

The cover features black silhouettes of a man on the left and a woman on the right, standing against a light blue background. The title 'Gender Gap' is written in a large, red, cursive font across the top.

Gender Gap

The Biology of
Male-Female
Differences

David P. Barash
Judith Eve Lipton

with a new introduction by the authors

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Introduction to the Transaction Edition

“GENDER GAP” MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS to different people. For some, it refers to the observation that men and women tend to differ in their political preferences (with men being somewhat more likely to vote Republican these days and women, Democratic). For others it indicates any male-female differences. There is typically a gender gap, for example, in preferences for television shows, for low-fat cottage cheese versus sirloin steaks, and there is, of course, a whopping difference in who buys tampons or power tools.

In writing this book, we were concerned with identifying some of the underlying biological bases for male-female differences, independent—insofar as that is possible—of the role of early experience, cultural tradition, and social expectation. We focused on those particular aspects of male-female differences that derive from the

biological differences between boys and girls, men and women, and males and females of the animal kingdom.

This material was controversial when we first wrote about it, and it remains so today. For some people, it is simply intolerable that males and females may be biologically different in ways that go beyond urogenital plumbing. Their fear is that any such differences will be used to justify oppression against women. For others, hard-wired male-female differences are devoutly to be wished for, especially if they can be used to justify oppression against women! Our message—and that, we believe, of evolution—is that such differences are genuine, although less pronounced than the former group evidently fears, and not as great as the latter might hope. Moreover, such differences do *not* countenance any particular political stance—so perhaps both groups will be incensed at us!

Our belief is that science is descriptive, not prescriptive. Science, including biology, is immensely useful in revealing how things are, but useless in announcing what should be done as a result. Nonetheless, social activists, some day, might conceivably want to design society so as to ameliorate some of the more troublesome aspects of male-female differences. It is also possible that others might want to exaggerate the gender gap (although this is more difficult to imagine). Still others may wish to leave things pretty much as they are.

Whatever one's political leanings—whether conservative or liberal, mischievous or beneficent—the likelihood is that any interventions, including the decision to follow an ostensibly “hands off” policy, will be more wisely conducted if they take human nature into account. And when it comes to human nature, the differences between males and females must be acknowledged as real, important, and downright fascinating. Moreover, when it comes to understanding those differences, there is no better guide than evolution.

But we do not want to leave the impression that a grasp of male-female differences is relevant only for possible policy implications, since this is an especially vexing and unclear realm. The payoff would be far greater in regards to personal wisdom, a deeper understanding of oneself, one's friends and partners (sexual and otherwise), as well as the satisfaction that comes from increased intellectual insight. After all, males and females make up a large part of the living world around us.

Our guess is that in the future, historians, scientists and laypersons alike will look back on the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and scratch their heads in amazement that anyone seriously doubted that males and females are importantly different. Daily events—in the public sphere no less than the private—have continued to italicize the reality of male–female differences. Thus, shortly after the hardcover version of this book appeared, the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal surfaced. This was followed by comparable revelations about then Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich as well as his putative replacement, Bob Livingstone, the mayors of New York City and San Francisco, and the Reverend Jesse Jackson. And there is no likely end in sight.

Readers of *Gender Gap* will immediately understand why powerful, charismatic men exert a particular sexual attraction, especially for young, attractive women. They will also understand why so many women—more than men—find the struggle of balancing career and parenthood to be an especially cruel bind, and why men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of violence, on the international scene no less than in the personal realm of domestic, day-to-day life.

Although details vary as scientific understanding is fine tuned, the intervening few years since this book was first published have seen the accumulation of studies that confirm the existence of substantial male–female differences—not only among animals, but also among widely separated human populations, including people in the modern-day United States. Thus, even as we write this, research is under way concerning male–female differences in “mate-poaching” (efforts by individuals—whether themselves mated or not—to disrupt the mateships of others), brain function, tendencies to violence, parenting inclinations, and even in the behavior of infant boys and girls. The pattern persists: in scientific language, the fundamental male–female behavioral difference described in *Gender Gap* is a “robust” phenomenon.

Not all developments in recent years, though, have blended seamlessly into previous findings. Nor should this be surprising, since *Gender Gap* is fundamentally a work of science—not theology—and science is a process of constant reassessment and adjustment. In the realm of research, therefore, even surprises are not altogether surprising! One such modification stands out, at least from the vantage point of the year 2001. A major tenet of *Gender Gap* (and of its earlier incarnation,

Making Sense of Sex) is that males and females differ substantially in their penchant for multiple sexual partners, with males being more inclined than females in this direction. This finding remains not just defensible, but has, if anything, been strengthened by intervening studies.

