

## II. Reading Comprehension (3 points)

### STONE AGE BABIES HAD BETTER PARENTING THAN TODAY!

Modern life may have made many things easier, but scientists say that raising a child is certainly not one of them. A study of modern **hunter-gatherer** groups that has been recently published in the journal *Developmental Psychology* suggested that our Stone Age ancestors gave their children better childcare than we do today. Researchers from Cambridge University found that children among the Mbendjele BaYaka in the Republic of Congo not only received nine hours of care a day from up to 15 different caregivers, but also that crying children were attended to by either the mother or some individual in the mother's support network more than half of the time, this way giving the mums more time to rest. The study's authors say that these findings suggest that modern parenting methods may **be at odds** with children's evolutionary programmed needs.

Dr Nikhil Chaudhary, lead author of the study, says that **insights** into these modern hunter-gatherer societies can give us a lot of detail about how humans lived in the Stone Age, which is the period in human prehistory that covers 95 per cent of human technological prehistory. "For most of our evolutionary history, humans have lived as hunter-gatherers," said Dr Chaudhary. "Therefore, contemporary hunter-gatherer communities such as the Mbendjele BaYaka can offer valuable clues as to whether there are certain **childbearing systems** to which infants, and their mothers, may be psychologically adapted."

The Mbendjele BaYaka are a nomadic group who live in the jungles in the North of the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo. They are a traditional hunter-gatherer society that practices hunting, fishing, **foraging**, and honey collection for sustenance. While some Mbendjele communities have become settled and integrated with local economies, many remain mobile and continue to inhabit the forest. Those that are still nomadic live in multifamily camps of between 20 to 80 individuals, consisting of a number of huts in which families live.

Evolutionary anthropologists stayed with the Mbendjele BaYaka between March and July 2014, observing children for 12 daylight hours and recording how often they were cared for and by whom. The researchers found that between 10 and 20 different caregivers would be involved in looking after a child and that a mother's support system would respond to more than half of their baby's crying episodes. Furthermore, children were almost never left alone and spent long periods of time in physical contact with adults or receiving close care from them. When children cried they were attended to in under 10 seconds in half of cases and in under 25 seconds 90 per cent of the time.

Older infants and adolescents were also often involved in caregiving, which the report's authors suggest gives them experience and helps reduce anxiety around parenting. This seems to point to the fact that children may be evolutionarily prepared to expect high levels of attention and physical contact from several different caregivers. However, in