Sex differences in Parental Investment

Females seem to invest the most:

Human female’s investment in each offspring is substantial. The Gamete she supplies is around 100x larger than the sperm, limited supply. Reproductive period only 30 years, limited offspring she can produce. Following conception, pre-maternal investment continues to be large. She carries growing foetus for around 40 weeks feeding it from own supplies of nourishment, uses thousands of calories. Must give birth and continue to invest in the baby. In the distant past – involved breast feeding, 2 years, investment compared to the males is substantial and best chance of reproductive success is to ensure the survival of her few previous offspring.

Robert Trivers - parental investment theory, argues that differences between males and females have their origins in the different amount of parental investment made by males and females.

Males investment in offspring is relatively small. Large amounts of sperm, remains fertile throughout his life. Capable of mating and the only limit on the offspring he can produce is in the number of available female partners. Each takes little in terms of time and energy. Best way to maximise his reproductive success to have several mating’s with multiple fertile partners.

Cuckoldry – Vulnerability for men is that they may use up valuable resources raising children who are not their own.

Buss suggested that jealousy might have evolved as a solution to these problems. Due to the risk of Cuckoldry, men are more jealous of the sexual act itself, whereas women are more concerned about the shift in emotional focus towards other women. Buss asked male and female students to imagine their current boyfriend/girlfriend either having sex with someone else or in love with them. Wired up to stress machine whilst fantasizing. Found that men became most distressed of the idea.

Geher et al: Asked 91 undergraduates from the state University of New York to complete a parenting investment scale, which measured how prepared they perceived themselves to be for parenting. Found no real difference in the perceptions of males and females in their perceived readiness for parenting. Not the only measure used in the study. Males PP's exposed to a series of statements that illustrated typical scenarios, their ANS arousal was measured. Males-higher ANS arousal compared to females when presented with scenarios emphasized psychological costs of parenting. Finding is consistent with previous research, which suggests that males are less prepared to comfort issues associated with parenting than females.

Anderson et al: Sex differences in investment in stepchildren

Looking at the willingness of men to pay for their children's college education as a means of assessing paternal investment strategies. Men were most willing to pay for their own child when they were still living with the child’s mother. Men didn’t discriminate financially between a child who was born to a current partner from a previous relationship and their own child from a previous child. A man may invest less in previous children where the relationship failed may not be sure he is the true father.