**The Fragile Wisdom: An Evolutionary View on Women’s Biology and Health.** By Grazyna Jasienska. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; 2013, US $37.00 (Hardcover). 336 p. ISBN: 978-0674047129

The Fragile Wisdom brings the biology and anthropology of sex differences to life by taking an evolutionary perspective on why certain health problems that never affected our ancestors, plague women today. A biological anthropologist specializing in reproductive ecology, Grazyna Jasienska postulates that women’s biology and health are evolutionarily distinct from men’s because of the relative energetic investment in reproduction and consequently executes her analysis of medical questions using the lens of sex.

In this text intended for an academic adult audience, Jasienska investigates emerging medical concerns by juxtaposing the biological demands of the world that human bodies evolved in with those of current industrialized society. She presents a very well-cited argument based on a broad spectrum of primary literature findings, from biochemistry benchwork to anthropological field studies, yet the book has a narrative style reminiscent of storytelling. Jasienska frames her book around the important distinction that “Health and evolutionary fitness are not synonymous” (p. 2). She explores how this disjunction relates to reproductive cost/benefit balancing acts.

Jasienska discusses hormone variation, agriculture and estrogen levels, developmental programming, case studies of childhood diet and heart disease, intergenerational effects of slavery, the physical burdens of reproducing, factors affecting life span, how modern diet and exercise patterns are distinct from historical circumstances, evolutionary trade-offs, benefits of philanthropy, and gene-lifestyle interactions. Jasienska also offers a basic biological introduction to each topic she considers before delving into larger questions, which makes The Fragile Wisdom accessible regardless of the reader’s particular background and specialty.

The way that Jasienska revisits hormone levels and energy storage from a variety of perspectives gives her argument a high level of coherency and stresses the broad implications of her work. It is rare to find a book that is able to simultaneously consider such a myriad of causes for biological disease. However, The Fragile Wisdom would be strengthened by exploring additional issues or by drawing on public health research to suggest interventions to combat the problems it presents.

Of note, Jasienska never attempts to advise the reader how to live a long and healthy life. Indeed, one of the main conundrums she grapples with is the fact that we are all products of our genetics, environment, and choices, in often-uncontrollable ways. She begins by explaining that “healthy” is a generally unattainable ideal.

Returning to earlier hunter-forager subsistence patterns is not only impossible, but would also not necessarily fix the rising frequency of breast and gynecologic cancers or obesity and metabolic syndrome. Jasienska suggests, however, that becoming cognizant of how external factors impact the delicate balance of our internal biology might allow us to work toward a healthier future.

This text provides an important summary of current research knowledge across subfields of sex and gender health and synthesizes those findings to present a new holistic perspective on women’s bodies. As engrossing as it is educational, The Fragile Wisdom leaves as many questions as it answers, in the best possible way.

Laura G. Goetz  
Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry  
Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies  
Yale College

**Pharmacology for Women’s Health. Second Edition.** By Mary C. Brucker and Tekoa L. King. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning; 2015. US $78.62 (Hardcover). 1212 p. ISBN: 978-1284057485.

Pharmacology for Women’s Health, Second Edition, provides an in-depth and updated review of the essential pharmacological agents utilized in women’s health. The content includes a thorough, informative review of pharmacological treatments useful for both women consumers and their treating physicians. The text is divided as follows: “Section I: Introduction to Pharmacology,” “Section II: Lifestyle and Preventative Healthcare Practices,” “Section III: Essential Drug Categories,” “Section IV: Pharmacotherapies for Common Conditions,” “Section V: Gynecology,” and “Section VI: Pregnancy and Lactation.” The information is uniformly and cogently organized; each chapter includes a glossary that provides explanation of terms, as well as clinical examples for use of various pharmacological agents. For example, Section II: “Lifestyle and Preventative Healthcare Practices” is subdivided into chapters on vitamins and minerals, immunizations, medications to enhance wellbeing, smoking cessation strategies and techniques, drugs of abuse, and complementary and alternative medicine. Section III: “Essential Drug Categories” is comprised of detailed, well-written chapters on “anti-infective” agents, analgesia and anesthesia, antihistamines, and steroid hormones.

Each specific area begins with a detailed section on pharmacological treatments and ends with a section on complementary therapies. More complex, broad
disease entities, such as arrhythmias, are further delineated into more specific diseases (e.g., Atrial Fibrillation), followed by specific pharmacological treatments for specific clinical presentations. For example, Section IV, “Pharmaceuticals for Common Conditions,” begins with a chapter (Chapter 15) on cardiovascular disease (CVD) that includes a glossary of terms, an introduction to CVD, a subsection discussing prevention strategies such as exercise and lifestyle modification, followed by other sections that are further categorized into particular CVD-related disease entities (e.g., Hypertension, Hyperlipidemia, Cerebral Vascular Disease, Peripheral Arterial Occlusive Disease, Systolic and Diastolic Heart Failure, and Cardiac Arrhythmias). Subsequent chapters in Section IV focus on other disease entities in the same way.

