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MALE TAKEOVERS, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS IN HAMADRYAS BABOONS (*PAPIO H. HAMADRYAS*)

P. Polo, F. Colmenares, M. V. Hernández-Lloreda

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

Presenter's Email: ppolo@psi.ucm.es

Dispersal from the natal group and transfers across groups are tough experiences that occur naturally in the life of group-living primates. Matters can even get worse when migrants do not move voluntarily across groups but they are forced to join already established and potentially hostile social units. In hamadryas baboons, sexually mature females attached to one-male, multi-female units are taken over by other adult males. The ensuing scenario may typically involve: (1) sexual harassment by the new male; and (2) competition with resident females. In this study we test a prediction from the sexual coercion theory, namely, that sexual harassment by the male may jeopardize the female's breeding performance. We analyse the effect of male takeovers on the female's time to conception (i.e., number of cycles to conception). We use data on 28 male takeovers and the females' reproductive parameters collected during a long-term study of the colony of hamadryas baboons housed at the Madrid Zoo (1985-2001). We find that females increase their time to conception when they are taken over during their cycling period(s) compared to various control conditions without takeover. We also examine the effect of a number of potentially confounding variables including the female's age and her previous breeding performance (i.e., prenatal and postnatal reproductive failures). Our analyses lend some support to the prediction that male takeovers certainly benefit the new owners at a cost to the females' reproductive interests.

Keywords: coercion, female transfer, time to conception, sexual selection