

# **The Female Brain Was Not Born with Math Anxiety**

**Where do women get the idea that they are not good at math? Is it possible that our own gender continues to perpetuate the myth of the male superiority for mathematics and science? The answer is a definite Yes. We are our own worst enemies when it comes to mathematics and the sciences.**

Numerous U.S. educational studies have shown **no difference in math skills between boys and girls**. This is also consistent World-wide. Nicole Else-Quest, psychology professor at Villanova University studied the math achievement scores of almost half a million students, ages 14-16 from 69 countries. She found no difference in math abilities, but did find boys had greater confidence in their math skills.

**Greater math skill confidence by boys' may explain why girls feel less competent and more anxious about math.**

Professor Sian Belilock from the University of Chicago found that **teachers who themselves are anxious about math are passing on that same anxiety** and perpetuating the stereotypical myth that girls are not as good at math as boys. This is appears to be understandable according to Belilock, since 90% of U.S. teachers are women and math anxiety ranks highest among elementary education college majors.

Attitudes at home and school also undermine self confidence by sending subtle messages that being smart in math is not a good thing when it comes to social relations with boys or being treated as an outcast for being too geeky.

**The stereotyping of girls being less proficient at math contributes to an overall lack of self confidence and can even override the abilities of girls who do excel at math.**

If you want to reverse the idea that the female brain was born with math anxiety or you would like to help your daughter or other young girls from falling into the math trap, you might want to check out **“Math Doesn’t Suck.”**

**Danica McKellar is the author of “Math Doesn’t Suck”** a book for middle school girls showing that math can be “easy, relevant, and glamorous.”

What makes Ms. McKellar such an ideal math role model is that besides her **impressive mathematical skills** ...

- advocate for math education
- summa cum laude graduate of UCLA with a degree in Mathematics
- honored in Britain’s esteemed Journal of Physics and the New York Times for her work in mathematics
- co-author of a ground-breaking mathematical physics theorem which bears her name (The Chayes-McKellar-Winn Theorem)

... she is also a **well known actress** playing the characters Winnie Cooper in The Wonder years and Elsie Snuffin in The West Wing along with roles in over 30 movies and numerous TV guest star appearances.

**It’s never to late to learn what your female brain can really do!**

by Joyce Hansen