Pharmacology for Women’s Health offers readers a concise and in-depth text covering a wide array of complex pharmacological treatments for a plethora of conditions. The book covers the most effective pharmacological and therapeutic treatments for women affected by non-gender specific conditions, as well as treatment options for conditions that only affect women (including obstetric and gynecologic-specific disease entities). Complex diseases and their pharmacological treatments are presented an easy-to-follow, accessible, uniform format that will make it a frequent resource on the bookshelf. This text is highly recommended for health-conscious, informed consumers and as a reference for physicians treating women.

Aaron J. Roberto, M.D.
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellow
Department of Psychiatry,
Boston Children’s Hospital
Harvard Medical School

Handbook of Gender and Sexuality in Psychological Assessment. Edited by Virginia M. Brabender and Joni L. Mihura. New York, NY: Routledge; 2016, US $114.95 (Paperback). 730 p. ISBN: 978-1138782051.

Brabender and Mihura’s Handbook of Gender and Sexuality in Psychological Assessment provides a comprehensive overview of how issues of gender and sexuality can impact both the assessor and the client during psychological assessment. The chapters elegantly weave together reviews of the current literature when it exists— noting where more research is warranted—along with illustrative case studies and vignettes, in order to provide suggestions for how to best interweave what is known into actual practice. This text does an excellent job of balancing the discussion of tools to reduce gender bias with an understanding of how gender- and sex-specific information can better inform assessment. A consistent theme tying the chapters together is that, while sex and gender issues are often not the main issue that brings the client in for psychological assessment, adequately addressing issues of sex and gender can greatly enhance the assessor’s understanding of the client and interpretation of the assessment results.

The introductory chapters, written by the editors, set the stage for the remainder of the book by defining essential terms, presenting a helpful introduction of assessor pitfalls, and noting suggestions for helpful assessor attitudes and behaviors during the different stages of psychological assessment. Several chapters of the book highlight how sex and gender, both that of the assessor and of the client, can interact with psychological assessment and influence specific disorders and traits. These chapters note that while gender nonconforming identities do not in and of themselves indicate underlying psychopathology, a better understanding of the psychological basis of such identities can still greatly inform and enhance treatment of such individuals seeking psychological assessment. The book includes excellent case illustrations and discussion of multi-dimensional gender-based issues such as its intersectionality with race, culture, and development. The final chapters discuss how to integrate the knowledge presented in the book into practice, to better train professionals, and to enhance professionals’ motivation to change their biased thinking and/or behaviors.

Although there is some repetition between chapters, particularly in redefining terms throughout the handbook, each chapter is able to stand alone and to provide unique insight into how gender and sexuality influence assessment. The chapters, while informative and providing an unbiased review of the literature, are also quite engaging, particularly the chapters that provide personal examples of the authors, which bolster the academic material presented. This text does not just explain epidemiological information about sex and gender differences in the assessment arena but also convincingly highlights reasons why it is important to further explore gender and sexuality in psychological assessment. Most chapters do assume prior knowledge of the assessment measures and psychopathology, and the book is therefore best suited to clinicians and researchers who are already knowledgeable on the topic but who want to gain better insight into the interplay between sex, gender, and assessment.

Amber Dunbar
Department of Psychology
Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Discovering Human Sexuality. Third Edition. Simon LeVay, Janicec Baldwin, & John Baldwin. Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates, 2015, US $81.22 (Paperback). 645 p. ISBN: 978-1605352756.

In the third edition of Discovering Human Sexuality, LeVay, Baldwin, and Baldwin have compiled an astounding thorough introduction to the biology, psychology, and sociology of sex and sexuality. While
targeted to undergraduates, this encyclopedic text would be a useful addition to anyone’s bookshelf. In the first chapter, sexuality is introduced as more than just the biological act of sex. Instead, the authors describe how sexuality is a fluid concept that has changed over time as humans have evolved both physically and societally. Later chapters describe sex specifics in both male and female bodies, leading to a discussion of sex, gender, and transgender individuals. Two chapters are given to sexuality throughout the life span, and several more chapters address sexual orientation, atypical sexuality, and sexual disorders. Potentially negative aspects of human sexuality are also discussed, including disease and assault. Visually, the pages in Discovering Human Sexuality are equally covered in well written text and helpful images, including photographs, historically relevant pictures, and anatomical diagrams. If six hundred pages was not enough, the book has a companion website, complete with summaries, study questions, and online activities.

