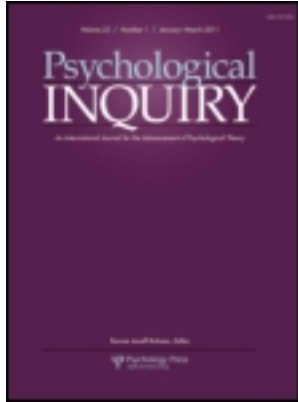


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The Psychology of the Pair-Bond: Past and Future Contributions of Close Relationships Research to Evolutionary Psychology

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The Psychology of the Pair-Bond: Past and Future Contributions of Close Relationships Research to Evolutionary Psychology

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Stewart-Williams and Thomas (this issue) urge evolutionary psychologists to reconsider their historically heavy emphasis on sex differences in human mating. The authors draw from research in biological anthropology and evolutionary biology to suggest that humans are more sexually monomorphic than implied by the evolutionary psychological literature. That is, humans are not appropriately characterized by a sexually dimorphic males-compete/females-choose (MCFC) mating model but rather a model of mutual mate choice (MMC) where males and females court each other. The core of Stewart-Williams and Thomas's argument rests on the evidence that parental investment sex differences (Trivers, 1972) are typically smaller in humans than in many other animals, including our closest primate relatives. Natural selection reduced the size of this sex difference in the hominin lineage because our ancestors faced unique evolutionary pressures that required mothers and fathers to provision and support their offspring for an extended period. The pair-bond was a key adaptive solution to these selection pressures: In the context of a pair-bond, males would be especially likely to invest in offspring, and therefore human mating is aptly characterized as a system where both males and females are highly motivated to pursue and compete for pair-bonding partners. Psychologists who study mating need to be well versed in this material; to this end, the review presented by Stewart-Williams and Thomas is both an accessible and thorough treatment of the selective forces faced by early hominins.

The authors lament that the unresolved tension between the MCFC model and the MMC model produces a lack of clarity in the evolutionary psychological literature; this is an astute observation. One possible reason that this tension persists is that evolutionary psychological theorizing rarely references the time course of evolutionary events (i.e., phylogeny). Phylogenetic considerations may be important for psychological theorists: Natural selection produced many different mating-relevant adaptations throughout humans' long evolutionary history, and these adaptations vary in the extent to which they correspond to the MCFC or the MMC mating model. In other words, selective forces differed for men and women during some periods, yet during other periods, natural selection pushed the sexes toward greater physical and psy-

chological equality. These time course considerations are implicit in Stewart-Williams and Thomas's thesis: The evidence they cite in support of the MCFC model largely derives from cross-species comparisons (suggesting very old evolutionary origins), but the evidence in support of the MMC model derives from research on early *Homo* and the lifestyle of hunter-gatherers (suggesting more recent origins, no more than 2 million years ago). Knowledge about the timing of evolutionary events can aid researchers in developing more precise predictions about when psychological sex differences should and should not emerge (Eastwick, 2009; Eastwick & Finkel, 2012; Grebe, Gangestad, Garver-Apgar, & Thornhill, in press). By drawing attention to the specific selective forces encountered by ancestral hominins, Stewart-Williams and Thomas (this issue) advance evolutionary psychological research by emphasizing how humans' evolutionary history makes us both similar to and different from other primates.

Yet when it comes to the importance of pair-bonding, I am a member of the proverbial choir; I enjoyed the sermon, but I find myself dwelling (perhaps unfairly) on concerns about how the target article will be received. Mainly, I maintain some pessimism that this piece will have the desired effect of persuading evolutionary psychologists to migrate away from the study of sex differences and toward the study of pair-bonding. To be clear, the authors' synthesis of the anthropological and evolutionary biological literatures is impressive, and as a whole the article carves a productive middle path between enthusiasm for and criticism of the current state of the evolutionary psychological literature. But I believe there are some limitations of the central conceptual contribution of the piece: the "spectrum" or "continuum" between MCFC and MMC. I fear that this particular concept is not terribly useful for most psychologists, including most evolutionary psychologists.