At the same time, accumulating research—using new findings from DNA fingerprinting—has begun to reveal that even though males remain more prone to multiple sexual partners than females (as well as being more readily stimulated to sexual activity), this difference is less clear-cut than had been thought. Therefore, biologists now understand that many (indeed, most) animals previously believed monogamous are not reliably so. Many bird species in particular, long thought to be the paragons of sexual fidelity, have recently been unmasked as prone to infidelity, or “extra-pair copulations” (EPCs). Not uncommonly, offspring are genetically fathered by someone other than the mother’s designated mate. In short, social monogamy does not necessarily equal sexual monogamy.

Any reader of *Gender Gap* will easily understand that a male fondness for EPCs is to be expected. Sperm-makers that they are, males can generally be expected to seek additional sexual opportunities whether or not they are mated (in human terms, “married”)—and irregardless of their short-term sexual partners being likewise already paired. The novel discovery is that females, too, evidently seek EPCs, although they are predictably more discriminating and less easily persuaded than their male counterparts (see David P. Barash and Judith Eve Lipton, *The Myth of Monogamy: fidelity and infidelity in animals and people*, New York: W. H. Freeman, 2001).

These findings doubtless have implications for human beings, although exactly what they are remains unclear! On the one hand, female coyness is not absolute—but no one ever thought it was, just as no one ever claimed that the sexual assertiveness of every male inevitably exceeds that of every female. On the other hand, the now-proven fact that females are often sexual adventurers in their own right makes male sexual jealousy all the more understandable: if females were not inclined to stray, at least upon occasion, there would be little reason for natural selection to have outfitted males with wariness regarding their mates’ behavior, along with a tendency to respond to any hints of female infidelity with pronounced intolerance. Similarly, male-male competition—which importantly underlies the biology of the human gen-

der gap—would more likely be exacerbated by a pronounced female tendency for infidelity.

The human mind loves order and clarity. Only rarely does the natural world oblige. Two of these tempting pigeonholes concern the designation “male” and “female.” And yet, despite the fact that sexual intermediates exist (there are, after all, hermaphrodites and other kinds of indeterminate individuals), the fact remains that “male” and “female” comprise some of the most distinct cases of genuine dichotomies, comparable to left and right, up and down, and in and out. Deepening our understanding of such phenomena remains one of the most challenging goals of any science worthy of the name, whether biological or social. And gaining insight into the differences between men and women remains a worthy goal for all sentient beings, doomed as well as blessed to navigate a world populated by two sexes and their ever-shifting but nonetheless persistent gender gap.

David P. Barash, Ph.D.
Judith Eve Lipton, M.D.
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Preface

THIS BOOK IS ABOUT MALES AND FEMALES, men and women, girls and boys, and why the two sexes are different. Most people understand the basic physical differences, and several popular books have described differences in how males and females communicate, but here we explore the origins of sex itself. We then look at its consequences, including lust, parenting, and childhood—in other words, the fundamental aspects of life for most people. In making sense of sex and all its trappings, we rely on the work of many biologists who, over the years, have come up with a simple, wonderful, and even beautiful explanation of why men and women are different, from genes to bodies to behavior. Our aim is to describe and explain this general theory and then discuss its implications. In the end, we hope our readers will come away from this book understanding themselves and their relationships in a new and more meaningful way.

In encountering the ideas in this book, it may help the reader to understand who we, the authors, are and what drives us professionally and personally. David Barash is a middle-aged evolutionary biologist and professor of psychology at the University of Washington who specializes in animal behavior, reveling in the study of obscure species for what they reveal about larger evolutionary issues. Judith Lipton is a psychiatrist in private practice with an abiding fondness for music and horses. She's someone who understands how the brain works, what to do about one's mother, and how to make peace with a former spouse. Each of us was previously married, and each has children from the previous marriage. To our blended family, Judith brought a son and David brought a daughter; together, we had two daughters.

