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4 THE END OF MEN AND THE BOY CRISIS

> This whole sort of war on women thing, I'm scratching my head, because if there was a war on women, I think they won . . . In fact, I worry about our young men sometimes, because I think the women really are outcompeting men in our world.
>
> —U.S. Senator Rand Paul, 2014[1]

In 1982 feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan published her landmark book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*.[2] The 1980s and early 1990s were marked by a surge of scholarship and activism related to girls' and women's development and educational opportunities. A 1992 report from the American Association of University Women entitled *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, and Myra and David Sadker's *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*,[3] critiqued the decades and centuries-long focus on boys and men in the educational domain. Mary Pipher's 1994 *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*[4] looked at the marginalization of girls relative to boys in a variety of domains. Almost immediately this brief and still intermittent attention paid to girls' and women's needs was met with resistance. These works on girls and women were and continue to be viewed as a takeover, an emblem of feminism having gone too far. By the 1990s, the anti-feminist response constituted a massive recovery effort to bring boys and men back to the center, and this effort has not relented since. These "boy crisis" books are represented by, for instance, the well-intentioned *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*,[5] by William Pollack in 1998, and Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson's 1999 *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*.[6] Anti-feminist Michael Gurian produced book after book on the subject, beginning with *The Wonder of Boys*[7] in 1996. Anti-feminist boy-crisis trailblazer Christina Hoff Sommers helped solidify the industry with her 2000 *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism Is Harming Our Young Men*.[8] The main claim of these works is that feminism has gone too far and now boys and men are paying for it.

In the last chapter, we addressed the anti-feminist fiction that feminists are man-haters and male bashers. In this chapter, we examine another claim reflecting the belief that feminism has gone too far: that feminism has so empowered girls and women that they are now taking over and getting ahead of boys and men. Kathleen Parker is one of the anti-feminist conservative columnists at the center of this moral panic launching arguments that begin with, "America is a dangerous place for males these days."[9] In her 2008 book, *Save the Males: Why Men Matter, Why Women Should Care*, Parker writes, "today's world is hostile toward men, who are no longer considered necessary for much of anything,"[10] and the first chapter of Parker's book is entitled, "Women Good, Men Bad." And while the United States ranks a miserable 47th in the world on gender equality[11]—meaning there are 46 other countries in which men's advantage over women is less dramatic—we still see headlines claiming that women are surpassing men in all areas of society.

In this chapter we first address the claim that mass media and society have become antimale. Next, we address the supposed "boy crisis" in American schools—the belief that schools have become hostile to boys and biased in favor of girls. Finally, we consider the issue of male privilege and entitlement as one explanation of why boys and men tend to earn lower grades and pursue university studies in fewer numbers than girls and women.

Mass Media and the Marginalization of Men?

Is the Media Mean to Men?

Media scholars have documented the near invisibility of women and people of color in television and film for decades. But the feminism-gone-too-far wave has imagined a mass media that marginalizes men and boys. For example, Steve Biddulph, author of *Raising Boys: Why Boys Are Different—and How to Help Them Become Happy and Well-Balanced Men*, says "The media continually portrays males as rapists, murderers, or inadequate fools. So a boy may easily feel quite bad about himself as a masculine being."[12] These claims stand in stark contrast to the actual media representations of men that children encounter. It is true that men can be seen playing violent predators or incompetent buffoons. However, claims that there are uniformly negative representations of men are erroneous. In fact, there are many more representations of men and they are depicted in a wider range of behavior than are women characters.[13] And in terms of negative portrayals of men, there are just as many men who play heroes as villains.[14] In other words, because there is such a diversity of positive and negative roles, especially for white men, the negative portrayals of men are simply one way in which they are portrayed. As researchers of one study concluded: "male characters did more of almost *everything* than did the female characters, simply because they appeared more often."[15]

Let's take a look at various genres of mass media to address the panic over the belief that women are taking over all the major institutions in society. Are women truly taking over mass media? In prime-time television women make up 45% of the regular characters.[16] Patterns are more exaggerated in film. Major male characters in top-grossing films outnumber female characters by a huge 73% to 27%.[17] When you consider the age of actors and characters, the representations of women are even bleaker. In both prime-time television[18] and in popular films[19] women are most frequently seen in the age range of 20 to 30, whereas men are more likely to be in their 30s and 40s. When you get into the 50s and 60s, women virtually disappear. This latter fact is particularly interesting because the largest percentage of women in the population is in the 51+ group.[20] So the largest age demographic of women in real life is the least likely to be seen in celluloid life. There is another reason that the erasure of older women in television and film is significant in addition to the mismatch between representation in media and representation in real life. Typically, older adults on TV and in film have more power, status, and leadership, but this is true for men, not women. For example, in TV and film, men in their 40s and 50s are more likely to play leaders than younger men, and women in the same age range. Men in their 50s have greater occupational power than women in their 50s.[21] So for men, as they get older they gain status and power; as women get older, they disappear—women disappear in terms of being shown on TV and film and they disappear in terms of their status, power, and significance as characters.

In terms of important and influential genres of TV and film there is a lot of work that still needs to be done regarding gender equality. Roles for men and stories about men continue to be the norm. As evidence, consider the use of the term *chick flicks*—those films dominated by women characters with storylines supposedly of interest to women more than men. Movies dominated by men, on the other hand, with characters and plots telling men's stories, are considered the norm and thus are not gender marked due to their supposed universal appeal. However, films that are thought to be of interest to women get the gender marking of "chick flick." This is similar to when films about heterosexuals are simply called films—they should resonate with everyone—but films with gay characters are marked, described as "gay films."

