

they stumbled over their words. One student even dropped the class after refusing to do revisions on his work. This example is a microcosm of the “giving up before you try” attitude that has permeated the minds of young men en masse.

Some people think it’s been a case of boys not doing well in school and giving their teachers hell since the beginning of recorded history. A recent large-scale meta analysis of over 300 studies that reflected the grades of more than 500,000 boys and nearly 600,000 girls revealed that, for many decades, girls all over the world have been making higher grades than boys in all subjects.²⁰ The authors suggested that this data undermines the “boy crisis,” but we have to disagree. Good grades have become crucial to earning a living wage—and it is all the more reason for society to show boys the importance of doing well in school. Boys also used to have far more motivation to compete and succeed in every other aspect of life—moving out of their parents’ house, getting a girlfriend or wife, setting long-term goals and embarking on a career—which they are sorely lacking now.

For the first time in US history, boys are having less education than their fathers.²¹ Moreover, academics are now more of a female pursuit. Girls are outperforming boys at every level, from primary school through university. In the US, by 13 or 14 years old, not even a quarter of boys are proficient in either writing or reading, versus 41 percent of girls who are proficient in writing and 34 percent who are proficient in reading.²² Boys also account for 70 percent of all the lowest grades given out at school.²³ Similar achievement gaps between the genders have been documented worldwide. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that boys are more likely to repeat school years than girls, had poorer grades and got lower pass rates on school leaving examinations. In some countries, such as Sweden, Italy, New Zealand and Poland, the girls scored so much higher than the boys on reading in the PISA Assessment (a global measure of skills and knowledge) that they were essentially a year to a year and a half ahead in school.²⁴ Internationally, in just over half of the countries that participated in the 2009 PISA Assessment, boys outperformed girls only in mathematics, but the mathematics gap was only one-third the size of the reading gap.²⁵

In her book, *The War Against Boys*, Christina Hoff Sommers, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research,

described even more imbalances. She said that girls not only outnumber boys in student government, honor societies and after school clubs, they also do more homework, read more books and outperform boys in the arts and in musical abilities. Meanwhile, more boys are suspended from school and more are held back from advancing to the next grade level. Simply put, girls are more “engaged” academically.²⁶

More boys than girls are coming to school unprepared—without books, paper and pencil, or their homework.²⁷ Twice as many boys think school is a “waste of time” and arrive at class late.²⁸ Predictably, students with the lowest test scores who came to school unprepared outnumbered the unprepared high-scoring students more than two to one.²⁹

The top reason for disability filings for children is now mental illness, “representing half of all claims filed in 2012, compared to just 5 to 6 percent of claims twenty years prior,” says child psychiatrist Victoria Dunckley.³⁰ Rates of ADHD diagnoses increased 5 percent every year between 2003 and 2011; boys are between two to three times more likely than girls to have ever been diagnosed in their lifetime,³¹ and therefore are more likely to be prescribed stimulants, such as Ritalin, even in primary school.

On top of this, boys are far more likely to drop out of school.³² The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) notes the ripple effects of this trend:

dropouts ages 25 and older reported being in worse health than adults who are not dropouts, regardless of income . . . Dropouts also make up disproportionately higher percentages of the nation’s prison and death row inmates. Comparing those who drop out of high school with those who complete high school, the average high school dropout is associated with costs to the economy of approximately \$240,000 over his or her lifetime in terms of lower tax contributions . . . higher rates of criminal activity, and higher reliance on welfare.³³

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, a study that began in 1997 and ended in 2012, found that by 27 years old a third of women had received bachelor’s degrees compared with one out of four men.³⁴ By 2021, in the US it is estimated that women will get 58 percent of

bachelor's degrees, 62 percent of master's degrees and 54 percent of PhDs.³⁵ Abroad there are similar trends. In Canada and Australia, 60 percent of university graduates are women.³⁶ Fewer than three boys apply to university in England for every four girls who do, and in Wales and Scotland, 40 percent more girls apply than boys,³⁷ a gap that widens among those from disadvantaged backgrounds.³⁸

Two-thirds of students in special education remedial programs are boys. It's not a question of IQ—young men are just not putting in the effort, and it translates into a lack of career options. These gaps are much greater for males from minority backgrounds: only 34 percent of college bachelor's degrees awarded to black students go to black men, and 39 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded to hispanic students go to hispanic men.³⁹

It is obvious to us that it is time for a loud wake-up call, to be sounded in every nation around the world where young males are failing to perform adequately in academic domains. The consequences for them, their families, their communities and even national destinies could be catastrophic unless dramatic corrective actions are taken soon.