I am not disputing the existence of such a continuum or the authors' suggestion that humans are located closer to the MMC pole than the MCFC pole. Furthermore, I think that this continuum could be very useful for researchers who compare mating behavior across species that lie at different points along this continuum (i.e., if gorillas are a more MCFC species than humans, then gorillas should exhibit more pronounced sex

differences in domain X than humans). Unfortunately, scholars who conduct such cross-species comparisons are rarely *psychologists* (but see Fraley, Brumbaugh, & Marks, 2005), and I am concerned that psychologists will have difficulty drawing from this dimension to generate predictions as they document mating phenomena in humans. Imagine a hypothetical evolutionary psychologist who has studied a particular suite of mating-relevant sex differences. If he or she draws from MCFC principles to predict such sex differences, finds evidence for them, and uses these data to illuminate how humans initiate and maintain relationships, does the MCFC–MMC continuum suggest that something about this researcher’s data is mistaken or in need of qualification? Do his or her sex differences of $d = .80$ (e.g., the sociosexuality sex difference that the authors discuss) now appear small even when such a difference dwarfs the effect sizes documented by his or her fellow psychologist colleagues? If I were this hypothetical researcher, I would not be persuaded by Stewart-Williams and Thomas that I need to change my research program.

Yet I think that the authors’ core premise is absolutely correct: The importance of pair-bonding is undervalued in the evolutionary psychological literature, and corrective action is needed. In my view, a psychological literature will make this case in the not-too-distant future. However, this very relevant literature was largely neglected in this article.

Close Relationships Research: Late to the Party

Setting the potential utility of the MCFC–MMC spectrum aside, there is an alternative way of making the case that the study of the pair-bond needs to be integrated with evolutionary psychology. This alternative is found in the research of my home discipline: the field of close relationships (for overviews, see Berscheid & Regan, 2005; Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Bradbury & Karney, 2010; Fletcher, Simpson, Campbell, & Overall, 2013; Miller, 2012). Close relationships research is the study of the psychology of the pair-bond, and I was disappointed to find that my discipline was missing from the target article. Other than a few brief mentions of the importance of love and commitment (e.g., this issue, p. 145) and three studies by Jeffrey Simpson (a relationships researcher who also serves as our most prominent ambassador to evolutionary psychology), we were absent from the discussion.

To be sure, my discipline deserves some of the blame for the fact that we were left off the guest list. The crossover between close relationships research and evolutionary psychology has historically been modest. We study many of the same topics, but ultimate evolutionary considerations are only rarely a part of the stated theoretical rationale underlying the work of close

relationships researchers. Consider attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), which is a highly influential theoretical perspective in the study of close relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Given how strongly Bowlby grounded his theory in evolutionary principles, work in this area should have served as a bridge between evolutionary psychology and close relationships research. Yet for many years, the majority of the research in this tradition focused on individual differences in attachment style, which is a topic that is more obviously connected to the social cognitive and developmental elements of the theory than to the evolutionary elements of the theory (but see Ein-dor, Mikulincer, Doron, & Shaver, 2010; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Diamond, 2000). There is little hostility to evolutionary ideas in the close relationships discipline—perhaps one might encounter a mild indifference or the belief that the field is doing fine without drawing explicitly from evolutionary concepts. Nevertheless, my discipline should be unnerved by the fact that two knowledgeable scholars just wrote a highly visible piece in *Psychological Inquiry* about the psychology of the pair-bond and mentioned none of our work. Our indifference to evolutionary principles may lead to our absence from major scholarly debates about mating where our perspective should be central. The close relationships field will have a greater interdisciplinary reach if we are explicitly informed by evolutionary and anthropological concepts.