Disparity also exists in terms of occupational roles on television. Men are more likely than women to play criminals, but they are also more likely to be in professional roles, law enforcement roles, and in blue collar jobs. In contrast, women are more likely to not work, or their work is not known,[22] conveying the message that being professionals with meaningful work outside the home is not a significant aspect of women's identity. This same pattern holds for both white and African American women[23] (there are so few other people of color on TV,

calculations are not available). Women characters on television continue to enact interpersonal roles involved with romance, family, and friends (emphasizing communal/expressive traits), whereas men characters are more likely to enact work-related roles (emphasizing the instrumental/agentic traits of ambition and desire for success).[24]

Is the picture so positive for all men, or only for white men? Anti-feminist writers and commentators who support this masculine recovery effort do not address race in their concerns about portrayals of men in the media. Their concerns lie with the disruption of the status quo, the supposed loss of status and influence of white heterosexual men. In fact, there is something to be concerned about when we do take into account how men of color are portrayed in the media: African American men continue to be portrayed as dangerous thugs. For instance, in television news African American men are *overrepresented* as criminal suspects and *underestimated* as victims of crime compared to actual crime statistics. The opposite is true of white men: they are *underrepresented* as perpetrators and *overrepresented* as victims.[25] Thus, in their eagerness to keep white, heterosexual men at the center of society, the end-of-men/boy-crisis authors miss an opportunity to address a group that is actually marginalized and actually negatively portrayed in media representations—men of color.

In music videos women are worse than marginal. Even though women have made progress in terms of their numbers as pop stars and musicians, the roles they play in music videos are as sexual objects used by men.[26] Men outnumber women in music videos nearly three to one.[27] Worse than the sheer lack of representation of women is the role they play when they do appear in videos. Women's chief role in music videos is as sexual objects that are denigrated and debased. They are pushed, grabbed, and slapped by men in videos. African American women are even more sexualized and abused than white women.[28] What explains the lack of creativity and range in the roles that women play in music videos? One answer is the intertwining of pornography and music videos. Former pornographic film directors now can be found directing music videos and former porn stars can be found starring in them.[29] This trend corresponds to the increased mainstreaming of pornography and hypersexual representations of girls and women described in Chapter 1.

There have been some changes in the representations of women and men in advertisements. In terms of role portrayals, women and men are more equal than in the 1960s. One study[30] looked at 50 years of advertisements in popular U.S. magazines. The findings indicated that the traditional patterns of ads showing that a woman's place is in the home, and that women do not do important things or make important decisions, is less true than in previous decades. However, ads still show men as leaders and protectors, whereas women are shown in roles that

are dependent on men. And in the area of sexual objectification, portrayals are actually worse than they were in the 1960s. Women are more likely to be portrayed as sexual objects than they were previously. The female body and women's dismembered body parts are used much more often than the male body as a visual element in ads. In this way, one can see how advertising has co-opted the feminist desire for sexual freedom described in Chapter 1. In print ads today men are still more likely to be shown in authoritative, superior, and more powerful positions than women, and women are depicted in more deferential positions to men.[31] Even more puzzling and alarming, women are also more likely to be positioned in weakened psychological states, looking away, disoriented, and even looking dead or passed out—and these depictions have actually *increased* over the 50-year period.[32] Magazines show ads depicting dead women from Marc Jacobs, Gucci, Lanvin, Jimmy Choo, and Louis Vuitton and ads depicting gang rape by Calvin Klein, Dolce & Gabbana, and Tom Ford. It is difficult to imagine what the end-of-men/boy-crisis authors have in mind when you see how women are depicted in advertisements.

In terms of television commercials men comprise 39% of the main characters in prime-time ads, whereas women make up 30% (about 1/3 contain both women and men). Roles played by women and men in U.S. television commercials are still highly gender-stereotyped. For example, 32% of women's roles are as homemaker, but only 1% of men's roles are as homemaker; 14% of the men in commercials are professionals (doctor, lawyer), but only 5% of women play these roles.[33] Television voiceovers are an important feature of many commercials, as a narrator conveys authority, gravity, and wisdom. Women's voices make up only 27% of commercial voiceovers compared to men's 73%.[34] Like most of the other media genres, television commercials convey the message that men are out in the world doing important things, and they are experts who should be listened to, whereas women tend to be relegated to the domestic sphere.

In newspaper comics, 61% of the characters are male and 28% of the characters are female (11% of the characters are animals, and male animals outnumber female animals 6 to 1). Women characters in comics are more than twice as likely to appear in the home and men characters are twice as likely to appear at work. Women characters are less likely to be identified as having a job, more likely to be married, and more likely to be taking care of children.[35]

Even in clipart—those graphics that enhance workplace PowerPoint presentations—women characters are invisible or relegated to silly roles. Middle-aged white men are the most common characters in clipart. Like TV and film roles, men are depicted in a wider range of activities than women. Women are more likely to be portrayed as younger (e.g., teenagers) rather than older. Clipart images of men show them as more physically mobile and producing some product, whereas

images depict women in passive positions such as sitting, reclining, or accompanying a man. When women are engaged in activity, they are more likely than men to be cleaning and taking care of children.[36] The analysis of clipart images might, at first glance, appear to be trivial and of little consequence. However, if you consider where and when these images are used—in office and business settings—it becomes clear that these images are important. Professional women already have to battle gender discrimination in the form of pay inequality, sexual harassment, and the glass ceiling. Clipart images reinforce the notion that men are the professional norm, whereas women do not quite belong in the workplace the way that men do.

Men even dominate media coverage of "women's issues." In an analysis of 2012 election coverage, men were more likely to be quoted on their opinions in newspapers and on television. For example, in front page articles about the 2012 election that mention abortion, men were 81% of those quoted; on birth control, they were 75% of those quoted; even on women's rights, they were 52% of those quoted (women were only 31% of those quoted and organizations were 17%).[37] Can you imagine the media seeking out women as the main experts on issues pertaining to men?

As this review of mass media portrayals of women and men demonstrates, women are hardly in the position of threatening the traditional domains of men. In every aspect of the mass media they are underrepresented compared to their actual numbers in the population. When women are seen, they are more likely to be portrayed as homemakers, as sexual objects, and as young. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be portrayed in a range of professional fields; they are more active, and they are older and portrayed with more power and influence.

