

Behavioral Patterns

Primate Paradigms. Sex Roles and Social Roles. LINDA MARIE FEDIGAN. Illustrations by Linda Straw Coelho. Eden, Montreal, 1982. vi, 386 pp. Paper, \$18.95.

Primate Paradigms: Sex Roles and Social Bonds is one of several recently published volumes on primate behavior and human evolution that focus on the role of female behavior in shaping social organization. Each characterizes the study of nonhuman primates as valuable for shedding light on human behavior and each attempts to redress what the author or authors see as a tradition of male bias in data interpretation and theory. Though another volume along these lines may seem at first to be somewhat redundant, Fedigan's work is a complementary and worthwhile contribution.

Fedigan has chosen to write an extended survey and critical review of male and female patterns of behavior among nonhuman primates in which she emphasizes accepted theories and concepts. In so doing she necessarily concentrates on the more extensively studied species of Old World monkeys and chimpanzees. This is in contrast with other works, for example Sarah Hrdy's *The Woman That Never Evolved*, which also criticizes aspects of the literature, but which focuses its discussions on new data and less well known species that present contradictions to less recent but persistent views of primate social organization and human evolution as male-centered. Unlike Hrdy, Fedigan does not attempt to present provocative new syntheses and speculations, but rather concentrates on dissecting the processes by which cultural attitudes and empirical data interact.

Fedigan's aim is that the book be "accessible and interesting to non-specialists, yet acceptable and even helpful to my colleagues in primatology." Her intended audience is nonspecialists and students of all kinds and specialists in primatology and women's studies. This is a tall order, as Fedigan is well aware, and with only a few reservations I think she has achieved her aim.

The scope of *Primate Paradigms* is broader than one might guess from the title. Fedigan wisely chooses not to discuss sex roles in isolation from other aspects of primatology and animal behavior, but rather within the broader contexts of adaptive "life-ways," which differ from species to species and even within species. She thus reviews in detail a wide range of topics before discussing their specific relationships to sex roles.

The first 13 chapters are devoted primarily to primate taxonomy; to conceptual issues such as instinct and innate and learned behavior; and to specific aspects of social interaction such as aggression, dominance, kinship, and development. The next three chapters explore the "life-ways" of specific species grouped according to their type of social organization (for example, multi-male, multi-female groups; polygynous groups; and monogamous groups). The last three chapters deal with evolutionary approaches to sex roles, including one chapter that discusses a number of scenarios for the evolution of human social behavior. Thus Fedigan has produced a volume that could be described first as an overview of primate social relationships (and perhaps the most suitable available for an advanced undergraduate or graduate seminar), and second as a discussion of male-female issues.

The range of Fedigan's criticism is also broad. In criticizing studies that have led to dichotomous views of male primates as aggressive, competitive leaders and females as passive care-givers, Fedigan points out problems ranging from practical problems of following free-ranging animals to those of research design, data interpretation, and theory-building. An entire chapter is devoted to linguistic problems in reporting findings. These problems have sometimes been seen as the results of incompetence or conspiracy, but Fedigan realistically sees them as representing perhaps inevitable human tendencies for cultural assumptions "to color our view of even empirical data," and also for "certain scientific findings quickly [to] achieve public prominence and others . . . not." Scientific theories are seen as "dynamic exercises in human reasoning, rather than quests for immutable truths." The specific study of primates will not lead to the "truth" about human nature, but it can serve to provide humans with a broad comparative base for the construction of useful "mirrors, models, and even myths." These mirrors, models, and myths may progressively integrate more information over time but will always be shaped in part by cultural attitudes.

Not surprisingly, *Primate Paradigms* argues for a very conservative approach to data interpretation and theory-building and rarely supports any scientific statement wholeheartedly. It is excellent at pointing out the assumptions inherent in many well-established notions about sex roles and the incompleteness of the data supporting them. This is not to say

that Fedigan has no preferred hypotheses. She has indeed, but for the most part these are clearly presented as opinion.

One reservation about this book is that it may give nonspecialist readers a somewhat exaggerated view of the degree to which present-day primate behaviorists espouse stereotyped views of sex roles. For example, Fedigan states that the view "that female choice plays no role in primate reproduction and that reproductive success is based (only) on interactions between males" is ubiquitous in the primate literature (p. 279). Later she cites numerous studies that explicitly refute these ideas. In discussions of sexual selection, perhaps too much emphasis is put on some of Darwin's early views (for example on intelligence in women) by comparison with current points of view. The impression of ubiquitous bias may also be aggravated by the book's apparently long time in press (the preface was written in April 1980), which might account for the omission of some recent references that might have softened this impression. In comparison with its strengths, however, these reservations are not serious. *Primate Paradigms* is a masterly, useful contribution to the primate literature.

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A Bird Family

The Cotingas. Bellbirds, Umbrellabirds and Other Species. DAVID SNOW. Color plates by Martin Woodcock. British Museum (Natural History), London, and Comstock (Cornell University Press), Ithaca, N.Y., 1982. 204 pp. \$45.

Tremendous concern has been expressed in the last decade over the rapid demise of habitats, especially those in the tropical areas where many species of the avian family Cotingidae reside. One widely publicized effect of this destruction is the extinction of large numbers of species as yet undescribed. After reading this book, one is impressed with the idea that habitats must be saved not only so that we may describe unknown taxa but so that we may study them and the known ones as well.

The primary message of this book seems to be our overwhelming lack of information concerning the biology of the Cotingidae, even though the family includes some of the most conspicuously