With regard to the authors’ focus on sex differences, men and women do differ in some close relationships research domains, but not in most. As noted by Fletcher et al. (2013), women tend to play a more active role in managing their relationships than men; women are more sensitive to problems in the relationship (Amato & Previti, 2003) and are more likely to initiate communication in an attempt to change elements of the relationship (Christensen & Heavey, 1990), for example. Support and conflict within relationships may have different health consequences for men and women (Crockett & Neff, 2013; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001), and women may be more motivated than men to perceive their partner’s thoughts and feelings accurately (Ickes, Gesn, & Graham, 2000). But the portrait of sex differences that emerges when researchers study established close relationships is hardly a story about Mars and Venus. In short, to the extent that close relationships research makes direct connections to evolutionary concepts, it is highly likely to support Stewart-Williams and Thomas’s (this issue) MMC worldview.

Fortunately, close relationships research has started to make this shift over the past few years. The recent Fletcher et al. (2013) textbook is a case in point: It represents a major synthesis of the close relationships and evolutionary psychological literatures and makes new strides in integrating the two fields. In the coming years, I anticipate that the close relationships discipline

will make several invaluable contributions to evolutionary psychology; next, I outline three strengths of my field that put it in a strong position to make such an impact. First, close relationships researchers maintain a strong focus on psychological process, and thus our research can explain how being involved in a pair-bond changes the way that people think and feel. Second, close relationships researchers use an impressive array of methods that track people as they initiate and maintain real relationships over the course of days, months, and years. Third, close relationships researchers draw from very different theoretical models that emphasize relationship development over time; these models differ considerably from the prevailing evolutionary models that focus on reproductive strategies. In the sections that follow, I make the case for why evolutionary psychologists need the insights generated by the study of close relationships.

Strength #1: A Focus on Psychological Process

One persuasive way to highlight the psychological importance of the MMC model would be to demonstrate that being a part of an established, bonded relationship changes the way that people think and feel. Ideally, these psychological changes would plausibly have been associated with functional outcomes in humans' ancestral past. Promising candidates for such psychological adaptations derive from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980, 1988). Bowlby described several normative features of the attachment bond including *proximity seeking* (i.e., attempts to stay near the attachment figure), *separation distress* (i.e., negative affect when separated from the attachment figure), *safe haven* (i.e., seeking the attachment figure for comfort or assistance when distressed), and *secure base* (i.e., relying on the attachment figure for support of growth and exploration). Young children exhibit these behaviors with respect to their caregivers, and Bowlby theorized that these behaviors were part of an evolved attachment-behavioral system. Adult close relationships researchers have suggested that natural selection co-opted the attachment-behavioral system to bond adult mating partners together in adulthood (Eastwick, 2009; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Diamond, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). This perspective explains why many adult pair-bonded partners exhibit these same attachment features: They rely on each other for support and advice (Feeney & Collins, 2013), and they become emotionally and physiologically distressed when they are apart from each other (Diamond, Hicks, & Otter-Henderson, 2008; Sbarra & Hazan, 2008). Close relationships researchers often assess the presence of these features (e.g., using items such as “___ is the first person that I would turn to if I had a problem”) as indicators of the extent to which

adaptations for pair-bonding are activated in a particular relationship (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008a, 2012; Tancredy & Fraley, 2006). This method of assessing pair-bond strength is ideal for psychological researchers, as it avoids conflating the pair-bond with monogamy, which is a societal-level construct that is only distantly related to the psychology of the pair-bond (Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matsick, & Valentine, 2013; Eastwick, 2009, 2013; Stewart-Williams & Thomas, this issue).

It is important to note that these normative elements of attachment theory—especially the safe haven and secure base features—are likely to have functional relevance in adulthood. When people face life adversities, their relationship partners frequently serve the safe haven attachment function by offering aid to them in the form of assurance, protection, and comfort (Collins & Feeney, 2000, 2004). When people are not facing stressful circumstances, their relationship partners frequently serve the secure base attachment function by supporting their exploration and encouraging them to engage fully in life opportunities (Feeney, 2004, 2007; Feeney & Thrush, 2010; Gable & Reis, 2010). People experience a wide variety of adaptive benefits if they are supported by a strong safe haven and secure base: They are more likely to accomplish their goals, develop new skills, accumulate wisdom, develop core strengths, and maintain and improve their psychological and physical health (Brunstein, Dangelmayer, & Schultheiss, 1996; Feeney & Collins, 2013; Feeney & Van Vleet, 2010; Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2009; Uchino, 2009). From an evolutionary perspective, these findings suggest that humans who invested in a healthy and successful pair-bond experienced more than reproductive benefits; they may have experienced survival benefits as well. Romantic partners are surely not the only significant others who can provision a safe haven and secure base, but they are a very common attachment figure in adulthood, and therefore pair-bonded romantic partners are likely to have tremendous adaptive value even beyond the reproductive domain.

