

120. SEXUAL BEHAVIOR OF MATERNALLY SEPARATED CAPTIVE GIBBONS (*HYLOBATES*).

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The effect of early maternal separation on the sexual behavior of captive gibbons was investigated because maternal separation compromises sexual behavior of some primates and adequate sexual behavior is essential for species propagation. Most of the maternally separated gibbons (24/31) were sexually proficient. Sexual behavior did not differ significantly in relation to species, sex, origin (wild- vs captive-born) or type of rearing facility (home vs zoo). Sexual proficiency was not related to the age at separation from the mother, but was associated with introduction within 19 months of age to a conspecific of less than 3 years of age and an absolute age difference of less than 2 years. Sexual proficiency was associated with rearing and adult housing in large enclosures. Gibbons that were isolated from conspecifics between 6 months and 2 years of age were strongly attached to humans, but this did not prevent sexual proficiency. A greater proportion of males were adversely affected sexually by prolonged early social isolation. Inadequate sexual behavior was associated with fearfulness of conspecifics, which probably interfered with compatible social relationships. Inadequate sexual behavior was but one aspect of a more general behavioral deficiency resulting from inadequate early socialization. Early maternal separation in gibbons is compatible with species-typical sexual behavior under the conditions described above. It is not necessary for gibbons to learn sexual and parental behavior by observing experienced adult conspecifics.