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# Explanatory Appeals to Hormones in Evolutionary Anthropology.

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## Abstract

”Session: Exploring the evolution of culture and social behavior (Stephen M. Downes, Patrick Forber, Matt Haber, Fiona Jordan, Elisabeth Lloyd, Rory Smead)”

Explanatory Appeals to Hormones in Evolutionary Anthropology.

Debates between evolutionary psychologists and evolutionary anthropologists have centered on a contrast between explanatory approaches (or explanatory styles). In these debates, evolutionary anthropologists have emphasized their debt to behavioral ecology. Evolutionary anthropologists apply optimality models derived from behavioral ecology to human behavior and use these models to generate adaptationist hypotheses about many aspects of human behavior. This explanatory approach stands in stark contrast to that of evolutionary psychologists, who appeal to evolved psychological modules in their accounts of human behavior. Many human behavioral ecologists reject evolutionary psychologists’ explanations due to this appeal to internal mechanisms. Many in evolutionary anthropology also appeal to hormones in their explanations of many areas of human behavior, for example, aggression, dominance hierarchies and parenting. One way of viewing such appeals to hormones is that they are also appeals to internal mechanisms and if so, this constitutes the adoption of an explanatory style that is rejected by many human behavioral ecologists. I look at the work of a few evolutionary anthropologists for whom hormones play a key role and assess their explanatory options. Here I also assess the extent to which explanations invoking hormones can or should be considered evolutionary explanations. The cases I focus on come from work by Elizabeth Cashdan, Mark Flinn and Sarah Hrdy.

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