

SANTA FE BOYS

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Leonard Sax vs *Time Magazine*: Are Boys Adrift or Are They Doing Well?

By Paul Golding

One way to look at Leonard Sax's recently released book, *Boys Adrift*,¹ is as a response to the *Time Magazine* cover story of August 6, "The Myth of Boys." While *Time* says that boys are doing better than ever, Sax talks of boys in crisis and the national medicalization of young masculinity.

Even though Sax's book was researched and scheduled for release months before the *Time* article appeared, he manages not only to challenge the author, David Von Drehle, but he also looks into what is happening to boyhood to see the underlying causes of the issues.

The following addresses the three main points of the *Time Magazine* article, drawing heavily from *Boys Adrift*.

1. Have reading scores for boys improved?

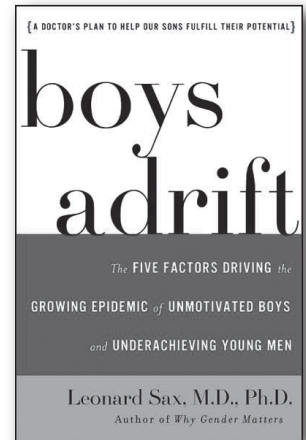
It is true, as *Time* contends, that on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (aka, the "Nation's Report Card"), the reading scores of fourth-grade boys have improved slightly over the last 20 years. But reading scores for twelfth-grade boys have fallen over this time. Isn't where you finish the race more important than where you were at the one-third mark? *Time* argues that as the fourth-grade boys move up we can "expect gains in the higher grades soon."

Sax addressed this phenomenon to an audience at the Santa Fe Community College in May. He also discusses it in chapter two of *Boys Adrift*. As early elementary curriculum accelerated and as the focus of elementary education narrowed, reading test scores of both boys and girls rose in the early grades. However, the improvement has come at a price: some students, especially boys, have started tuning out; they no longer read for fun; they have stopped paying attention. This shows up by the twelfth grade, when students are expected to read for content. Sax reports on a National Endowment for the Arts study that found that the gap between boys and girls in reading over 20 years has become a "marker for gender identity . . . girls read; boys don't."

2. Have we seen a 4% increase in male high school graduation since 1980?

Anyone familiar with the recent news that fewer than a third of those who started the ninth grade at Santa Fe's Capital High School made it to the end should wonder about this statistic. Such skepticism might increase after reading an article elsewhere in this issue of *Santa Fe Boys* about the statistics on New Mexico's high school graduation rates showing that only 54.7% of males compared to 64.2% of females graduate from high schools.

Addressing the *Time* allegation, which uses national statistics to make its case, we can see that the educational attainment levels for males have been falling for some time. It may well be that the absolute numbers of male high school graduates and college students have increased as the population in these age groups has grown. It may even be that the percentage of high school graduate males enrolled in college has been growing as *Time* argues. But the proportion of male high school and college graduates in the total male population has declined. The US Census Bureau presents this picture very clearly by looking at educational attainment by five year cohorts over long periods of time. As they put it: "Younger men were less likely to complete high school than men aged 50-54."² Similarly, "College graduation rates were lower among younger men (age 25 to 44) born later in the twentieth century than they were for men born just after 1950 (age 45 to 49)."



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Pojoaque's Success Expands Single Sex Classes for Fifth Grade, Sixth Grade and Middle School

The Pojoaque Valley School system, the next public school system north of Santa Fe, has expanded single-sex classes to the sixth grade following improved test scores and reduced behavioral problems with last year's fifth grade classes in the Pojoaque Valley Intermediate School (PVIS). PVIS has also extended the amount of time fifth graders spend in all-boy and all-girl classes from half a day last year to a full day. In addition, the Pojoaque Middle School will offer single-sex classes in selected subjects this school year.

Test Score Improvement: At the beginning and end of the year, all Pojoaque fifth graders took standardized tests in mathematics and reading to measure academic growth during the year. These tests, known as Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) are also administered in Santa Fe Public Schools. They gauge achievement and improvement for individual students and whole classes relative to national norms.

As the graph below shows, both Pojoaque all-boy and all-girl single-sex classes exceeded the national norm for improvement in math and reading and both did better than the Pojoaque coed fifth-grade classes. As a result of these improvements parents have enthusiastically enrolled their children for the additional offerings. In contrast to last year, when parents were reluctant to allow their children to attend the single-sex classes in fall 2006, Paul Ortiz, the all-boy fifth-grade class teacher, noted, "This year after the media attention and test data, the classes filled up quickly." Indeed, some students had to be turned away because of classroom shortages.

