



Taking Sex Differences Seriously

Steven E. Rhoads

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Most contemporary discussions of sex differences assume that they are determined by society rather than biology. It is society that teaches little girls to be feminine and little boys to be masculine--society that tells women to respond to babies and men to respond to sports. Reflecting the fashionable idea that male and female roles have been "socially constructed," most commentators speak of gender instead of sex. Because men and women are virtually interchangeable, so the argument goes, men should do an equal share of domestic and childrearing work so that women can compete equally outside the home. There's only one problem with this beguiling vision of androgyny. Whatever we might like to believe, as Dr. Steven Rhoads shows, sex distinctions remain a deeply rooted part of human nature. In "Taking Sex Differences Seriously," Rhoads assembles a wealth of scientific evidence showing that these differences are "hardwired" into our biology. They range from the subtle (men get a chemical high from winning while women get one from nursing) to the profound (women with high testosterone levels are more promiscuous, more competitive, and more conflicted about having children than those with average levels.) Rhoads explores disparities in aggression and dominance, in sexuality and nurturing. He shows how denial of these differences has helped to create the sexual revolution, fatherless families, and policies such as Title IX, and the call for universal day care. But while insisting that we must take sex differences seriously, Rhoads also advocates discouraging some natural tendencies, like men's desire for irresponsible sex, and encouraging others, like women's greater interest and talent in caring for babies. In this provocative exploration of the masculine and feminine, Steven Rhoads dispels contemporary clichés and spotlights biological realities. Meticulously researched and elegantly written, "Taking Sex Differences Seriously" is a groundbreaking look at the way we are.

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