

Invited Commentary

FEMINIST EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY: SOME REFLECTIONS

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The goals outlined by Sokol-Chang, Fisher, and their colleagues, particularly (a) calling for deeper theoretical and empirical analysis of the active role of women in human evolution, and (b) calling attention to understudied topics that might be missed by male minds, are highly laudable. They can only produce more rapid scientific progress in the rapidly expanding field of evolutionary psychology. In this brief note, I reflect on some ways in which this progress can be accelerated.

One way is to fully recognize a scientific insight provided by evolutionary psychology itself—that *women's and men's evolved minds differ in some domains* (those in which they have recurrently faced different adaptive problems) and are alike in other domains (those in which the genders have faced similar adaptive problems) (Buss, 1995). This implies that female evolutionary scientists will likely have scientific insights missed by male scientists.

I will note three coming from female scientists within my own lab. One was provided by Lisa Dedden into the ways in which women derogated other women in the service of intrasexual mate competition (Buss & Dedden, 1990). A second was provided by Heidi Greiling. With her original insights, we explored what we called “the hidden side of female sexuality,” namely the multiple functional reasons women engage in short-term mating (Greiling & Buss, 2000). A third was provided by Martie Haselton, who hypothesized and subsequently empirically documented women's *commitment skepticism bias*, one of the many evolved biases emerging from *Error Management Theory* (Haselton & Buss, 2000). These conceptual innovations and empirical discoveries were made possible, I believe, by exceptionally bright female scientists having insights into female sexual psychology that had been missed by male scientists.

This leads to my second point—it is essential for the field to attract “the best and the brightest” women to go into evolutionary psychology. To some extent, this has happened from the beginning. Some of the founders of the field of evolutionary psychology, such as Leda Cosmides and Margo Wilson, have been women. And the existence of such stellar female role models has drawn talented women into the field. The vibrancy and excellence of a scientific field rests with its ability to attract the best and the brightest.

An impediment to progress, however, is an educational one. In gender studies courses, sociology courses, and psychology courses throughout the world, evolutionary psychology is poorly taught, badly mischaracterized, and erroneously believed to be at odds with feminist goals such as achieving gender equality (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 2011; Confer et al., 2010). As Pinker notes, the moral principle of achieving gender equality cannot rest on the empirical claim that women and men are psychological clones of each other (Pinker, 2002).

It is my hope that these educational barriers to scientific progress will be overcome. They will be overcome in part by the recognition that women are not, and have never been, passive pawns

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in a male game (Buss & Duntley, 1999). And progress will accelerate as top women and men scientists continue to join forces to advance the new science of the mind.

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