

The Behaviour of People at Work

**Lecture Title: Parental care and relationship
with kin**



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Date: 9 January 2023



Life outside work

Parental care and relationship with kin



Course Outline



Module 6. Life outside work: parental care and relationship with kin



Module 7. Solutions for the team: status, rank and dominance



Module 8. Solutions for the team: esteem dynamics



Module 9. Solutions for the team: cooperation, alliances, and friendships



Module 10. The modern organic workplace: built around your people



Module 6: Life outside work. Parental care and relationship with kin

- The challenges of parenting
- The cost-benefit of parental care
- Mothers as heavy investors
- Parental favouritism
- Parental investment
- Parent-children conflict
- The effect of upbringing
- Conflict within families
- The role of grandparents
- Problems of kinship
- Genetic relatedness



Why does parenting have to be such a challenge?

- Once an organism has successfully managed the hurdles of survival, mating and reproduction, the next challenge is the production of “vehicles” for parents’ genes, also known as children.
- We start with the puzzle of why mothers typically provide more parental care than fathers.



*In their 1975 book, *Women in the Kibbutz*, Tiger and Shepher tell what they found about 34,040 people across three generations living in the kibbutz – an egalitarian society in which women were given opportunity to work and children were raised collectively by the group. Over time, women began insisting that they raise their own children, and even outvoted the men who regarded this as a step backwards.*

So the utopian experiment of communal child rearing reverted to the primacy of the mother–child bond—a pattern seen in every human culture.

The cost-benefit analysis of parental care

- From an evolutionary perspective, children are the means by which their parents' genes get transported to the next generation. It is only logical, then, that evolution should favour parental mechanisms adapted to caring for offspring.
- Parental care is very costly. This is the reason why it is not a universal (many species do not engage in it at all).
- Parents who protect their young risk their own survival. It is only reasonable, then, to expect that whenever we observe parental care, the reproductive benefits must be large enough to outweigh the costs.



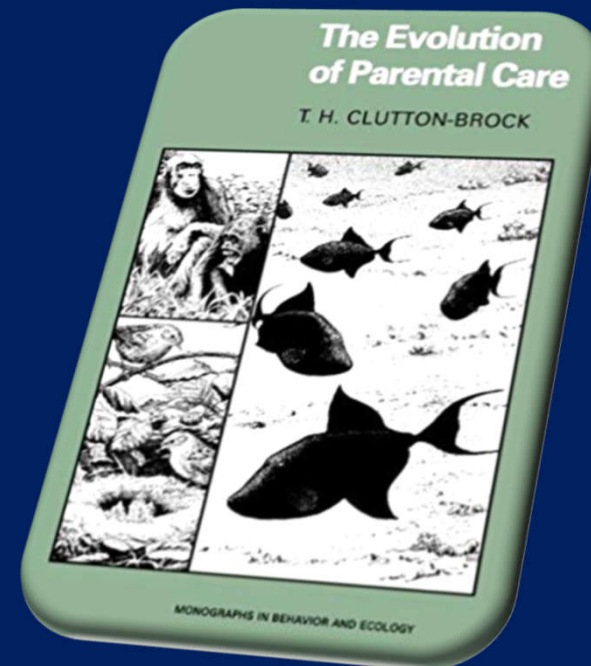
Parental love as an investment

- The phenomenon of powerful parental love appears to baffle psychologists.
- From an evolutionary perspective, however, the reasons for deep parental love should be clear: selection has designed mechanisms of parental motivation to ensure the survival of their genes.
- Seen in this way, parental love is a direct investment in one's own reproductive success.
- As expected, parental love is rarely unconditional.
- As anticipated, such a situation is likely to create a number of conflicts.



The first puzzle: mothers as the heavier investors

- There is a fundamental truth in the evolution of life: throughout the animal kingdom, females are far more likely than males to care for their offspring.
- Indeed, cross-cultural data shows that women do care for their children more intensively than men do. 'Nesting behaviour' (the uncontrollable urge to organise and clean the home when pregnant) is only one example.
- Two relevant theories to explain this difference are:
 1. The paternity uncertainty hypothesis (mothers are 100% sure that their offspring is theirs, but fathers are not);
 2. The mating opportunity costs hypothesis (the cost of what is sacrificed when choosing between different profitable activities is higher for males than for females).



The "greatest debt is to my wife,...(who) looked after our children while I wrote about parental care."

Parental favouritism

This is the phenomenon whereby parents tend to favour children who are likely to provide a higher 'reproductive return on investment'.

Parental investment is influenced by:

1. Genetic relatedness of the offspring: are children really my own?
2. Ability of the offspring to convert parental care into fitness: will a given unit of investment make a difference?
3. Alternative use of the resources: will a given unit of investment be best spent in children or in other activities?



In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a bus driver, Mr. G stopped giving monthly support payments, refused to hug or kiss the 6-year old girl he had previously thought was his biological daughter after he found out that another man was the father.

Parent-children conflict

- Suppose you have one sibling. Your mother comes home with 2 food items.
- The law of diminishing returns states that the value of the first unit of food is higher than that of the second. The first unit might prevent you from starvation (e.g. has a value of 4); and the second unit will make you a little fuller (has a value of 3).
- Now comes the conflict.
- From the mother's perspective, the ideal allocation would be 1 unit of food to each son. For her, that equals 8 net units.
- From your perspective, if you manage to get all the food, you benefit by 7 units.