We consider ourselves equals: intellectually, educationally, and financially. Each of us has a doctoral degree (David's in biology, Judith's in medicine), each of us has a successful career, and each spends considerable time with our children. Still, we find it impossible to detach ourselves from gender issues in our own lives, from courtship, marriage, and divorce to plain old sexual relations and, then, parenting and step-parenting. We consider ourselves to be as nonsexist a family as one could comfortably imagine, and as a couple we are deeply in love as well as avowedly monogamous. And yet, even after twenty years of marriage and years of professional training and practice, we find ourselves struggling to make sense of our own gender gap, ranging from modes of verbal expression to sexual proclivities. We say this to emphasize the broad nature of what we mean by the terms *sex* and *sex differences*, referring not just to genitals but to hormonal, physical, and behavioral differences throughout the life cycle, differences that deeply affect each of us as well as every other human being.

Even the process of collaboration has made us aware (sometimes painfully so) of our own differences. Left to his own, David would present the material in this book as if it were a lecture, intellectually interesting and fun but somewhat detached. Judith wants to relate to her readers and so tends to be more empathic and emotional, sympathetic and resonant; she wrote everything that is self-revealing in this book. She also prefers to present case histories and offer therapeutic suggestions and interpretations, whereas David prefers to discuss theory or animals. Overall, David likes to discourse on general principles. The patterns of adultery and violence he describes on these pages, for ex-

ample, are the practices and patterns of animal and human societies all over the world. It is not that David can't be empathic or intuitive or self-disclosing or that Judith can't quote data and abstract theory or maintain interpersonal boundaries; rather, we tend to look at life differently, and some of that difference exists because we are male and female.

We also experience work differently. In his studies of animal behavior, David has spent thousands of hours with binoculars watching species as varied as bluebirds and bears, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. His working concept of an experiment rarely interferes with the lives of his subjects, and he seeks to build general principles out of specific cases. In contrast, Judith as a clinical psychiatrist, works with individual patients, confronting such problems as adultery and domestic violence in the context of individual lives and families. She views each new patient as an experiment about to unfold, a relationship in the making. Her goal as a clinician *is* to interfere, to have a positive impact on someone else's life. Her thinking tends to be the inverse of David's: she begins with general principles of psychiatry and medicine and applies them to the individual circumstances of each patient.

When, on the lecture circuit, a questioner disagrees with us, Judith tends to think, "We must have been unclear in our presentation," whereas David is likely to wonder why the questioner is so obtuse or, if persistent, such a jerk. Judith tends to question, David to argue. On his own, David would make this a popular science book; on her own, Judith would write a self-help book. We find it a rather humorous irony that despite our scholarly degrees and feminist politics, our actual behaviors fall into rather predictable stereotypes. Maybe our joint effort will both amuse and console.

As a husband-wife team, we have brought our own perspectives to the subject at hand and are convinced that by collaborating in this way, we can offer our readers a more creative synthesis and a more enlightening view of gender differences than would be possible had either one of us authored this volume alone. The upshot is a controversial view of human beings and their sexuality. We gratefully acknowledge our reliance on the pioneering work of many biologists, some of whom worked mainly in the realm of theory and others who spent many hundreds of hours observing the behavior of animals as well as human beings. Sometimes we cite them by name in the text; at other times, in the

endnotes. In nearly all cases, they did the scientific heavy lifting. We merely point out connections and—we hope—convey the results in an accessible way to our readers, nearly all of whom we assume are non-scientists.

Some readers will dismiss this approach outright because it gives a scientific—moreover, a Darwinian—rather than a theological explanation for human nature. Anyone who believes, perhaps for religious reasons, that biology and animal behavior have nothing to do with our own species might as well stop here. We are no more inclined to dispute evolution versus creationism than we are inclined to argue with members of the Flat Earth Society. Instead, we present a fresh interpretation of sex and sex differences based on evolutionary biology, and we assume our readers are open-minded and curious enough to give it a try.

We have included some case histories to emphasize that the issues we discuss are not purely theoretical and to demonstrate how biology can help make sense of life's day-to-day experiences. These cases are true in that each one happened to a real person, but names have, of course, been changed, along with minor details, and often several stories have been amalgamated into one. Although we make some value judgments—about violence, for example—they are clearly our own, and we do not presume to tell anyone what to do or how to be. Indeed, we expect that many of our readers will disagree from time to time with what we say. Our hope is that the facts and theories we present will help each reader of this book to choose his or her course in life, armed with insights and information and prepared to live and let live with all the freedom human beings can muster.

DAVID P. BARASH, PH.D.
JUDITH EVE LIPTON, M.D.