Is the Media Mean to Boys?

Authors of end-of-men/boy-crisis books claim that the world is now geared toward girls. For instance, Christina Hoff Sommers, author of *The War Against Boys*, writes that feminists see boys' masculinity as "politically incorrect."[38] Kathleen Parker, author of *Save the Males*, says "boys learn early that they belong to the 'bad' sex and their female counterparts to the 'good.'"[39] Parents even have been accused of leaping on the antiboy bandwagon, according to *The Atlantic* writer, Hannah Rosin. In her 2010 article "The End of Men," Rosin reports that American couples are now preferring girls to boys when contemplating pregnancy.[40] The belief in a preference for girls resonates with those who believe that feminism has gone too far, but that belief is false. American couples still prefer sons over daughters. When presented with the question, "Suppose you could only have one child. Would you prefer that it be a boy or a girl?" 37% of the respondents express a preference for a boy, and 28% for a girl.[41]

Parents may still prefer boys, but does the mass media? Let's begin with children's television cartoons. Consistent with empirical studies over several decades, male cartoon characters continue to outnumber female characters.[42] Some cartoon genres are extreme. For instance, in the traditional adventure genre (e.g., *Batman, Aladdin*) male characters outnumber female characters more than 4 to 1. In comedy cartoons (e.g., *Animaniacs*), males outnumber females 2 to 1. In nontraditional adventure series (e.g., *Sailor Moon, Reboot*), there is equal representation. *How* are females and males represented in TV cartoons? Anti-feminists are concerned that boys are being feminized and girlified, but this is not the case in TV cartoons. Male characters are portrayed in highly masculinized ways. They are more likely to engage in physical aggression and less likely to show fear than female characters. They are less likely to be supportive and polite, and less likely to be romantic, than female characters.[43] Overall, despite Christina Hoff Sommers' and Kathleen Parker's concerns about traditional male gender roles being undermined by feminism and feminizing, cartoons are still rigidly gender stereotyped.

Has the content of cartoons changed over time? One study[44] examined cartoons over a 60-year period. The representations of female and male characters have actually changed little. Females account for only 16% of all characters. Physical attractiveness was more important for female characters, whereas intelligence was more important for males. Male characters were 50% more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors, females were twice as likely as males to be considered "good." Over time, cartoons have contained fewer and fewer African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians, relative to their population numbers. Even in educational programs such as *Mr. Wizard's World, Beakman's World, Bill Nye the Science Guy,* and *Newton's Apple*, twice as many adult male scientists as female scientists were shown. Fully 79% of the female characters that did appear were relegated to secondary roles such as helpers.[45]

When the content of children's picture books has been examined, we find nearly twice as many male as female main characters, and female characters are more likely to be portrayed inside the home and without a paid occupation. Furthermore, these representations have not changed over time.[46] Males are even more common in children's coloring books. A study of 56 coloring books found that 59% of the characters were male and 41% were female. Children were more likely to be females (58%) than males (42%), adults were more likely to be male (78%) than female (22%).[47]

Toy commercials on television reinforce these patterns. Although content analysis[48] of 455 commercials appearing on the network *Nickelodeon* found that commercials were more likely to be oriented toward girls (34%) than boys (27%), this hardly represents a girl takeover. Boys in commercials are shown in a wider range of interactions (e.g., competitive, cooperative, independent) than girls. And like other media genres featuring both adults and children, girls were once again more likely to be located inside the home. That commercials depicting boys showed them in a variety of settings implies that they have more opportunities and are involved in more action. So boys are doing stuff. One commercial for Silly 6 Pins has boys bowling and girls cheering them on, laying on the ground watching.[49] Can you imagine the roles in reverse? Girls bowling while boys lay on the ground cheering them on the sidelines?

You even see unequal gender representations on cereal boxes. In an analysis[50] of 217 cereal boxes, male characters outnumbered female characters by more than 2 to 1. Similar to other genres, animal characters are more likely to be male than female. Like children's coloring books, authority figures (e.g., adults) were more likely to be men than women and children were more likely to be girls than boys, thus suggesting that females are more dependent on others and are less powerful. Unlike research in other areas of media representation, there were no gender differences in activity level and passivity.

It is clear from this exhaustive (and exhausting) review of the literature on media representation that boys are not marginal, nor are they denigrated. Boys are portrayed as the gender that matters, that gets things done; boys are the default, the norm. These patterns from empirical research studies contradict what the boy-crisis authors say about society's view of boys. Let's take a look at what Steve Biddulph, author of the 1998 book *Raising Boys*[51] says:

> In an era when men are often targets of ridicule in the media, it's important to remember (and to show boys) that men built the planes, fought the wars, laid the railroad tracks, invented the cars, built the hospitals, invented the medicines and sailed the ships that made it all happen. There's an African saying, 'Women hold up half the sky.' But, clearly, men hold up the other half.

This statement reflects the upside down world of men-are-marginalized rhetoric you see from the boy-crisis authors. From Biddulph's perspective, men have been so erased from history and the present that we actually need to remind boys of men's accomplishments. His invented "era" of male erasure gives him permission to gratuitously reassert male dominance (men are the ones, after all, "who made it all happen") while pretending to apply a much-needed remedy to a perceived girl takeover.

Are Schools Antiboy?

Authors and commentators who claim a boy crisis argue that, even more than the media, schools are the main repositories of antiboy elements. Their focus on education is, in part, a response to the progress of Title IX—the 1972 statute prohibiting gender discrimination in educational institutions—and to the deliberate efforts of feminist educators to make schools hospitable to girls.

Content and Curricula: Are Boys Invisible?

