

# Extended critical response final draft



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The amount of women who join or even are a part of science related fields, are few and the percentages are lowering over time. The question is why? Why aren't women pursuing careers in these fields? The combination of stereotypes in society and the lack of education on this matter is the answer. They get in the way of a woman's judgment and choices. This is the argument that the article "The Persistence of Gender Myths in Math" by Roseland Chat Barnett & Carry Rivers published in October 2004, in the newspaper Education Week supports.

I reasonably am in favor of Barnett and Rivers position. Not only because they are against the stereotype which is implanted in our society, that math is only suitable for men but also because they believe that if women were properly educated without bias they could achieve things they are capable of instead of being discouraged. To support my views on this matter will be using evidence from other sources that will be presented later on. One reason I agree with Barnett and Rivers is because on one hand although they acknowledge the fact that "men far outnumber women in math related fields" (par. , on the other hand they argue that this has nothing to do with innate differences but rather with stereotypes. In other words the authors do not believe that genes are the reason why women do not choose to study math but are rather deterred from biased people and circumstances which discourage women in succeeding in these fields. When girls grow up in an environment which is biased and supports that men are better than women in jobs or math related studies and avert them from doing the same they will end up believing that men are better than them and that "erodes their confidence in their own ability to succeed" (par. . In plain English when a girl

has been discouraged throughout her life from doing something that is considered unsuitable to her gender she will not have confidence in achieving a goal and she will believe that she is not good. It will always seem hard, even if she has the capability of achieving it. Moreover, I could not agree more with Barnett and Rivers that 'culture has convinced them that girls don't belong in these fields' (par. 0), because a biased culture and the influence of stereotypes may avert girls from choosing what they are good at but rather choose what they are mostly suited for. But doesn't culture consist of education and family? On one hand the article "Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes: How Our Schools Narrow Children's Choices" by Athena Donald published in January 2014 in the newspaper The Guardian the author supports that the reason girls are not interested in "manlier" subjects is not due to innate differences but propaganda in school.

As Donald puts it "children learn sexism at school". Barnett and Rivers are of the same mind. They believe that teachers do not encourage girls in choosing courses that are more popular with boys. On the other hand, Steven Pinker the author of "The Science of Difference" published in February 2005, in the newspaper The New Republic talks about this topic in a more psychological prospect and is a firm supporter that biology has to do with what we like (nature), but partly agrees with Barnett and Rivers that people's preferences are caused by their social environment (nurture).

This is where family comes in. When the author says "children are born unisex and are molded into male and female roles by their parents" it shows us that children have the same abilities in achieving things but society is what teaches kids that humans are different due to their sex, which applies,

to my beliefs as well as Barnett and Rivers. The authors of "The Persistence of Gender Myths in Math" offer a solution, which I think is reasonable.

A combination of teachers helping kids in the school environment and enhancing the girls' natural talents rather than eliminating them because they don't apply to their sex and the elimination of bias from our society, is what the authors believe to be the solution. Firstly, they believe that teachers can contribute to their female students and help them believe that they are equally likely to succeed in the fields of math. To do so, the educators need to "examine the degree to which they themselves may have - unconsciously- accepted the math-male equation" (par. 1). I agree with the authors because, since teachers are the ones who have a part of "molding" a child's personality, they need to educate themselves too on this subject. Children cannot be trusted with a teacher who does not encourage them equally. Moreover, I could not agree more with Barnett and Rivers when they say that when we stop believing in the stereotype that men are better than women at math and finally see that it has nothing to do with innate differences (par. ) but rather judge correctly a human and his capabilities by "their individual merits rather than the statistics of their group" (Pinker par. 6) that is when we will have a clear idea of each individual's capabilities despite of their sex. To sum up, I am a firm supporter of Barnett and Rivers, because they are of the same mind as me which is that achievement in math has nothing to do with sexual characteristics but this is our society's false belief that men can do better in math fields.

The consequence of which, ends up affecting women negatively, it does let them acknowledge their own abilities and flourish in these fields. Moreover,  
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the authors do not stand idly towards this topic but proceed in offering a solution in eliminating this bias specifically in the school environment, which is that educators should eliminate this inhabited stereotype so they can judge the abilities of their students in math, based on their performance and not according to their sex which will result in encouraging them equally.

Finally, a stereotype cannot stand in the way of a woman's pursuit of her dreams just because her sex according to statistics does not do well in math. All humans despite of their sex, deserve the same encouragement and support in achieving their goals, so it's time for society to work off this bias and judge equally peoples' achievements rather than having a false idea of women's capabilities.