Acknowledgments

NO BOOK, IT IS SAID, IS WRITTEN ALONE, and *Making Sense of Sex* is no exception. Most of all, we would like to thank . . . each other! This book would not have happened without the two us. It was written as improvisational jazz is performed: each of us contributed themes, variations, assorted harmonies, riffs, and rhythms.

We owe numerous debts outside our private *folie à deux*. We especially thank the many biologists—too many to list individually here—whose theoretical insights and old-fashioned hard work helped reveal the underlying principles as well as the basic “facts of life” on which our presentation is based. Similarly, we thank the anthropologists, psychologists, and other social scientists whose evolutionary orientation has propelled them against the grain of traditional wisdom in their fields. We also thank Judith’s patients and David’s students for providing source material and valuable responses.

A number of people read, commented on, and in various ways improved this book. These include Carla Bradshaw, Leif Carlson, Daniel M. T. Fessler, Sarah Kinney, Kate Noble, Adam Sorscher, David Stutz, and Del Thiessen, as well as two anonymous reviewers recruited by Island Press. We are very grateful to them all.

Our editor, Laurie Burnham, believed in this project, stuck with it through good times and bad, and was extraordinarily attentive to all aspects of its development, in the process challenging, delighting, enlightening, and infuriating us—sometimes all at once! Thank you, Laurie, for hanging in there, working so hard, and contributing so much.

We gratefully acknowledge the many animals of Meadowland Farm for teaching us about practical aspects of sex differences.

Our daughters, Nellie, Ilona, and Eva Barash were wonderfully tolerant—even helpful—throughout this process. Ilona and Eva were founts of popular culture who kept us suitably humble. Nellie provided distraction and comic relief. We thank them for the inspiration they provided and for projecting our genes into the future.

Many thanks are due our readers, as well, for trying on this new perspective on sexuality, evolution, and relationships. We hope they will tolerate our sassiness and enjoy themselves.

CHAPTER 1

Differences

THERE IS GRANDEUR in this view of life. . . . Whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.

— Charles Darwin,
The Origin of Species

We are here to make sense of sex differences: what they are, how they came to be, why they are important, and what they mean to our everyday lives. All people have sex on the mind, in the brain, and in the body. Whether expressed as a physical experience, an emotional attraction, or gender differences, sex pervades our daily lives. True, people do nonsexual things such as “surf” the Internet, dream up religions and weapons of mass destruction, perform neurosurgery, and write advertising jingles and books about button collecting and computer programming. Sex is not the only thing people think about or do.

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But even the Internet, Madison Avenue, and the publishing world, not to mention religion, medicine, and the military, devote prodigious time and space to sex. From the cradle to the grave, whether male or female, heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual, everyone has sexual experiences of one kind or another. No one is truly asexual: persons with childhood autism still go through puberty, individuals who have been castrated for cultural or medical reasons still have gender identity, and even the avowedly celibate must contend with sexual yearnings.

Very few people, however, are entirely comfortable with sex. Although sexual intercourse itself is something of a learned skill, the relationships leading up to it are even more difficult. Men and women worry about finding a mate, about being attractive to him or her, about having to compete with others seeking the same goal. Courtships go awry; encounters with both opposite-sex and same-sex people are frequently charged with an unaccountable energy, relationships often fall prey to miscommunication and distrust. And so our ability to compete with others, to find and hold mates, and even to function normally is constantly tested, just as all men and women constantly evaluate and reevaluate themselves and one another—not just as people but as *men* and *women*.

Moreover, sex—by which we mean not only the act itself but also sex as it applies to gender-specific behaviors—has an impact on almost every aspect of human existence: intellectual abilities, childrearing, propensity for violence. Even those among us who are not obsessed by sex in its more obvious or prurient forms are deeply and almost constantly aware of sex differences as demonstrated by the simple dichotomy of boys and girls, men and women. Is that surprising? After all, from the moment of birth, when the nurse or doctor utters the portentous “It’s a girl” or “It’s a boy,” each of us is unambiguously assigned to one category or the other. When it comes to gender, there is very little “in between.” From the chromosomes in every human cell to the preoccupations of every human life, the world is cleft in two: male and female. “As different,” we sometimes say of two things that are clearly distinct, “as night and day.”