What is truly impressive about Discovering Human Sexuality is the positivity with which the authors approached the presented topics. Unsurprisingly, the text is written in a highly sex positive way, which allows it to remain informative while dealing with subjects that may make readers uncomfortable at times. The unbiased manner in which the authors discuss sexual positions or group relations allows the text to be instructive, yet non-judgmental. It is clear that the authors put effort into being inclusive of the diversity that exists in human experiences. Thus, this textbook is an ideal resource for the variety of students enrolled in a college course on human sexuality. Overall, the interdisciplinary collaboration of LeVay, Baldwin, and Baldwin has produced a comprehensive guide, and generally good read, to one of the most pervasive aspects of human nature.

Maggie Sledd
Department of Cell Biology
Yale University

Gender Circuits, Second Edition. By Eve Shapiro. New York, NY: Routledge; 2015. US $39.95. (Paperback). 280 p. ISBN: 978-0415638531.

While humans are working harder than ever to drive technological discovery, sociologists would argue that, in turn, these advances in technology are changing what it means to be human. With the release of its second edition, Gender Circuits discusses the sociological impact of changing technology on sex, gender, and society in an instructive and relatable manner. Written for the average undergraduate, Shapiro’s work is easily accessible and relatively free of jargon, with all key concepts clearly defined. The reader is given numerous examples, including first-hand stories and historical accounts that relate sociological ideology to the reader in a personable manner.

The first chapter begins with a reference to the film Kinky Boots, using the story of Lola, a drag queen who pioneers high heeled shoes designed for male bodies, to illustrate that new technologies have shaped how gender is perceived, and in turn redefining gender necessitates innovation. The author then steps back to provide a historical background of technology and gender from a social perspective. Later chapters discuss how information technologies allow exploration of gender and identity in today’s digital world and how biomedical technologies allow individuals to modify their physical bodies in new ways.

Mixed in with the broader chapters are individual case studies that provide in depth analysis of specific areas where technology and gender interplay. These alternate chapters discuss varied topics such as the relationship between tattooing and masculinity or bloomers and the nineteenth century woman, allowing the reader to apply concepts learned in the main chapters to novel scenarios.

Overall, Gender Circuits is a pleasure to read, the text manages to be informative without coming across as overly didactic, owing to the plethora of examples and stories provided by the author. Rather ironically, several updated cases of information technologies added to the second edition, such as MySpace and Second Life, would likely be considered outdated by today’s average undergraduate. Instead of detracting from the work, this fact could be used to begin a discussion about new technologies that have shaped and been shaped by modern society.

Maggie Sledd
Department of Cell Biology
Yale University

Gendered Worlds, Third Edition. By Judy Root Aulette and Judith Wittner. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2015. US $79.95 (Paperback). 564 p. ISBN: 978-0199335619.

Gendered Worlds, Third Edition, by Judy Root Aulette and Judith Wittner explores the multiplicity of issues within the concept of gender inequality. By introducing an array of gender-influenced topics, the book serves as an excellent resource for stimulating discussion in undergraduate and graduate-level women and gender studies courses. The strength of this textbook lies in its analysis of intersectionality—this is, the role that “cross-cutting inequalities” such as race, class, and sexuality influence gender disparities. Supported by “real world” examples, each gender theme is addressed with consideration to these complicating factors.

Aulette and Wittner begin with a general overview of the gender assumptions that infiltrate all societies to varying degrees, introducing the notion of gender inequality. From here, the reader is positioned to tackle more in-depth analyses pertaining to the consequences of and movements challenging gender-related inequalities. While maintaining a succinct style, Gendered Worlds addresses diverse topics from the biological components that influence one’s gender to the perpetuation of gender stereo-
types by the media. If a particular topic strikes the interest of the reader, he or she should consult the outside texts provided at the end of each chapter for more detailed information.

With the arrival of the third edition comes the addition of current issues facing gender equality activists. The reader may find many of these fiercely debated topics familiar, thus establishing a connection between current events and the underlying theory discussed in this book. Topics include women in military combat, the portrayal of gender and sexuality in the media, and the wage gap between women and men. Synthesizing theory with these empirical examples will encourage the reader to think critically about the weight of gender on any given social issue. Students will find *Gendered Worlds* to be a fitting guide to the many gender concepts integrated into modern societies.

Joshua B. Sheetz
Department of Pharmacology
Yale University School of Medicine

**Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective, Sixth Edition.** By Linda L. Lindsey. New York, NY: Routledge; 2014, US $104.00 (Paperback). 576 p. ISBN: 978-0205899685.

*Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective,* Sixth Edition, delivers a clear and concise review of the foundations of knowledge in the field of gender studies with historical, contemporary and cultural context. The text provides important, essential commentary on current research in the field. The sixth edition tackles gender myths, gendered trends in health and mental health, and provides a framework for understanding gender roles within traditional and contemporary media. New research in this edition expounds and delineates a wide variety of topics, including masculinity norms in social institutions, gender roles within political elections, and the gender issues that intersect with public policy.

