

ABSTRACT

A wide diversity of reproductive strategies and alternative reproductive tactics (ARTs) have evolved to promote the reproductive success of individual male and female primates. Intraspecific variation in male mating strategies has received far more attention than flexibility of reproductive behavior in female primates. However, female primates may also employ ARTs, with important implications for lifetime reproductive success. ARTs in primates tend to be limited to behavior, gonads, and physiology and are rarely associated with dramatic alternative morphologies, although striking exceptions to this rule exist. This is likely due to the advantages of plasticity and the lower costs of adjustment according to changing characteristics of the individual and social conditions. Most ARTs in primates appear to be “best-of-a-bad-job” phenotypes, whereby inferior individuals, or those in a suboptimal situation, make the most of any opportunity available to gain reproductive success. With the exception of female reproductive suppression in common marmosets, relatively little is known about the life-history pathways underlying ARTs and the factors that determine their expression. Finally, male and female reproductive strategies are intricately linked in primates, and interactions between the sexes play an important role in the evolution of primate ARTs.