

Human development test questions



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The process of human development depends chiefly on sex; that is, procreation and the concern over progeny. Without the drive to procreate, to continue the species many human developments and the course of civilization would be very different, if they existed without this urge at all.

The following paper will examine how sex has been the main element in human development by using Leonard Shlain's book *Sex, Time and Power: How Women's Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution* and articles critiquing his work. A personal opinion on the subject will be given as a conclusion. The purpose the paper then is to explore the concept of human development as it applies to sex and mainly women. A Thesis of the Book Leonard Shlain's book *Sex, Time and Power: How Women's Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution*, introduces the idea that women were the impetus of evolution some 150, 000 years ago. It is woman's sexuality that changed the human species from the uncivilized hunter gatherer to the agrarian time conscious being. Women's sexuality presented the concept of time.

In fact, Shlain argues in his book that not only bipedalism but the act of childbirth called for necessary changes to the biology as well as the physiology of women. With these changes Shlain highlights narrow pelvises and large fetal heads as the defining changes that women, and thus humanity underwent in the course of evolution. Childbirth was a laborious event in which infant mortality was very high. In the early stages of human evolution women began to recognize the connection between sex and childbirth. Shlain argues that women lost estrus (heat) and developed a menses cycle and then began to be experience the orgasm.

Without the orgasm it would have been next to impossible for women to spontaneously procreate; there had to be that enjoyment in order for the human race to survive. Within each of these variables women became increasingly aware of the concept of time and to use and manipulate and recognize its power. The menstrual cycle, or the hormonal balance in the female was strongly connected to the moon and its cycles, thus the concept of time is born since women could recognize the time of the month when they were likely to conceive. If they did not want to conceive they simply did not have sex. Women refused to have sex knowing what sex could create and men were forced to recognize that power.

This is an underlying factor in the thesis of Shlain's book. With their new knowledge women instructed men on foresight. With foresight men became the elite predator. There was a downside to this notion and recognition, however, and that was that men now understood that they were mortal, that death was an inevitability. The book goes on to explain that after men became aware of their part in child birth they came to an astounding realization; that they were immortal in their progeny. This concept also changed the social and personal interactions between men and women and men took on new roles such as husband and father.

The concept of immortality through progeny began a gruesome patriarchal cycle that led men to construct society, religion and familial homes in the effect of controlling women's cycle and their choices in the reproductive act. Arguments of the Book Shlain argues that the beginning of the Homo sapiens species was due to the bottle neck effect. 150,000 years ago the African Eve or the Unnamed Mother died in child birth. Due to the increasing changes in <https://assignbuster.com/human-development-test-questions/>

the evolution of humans such as being bipedaled, having smaller pelvic cavities etc. the infant mortality rate was increasing to an exorbitant degree. Women were not equipped to give birth to a child with an increasing brain mass and so the child got stuck, the mother died, the child died.

Outside assistance of this early species in child birth was not common, “ During the last two and a half million years, the hominid brain had tripled in size but the opening in the pelvic girdle through which this rapidly enlarging brain had to pass at birth did not keep pace. These two adaptations - two-leggedness and watermelon sized heads - were clearly incompatible” (2). This is the beginning argument in Shlain’s book; the adaptations of the human species because of ever-changing evolutionary physiology. This period in human evolution roughly 150, 000 years ago was marked by high infant mortality. The species was quickly dying off because of lack of mutation in adapting to increased brain mass; that is 1/3 size in growth over a short period of time.

This increase brain size also aided humans in outwitting other worthy predators during the time which mainly consisted of large cats. Thus, the large brain was necessary in survival but ironically it was the large brain that was killing off the species. Of the brain increase and the infant mortality rate Shlain writes, “ The laws of physics superceded the strength of her uterine contractions. Unfortunately she was the first of an avalanche of young mothers to die. For the first time in the history of any higher anima, extraordinary high numbers of healthy females began to die in childbirth; the percentage of stillbirths rose with the number of maternal deaths” (3).

Thus, the link between mother and child and the entire race is established. During this time period women were forced to spread the amount of births per lifetime far apart. Thus, the number of births per woman was greatly limited considering the high mortality rate of life during this time. Also, if a mother died during child birth but the infant did not their chance of survival was nil. Thus, the leading cause of death in this history was child birth.