But just as night and day blend seamlessly into each other, there are some ambiguous cases of sex differences, notably transvestites and transsexuals and even a few hermaphrodites. Because they are so spectacularly unusual, exceptional cases of this sort receive disproportion-

ate attention, whether in movies like *The Crying Game* or Broadway plays such as *Victor/Victoria*. But don't be misled: such gender bending is extremely rare and does not detract from the overwhelming, commonsense fact that sex differences are not only important but real.

Indeed, human beings are probably more aware of the difference between male and female than of any other distinction in the natural or human-made world. We may, on occasion, have a hard time recalling our telephone number or zip code, but anyone capable of communicating can state his or her gender. And although many of us forget—almost instantly—the name of someone we have just met, just as we may also forget the color of his or her eyes, how he or she was dressed, and so forth, we are unlikely to forget whether he or she was a he or a she. Overall, it is difficult to name anything that is more taken for granted than sex differences. Among the more obvious facets of our lives, few things have been analyzed more and yet understood less than what it means to be male or female. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, never have so many been so concerned about something they understand so little.

In our dealings with students, patients, and lecture audiences, we are often asked by women, “Why does my boyfriend want sex more often than I do?” Men ask, “What does my girlfriend mean when she complains that I don't communicate enough with her?” And everyone asks, “Why are men so often violent?” and “Do women think differently from men?” In fact, Judith's office is flooded with patients hoping to resolve gender-related conflicts, people whose sexual lives are fraught with difficulty and frustration. There is the mother who is dismayed by how difficult it is to raise nonsexist children: her daughter prefers to play house, and her son insists on playing soldiers even if he has to line up the forks and spoons to do so. There is the upwardly mobile career woman who fears that her growing assertiveness will turn men off; the recently married man who loves his wife but finds himself attracted to sexy co-workers; the lawyer whose husband dismisses his casual extramarital encounters as “no big deal”; the man who assaults his wife when he discovers that she's been unfaithful. Smart women and men ask why they have selected poor mates and vow to do better next time but haven't a clue as to how to go about it.

The fact that sexual activity is highly desired despite its difficulty and frustration suggests that sex ranks high among the priorities of our

species. Consider how much time human beings spend seeking the ideal mate, holding on to tumultuous relationships, and grooming their bodies to appeal to the opposite sex—not to mention the emotional and physical energy invested in courtships that go awry or the anguish suffered as a result of miscommunication with one's partner. And who has not felt the pain of rejection? Yet most of us pick up and carry on, determined to continue the quest for a satisfying sexual relationship.

Our goal in writing this book is not to tell our readers how to have better sex lives, more successful courtships, or sharper communication skills—at least, not in so many words. Rather, we intend to examine fundamental distinctions between males and females and to suggest a unifying biological basis for those differences, thus helping to demystify an important part of our universe and ourselves.

Because sex-specific behaviors are expressed by the simplest life-forms as well as the most sophisticated, we talk a lot about animals on these pages—not only the birds and the bees but also elephant seals, hyenas, lions, worms, and fishes. We do so in graphic detail because we believe that by closely examining the sexuality of other species we can learn a lot about our own behavior: in particular, why we do the things we do.

In a genuine sense we are all animals, genetically connected to one another through an ancient lineage of species, an intricate web that extends back to the primordial ooze from which life sprang almost 4 billion years ago. Since the birth of the earliest cells, evolution has organized the fabric of life, weaving together nature's warp and woof into a remarkably graceful pattern of history, hardware, and happenstance. Like atomic theory, which provides a unifying basis for understanding chemistry, physics, and biology, evolutionary theory provides a unifying basis for understanding the profusion of life on earth, from paramecia to people. Not only do we physically share our planet with a buzzing, blooming profusion of living things, but we are also genetically linked to our fellow inhabitants, connected to them through an ancient and intricate evolutionary past. Biology looms large in this book because it looms large in all living organisms. As University of Texas psychologist Delbert Thiessen put it, "We do not walk through nature; nature walks through us."

Evidence that biology scripts the human species can also be found by looking to the field of anthropology. Just consider the panorama of

human cultural diversity in all its wild and woolly manifestations, from New Guinea highlanders to Lapland reindeer herders to Polynesian fishermen to Afghan pastoralists to Manhattan stockbrokers, and it is easy to build a *prima facie* case for the organizing and underlying role of biology. Among such an incredible variety of cultures, all with vastly different patterns of social learning, technological development, religious tradition, historical background, and so forth, one common thread emerges: the biological nature of *Homo sapiens* and what it means to be male or female. As we shall see, some societies minimize the difference between the sexes; others—perhaps the majority—exaggerate them. But the differences are never reversed, and thus evidence mounts in favor of a biological common denominator.