Another line of work in the close relationships literature reveals some of the boundaries of the MCFC model. Specifically, research on the *derogation of alternatives* suggests that being a part of a pair-bonded relationship changes the psychological process by which people evaluate possible romantic partners. People who are committed to their current romantic partners tend to see objectively desirable alternative partners as less appealing than their uncommitted (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Lydon, Fitzsimons, & Naidoo, 2003) and single (Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990) counterparts. Furthermore, this effect is unlikely to be due to self-report social desirability biases, as similar effects emerge with indirect dependent variables such as nonconscious mimicry of desirable partners and the amount of time people gaze at desirable partners (Karremans & Verwijmeren, 2008; Linardatos & Lydon,

2011; Maner, Rouby, & Gonzaga, 2008; Miller, 1997; Plant, Kunstman, & Maner, 2010). In addition, the attention that people devote to attractive alternatives predicts whether their relationships remain intact or not (Miller, 1997). The fact that men reliably exhibited these effects in all of the aforementioned studies (but see Lydon, Menzies-Toman, Burton, & Bell, 2008) suggests an important qualification of the MCFC model: Whatever psychological adaptations lead men to seek out a plethora of desirable mating partners, these adaptations appear to be deactivated in the context of a strong pair-bond. As Stewart-Williams and Thomas (this issue) note, an extreme version of the MCFC model predicts that “men evolved to pursue short-term sexual relationships with as many women as possible, only opting for long-term pair bonding if they failed in this strategy” (p. 138). Considering the derogation of alternatives literature, one could conclude that the converse extreme is more likely: Men evolved to pursue long-term pair bonding, only opting for short-term sexual relationships if they failed in this strategy.

Finally, some recent work has suggested that adaptations for pair-bonding may intersect with the psychological shifts that accompany women’s ovulatory cycles. An impressive corpus of research has demonstrated that women are more likely to prefer indicators of good genes in male partners (e.g., symmetry, dominance) when they are in the fertile rather than the nonfertile phase of their menstrual cycles (Gangestad, Thornhill, & Garver-Apgar, 2005; Thornhill & Gangestad, 2008). Yet under circumstances where pair-bonds are especially strong, ovulatory adaptations may have been co-opted by the attachment system to maintain or strengthen attachment bonds rather than to pursue good genes. In one set of studies (Eastwick & Finkel, 2012), fertility was associated with reduced interest in romantic physical intimacy with a current romantic partner among women who were not strongly bonded to that partner (see also Sheldon, Cooper, Geary, Hoard, & DeSoto, 2006). Yet among strongly bonded women, fertility was associated with increases in the desire for romantic physical intimacy with their current partner. Also, women tend to be more open to variety and novelty (in both men and consumer products) when fertile than when not fertile, unless they are reminded of their commitment to their current partner (Rae & Durante, 2013). Similar ovulatory shifts emerge with respect to men’s psychology when they are interacting with desirable alternative romantic partners: Although single men report more attraction to fertile than nonfertile women, men with romantic partners find fertile women to be significantly *less* attractive than nonfertile women (Miller & Maner, 2010).

In summary, being involved in a romantic relationship—especially a relationship with a strong attachment bond—seems to change the human mat-

ing psyche in profound ways. The tangible adaptive benefits provisioned by attachment figures (Feeney & Collins, 2013) and the moderational effects linked to derogation of alternatives (Miller, 1997) and ovulatory shifts (Eastwick & Finkel, 2012) offer strong support for the importance of Stewart-Williams and Thomas’s (this issue) MMC model. In crucial ways, the close relationships literature is uniquely poised to offer many such qualifications of MCFC orthodoxy.