Shlain also goes on to define the importance of iron to the sex relationship of man and women. The argument subsists that woman, because of her iron needs in child birth and her naturally low suppliers of this mineral needs to eat a lot of meat in order for survival. Women were not hunters during this time and so the woman depended on the man to do the hunting. Since man was not in need of iron, but was in need of sex, the exchange of meat for sex in the paradigm of the relationship was enlisted to occur (41). In part four of the book Shlain goes into detail about the mortality angst by the idea that time is a conclusion that leads to death. This is the part of the book that explains the vital role in the human race understanding the importance of time not only as relays the menstrual cycle of the woman and the correspondence with the moon but also the subsequent phase of men understanding time (due to women's refusal to have sex during ovulation to prevent pregnancy) and the idea that humans are mortal.

In the concept of mortality men find that they may become immortal through the survival of their progeny. Shlain explains this cycle of thinking to be the birth of patriarchy since man now wishes to control women's cycles through religion because men want to ensure that they are immortal (265). This brings the argument to Part five of the book dealing with misogyny and

patriarchy. Before men began to control women there existed a time of supreme reverence to the goddess; that is the power of the female.

Women were held as equals to men in cultures of this time as well as at times considered leaders (the Aztec empire has remains of women as shamans, a position usually thought of as being delineated to men). Women were considered to be powerful because they were the creators as can be witnessed in different fertility goddess' in the form of statues and oral history (the Venus of Willendorf is one such example of a hand held fertility goddess found in all parts of the European, and African continent). Shlain then delves into the correspondent examples of the unknown mother, eve and the modern woman. The idea of menstruation is still prevalent in considering the power of women in the world while the idea of childbirth alone is worthy of worship and as Shlain writes, " The unyielding walls of the birth canal... produced the bottle neck that shaped all subsequent hominid evolution.

The death of the Unknown Mother and her unlucky baby, and the subsequent dying off of increasingly large numbers of hominid mothers and their newborns, was the stressful Factor X that precipitated the Homo sapiens line" (6). Published Reviews In Meredith F. Small's review Evolution of the Meat Sex Exchange (New York Times, August 28, 2003) she pays strict attention to the iron supplement that women need. Iron was the leading factor in sex for women needed iron more than men because of their menstrual cycle and because of child birth and so, probably, the women exchanged sex for meat which nourished them, " In this manipulative move, Dr. Shlain suggests, then set into motion just about every aspect of human behavior".

Small's main focus on the book is the reference made by Shlain to every other theory that has existed already in the evolution of humanity and the relationship between men and women except for this intriguing iron reference. Small rejects the idea of Shlain placing emphases on every variable of human evolution and explaining each in detail; she states the book is too exhausting in breadth and does not focus on one thing enough to fully develop a theory. Martin H. Levinson's review, *Sex Time and Power* (ETC: A Review of General Semantics, July 2004) focuses on Shlain's intention of writing the book. Levinson states that Shlain felt as if he did not completely do justice to the concepts of patriarchy and dominance in his last book *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess* and that this book is more of a sequel of his earlier work.

Levinson further states that despite how a reader might feel about the issues of misogyny and patriarchy, Shlain's book is researched well and lends the reader at the end of the reading at the very least an altered world view. In Tim Callahan's review *Did Women's Blood Lead to Men's Blood Lust?* the similar issue of iron is introduced as far-fetching. Callahan states that the idea that women needing iron but not sex and men needing sex but not iron is a very transparent relationship and as a theory does not hold its own when compared to other theories about women shaping the course of evolution such as Elaine Morgan's *Descent of Women* or in general the aquatic ape theories in the field. My Own Review In my personal opinion of Shlain's novel *Sex, Time and Power* I feel as though the theories are sound in their presentation and Shlain's balance and juxtaposition of subjects and evolutionary events are cohesive. He leads the reader from the existence of

the human race in ignorance to women realizing the connection of child birth, to the ideas of orgasm, time, man as an elite predator, and the eventual control men evoke on women to the existence of organized religion all to reinforce the concept of patriarchy. Although in some cases I would have to agree that some of the book reads more like postulation than sound theory especially with the introduction of iron as leading to the true relationship between women and men.

Although a follow up book about the power role changes in women and men in the current century as finding its way full circle to the goddess image that once existed would be an interesting read if Shlain ever decided to juxtapose his research with modern day sociology. The work as a whole goes into great detail and at time reads too pundit such as the explanation at the beginning of the book about women's hormonal cycles but the work generally kept me interested. The parallels in theory were apparent in the book since Shlain's ideas were not original but merely a compilation of other theorists' work. This was disappointing since I was expecting to be introduced to a whole new concept of gender studies and biology. This book did not bring any new ideas of evolution but what it did accomplish was an extension of existing ideas manipulated to back up the timeline of evolution as it is presented in *Sex, Time and Power*. The book was well written and well researched but lacked for some part originality.

This was the deterring factor in reading the book although Shlain presents many interesting points about evolution some where too far fetched to be believed (i. e. the iron and meat relationship of sex).