

Evolution and Gender: Why It Matters for Contemporary Life

By Rosemary L. Hopcroft

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Offering new research and analysis on the relation between gender and evolution, this book explains conflict between the sexes and the frequent emergence and stubborn continuation of patriarchal regimes that serve to control the behavior of women in societies around the world, both past and present. Women and men are different, on average. But that does not mean they are unequal. Indeed, understanding average differences is key to the full realization of equality in health care and other dimensions of social life.

Hopcroft shows that gender differences in physiology, psychology, and behavior can be traced to slight differences in evolved traits between men and women. These differences exist because of sex differences in investment in offspring, which meant that, in the environment of evolution, some adaptive problems were more important for men to solve than for women, and vice versa. For men, the most important adaptive problem to solve was that of finding a mate. Men who did not solve this problem are not our ancestors. For women, the most important adaptive problem to solve was that of successfully bearing and raising children. Women who did not solve this problem are not our ancestors. These small differences underlie all the differences described in the book, including sex differences in mate preferences, physiology, cognition, aggression, status striving, and emotional experience. It can also help explain the differential treatment of children by parents, the differential success of boys and girls in modern schools, and sex differences in style of communication.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A timely and important book. In an age of political correctness, this work represents a bold challenge to comfortable prejudices with a systematic and comprehensive review of the scientific evidence on the extent to which aspects of gender have a biological basis. Even the fiercest of critics will have difficulty ignoring this rich, compelling, and balanced analysis of what underlies the differences between males and females."

Alexandra Maryanski, Professor of Sociology, University of California at Riverside

"*Evolution and Gender* is a breath of fresh air in a field all too inclined to obfuscation and sterile incantations of 'patriarchy'. Rosemary Hopcroft actually *explains*, without excusing it, the ubiquitous tendency toward control and oppression of women in human societies. With this book she provides a scientific basis and necessary corrective for any serious understanding of gender differences and gender relations."

François Nielsen, Professor of Sociology, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill

"In a down-to-earth way, Hopcroft's book walks readers through a dazzling variety of both old and especially new scientific evidence of how males and females behave in different ways (on average, of course). Her book pushes scientific understanding of the sexes, especially regarding behavior, to new heights."

Lee Ellis, Professor of Sociology, University of Malaya

"The sociologist Rosemary Hopcroft has compiled and analyzed an expansive body of thought and evidence about gender differences, their origins, how they affect our lives. The skill with which she weaves together social scientific and biological knowledge about female-male differences and presents it in a highly accessible manner makes this book the envy of any serious scholar who is committed to advancing our understanding of one of the most important suite of traits that makes us human. In fact, this kind of knowledge might even help guide us in constructing more just and equitable societies in which all humans deserve to live."

Richard Machalek, Professor of Sociology, University of Wyoming

About the Author
Rosemary L. Hopcroft is Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She has published widely in the areas of comparative and historical sociology and evolution, biology, and society in journals that include the American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, and Social Forces. She is the author of Sociology: A Bio-Social Introduction (Paradigm 2010).

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