Strength #2: Methodological Rigor

A second strength of the close relationships literature is that the methods typically employed in this domain do an excellent job of documenting how people initiate and maintain real (not imagined or hypothetical) relationships. As far back as the classic computer dance study (Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966), scholars in this tradition have placed a premium on people’s face-to-face romantic impressions. As the focus of the field shifted from the study of initial attraction to the study of close relationships in the 1980s, this emphasis on the study of real relationships remained (Eastwick & Finkel, 2008c). Scholars pioneered new methods (e.g., daily or event-contingent diaries, Wheeler & Reis, 1991; observational coding schemes, Sillars, Coletti, Parry, & Rogers, 1982) and new statistical techniques (e.g., the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model, Kenny, 1996; growth curve analysis, Singer & Willett, 2003) to handle the intricacies of studying living, interacting romantic dyads. Today, relationships researchers have an impressive array of methodological tools at their disposal as they work to bridge research on initial attraction with research on existing close relationships (Beck & Clark, 2010; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008c).

Some studies in the evolutionary psychological literature also emphasized face-to-face impressions (Clark & Hatfield, 1989) and romantic evaluations within existing close relationships (Buss & Barnes, 1986). But many studies did not, and some recent evidence suggests that the heavy reliance on hypothetical and scenario-based paradigms has tended to overestimate some sex differences. For example, as Stewart-Williams and Thomas (this issue) note, men consistently report that they desire physical attractiveness in a partner more than women. In addition, women consistently report that they desire earning prospects in a partner more than men. However, the question of interest to a close relationships researcher is whether these particular qualities affect the process of relationship initiation and maintenance differently for men and women. That is, does physical attractiveness inspire positive romantic evaluations more strongly for men than for women, and does earning prospects inspire positive romantic evaluations more strongly for women than

for men? Studies that used hypothetical or scenario paradigms—where participants had never met the target whom they were evaluating—unambiguously answered these two questions in the affirmative (Baize & Schroeder, 1995; de Vries, Swenson, & Walsh, 2007; Fletcher, Tither, O’Loughlin, Friesen, & Overall, 2004; Greitemeyer, 2007; Hitsch, Hortaçsu, & Ariely, 2010; Townsend, 1993; Townsend & Levy, 1990a, 1990b; Townsend & Roberts, 1993; Wenzel & Emerson, 2009). However, evidence for these sex differences was far more ambiguous in paradigms where participants had recently met the target in a face-to-face interaction (e.g., speed-dating; Eastwick & Finkel, 2008b; Kurzban & Weeden, 2005) or where participants reported on existing relationship partners (e.g., Critelli & Waid, 1980; McNulty, Neff, & Karney, 2008).

To clarify the nature of these sex differences, a recent meta-analysis examined (a) the association between physical attractiveness and romantic evaluations (e.g., romantic desire, relationship satisfaction) as well as (b) the association between earning prospects and romantic evaluations (Eastwick, Luchies, Finkel, & Hunt, in press). The meta-analysis included paradigms where participants had met the opposite-sex partner in a face-to-face interaction at a minimum; thus, it spanned both the initial attraction (e.g., speed-dating) and close relationship (e.g., existing romantic partners) literatures. Across approximately 30,000 participants, physical attractiveness predicted positive romantic evaluations with a medium-to-large effect size (average $r = \sim .40$), and across approximately 50,000 participants, earning prospects predicted romantic evaluations with a small effect size (average $r = \sim .10$). However, the sex differences in these associations were extremely small in both cases ($r = .03$) and nonsignificant. When compared with the data from hypothetical paradigms that demonstrated these sex differences, the meta-analytic results suggest that the psychological processes that underlie romantic evaluations may differ substantially depending on the research paradigm (Eastwick, Finkel, & Eagly, 2011; Eastwick, Hunt, & Neff, 2013). By emphasizing the study of existing relationships and live, face-to-face impressions, close relationships research stands an excellent likelihood of accurately characterizing people’s real-world mating experiences.