The effect of upbringing

Contrary to what we may call 'conventional wisdom' about childrearing, what children become is known to be the product of the following:

- Inherited genes (these account for 40-50%);
- The shared environment (accounts for 0-10%);
- The unique environment (accounts for around 50%).

Harris looked outside the family and pointed at the peer group as an important shaper of the child's psyche. She also suggested that children differentiate themselves within a peer group, depending on what niche is available, how suited a child is to filling it, and chance. Steven Pinker believes that fate, or uncontrollable fortune is what constitutes the unique environment.



*In 1998, Judith Rich Harris, an unaffiliated scholar (whom the press dubbed "a grandmother from New Jersey"), published *The Nurture Assumption*, in which she tried to get people to recognise that the conventional wisdom about childrearing among experts and laypeople is wrong.*

Does parenting matter?

Parents wield enormous power over their children and their actions can make a big difference to their happiness. Childrearing is above all an ethical responsibility: it is not OK for parents to beat, humiliate, deprive, or neglect their children, because those are awful things for a big strong person to do to a small helpless one.

Second, a parent and a child have a human relationship. One person's behaviour toward another has consequences for the quality of the relationship between them. If for no other reason, parents should treat their children well to allow them to grow up with fond memories of their parents' kindness and sacrifice for their happiness.



The home environment

- Parents influence the way their children behave at home. They also supply knowledge and training that their children can take with them when they go out the door.
- Children also learn things at home that they do not bring to the peer group, and these may be retained even if they are different from what their peers learned.
- That is why parents still have some power to give their kids their religion, and aspects of their culture that involves things done in the home, e.g. cooking, and how to run a home.



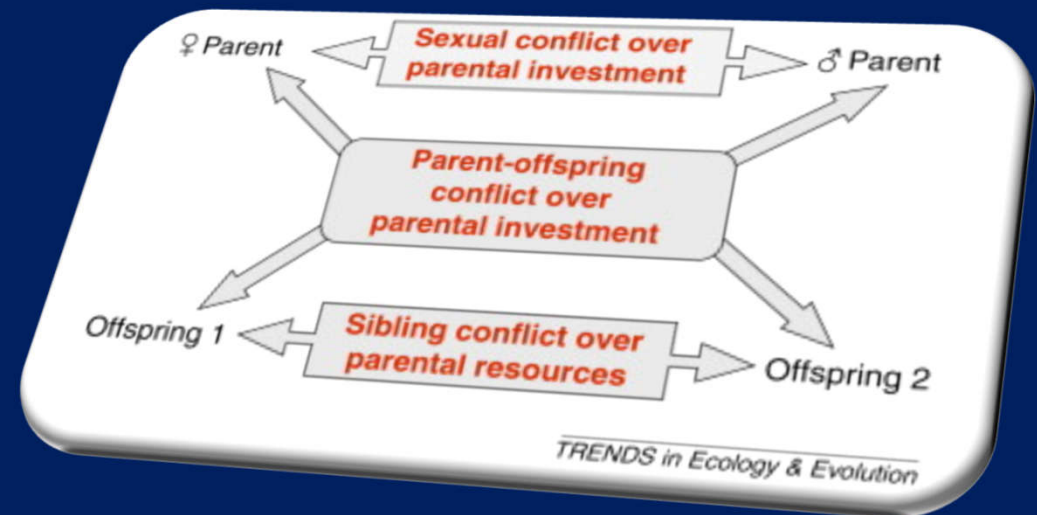
Conflict within families

There are three fundamental sources of conflict within families.

1. Sibling conflict: within the same family, siblings compete with one another for access to parental resources.
2. Parent-offspring conflict, as we have seen, the optimal allocation of resources from the parents' perspective and the child's perspective is different.
3. Parental conflict, or conflict between the mother and father, centres on how much parental investment each will give to the offspring.

We often grow up believing families should be harmonious sanctuaries, and as a consequence, when we experience turmoil, disagreement, and clashes, we feel that something is terribly wrong.

An evolutionary perspective suggests that these conflicts are likely to be pervasive, and helps us realise we are not alone in these experiences.



The role of grandparents

- Grandparents are related to their grandchildren by a factor of genetic relatedness of 0.25.
- The fact that modern women often live well beyond menopause has led to a hypothesis that menopause evolved as a means of investing in children and then grandchildren rather than continuing to reproduce. This is the 'grandmother hypothesis'.
- In fact, across cultures, post-menopausal women contribute substantially to their grandchildren.



Problems of kinship

- Imagine a world in which everyone loved everyone else equally. There would be no favouritism.
- You would be just as likely to give your food to a passing stranger as to your children. Your parents would be just as likely to pay for a neighbour's college education as they would be to pay for yours.
- Such a world is hard to imagine.
- Inclusive fitness explains why.



Helping kin

- Selection favours what Hamilton called inclusive fitness, being made up of direct fitness (the individual's reproductive success, or classical Darwinian fitness), and indirect fitness (the individual's contribution to the reproductive success of kin).
- This means that selection will often favour the evolution of mechanisms to help close kin more than distant kin and distant kin more than strangers.



Genetic relatedness

- Although an individual's relatives are all vehicles of fitness, they differ in value, and this is because people differ in their genetic relatedness to others.
- As a general rule, we are related by 50% to our parents, children, and siblings. We are related by 25% to our grandparents and grandchildren, half brothers and half sisters, and uncles, aunts, nieces, and nephews. We are related by 12.5%, on average, to our first cousins.





Thank You!



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