Twitter Thread by Jeffrey Sachs



Jeffrey Sachs
@JeffreyASachs

I have to say, of all the responses to my defense of the Feminist Glaciology piece, this one (and the others along the same lines) is not what I was expecting.

> This is a pretty valiant attempt to defend the "Feminist Glaciology" article, which says conventional wisdom is wrong, and this is a solid piece of scholarship. I'll beg to differ, because I think Jeffery, here, is confusing scholarship with "saying things that seem right". https://t.co/hWFA6p9Ln0
>
> — Simon DeDeo (@SimonDeDeo) October 19, 2018

The core complaint is that the original article doesn't supply any evidence to back up its claims -- claims about colonialism, about public attitudes toward scientific expertise, about mountaineering and expeditions. That lack of evidence strikes this critic as surprising.

It shouldn't. As I noted in the original thread, the article is explicitly NOT an empirical piece. It is a review article designed to link together the empirical work of others. And there's no shame in that. On the contrary.

https://t.co/d5yPa1pNzZ

> What can we say about the article in general? Well, it doesn't break any new empirical ground, but rather synthesizes the work of others and organizes them together around the concept of gender. The article is quite clear about this at the outset. pic.twitter.com/6d4JTpnD29
>
> — Jeffrey Sachs (@JeffreyASachs) October 13, 2018

Review articles like this are both very valuable and extremely common. Common in all fields and disciplines, including in the hard sciences. I mean, there's an entire series in the social sciences devoted to just this: reviews. And it rocks.

https://t.co/UUm1Igqc0L

Here's a review article just published earlier this month. Not a whiff of original empirical evidence in it, but the authors (no doubt handsome and brilliant chaps the both of them) certainly seem confident they have something valuable to say.

https://t.co/LYb2syoJtd

So yeah: the Feminist Glaciology article doesn't supply much evidence for its claims. Probably that's partly because some of those claims are taken as obvious givens in the literature (e.g. the masculinity of colonialism), but it's also just not the purpose or goal of the piece.