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Same Difference: How Gender Myths Are Hurting Our Relationships, Our Children, and Our Jobs, by Rosalind Barnett & Caryl Rivers

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originally emerged in our country as a call to community and in response to the perceived threat of Protestant-based public schools. Nearly all Catholic elementary schools were established as part of a parish and part of a community of not only common religious beliefs, but also of similar culture, thought, and action. With the number of Catholic K-12 schools currently decreasing and enrollment declining, one must consider the mission of Catholic schools and what is missing from them today that was vibrant decades earlier. We must look at methods of community building that were key features in Catholic schools at the time of their establishment, that still exist in spirit and as an ideal, and that can perhaps come alive using models of building social capital. Within the context of a church that is hierarchical in structure, we must work to have all constituents involved and heard in the process of reclaiming and reinventing the greater community of Catholic schools in the United States. Parents, students, teachers, administrators, parishioners, and community members must all feel invested in the process of revitalizing and strengthening the network of Catholic schools, as seen in similar scenarios described by Putnam and Feldstein. The stories from *Better Together* must do more than inspire. They must be a call to action.

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SAME DIFFERENCE: HOW GENDER MYTHS ARE HURTING OUR RELATIONSHIPS, OUR CHILDREN, AND OUR JOBS

ROSALIND BARNETT & CARYL RIVERS

BASIC BOOKS, 2004

\$ 25.00, 289 pages

Reviewed by Ruby T. Urbina

“People’s behavior today is determined more by situation than by gender” (p. 5). *Same Difference: How Gender Myths Are Hurting Our Relationships, Our Children, and Our Jobs* explores how power makes the difference, not necessarily gender. The book is divided into three parts: relationships, work, and parenting.

The authors refute many myths, presumptions, and misconceptions about the differences between men and women. Part 1 of the book provides different examples that foster the view that the woman's role is that of caretaker, responsible for answering to the needs of her husband and family. Starting in Genesis, we find the idea that a woman (Eve) was created to take care of the man (Adam). Using science and intellectual insight, the authors take on the most popular myths of gender difference. This book strongly recommends the improvement of relationships between men and women.

Historically, men have been the breadwinners of the family. Today, due to the demands of society and the greater needs of families, both parents are forced to work to make ends meet. Since this shift, a drastic change in relationships has begun to surface within members of the family and the so-called harmony has begun to fade, probably because of pressures at work.

This book not only discusses relationships between adult males and females, but it also talks about young boys and girls as well. Researchers claim that boys are better in mathematics than girls. The influential journal, *Science*, published a study under the headline "Math and Sex: Are Girls Born with Less Ability?" *Time* presented it as the "Gender Factor in Math." The study became a major national story, and many parents worried that their daughters would not be able to compete with their male peers in mathematics. According to the authors, the reporter who is responsible for this did not go over the significance of statistics and failed to emphasize that the key issue is not the size of the difference in the average scores of the boys and girls. What is really important is the difference in the range of scores in each group. The three studies conducted by these researchers concluded that girls' and boys' math scores are roughly equivalent. They also emphasized that women succeed not only in math but also in the field of science, engineering, and within the technology workforce. Excellence in women in these different fields was proven by different statistics cited in this book. The authors added, "this kind of progress won't be widespread until we stop believing that males are innately superior at math just as we have stopped believing that the earth is flat" (p. 171).

Gradually, we have established social views about women and their role in a relationship. Our views are natural and we have grown up listening about these traditional outlooks. Many social commentators cite that men are better leaders. Among the reasons given are that women do not have the right hormones. Their brains are built for empathizing, which is only good for making friends, caring for the baby, and gossiping. Also, women lack the motivation for leadership and are violating their essential feminine natures when they try to lead. In short, these social commentators believe that women will never achieve as much as men in the work world. This reviewer

commends the authors for pointing out that if we believe the myths about a woman's inability to lead in the workforce, we will also harm the corporations for which they work.

The last part of this book talks about parenting. Both authors agree that there is no difference between the two sexes; they are equal in potential, but varied in behavior. This section shows that fathers are also capable of doing the day-to-day caring for children, such as fixing a daughter's hair, playing with children, and interacting with them. Parenting behavior is neither inborn nor socially transferred to one sex, but is learned by caregiving in a specific situation.

The authors provide several examples to support their argument, refuting stereotypes and rationalizations about differences between the sexes. From mathematical aptitude to maternal intuition, the authors explore and take apart many generally accepted conceptions of male and female destiny. Each chapter in the book focuses on myths that are thoroughly misunderstood by our society.

Their conclusions provide a different point of view toward gender and diminish the already established notion of innate difference between the sexes. After extensive and quite exhaustive research, Barnett and Rivers demystify several myths and depict how society has influenced human thinking and behavior. As a result, people often make poor and sometimes incorrect decisions. Furthermore, the authors lay out a marvelous resource for educators that instills the notion of gender difference as irrelevant to education. It suggests getting rid of misconceptions and presumptions of gender. Students, both male and female, should not consider themselves superior or inferior. They should perceive their fellow classmates and everyone around them to be equal in potential and in ability. Educators must help their students in this matter. Educators must accept that there is no academic difference between males and females. Education is optimistic; hence, educators should be optimistic, believing that both males and females have the potential to do anything they desire. The authors of this book tell their readers that there is no difference in gender. They insist that it is society that is setting the misconceptions and erroneous judgment.

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