

NOTHING IS PURELY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, EXCEPT THIS BOOK

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A Review of the Book

Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Sexual Psychology and Behavior

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The purpose of the book is to provide a solid basis to understanding similarities and differences between the sexes in human psychology and behavior, using Sexual Selection as a pillar to develop the explanations of human sexual behavior. As a general overview, it is noteworthy that all authors define theories well, using precision and details without making reading tiresome. This makes the book appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate students, with the ability for each chapter to be read and understood independently, promoting its usefulness as a course text. The book is organized in four sections: 1) Introduction to Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Sexual Psychology and Behavior; 2) Sexual Adaptations in Men; 3) Sexual Adaptations in Women; and 4) Conclusions and Future Directions for Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Sexual Psychology and Behavior.

The book starts with David Schmitt giving an introduction into mate preferences from an evolutionary perspective, describing concepts such as long- and short-term relationships and Sexual Strategies Theory, and discussing mate preferences for men and women in the short-term and long-term. He gives details about several studies, explaining to the reader how to conduct research in evolutionary psychology. He also uses studies to provide evidence about preference in men and women in short- and in

long-term relationships. Men tend to prefer short- and long-term partners who are physically attractive, though when choosing a long-term partner men also give importance to personality traits (Buss & Shackelford, 2008; Castro & Lopes, 2011; Fisher, Cox, Bennett, & Gavric, 2008; Gaulin & McBurney, 2001; Pawlowski, 2000). Women tend to give more importance to gene quality over willingness of resource investment (women's preference for long-term partner) when choosing a short-term partner (Brase & Guy, 2004; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Geary, Vigil, & Byrd-Craven, 2004; Mafra & Lopes, 2014). Thereby, David Schmitt's chapter prepares the reader for the rest of the book.

The second section of the book is dedicated to sexual adaptations in men. The second chapter draws attention to addressing a question that cannot be explained by Sexual Selection or Sexual Strategies Theory: men offending. Camelleri and Stiver address this subject, which is a novelty from an evolutionary perspective, very well. They provide different hypotheses about why sexual offending is considered an adaptation, even though it brings disadvantage to females that are not able to choose their partners.

Male voice, preference for women's facial characteristics, perception of women's sexual interest, male adaptation to ovulation, and male mortality are also discussed in this section. Some chapters drew particular attention. One of them was about the evolution of male production of good humor as a passive-aggressive form of competition and/or a way to facilitate social bonding or avoiding serious conflicts, a selected trait by advertising mate quality. Greengross addresses an interesting discussion about it and supports, with empirical results, that not only funny men are seen as more attractive, but also women who laugh more are considered more attractive, evidencing that production of humor is, in fact, more important to men's reproductive success than women's.

Finishing off the male adaptations section, Starratt and Alesia summarize male strategies of mate retention. As men invest in their partner and offspring, the costs of losing a partner and/or raising a child that is not one's own are high. In this way, men would tend to engage in tactics to avoid such loss of time and resources (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Miner, Starratt, & Shackelford, 2009). They discuss tactics used by men to retain a mate, such as competitor and mate derogation; manipulation of the perception of his partner about him, herself, and the current relationship; and sperm competition, engaging more in retention behavior the higher mate value the partner has. Nevertheless, the last tactic would be more used as a corrective strategy, in other words, men tend to use sperm competition more when they do not engage in other mate retention tactics. Thus, in order to ensure their paternity of the women's children, there is a modification of the shape, number, performance of the sperm (Kelly & Jennions, 2011; Leivers, Rhodes, & Simmons, 2014).

In a complementary chapter to sexual offending, McKibbin starts the third section of the book by talking about different behaviors that women adopted in order to defend themselves from rape. As sexual offending evolved in men, women counterattacked, presenting behaviors in a way to avoid this detrimental behavior. Some of the chapters of this section are complementary to the previous sections of the book (e.g. preference for male's facial characteristics, female adaptations to ovulation, and intrasexual competition), although "Sexual adaptations in women" section discusses different

aspects than those discussed in the section “Sexual adaptation in men” (perceptions of male body movement, disgust adaptation). Welling conducts an interesting chapter, explaining why female orgasm may be a product of natural selection (or by-product) based on four different hypotheses: 1) a way to ensure future copulation, by stimulating women to copulate again with men who they had an orgasm with; 2) increasing the strength of the relationship connection; 3) stimulating uterine contractions and, consequently, increasing the probability of fertilization; 4) stimulating women to have sex with high quality or investing males.

Finishing off the female’s adaptation section, Li and colleagues address a chapter about eating restriction. This interesting approach is not only useful to clarify why a behavior that causes several injuries to human health, leading to death in some cases, has evolved within humans (predominantly women), but also offer valuable information with regards to human health. They present theories for the evolution of this behavior, going deeper into intrasexual competition. Emphasizing more on female intrasexual competition, the chapter written by April and colleagues discusses rivalry between women friends, explaining how women tend to base their decision when choosing a female friend and how this choice may affect in their success in attracting romantic partners.

The last section of the book is dedicated to future directions for evolutionary perspectives. The two chapters address subjects that had been neglected by evolutionary psychologists in the past but are gaining due attention lately: evolution of female competition and male androphilia. Female competition has been gaining more attention recently, but unlike male competition, it had not been aim of as many studies. This chapter brings to the book a different focus on intrasexual competition, mainly for being associated to social selection.

Heterosexual individuals have their romantic partner preferences studied by evolutionary researchers because their sexuality allows their reproduction. In this way, heterosexuality is easier to explain by an evolutionary perspective, ensuring a better understanding of heterosexual individuals strategies. Trying to fill this gap, Varsey and VanderLaand raise hypotheses about the evolution of homosexual behavior and analyze them supported by investigations with sex-gender congruent and transgendered male androphilia found in different cultures.

Although the chapter about men androphilia is outstanding and recognizing that gynephilia in women is a more obscure branch than male androphilia, the absence of information on gynephilia in women was noticeable. Perhaps, with the progress of the research in this field, the next version will be able to discuss it as well. Another topic that would be interesting to take into consideration would be about jealousy and how environment may influence individuals’ preference, choice, patterns of attachment, and self-evaluation as romantic partner. The editors did valuable work in a way that it is difficult to suggest something that could better balance the length of the book and the subjects that need to be addressed. In general, I strongly recommend this book for everyone that works with human sexuality as well to people that are interested in the field and I even could say that I will not hesitate to read the next version.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthonieta Looman Mafra is a biologist about to get her PhD in Psychobiology. She has dedicated five years to the study of mate preference and mate choice from an evolutionary point of view, with the focus on sex, context, and socioeconomic status differences.

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