William Pollack in his book *Real Boys* writes, "Our schools, in general, are not sufficiently hospitable environments for boys and are not doing what they could to address boys' unique social, academic, and emotional needs" because "they use curricula, classroom materials, and teaching methods that do not respond to how boys learn."[52] Kathleen Parker, author of *Save the Males*, also claims that classes and curricula "favor girl interests."[53] She says, "Elementary grade textbooks and literature rarely feature strong, active male roles or tales of valor, high adventure, or heaven forbid, gallantry, which feminists view as implying that men and women aren't equal. Biographies of presidents and inventors have been replaced by stories of brave and adventurous women."[54] Christina Hoff Sommers says that boys are forced to learn about Jane Eyre, when instead they should learn about Silas Marner and the war poets.[55]

Do classroom materials privilege girls and marginalize boys? Let's take the content of textbooks. There are more male (54%) than female (46%) characters in first and third grade children's developmental reading texts. Males are more likely to be portrayed as aggressive, argumentative, and competitive. Females are more likely to be described as affectionate, emotionally expressive, passive, and tender.[56] These gender-stereotyped depictions should please Sommers and Parker for their total lack of creativity and their strict adherence to traditional gender roles.

Much has been made in the last two decades about getting girls more interested in math and science. Unfortunately, school materials do little to encourage girls' interest in these fields. Like most materials, life science textbooks show pictures of males more often than females, males are positioned in active roles more frequently than females, and the accomplishments of women are less likely to be featured.[57] High school chemistry textbooks also show more pictures of males than females.[58] These depictions offer few role models for girls aspiring to be scientists. When early and more recent editions of high school chemistry texts have been examined, we find that most maintain a gender imbalance favoring representations of boys and men compared to girls and women, and a few have even increased the imbalance in recent years.[59] The patterns found in science textbooks send the message to readers that boys and men are engaged in the scientific endeavor, whereas girls and women are on the sidelines—they are not doing science so much as watching and observing those who are.

Even educational software favors boys and men. In a study of 43 popular educational software programs, 20 programs contained only male main characters but only 5 programs contained only female characters.[60] These numbers also reveal the gender-segregated nature of these software programs, which sends the message to young people that male and female characters inhabit different lives and gender cultures. Male characters were more likely to be shown as aggressive but also more athletic, more likely to rescue, and more likely to take risks than female characters.[61] Once again, educational software depicts boys and men as active, involved, and mattering more than girls and women.

Even teaching materials are gender biased in favor of boys. In an analysis of teacher education texts (texts used by those studying to become teachers), the content focuses mostly on males, although unlike the findings from other studies reviewed in this chapter, photos depict more females than males. The presence of females compared to males might suggest progress but the photos tended to show women as teachers and men as principals and administrators which only solidifies traditional gender roles. If there is any field in which women have made significant contributions, it would be education. Yet the pioneers of education shown in these texts are nearly all male.[62]

In this exhaustive review of educational materials, the only literature found with some gender balance or counter-stereotyped content was one study of 15 popular educational psychology textbooks.[63] The study analyzed student characters in classroom scenarios depicted in the texts. Girl and boy characters were presented at roughly the same frequency. Surprisingly, there were no gender differences found in portrayals of positive masculine traits (e.g., courage, confidence) or positive (e.g., nurturing, caring) or negative (submissiveness, emotionality) feminine traits. However, boys were portrayed as engaging in more negative masculine activities (e.g., aggression, bullying).

In contrast to the concerns of anti-feminist authors, an avalanche of research studies demonstrates that school materials overwhelmingly present males as the typical, normal student by portraying them more frequently than females. The content of materials caters to traditional boys' interests; boys are the active characters in these materials and girls provide marginal, largely supportive roles; and gender roles are traditional.

Are Teachers Mean to Boys?

Several writers express concern about the overinfluence of women in boys' lives. In her book *Women Who Make the World Worse*, anti-feminist Kate O'Beirne[64]

argues that "Classrooms have been turned into feminist reeducation camps. . ." Most often women teachers are presented as the ones to blame for boys losing interest in school, boys not doing well, and even boys feeling marginalized *as* boys. In *Raising Cain*, Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson lament: "a boy's experience of school is as a thorn among roses; he is a different, lesser, and sometimes frowned-upon presence, and he knows it,"[65] and "Grade school is largely a feminine environment, populated predominantly by women teachers and authority figures, that seems rigged against boys, against the higher activity level and lower level of impulse control that is normal for boys."[66] In *Save the Males*, Kathleen Parker says, "[Boys'] interests aren't valued, and their behavior isn't tolerated."[67] Parker describes the school day for boys as being "steeped in estrogen" during which boys are told of "how many 'bad choices' they've made."[68]

It is true that elementary and middle school teachers are much more likely to be women than men. Remarkably, the boy-crisis authors do not account for *why* there are not more teachers who are men and, conversely, why many talented, educated young women view teaching as one of the few careers available to them. Elementary school teaching is a low-status job and is considered "women's work." The median salary for an elementary school teacher in the United States in 2012 was $40,000.[69] So even though men who are elementary school teachers are paid more than women, it is not surprising that only 13% of them are men.[70] Those men who do choose woman-dominated fields tend to be treated differently, which in this case, means *better*. Men in woman-dominated careers benefit from what been called the "glass escalator"[71]—the phenomenon whereby men, at least white men,[72] in woman-dominated jobs such as nursing and elementary teaching, are given preferential treatment in terms of hiring and promotions. They are promoted into administrative and managerial positions at a faster rate than are women.

