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**The Sexual Paradox: Men, Women, and the Real Gender Gap**

Susan Pinker. Scribner, \$25 (336p) ISBN 978-0-7432-8470-7

Why, according to 2003 figures, do women constitute 49% of law school graduates but only 27% of practicing lawyers? Defying taboos, Pinker, a psychologist and columnist for the *Globe & Mail*, presents a compelling case for a biological explanation of why men and women make different career choices. Drawing on comprehensive scientific and social evidence and case studies, she proposes that hormones are a determining factor. The hormones predominant in men lead to action, focus and, often, to competitive and rigidly hierarchical professions such as law. Women's hormones lead them to focus on empathy and social interaction, and careers as teachers or social workers. Thus, despite their early advantages—girls have better language skills and discipline, while boys are more prone to dyslexia, autism and Asperger syndrome and other difficulties—women tend not to seek out “the highest status or the most lucrative careers”: They're reluctant to take jobs whose demands won't allow them the choice to focus on other aspects of their lives. Pinker says she isn't calling for a return to the 1950s housewife model. She emphasizes individual differences among men and women, but hopes that wider recognition of gender differences can lead to greater workplace flexibility and room for women's professional advancement on their own terms. She may draw a great deal of fire for this book, but her strong evidence could also open a better-informed discussion of the issues. B&w illus. (Mar.)