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Men: The powerless sex?

Attention, women: Have you ever asked yourself why men are such jerks? And men: Have you ever wondered why women today are so angry at men? What do women really want from men?

If you're ready to accept real answers to these questions, answers that may both surprise and dismay you, read Warren Farrell's *Why Men Are The Way They Are* (McGraw-Hill, \$17.95). Your life and your relationships may never be the same, and what's more, you'll probably be glad in the long run. Farrell, a once-ardent feminist who wrote *The Liberated Man*, has now settled into a "more balanced approach to sex roles."

In *The Liberated Man*, Farrell focused on women's experience of powerlessness in their interactions with men. By educating men to support female independence, he glossed over an equally important reality: men's experience of powerlessness in their relationships with women.

Why Men Are The Way They Are rounds out this picture, showing us how male powerlessness has been largely ignored in the last two decades' concentration on the women's movement and how "women get the raw deal." Just as men have had a stake in perpetuating traditional ideals for women, so women have reinforced male qualities that contribute to inequality between the sexes. Farrell supports his argument with telltale examples of advertising from feminist and women's magazines that subtly perpetuate financial and sexual inequalities between men and women.

Farrell believes that things between the sexes really haven't changed that much. Men and women still have different primary fantasies or agendas when it comes to the opposite sex. For men, the fantasy usually involves sexual fulfillment with a variety of attractive, willing women. Women are more likely—even in the '80s—to dream of security, commitment and marriage to one man. This situation traps both men and women, Farrell insists. In explaining how men end up feeling sexually powerless, Farrell points out that men are socialized to want sex as long as one condition—physical attractiveness—is met. Women, however, seek out as many as nine conditions, including attraction, respect, emotions and intellect. "By being cautious until more conditions are met, women gain enormous sexual leverage over men," says Farrell. "They can use this power to get the external rewards of which they feel deprived."

Farrell also rewrites the book on the double standard. The real double standard, he asserts, is the fact that "marriage fulfills a woman's primary fantasy, but requires a man to forfeit his." Further, given the extraordinary importance of sexual exploits to men, their "willingness to shift gears upon commitment is perhaps the most unappreciated adaptation in all human behavior."

Any woman reading this book is going to recognize herself as well as a lot of deep-running male hostility toward women. But maybe for the first time she will have a basis for understanding it, in the same way that many men recognize the legitimacy of feminist protests. Farrell actively promotes such understanding in the workshops he conducts around the country, in which men and women reverse roles to experience the dilemmas faced by their sexual opposites. Most come away with less anger and new appreciation for the other sex. The same thing happens for people who read Farrell's books.

—Holly Hall