What does actual research find on teachers' treatment of girl and boy students? Is the classroom rigged against boys? Is boys' behavior not tolerated as the boy-crisis authors suggest? Are boys thorns among girls, who are roses? In 1988 Alison Kelly published a comprehensive meta-analysis on teacher-pupil interactions that examined the attention teachers give to girl and boy students. She compiled the data from 81 previously conducted studies. Here's a summary of what Kelly found:

> It is now beyond dispute that girls receive less of the teacher's attention in class, and that this is true across a wide range of different conditions. It applies to all age groups (although more in some than in others), in several different countries, in various socio-economic and ethnic groupings, across all subjects in the curriculum, and with both male and female teachers (although more with males). Boys get more of all kinds of classroom interaction. This discrepancy is most marked for behavioral criticism, but this does not explain the overall imbalance. Boys also get more instructional contacts, more high-level questions, more academic criticism and slightly more praise than girls.[73]

Kelly's study is comprehensive but her work is dated. Does more recent research reveal different patterns of teacher treatment of girls and boys? One study found that the attention to boys was more likely to be negative than positive.[74] And some studies say that boys are given more attention because they take more initiative than do girls.[75] However, most studies find that boys receive more negative *and* more positive attention from teachers[76] and that boys' initiating interaction does not account for this differential treatment. In other words, boys may raise their hands or call out to the teacher more often than girls, but above and beyond this difference, teachers attend to them more than they attend to girls. What does the attention look like? One study found that boys receive more criticism of their behavior than girls, but they also receive more intellectual criticism and intellectual acceptance than do girls.[77] The positive and negative intellectual-related interactions boys have with teachers reveal that teachers take boys seriously as intellectual beings and encourage them to think critically. This differential treatment also reveals that more intellectual advances are expected of boys than girls, and that boys are more valued than girls for their intellect.

Boys get more of *all* kinds of classroom attention. These interactions do not amount to a "toxic" environment for the white middle class boys who are the focus of boy-crisis writers. A useful endeavor would be to examine the degree to which schools might be toxic to ethnic minority students—both boys and girls. For example, in their meta-analysis on teachers' expectations of students, Harriet Tenenbaum and Martin Ruck[78] found that teachers held more positive expectations for white and Asian American students than African American and Latino students. Teachers also made more positive comments to white students than to African American and Latino students. African American boys might be particularly targeted by teachers because teachers rate their behavior as more antisocial, and they have lower academic expectations for them than they do for African American girls.[79] African American students, African American boys especially, are more likely to receive disciplinary office referrals than students of other ethnicities.[80] There is a warehouse of studies finding that African American men are perceived as more dangerous and aggressive than white men who engage in the same behavior.[81] For authors who are so concerned with the plight of boys, it is unfortunate that Parker, Sommers, Pollack, Gurian, Kindlon and Thompson, and Biddulph do not address the

challenges that ethnic minority boys and men have in school and in the mass media representations of them.

Center Stealing and Perceptions of Male Marginalization

How can books, articles, pundits, and politicians over the past 15 to 20 years have such a warped view of the regard and treatment of girls and women compared with boys and men? Trina Grillo and Stephanie Wildman[82] describe this blindness to inequality as the *center stage problem*. When those who are used to being at the center of everything important in society are moved from the center, however briefly, group members experience a threat and therefore are motivated to re-assert their privilege. The center stage problem occurs because dominant group members are already accustomed to being center stage; they have been treated that way by society; it feels natural, comfortable, and the natural order of things. Members of dominant groups assume that their perceptions are the pertinent ones, that their problems are the ones that need to be addressed, and that in discourse they should be the speaker rather than the listener. Part of being a member of a privileged group is being the center and the subject of all inquiry in which nonprivileged groups are the objects or pushed to the sidelines. So strong is this expectation of holding center stage that even when a time and place is specifically designated for members of a nonprivileged group to be central, members of the dominant group will often attempt to take back the focus. They are stealing the center—often with a complete lack of self-consciousness. As Grillo and Wildman argue, when people who are not regarded as entitled to the center move into it, even momentarily, they are viewed as usurpers. In other words, members of the privileged group experience a threat when attention even temporarily and briefly turns away from them and toward members of a marginalized group. Feelings of personal entitlement can lead members of dominant groups to be blind to seeing when they are unfairly overbenefiting, and their unearned and unjust privilege leads them to regard efforts to "level the playing field" as fundamentally unfair.[83]

Entitlement and the Privilege to Underperform

> We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them. We stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a very narrow way. Masculinity becomes this hard small cage and we put boys inside the cage. We teach boys to be afraid of fear. We teach boys to be afraid of weakness, of vulnerability.
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> —CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE, 2012[84]

So if boys are getting plenty of teacher attention and the curriculum is geared toward them, why do boys tend to earn lower grades and go to college in fewer numbers than girls? There may be several reasons but two are presented here. First, school is considered a feminine environment, doing well in schools is inconsistent with masculinity. A second reason is the problem of male entitlement.

School Is for Sissies

Research on girls' and boys' interactions with teachers and peers finds that boys are more likely to be influenced by other boys—not teachers and not girls. If a boy peer responds positively to a behavior, boys are more likely to continue the behavior than if the peer criticizes the behavior. The reactions of teachers and girls to a boys' behavior tend to be irrelevant.[85] In her book *Save the Males,* Kathleen Parker states that boys prefer the company of men. "That is because a woman is perceived as just another mother, while a man is a *Man*."[86] Precisely. Just as our review of the literature indicates, women matter less than men in society, and, not surprisingly, boys internalize this message. Women, even women teachers who are in positions of authority, are perceived as just "moms," so who cares what they think? Men are more interesting, are higher in status, and worthy of boys' attention. But this pattern goes beyond simply finding women teachers boring. For boys as young as elementary school years, defying teachers' authority—and in the elementary years most teachers are women—is a means by which to gain popularity with other boys.[87]

