Men hunt and women nest: Challenging claims about intrinsic gender differences

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Scientific claims about intrinsic gender differences in behavior and cognition have been widespread for almost four decades, beginning with the backlash after the Women’s Movement of the 1970s. For more than 30 years, Dr. Nash’s scholarship has challenged the theoretical underpinnings that eclipse the importance of social context in understanding human behavior. Her theoretical papers have critiqued aspects of sociobiology, attachment theory, and evolutionary psychology, illustrating how flawed logic and methodology can serve to reify gender stereotypes. At the same time, her empirical research has taken her from Great Gull Island to the play spaces of young children as she critically examined assumptions about gendered behavior that are derived from these theories. From birds to babies to bubbies (i.e. grandmothers), Dr. Nash’s diverse methodologies have revealed surprising complexity and variability in behaviors that may be overlooked when they are simplistically described as innate.

ALISON NASH received a PhD in Psychobiology from Stony Brook University in 1985. She completed a pre-doctoral fellowship at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Utah to work on research on cowbirds and infant attachment, respectively. In addition to her empirical research, her expertise has been recognized by the inclusion of her papers in prestigious scholarly compendiums such as the *Handbook of Infancy* and the *Handbook of Peer Relations*. Her research has brought her from a Museum of Natural History bird colony research station on Great Gull Island to laboratory playrooms on college campuses while investigating the complexities of social interaction across species and across the lifespan.