

Piercing whooping calls echo throughout the savannas and grasslands of sub-Saharan Africa, originating from a clan of spotted hyenas that saunter beyond their territorial boundaries in the late night hour. With nearly fourteen different vocalizations attributed to the species, including their infamous cackle (which is now known to signify submission or fear), these heightened whooping calls are most likely indicative of their successful predation of an ungulate (African Wildlife Foundation). These nocturnal hunters are excellent at both obtaining their prey and digesting it, having the ability to process bone and other animal hides usually left behind by other carnivores. <sup>When</sup> Despite common belief hyenas are not solely scavengers nor cowardly in behavior. These creatures are feared by numerous African societies, being referred to as "evil spirits", and constantly engage in aggressive sparring within their clans and with the surrounding lion population (National Geographic). Studies have even indicated that male lions purposefully engage hyenas in an attempt to kill the matriarch of the clan, perhaps suggesting the lion population sees this species as a potent threat to their own survival (African Wildlife Foundation).

The reason that male lions target females within the hyena clan, which may hold up to one hundred individuals all of which being related, is due to their dominance over the male population (Crocuta Crocuta). Females display more aggressive behavior than males, they protect the group territory (which is distinguished by either depositing feces around their perimeter or a pungent scent from their anal glands), and males are prohibited from entering their dens that are usually abandoned warthog diggings or a ditch of a similar form (African Wildlife Foundation). Age is irrelevant; the youngest female hyena has a higher rank than the oldest male hyena. Physically one may notice that even the female genitalia are nearly undistinguishable from male genitals (Crocuta Crocuta). The female clitoris is phallus shaped and may become erect, and if a male were to successfully mate with a female he would have to allow her to inspect his own private parts as a symbol of submission before mounting. After mating the male plays no other role in parenting (Crocuta Crocuta).

Studies have revealed that females have nearly three times as much testosterone than <sup>similar to</sup> ~~males~~ compared to their male counterparts. These high levels of androgen in females are also circulated throughout the fetus, perhaps indicating the reason for female genitalia resembling male reproductive organs (African Wildlife Foundation). It also provides insight into the aggressive behavior of these mammals; literally moments after birth the two cubs (if they are the same sex) begin to battle one another for dominance (National Geographic). The victorious cub then gains the sole privilege of being weaned by the mother, whose milk is now known to be four times as nutritious as the milk of a cow (National Geographic). Obviously, the defeated cub dies quickly without this nutrition, being the largest cause of death for hyena cubs. If the mother had given birth to a male(s), then near the age of two or three years these cubs would migrate to join a different clan (African Wildlife Foundation). This is similar to the process in which female chimpanzees assimilate into different groups upon reaching a certain age, while male chimpanzees remain with their relatives throughout. It makes sense that these processes were reversed due to the reverse genders being dominant.

Although the females that reside together within the communal dens are related they are far from peaceful co-inhabitants. Mother hyenas are protective over their cubs and will only suckle their own kin (Crocuta Crocuta). In fact, it is more common for hyenas to cooperate with their cubs (in terms of hunting, and overall peaceful interaction) than other females of a similar age within their group. Researchers have pointed out that mothers respond most vigorously to the calls of their own cubs, while male whooping noises are usually ignored (National Geographic). Perhaps the heightened relationship between mother and offspring is due to the constant battles between females within the group. The position of matriarch within the clan is deeply coveted; they have primary

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access to resources, tend to have shorter birth rates, start bearing cubs younger than other females, and have a ten percent increased reproductive lifespan (Crocuta Crocuta). Usually these matriarchs are the females with the highest levels of androgen, and thus are the most aggressive members.

Conclusively, this species has come to be known as a highly intelligent one, shedding the assumptions of the past. Their social structures have been compared to baboons and macaques, and they share a common link with bonobos in being female dominated. These sandy colored omnivores, who are close relatives of the cat and mongoose, are prone to areas that aren't heavily forested in regions such as Africa and southern Asia (Crocuta Crocuta). Wherever their presence may be they are highly feared, their intertwining echoes of grunts, growls, and squeals igniting fear to any individual within the range of those calls.

$$\frac{18 + 19}{20} = \frac{97}{100}$$

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