Like boys, girls are also influenced by same-gender peers, but in contrast to boys, they are also influenced by teachers.[88] Boys are more concerned than girls about looking cool to their main social group—other boys. School achievement is incompatible with this goal.[89] The social dominance goals of having power over peers are negatively correlated with academic achievement for boys.[90] So the extent to which a student thinks that being powerful over others and seeming tough is important, that student will perform worse academically. Research finds that boys' culture is less study-oriented than girls' culture and that this study culture influences achievement.[91] In other words, one reason girls tend to outperform boys is because boys are concerned about conforming to gender stereotypes that say that school is for girls. Boys are worried about looking weak (i.e., feminine),[92] so boys will avoid academic achievement to the extent that it is viewed as feminine.[93] Stereotypically masculine traits (for example, competitiveness, assertiveness) are more valued in U.S. and western European cultures.[94] In fact, attributes arbitrarily labeled "male" are more valued than the exact same characteristics that are labeled "female."[95] So to the extent that school achievement is seen as feminine, even when curricula and teacher behavior are male-centered,

some boys and young men will dismiss or discount school activities and academic achievement. Therefore, it's not the school experience that feminizes boys but rather the ideology of traditional masculinity that keeps boys from wanting to succeed. Unfortunately, some boys see academic success itself as a disconfirmation of their masculinity.[96]

In their book, *Raising Cain*, Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson say, "Today many boys face a steady diet of shame and anxiety throughout their elementary school years. From it they learn only to feel bad about themselves and to hate the place that makes them feel that way."[97] Since boys are favored by curriculum *and* teachers, it is difficult to imagine too many boys feeling bad about themselves after a day at school.

The end-of-men/boy-crisis authors would have us believe that the world has become too female-centered, and that schools in particular are too female-focused thanks to feminism. We have already established this argument as baseless. Therefore, let's consider an alternative view.

In addition to the issue of school success as indicative of girliness, one way to help us understand and explain the data that boys are performing less well in school is to examine the role of entitlement and privilege. Psychological or personal entitlement refers to one's sense of deservingness. Entitlement reflects the belief that a person deserves a set of outcomes because of who they are or what they have done. Social psychologists tend to define entitlement as deservingness based less on what someone has accomplished (an *achieved* characteristic) and more on *who* the person is (an *ascribed* characteristic).[98] Individuals with a strong sense of entitlement believe they deserve good things to come to them. Not surprising, entitled people are fairly self-centered. They have the tendency to take credit for positive events and to blame others for negative ones.[99] Entitled people tend to shy away from information that contradicts their worldview and avoid situations that do not reinforce their positive self-image.[100] Studies consistently find that men have a stronger sense of entitlement than do women. (Unfortunately, most of the research on gender and entitlement has examined white respondents, therefore we know little about the interaction of gender and ethnicity.) Men also tend to score higher than women on the related concept of narcissism.[101] How does entitlement manifest? One way is in overconfidence. Men give higher estimates of their ability than do women, and men's self-estimates tend to be independent of their actual ability.[102] On cognitive tests, for instance, men give themselves higher ratings than their actual performance merits, whereas women tend to have a more realistic appraisal of their own performance.[103]

Entitlement is difficult to measure because individuals who are entitled tend not to recognize their own sense of it, just as individuals who experience and benefit from privilege (e.g., white people, men, heterosexuals) do not recognize their

unearned privilege. Social psychologists typically measure entitlement through pay expectations; they assign individuals to a task and ask them how much they would expect to be paid. In study after study, we find that women's wage entitlement is lower than men's.[104] In a representative study, Lisa Barron[105] conducted simulated job interviews with MBA students. Men's initial salary requests were higher than women's, even though women and men did not differ in GPA, age, previous salary, and negotiation training. Men were more likely to have a strong sense of what they are worth, and they also expected the company to pay them what they believed they are worth. Men were more likely to believe that they could prove their value in the negotiation. In contrast, women were less likely to have a sense of what they are worth, and they expected the company to determine their worth. Women were also more likely to think that they could prove their value only once they got on the job. Men also reported that they were entitled to a higher salary than their similarly situated peers, whereas women were more likely to believe that they were entitled to the same salary as their peers.[106] In another study, researchers gave college students a task to complete, followed by instructions to pay themselves what they thought their work was worth. Although independent raters who judged the work perceived no differences in the quality of the work, self-ratings indicated that women and men evaluated and paid themselves differently. Men paid themselves 18% more than did women for the same amount and quality of work.[107]

Do men think they deserve more because they actually do better work? They might think they do better work, but they do not perform better in these studies. And even if they know they did not perform well, they think they should be paid as much as if they had performed well. This is entitlement. In one classic experiment, Brenda Major[108] and her colleagues had college students complete a task. When they were finished they could pay themselves what they considered fair for the work they completed, and leave any remaining money behind. Like most studies, women paid themselves significantly less than what men paid themselves. In a second experiment, Major and her colleagues[109] paid students a fixed amount of money to perform a task in which the students could work for as long as they thought was fair. When women and men cannot choose how much they deserve because the salary is fixed, do the usual gender differences in entitlement disappear? No, entitlement just takes a different form. In experiments in which pay is fixed, women (1) worked longer than men did, (2) completed more of the work than men, (3) did so more accurately, and (4) even worked more efficiently than men. After the main part of the study, participants were asked to provide evaluations of their own performances. Despite the fact that women worked longer than men, completed more work, and worked more accurately and efficiently, women and men did not differ in their self-rated performance evaluations. These

experiments suggest important differences between women's and men's sense of entitlement.

Major's findings of gender differences in entitlement tend to be framed in terms of women having "depressed" entitlement, whereas men have a normal, healthy sense of entitlement. It is true that in these kinds of studies, women tend to pay themselves less than men for the same or better quality work, and believe the pay allocation to be fair.[110] However, a more recent experiment finds that the issue does not seem to be that women's entitlement is *deflated*, but rather that men's entitlement is *inflated*. Brett Pelham and John Hetts[111] asked American college students to solve easy, moderate, or difficult anagrams of scrambled words. Participants were asked to evaluate their own performance and then paid themselves for their work. You might guess that those who performed poorly would pay themselves less than those who performed well. This was the case for women, but not for men. Specifically, women paid themselves less when they had performed poorly—when they had solved fewer anagrams. However, men paid themselves well even when they had performed poorly. Pelham and Hetts speculate that men seem to think that their personal feelings of worth entitle them to a certain level of payment, regardless of the quality of their performance. The women in these studies based their level of self-pay on their evaluations of their *work* (performance, an *achieved* status) rather than their evaluations of their *worth* (who they are, an *ascribed* status).

