarily a signal of dominance to other males, or of attractiveness and good condition to females? (Puts slide, lecture)
- How do chimps display dominance and submission, and how does the dominant chimp benefit from that status? What attributes do dominant primates have, in addition to physical toughness? (text)
- How can high rank translate into reproductive benefits for men? Does it? Review the evidence relating social success and reproductive success for both women and men (lecture and text), in traditional small-scale societies (lecture) and kingdoms (text). Data on modern industrial societies presents a more complicated picture.

- Why would evolutionary theory lead you to expect males to be more interested in status striving than women? Are they? Are they always? (text and lecture, note caveats).
- How do men and women differ in how they express dominance?
- What is the relationship between status and helping? (Buss speculates on why don't men like to ask for directions).
- What is the relationship between the physical expression of status and shame, and winning and losing? The empirical evidence relating depression to status loss?
- What is the relationship between status and body size? status and voice pitch? Why might these signal dominance?
- What is the nature of the relationship between testosterone and competition in males? The "challenge" hypothesis is that testosterone rises in males when it is needed for competition (for example, at the beginning of the breeding season in male birds). Does it apply to humans also? When does testosterone rise in human males, and how does it change after winning or losing? Is the same effect found in women?
- What is some evidence that high testosterone does not necessarily correlate with high status? (see lecture slides not discussed in class)
- Physical aggression isn't the only way animals rise in status. How did the behavior and rank of subordinate male vervet monkeys change when they were given prozac and other drugs that increased serotonin?
- The text discusses self-esteem as a person's self-evaluation of their position in a status hierarchy (sociometer theory). Why might it be useful (evolutionarily advantageous) to be able to track one's status?
- The text discusses sex differences in submissive strategies but when you read it note that sexual and status signals can be confounded in interesting ways - imagine a boss and a subordinate walking down the hall, with one of them touching the other on the shoulder - who is more likely to touch whom? Imagine the implications for male and female subordinates (and bosses).
- * Smiling can indicate submission (or at least, "I am not a threat") as the text suggests, but it can also be a signal of affiliation. In my studies of group discussions, people high in popularity and caring smiled more, and toughness and leadership were unrelated to smiling (significant for female groups, trend in male groups).
- What did the video clip shown in class indicate about testosterone and competition?