One additional methodological strength of the close relationships literature is evidenced by scholars’ focus on the dyad. Interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959)—another influential theory in the close relationships literature—posits that the behavior of two interacting people is often poorly explained by appeals to their individual qualities (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Van Lange, 2010). Rather, their behavior is largely a function of the unique relationship that they share. This tension between the individual and the dyad is elegantly parsed by the Social Relations Model (Kenny, 1994; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006), which is a frame-

work that separates the extent to which judgments are due to the person making a judgment (i.e., the actor), the target being judged (i.e., the partner), or the unique relationship between the actor and the partner (i.e., the dyad). As predicted by interdependence theory, the lion’s share of the variance exists at the level of the dyad (i.e., relationship variance) for many social judgments and behaviors (Kenny, 1994; Kenny et al., 2006). For highly affective judgments (e.g., liking, desire) that are important in inspiring romantic pursuits, relationship variance is often quite large (Eastwick & Hunt, 2013).

This state of the social world potentially poses a problem for the MCFC model. In a mating system where males compete to impress females, females would need to exhibit substantial consensus (i.e., partner variance) regarding which males are the most desirable. Indeed, there is some evidence in humans for consensus on romantically relevant qualities (e.g., physical attractiveness, desirability as a romantic partner) when people are meeting for the first time (Asendorpf, Penke, & Back, 2011; Back, Schmukle, & Egloff, 2011). Yet partner variance is typically weaker than relationship variance, and as members of the opposite sex get to know one another over time, consensus on romantically relevant qualities drops off dramatically (Eastwick & Hunt, 2013). That is, as people become better acquainted with one another, their romantic evaluations become highly nonconsensual and especially idiosyncratic. An MMC model is largely consistent with this pattern of data: Highly unique romantic evaluations probably facilitate a mating system where males and females form pair-bonds, as it increases the likelihood that most people will be able to find a mate who is especially desirable to them. In short, relationships researchers’ methods that focus on real interactions, existing close relationships, and evaluations unique to the dyad have tended to support Stewart-Williams and Thomas’s (this issue) favored MMC model.

Strength #3: Emphasis on Relationship Development Over Time

The models of relationship development that underlie the evolutionary psychological and close relationships literatures fail to overlap in crucial ways. In evolutionary psychology, the distinction between short-term and long-term mating *strategies* is paramount (e.g., sexual strategies theory, Buss & Schmitt, 1993; strategic pluralism, Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). These theories posit that men and women possess some psychological adaptations that are relevant to mating when in a short-term mindset (e.g., a one-night stand or brief affair), and they possess other psychological adaptations that are relevant to mating when in a long-term mindset (e.g., a pair-bonded relationship).

These different strategic mindsets should be associated with the pursuit of different kinds of partners and the use of different tactics to attract those partners (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt & Buss, 1996). The trade-off between short-term and long-term strategies flows from the evolutionary biological distinction between mating effort and parenting effort (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000; Trivers, 1972). For example, a male can achieve reproductive success by devoting his energies to having sex with as many females as possible (i.e., mating effort), or he can devote his energies to investing in a smaller number of resource-rich offspring (i.e., parenting effort). Men and women differ in how they negotiate this tradeoff (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), and there are individual differences within-sex in how people negotiate it as well (Belsky, Steinberg, & Draper, 1991; Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). The key element of these evolutionary models is that, when people pursue romantic relationships, they use different sets of goal-directed strategies depending on whether the goal is a short-term or long-term relationship.

