

What Makes Jane Walk?

Rosalind C. Barnett and Grace K. Baruch (with an afterword by Carolyn G. Heilbrun)

The Competent Woman: Perspectives on Development. New York: Irvington, 1978. Pp. viii + 184. \$12.95.

Reviewed by JACQUELYNNE E. PARSONS

Both authors are Senior Research Associates and Adjunct Lecturers at the Florence Heller Graduate School at Brandeis University and Research Associates at the Center for Research on Women in Wellesley, Mass. Rosalind C. Barnett, a Harvard University PhD, was previously a Research Associate at the Radcliffe Institute and Research Fellow at Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. Barnett is coauthor of *Behavioral Science Concepts in Case Analysis* (with Renato Taguiri, Paul Lawrence, and Dexter Demphy). Grace K. Baruch, a PhD of Bryn Mawr College, was previously Assistant Professor at the University of Massachusetts—Boston, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology, and Research Associate at the Radcliffe Institute. Barnett and Baruch are coauthors with Caryl Rivers of *Beyond Sugar and Spice*. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, who wrote the afterword, is Professor of English at Columbia University.

Reviewer Jacquelynne E. Parsons is Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). A PhD of the University of California (Los Angeles), she was previously Assistant Professor at Smith College and a 1979 Spencer Fellow of the National Academy of Education. Parsons is author of *Gender-Related Behaviors: A Biopsychological Perspective* and coauthor of *Woman and Sex Roles* (with Frieze, Johnson, Ruble, and Zellman).

THE authors set out two primary goals for their book: to provide the nonspecialist with an overview of the issues "relevant to the development of competence in women" (p. v) and "to show the ways, both obvious and subtle, in which limitations on women are per-

petuated" (p. vii). They go on to acknowledge their disproportionate attention to the "forms of competence traditionally associated with males" (p. vi). Within the constraints imposed by their bias, the authors have certainly met their goals, reviewing for the nonspecialist a wealth of material related to the adoption of "male" career goals and to the impact of various socializing agents on the sex-typing of women's career choices. However, one must question the book's title, given its perspective. Perhaps *The Nontraditional Woman* might have been more appropriate.

The first two chapters define competence, provide a discussion of "successful" women, and highlight some of the obstacles to women's career adjustment. It is in these chapters that the authors' emphasis on male-defined competence is most evident. These chapters do not consider the possibility that some people, especially women, have more than one goal in life or that maximal career development in a male sense is inhibited by sharing time and energy among many goals and, consequently, that it is essentially impossible for a multifaceted individual to compete on par with the single-minded individual for "top" positions.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 provide good discussions of the role fathers, mothers, families, and schools play in socializing girls into traditionally feminine choices. Chapter 5 includes an interesting dis-

ussion of the impact of women's careers on their own family roles. Chapter 7 contains particularly good introductory discussions of math competence, women and sports, and attributional influences on achievement.

THERE are two major weaknesses in the book. First is its limited and ambiguous definition of competence. In addition to its male bias, the book never really defines its focuses, jumping from self-concept to expectancies, to independence, to career aspiration, and to career development. While these constructs may seem intuitively similar, neither the relations between them nor their relation to one's sense of competence are well understood, and the developmental origins of individual differences across these various constructs undoubtedly differ. Taking such a global approach makes the field seem much tighter than it actually is.

Second, its primary focus on the psychological obstacles inhibiting women's instrumental achievements limits its usefulness in answering the broader questions suggested by Tolkien's mandate as cited by Heilbrun in the afterword—namely, how do we go about deciding what to do with the time that is given us and what constraints are imposed on our use of time by our genders? Focusing on these larger questions brings several issues to mind. For example, are women's desires to be successful in a man's world blocked by external barriers, internal psychological barriers, or competing role demands that differ from men's? To what extent are these competing roles selected by choice? Why do women make these choices? And finally, what is success and what makes one feel competent? A full understanding of what makes Jane walk or conversely what makes Sammy run will require this broader perspective.

All things are engaged in writing their history. The planet, the pebble, goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain; the river, its channel in the soil; the animal, its bones in the stratum; the fern and leaf, their modest epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sculpture in the sand or the stone. Every act of the man inscribes itself in memories, manners and face. Every object is covered with hints which speak to the intelligent.

—EMERSON