

Chapter 2 Evolutionary Theory

Cases

1. Myra and Irwin are a dual-career couple with a toddler. During their courtship, they were both enthusiastic about their work, and appreciative of one another as life partners. They agreed about the desire to have children, and planned that they would both continue to work once their children were born. However, they have recently become aware of increasing tensions in their relationship. They sense new experiences of jealousy and resentment; and even though they try to talk it out, their unease persists. Think about the evolutionary basis of these emotions. How might evolutionary theory explain these sentiments? How might men and women differ in the sources of these emotions? From an evolutionary perspective, what might make childrearing incompatible with the dual-career lifestyle, especially when both a man and a woman are away from the home much of the day. What, if anything, can they do to alleviate these feelings?
2. Consider the free-rider problem:
Five college students have been assigned to do a collaborative project for a Human Development theories class. They are to make a class presentation and prepare a paper about the life history of a theorist, the historical context in which his or her theory emerged, unique contributions of the theory and ways that it altered the field, and two or three examples of ongoing research that extend or evaluate the theory. The team is told that their grade will be based on the combined quality of all parts of the assignment, including their written work and the quality of their class presentation. The students divide the assignment and agree to meet before the date of the presentation to coordinate their sections. Four of the students show up; the fifth student texts to say he/she has another paper due and can't come to the meeting. The four students realize that they can't count on this last student. They decide to prepare the section that the fifth student was expected to do, anticipating that he/she may not get the work done. At the time of the class presentation, they present the completed project, even though the fifth student is absent. The project is positively evaluated, and all the students in the group get a very good grade, but the four students who did the work feel angry and frustrated.
 - (a) What is the source of the students' anger and frustration? Why is free-riding an adaptive problem? What is the long-term outcome if this happens repeatedly to these students in the future?
 - (b) What ideas can you offer to the instructor to prevent this kind of problem in the future?
 - (c) What ideas can you offer to students to prevent this type of free-riding?