Perhaps it is not surprising that men believe they are worth more than do women. Society rewards them accordingly. In experiments, participants tend to pay men more than women for the same job. For instance, Melissa Williams[112] and her colleagues presented Asian American and white participants with a description of an employee and job and were asked how much the employee should be paid. Participants allocated higher salaries to men than to women. Even in experiments when jobs are simply labeled as "male" they are viewed as higher valued and therefore meriting a higher salary than jobs with the exact same characteristics labeled "female."[113] So people think that men should be paid more than women for doing the same work and that "men's" jobs deserve more pay than "women's" jobs.

When women and men have been asked about what they deserve, how they compare to others, and what information should be used in hiring and salary decisions, there are interesting differences there too. One study found that women's investment in work is not determined by the financial rewards they receive: they invest as much as they can in work regardless of pay. Men, on the other hand, admit to doing more work when pay is higher and less work when pay is lower.[114] Mary Hogue[115] and her colleagues asked individuals about the characteristics important in determining pay. The following characteristics are

typically cited: *work output* (quality and quantity of work), *specific status characteristics* (worker education, job experience), *job attributes* (responsibility, working conditions, impact of job, complexity), and *ascribed status characteristics* (age, race, gender). When setting a salary, men placed greater importance on ascribed status characteristics than women. Women placed greater importance on work output, specific status characteristics, and job attributes. In terms of determinants of salary, men feel comfortable relying on *who they are*, whereas women rely on *what they have done*.

Both women and men seem to go along with men's overconfidence and inflated entitlement, consequently men are led to see their level of deservingness as fair and equal even when, objectively, it is not. For example, one study[116] asked people to play a bargaining game in which one person offers an amount of money to another and the responder decides whether or not the offered amount is acceptable. Of course each side in the negotiation is motivated to obtain the most amount of money—the proposer is motivated to give up as little as possible and the responder is motivated to obtain as much as possible. Women made higher offers overall than did men. Men were offered more than women and less was demanded from men than women. So more was offered to men even when they did not demand more. It is not surprising that some men feel entitled to things they have not earned. How could they not? People reward them accordingly.

What are the repercussions of these gendered patterns of entitlement and salaries? Obviously, if women ask for less and are offered less, they will earn less than men who ask for more and are offered more. Pay raises are often based on a percentage of the worker's salary. If men start out earning more than women, they will get higher and higher raises over their careers. Also, the mere recognition of a pay difference associated with group membership is enough to make people believe that the higher-paid group is more competent and worthy than a lower-paid group.[117] In other words, if people notice that men make more money than women, they infer that men deserve more and are worth more; therefore, the pay inequity is perceived as justified when it is not.

Academic Entitlement

Much of this chapter has examined the "boy crisis" in education. How do feelings of entitlement influence the school experience? Some research has examined the concept of *academic entitlement*. In their research on academic entitlement, Karolyn Chowning[118] and her colleagues find that on some dimensions of academic entitlement women and men score similarly. For instance, women and

be good" and "My professors should curve my grade if I am close to the next grade." However, on a measure of *externalized responsibility*, men are more likely to agree with statements such as "It is unnecessary for me to participate in class when the professor is paid for teaching, not for asking questions" and "For group assignments, it is acceptable to take a back seat and let others do most of the work if I am busy." Men more than women are likely to agree with statements such as "Instructors should bend the rules for me" and "If I felt I deserved a higher grade, I would tell the instructor."[119] The authors conclude that students who attribute their performance to their courses or instructors may fail to self-correct or develop adaptive strategies for success in college.

As we mentioned earlier, men are more likely to be narcissists than are women. One particular type of narcissism, *exploitativeness/entitlement* is more common among men than women. Individuals with high levels of exploitativeness/entitlement narcissism would agree with statements such as "I find it easy to manipulate people" and "I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve." Interestingly, this particular aspect of narcissism is associated with academic disengagement, such as not attending class.[120] The implication here is that inflated self-importance may lead to shirking academic obligations and lower academic performance.

Unfortunately, parents contribute to some boys' overconfidence. Both parents of boys, as well as boys themselves, *overestimate* their intelligence relative to their actual intelligence. Parents of daughters, and girls themselves, tend to *underestimate* their intelligence.[121] Boys tend to view themselves as *more* competent than how teachers view them, whereas girls tend to view themselves as *less* competent than how teachers view them.[122] These differences, most evident in the lack of agreement between boys and their teachers on competence and the work cited previously indicating that boys are more likely to listen to other boys than they are to teachers, suggest that boys may be less attentive to expectations from others than girls, and therefore they also may be affected less by evaluations from others.[123] Boys' inflated sense of entitlement and their privileged status as males allows them to be insensitive to others' evaluations. Boys' and men's sense of entitlement, coupled with the perception that school performance and academic commitment is incompatible with masculinity, may account for boys and men's disengagement with school.

The Gender Gap in College Attendance

A key piece of the argument that there is a war against boys and men is that women now outnumber men in college and university attendance and graduation rates. Women make up 57% of the students at U.S. universities.[124] So they do make up

the majority of college students, but this number hardly represents a female takeover and male demise. There are important caveats to even these fairly modest numbers. First, men continue to outnumber women in the attendance at most elite colleges and universities. Harvard has a 50/50 split of their undergraduate enrollment, but Princeton and Yale's men represent 51% of the student body; the University of Chicago has 56% men; Stanford has 52% men, Caltech has 65% men, and MIT has 63% men.[125] Second, men are still more likely to graduate with degrees that lead to higher-paying jobs. For example, in 2014 the average starting salary of a person with a degree in Education was $40,590, Humanities and Social Sciences majors earned $38,045, but Math/Sciences and Engineering majors earned $42,596 and $62,564, respectively.[126] Of course, women could choose to major in male-dominated fields such as math, sciences, and engineering, but they will still make lower salaries than men with the same majors.[127] Third, men make more money than women in every education category from high school dropouts to those with high school diplomas to college graduates.[128] In terms of earning power, then, men as a whole do not need as much education as do women for higher pay—simply because they are men. Surely, girls and boys alike should be encouraged to seek higher education, but end-of-men/boy-crisis authors fail to consider the causes other than a supposedly antimale climate that may account for the increase in young women attending college relative to men.