The short-term versus long-term mating distinction does not fit elegantly into close relationship researchers' models of relationship development. According to these models, dyads negotiate increased interdependence as the partners get to know each other over the course of days, months, or years (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). This courtship process has been depicted as a stage model (Knapp, 1984; Levinger & Snoek, 1972), a series of memorable turning points or choice points (Bullis, Clark, & Sline, 1993; Gagné & Lydon, 2004; Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald, & Cate, 1981), or a set of psychological processes that wax and wane over time (Clark & Beck, 2011; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Murstein, 1970). Like the evolutionary models, many close relationship models posit that people pursue goals via romantic relationships (e.g., sex, fun, intimacy, companionship), but these goals do not map on cleanly to the distinction between short-term and long-term strategies. In fact, some perspectives suggest that relationship initiation is accompanied by "strategic ambiguity" such that people remain unsure of their feelings and unsure of what they want from the relationship until repeated interactions have taken place (Perper & Cornog, 2000). In this light, the short-term versus long-term nature of a relationship can be determined only in hindsight; indeed, researchers' ability to predict relationship duration and stability before the relationship actually exists is exceptionally weak (Finkel et al., 2012).

One possible synthesis of these incongruous perspectives is that people pass through an initial set of stages when "short-term" psychological adaptations (e.g., sexual attraction) are activated; if the relationship persists for long enough, they reach a stage when "long-term" adaptations (e.g., pair-bonding) become

relevant. The terms "initial-stage" and "later-stage" represent one way that these models might be merged. If this synthesis is correct, short-term relationships would tend to be those in which one or both members of the couple lacked sufficient motivation (e.g., they possessed only moderate feelings of attraction and liking) to negotiate the many steps between initial acquaintance and relationship formation. In other words, wanting a short-term relationship with someone could be a euphemism for "I like you a little."

Furthermore, this synthesis can potentially explain the differing effects of male physical attractiveness on women's romantic evaluations across relationship stages (Eastwick, Morgan, Graham, & Neff, 2013). In initial attraction paradigms (e.g., "initial-stage" studies), objectively attractive men are desired by women more than unattractive men (average $r = \sim .30$), perhaps because the genes of these men aided the women's offspring in resisting pathogens and disease in our ancestral past (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). However, in paradigms examining established couples (e.g., "later-stage" studies), objective attractiveness in men is uncorrelated with their female partners' relationship satisfaction (average $r < .05$). This association is essentially null because of two opposing indirect effects: Objective attractiveness in men is associated with some (small) benefits for female partners, such as perceived social support (Langlois et al., 2000) and sexual satisfaction, but it is also associated with some (small) costs, such as increased potential for trust violations (Eastwick, Morgan, et al., 2013).

The initial-stage versus later-stage distinction may help to incorporate relationship development perspectives into evolutionary psychological theorizing. Note that this distinction is not simply a repackaging of short term versus long term: For example, the Eastwick, Morgan, et al. (2013) data do not require that people engage in a trade-off between short-term mating effort and long-term parenting effort, a trade-off that characterizes many evolutionary models (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000). In other words, physically attractive males have great success in the short-term mating domain, but a relationship development model does not require that attractive males are *also* poor long-term partners (cf. Durante, Griskevicius, Simpson, Cantú, & Li, 2012). Rather, attractive men's short-term mating successes are accrued during periods when they are in the initial stages of relationships and not pair-bonded; at these times, attractive men simply have more romantic options than unattractive men. When in a pair-bonded relationship, these same attractive men are about as likely as unattractive men to pursue extrapair romantic options, and they prove to be equally good long-term partners. Thus, the integration of evolutionary and relationship development models is likely to raise heretofore unnoticed theoretical conflicts. At the moment, few research programs have attempted to unite these

two different types of models, and this topic remains an important a direction for future research.

Conclusion

On the whole, I think that the Stewart-Williams and Thomas (this issue) perspective is valuable, and they present an informative synthesis of the anthropological and evolutionary biological literatures on pair-bonding. I have some concerns that the evidence they marshaled in support of the psychological importance of the pair-bond is not as strong as it could be. In my commentary, I have tried to bolster this case by incorporating empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives from the close relationships literature. I am not entirely surprised that knowledgeable evolutionary scholars would overlook the relevance of this literature; after all, the first major synthesis of evolutionary psychology and close relationships research hit store shelves only a few months ago (Fletcher et al., 2013). As I noted earlier, close relationships scholars are late to the evolutionary party. But I anticipate that in the coming years, for the reasons I have outlined, we will be the life of it.

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Note

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