The text is organized in an attentive and deliberate manner that provides structured context to the sociological commentaries. The content is divided into three parts, namely: “Part I: Theoretical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives,” “Part II: Gender Roles, Marriage, and the Family,” and “Part III: Gender Roles: Focus on Social Institutions.” Part I lays the groundwork with in-depth exposition of fundamental sociological concepts, feminism, and gender theories, providing the natural history and historical context of these perspectives. Part II addresses gender issues within the social constructs of family, marriage, and household. Part III summarizes the key theories and points, culminating in application of central concepts to contemporary issues in business, education, economics, religion, public policy, law, and the media. The information is uniformly and cogently organized with each part subdivided into sections. Each section begins with learning objectives and ends with a summary of emphasized concepts, section of key terms, and critical thinking questions. The organization is simple yet thoughtfully structured providing effective guidance.

This well-structured organization is repeated throughout the text. For example, Part II is divided into sections on love and marriage, family relations, and men and masculinity. The first section in “Part II” is a section (chapter 7) entitled “Gendered Love, Marriage, and Emerging Lifestyles.” This chapter distinguishes between the concepts of love, friendship and marriage, challenges regarding some common myths surrounding romance and love. Further, this articulate, excellently written chapter introduces avant-garde styles of relationships. This leads into the next chapters in Part II which discuss the gender issues within family relationships; and lastly, new research on gender issues from the “micro-level” of sociological inspection; specifically, male gender roles and masculinity. The natural step-wise progression of the text builds a strong context before introducing the new research and its commentaries. To balance the interpretations of these sociological views, critiques, given their own sub-sections, are found throughout the text and provide unbiased opposing views.

*Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective* offers readers both historical and contemporary views of the gender issues. The text provides not only context but also examples for these issues within a wide array of frameworks including political, economic, and cultural contexts. Initially introducing the foundation of sociological concepts needed to understand these issues, the text allows novice readers to quickly develop a sophisticated working knowledge about these important issues. This book is highly recommended not only for public consumers and students, but also for experts in the field who will appreciate the astute description and discussion of the latest research, as well as a rich, comprehensive review of fundamental sociologic concepts.

Aaron J. Roberto, M.D.
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellow
Department of Psychiatry,
Boston Children’s Hospital
Harvard Medical School

Kevin J. Li, M.D.
General Psychiatry Resident
Harvard South Shore Psychiatry Residency Training Program
VA Boston Healthcare System
Arguing that men and women are different is risky business as the social demand to eliminate the gender binary increases. However, in her latest book *Evolution and Gender: Why It Matters for Contemporary Life*, Dr. Rosemary L. Hopcroft, a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, not only delves into the question of how men and women are different, but also explores how they became different. Hopcroft takes an “evolutionary approach to gender” exploring the development of the binary (p. 3). She argues that the differences have been evolving due to physical pressures, focusing on the roles of the two sexes in child rearing, and social pressures.

Hopcroft begins by exploring the mating strategies of the two sexes. Using the point of view of an anthropomorphized gene, she explains the ultimate goal of a partnership is to have their children reach reproductive age to perpetuate the gene’s lineage. As such, a woman’s partner choice depends on his ability to aid in rearing the child, be it by financial or other means. Men, on the other hand, can either invest in a long-term mate, to ensure their children have the greatest chance of survival, or have many short-term mates to have a larger cohort of children, increasing the likelihood that their genes will continue on in his lineage. These differences drive many of the social differences between men and women. Hopcroft continues to explore other physiological and cognitive differences between the sexes, such as strength and ability to deal with strong emotions, arguing different evolutionary pressures developed these differences. She repeatedly ensures readers she is not trying to build a stereotype of man and woman; instead she is describing an average.

Importantly, Hopcroft describes the social changes leading to predominantly patriarchal societies. Before farming, men and women played an equal role in obtaining food, hunting and gathering, respectively. After the agricultural revolution, “men are still able to use their roles in defense (and offense) to gain power, but the nature of [these] agrarian societies means they now have other means of controlling others, including women,” because men took over the entire means of managing food, eliminating women’s social roles other than childcare (p. 89).

Tackling politically triggering topics is difficult to do. Hopcroft is able to use evolution and biology to explain that indeed, men and women are physically different and traditionally serve different social roles, but emphasizes the equality of the sexes within society. Although there was a lack of discussion on sexuality beyond the traditional pair of a heterosexual male and female, this seemed to be done on purpose, to emphasize how our society has evolved the gender binary. Hopcroft argues that the “[awareness] of sex differences in evolved predispositions” is necessary “to create a truly nondiscriminatory, equitable society for all” (p. 244). Overall, Hopcroft elegantly explores what it means to be an average woman and average man in modern American society and how we culturally evolved these characteristics.

Helen A. Beilinson
Department of Immunobiology
Yale University