Just as ecologists have come to appreciate that all things are connected, evolutionary biologists, too, are starting to recognize previously unsuspected connections between “pure biology,” such as eggs and sperm, and the various complex roles and elaborate social “facts” that make up our daily lives. Gametes and gonads, genes and gender all work together to produce sex differences, not only among human beings but among all living things.

Yet the biological pull on our beings is often overlooked; indeed most people are blissfully unaware of the full extent to which biology affects their lives. One recent study of human sperm count attests to the subtle influence of biology. As part of the experiment, ten sexually active couples were physically separated from their partners for various periods of time (during which they remained celibate) and then reunited. When they resumed their sexual relations, the number of sperm in the ejaculate of each man increased in relation to the length of time since previous intercourse. Such findings are not in themselves surprising: sexual abstention is known to raise sperm levels on resumption of intercourse. But noteworthy is the fact that no such increase occurred in ejaculate obtained through masturbation after identical periods of abstinence.

Apparently, there exists a factor—hidden and previously unrecognized—that results in greater sperm production or transfer during sexual intercourse than when fertilization is not a possibility. Although the mechanism remains unknown, the phenomenon makes evolutionary sense. Why waste sperm (which take energy to produce) when no offspring are in the offing? We cite the foregoing example not because it

is overwhelmingly important in itself but because it helps reveal how even *Homo sapiens*—smartest of all animals—can be influenced by evolutionary pressures without having the slightest idea that anything of the sort is going on.

For those inclined to denounce a biological approach to understanding male–female differences as sexist, we hope to reveal that if anything, sexism comes from culture, not from biology per se. Social learning and cultural traditions can magnify or suppress sex differences in human beings by rewarding certain behaviors and condemning others, as well as by providing models and expectations for ways in which boys and girls ought to behave. But they no more create those basic differences, any more than they create the basic biology of maleness and femaleness. Society is responsible for establishing sexist social roles and expectations (what are traditionally called *gender differences*). But it is evolution that makes for *sex differences*, the basic, organic, genetically inspired biological distinctions between women and men.

When we lecture on male–female differences in sexual style and motivation, we are often confronted by members of the audience who triumphantly maintain that we must be wrong. Why? Because they know a man, for example, who is altogether nonaggressive or sexually reticent, or a woman with a killer instinct or whose libido has her chasing every male in town. The generalizations in this book are just that: generalizations. A generalization, by definition, applies to the majority within a population, allowing plenty of room for individual exceptions. It is perfectly true, for example, that men generally weigh more than women. This does not mean that there aren't some small men and large women; it simply means that at the level of the population, the weight of a randomly chosen man will usually exceed that of a randomly chosen woman.

As we make generalizations throughout this book—about sexual inclinations, parental tendencies, aggressiveness, and so forth—please keep this simple body-weight example in mind. Thus, when we point out that men are more likely than women to become sexually aroused by simple visual images, we are not claiming this to be true without exception. We are not proven wrong simply because some men are indifferent to *Playboy* centerfolds and some women are turned on by posters of Antonio Banderas. Rather, we are talking about general and widespread tendencies, no different in principle from other male–

female distinctions that are universally accepted, such as body weight, vocal range, number of hair follicles, and the like.

We do not intend to be judgmental and have tried to steer clear of declaring certain behaviors good or bad. If, again, men are more aroused than women by nude photographs, does this mean they are more barbaric or primitive, unable to distinguish image from reality, or less loving? Or that women are sexually repressed, inhibited, or otherwise defective? Neither. It simply suggests that natural selection has created different behavioral inclinations.

As with so many difficult questions concerning human beings, it may be impossible to prove absolutely that biology exerts a powerful pull on our personas. But we think this book makes a strong case for that assertion, one that will help our readers to make sense of sex and sex differences and, in the process, to better understand their lives. Furthermore, we hope that the insights we offer into the complexities of human behavior and the evolutionary roots of maleness and femaleness will help increase readers' sensitivity to their fellow human beings. We aim to assist the reader in acquiring self-knowledge and also to demystify the opposite sex—those crucial others with whom each of us shares so much and yet who are often so infuriatingly and fascinatingly different.