Another frequently cited gender difference used as evidence that schools are systematically harmful for boys is that girls generally excel at reading and writing relative to boys. Concerns about boys' reading and writing difficulties are valid; however, as noted earlier, the stereotypically male careers of math, science, and technology are much more prestigious and lucrative than stereotypically female careers in reading and writing. Support for boys' success in the more lucrative math and technology fields comes from parents, teachers, and boys themselves. Teachers and parents reinforce gender-segregated career categories. For instance, teachers overrate male students' mathematics capability and believe boys to be more interested, more confident, and to have higher achievement in science and math than girls.[129] Teachers also call on boys more often in science classes (although boys also more often volunteer questions and comments).[130] Parents perceive sons as more competent in science, and they expect better performance from them compared to daughters.[131] Again, pointing to boys' deficits in reading and writing as indicative of schools shortchanging boys does not take into account boys' achievements and the different value and compensation for those achievements. Parents encourage their children to take gender-stereotyped courses: they select fewer foreign language courses for their sons and fewer science courses for their daughters.[132] Across all academic domains parents' underestimate daughters' compared to sons' abilities, and this underestimation is reflected in their talk

to their children. Even when girls and boys earn equivalent grades, when parents talk with daughters and sons about academics, they use more discouraging talk with their daughters than sons.[133] Parents tend to overestimate their sons' science ability relative to daughters' and believe that their sons like science more than their daughters. It's hardly a surprise then that boys tend to be more confident in their science ability than girls—but this gender difference is not reflective of their actual science ability because there tends to be no gender difference in actual science grades of kids.[134]

Conclusion

The end-of-men/boy-crisis rhetoric says that feminism brought attention to girls' and women's needs in education but, in doing so, feminists subordinated boys' needs to the point that girls and women got ahead of boys and men. Contrary to the inflamed rhetoric about the end-of-men, boys and men continue to be at the center of popular culture and education. Male characters continue to dominate television shows, television cartoons, children's television shows, television commercials, commercial voiceovers, films, music videos, magazine advertisements, newspaper comics, and even cereal boxes and clipart. Boys and men are portrayed as doing things—they take risks, they adventure, they are leaders, they work, and they take care of business. They matter. Boys and men continue to be portrayed as the regular, normal, natural human. Girls and women largely operate in a service capacity to boys and men. What girls and women do matters less.

Nonetheless, books continue to be written and sold that argue that the education system is "rigged against boys." A systematic review of school materials and teacher behavior demonstrates just the opposite. Just as mass media in general put men at the center, so do teaching materials. Teachers continue to focus most of their attention—both positive and negative—on boys. Teachers and parents expect more intellectually from boys than from girls. Even when teachers attempt to be "gender-blind" in their interactions with students, as well as their choices in curricula and lesson plans, they tend to use male-centered curricula without realizing what they are doing.[135] However, teachers who have been trained in gender equity tend to distribute their attention more equitably between girls and boys than those who have not.[136] The problem of course is that if teachers believe that it is *boys*, not girls who are short-changed, they are not prepared to notice their own behavior when it is directed to keep boys at the center.

The end-of-men/boy-crisis authors attack the relatively brief moment of academic, educational, and popular focus on the inhospitable nature of classrooms and educational institutions for girls and women and demand a focus not just

broadened to include boys but redirected once again to exclude girls. William Pollack, author of *Real Boys*, even declares, "Boys' poor performance is a global issue."[137] He ignores the fact that in many countries girls are denied access to formal education simply because they are girls and, in some cultures, when a family has resources for only one child to attend school, it is the boy who is allowed to attend. According to UNESCO, women account for two-thirds of the global illiterate population and that number has remained virtually the same over the past twenty years.[138]

Feelings of personal entitlement can lead members of dominant groups to be blind to seeing when they are unfairly over-benefiting, and their unearned and unjust privilege leads them to regard efforts to "level the playing field" as fundamentally unfair to them.[139] Grillo and Wildman's center stage problem[140] helps us understand how those who are accustomed to being at the center of everything important in society are threatened when a spotlight is shone on a marginalized group even for a brief moment. When people who are not regarded as entitled to the center move into it, they are viewed as usurpers. The reaction is a backlash and a re-assertion of privilege.

Girls and women are usurpers. Jean Twenge[141] notes that in recent decades girls and women earn better grades and obtain college degrees because of an increased emphasis on instrumentality (e.g., assertiveness, competitiveness—characteristics traditionally associated with men) for women. Twenge argues that society has done a good job of encouraging girls to be instrumental, and now girls are prepared to compete with boys. Women regard achievement-related status enhancements (e.g., education, experience) as more important to employee pay decisions than men do, whereas men suggest that ascribed status (who a person is) should be utilized in pay decisions.[142] Trends in society suggest that women are taking the steps necessary to enhance their achievement-related status through education and training.[143] For some men, their sense of entitlement does not always match their actual achievement. Rather than blaming feminism for the supposed end of men, we should focus on patriarchy and male dominance as producing gender rules that dictate that school, and anything else coded as feminine, is viewed as weakness; that women teachers have nothing useful to say to boys and men; and that simply being a man should be good enough for success without hard work, education, and training.

Notes

1. Sledge, M. (2014, January 26). Rand Paul: "If there was a war on women, I think they won." Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/26/rand-paul-war-on-women_n_4669464.html