Why Single Sex Works: Last spring, Dr. Leonard Sax, author of *Why Gender Matters* and executive director of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (www.singlesexschools.org) was in town to deliver an all-day workshop to Santa Fe Public School middle school teachers on how boys and girls learn differently.

Speaking to parents and community members that evening at the Santa Fe Community College, Dr. Sax described the many benefits of the single-sex classroom approach. The main reason for its success is

that teachers, after receiving training in how boys and girls learn differently, are able to tailor classrooms to only one gender. They know how to engage boys who previously looked at school as a "be-quiet-sit-still" environment for girls, and they involve girls in subjects like computers and science in ways that these previously "boy subjects" usually do not.

In addition to allowing teachers to address the gender-different learning needs of boys and girls, a single-sex setting has the advantage of much more diverse student behavior. Girls show less interest in looks, and boys waste less energy on developing their tough-guy persona. The main beneficiary is learning.

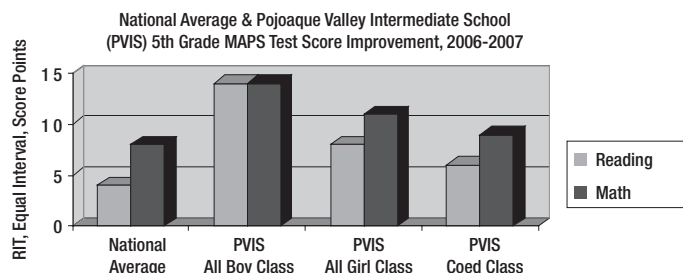
As the number of public schools in the United States with single sex classrooms increases, will we see more interest in this choice for Santa Fe's children? Will the local public schools follow Pojoaque's example?

In addition to Pojoaque, the Santa Fe Girls School is another local model of single-sex education. For seven years, this school has been providing education to girls, from sixth through eighth grades. Because SFGS is private, parents must pay to send their children, an indication of how strongly parents favor this kind of educational alternative for their daughters when given the choice. Indeed, for many generations Americans have been able and willing to elect this model of education for their sons and daughters in private schools.

Of course, not all boys and girls fit the profiles of the "typical" boy or girl learner, and so single sex classrooms in public schools are offered only as alternatives. Parents can always choose mixed gender classrooms if they prefer, as many have in Pojoaque. But the question is: if parents of public school students want their children in single sex classrooms, shouldn't they be able to elect this alternative? The cost difference to the public school system to provide this is minimal: a few days of teacher training to those who want to lead the classes.

Several Santa Fe teachers and some principals have expressed interest in trying out this approach in their schools. Also, a community group has gotten together

to promote a private boys school, similar in concept to the Santa Fe Girls School. If you would like to learn more about single sex education and/or participate in any of the alternatives being promoted by community groups, email santafeboys@comcast.net. **SFB**



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A Question of Equity

Over the last ten years the NM Lottery Success Scholarships has distributed \$166 million to students—graduates of NM high schools attending public institutions of higher education. According to the NM Department of Higher Education, only 39.7 percent of scholarship funds has been awarded to males attending community colleges, four-year colleges, and state universities. In the table and graph below we can see how the unequal distribution of these scholarships parallels the unequal ratio of male to female college degree recipients in the state.

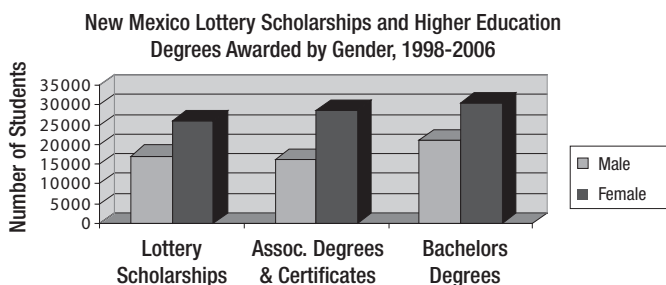
	Lottery Scholarships	Assoc. Degrees & Certificates	Bachelors Degrees
Males	39.7%	36.3%	40.8%
Females	60.3%	63.7%	59.2%

Source: NM Higher Education Department, December 2006, *The Condition of Higher Education in New Mexico 2005-2006* (<http://hed.state.nm.us/cms/kunde/rts/hedstatemus/docs/649408-12-21-2006-13-46-59.pdf>, retrieved July 24, 2007).

In New Mexico, educational policy makers express concern with questions of equity when race and female gender are seen to be disadvantaged, but there is no similar preoccupation when young males, especially Hispanic and Native American males, do not get their share of a college education.

Some might say that promoting the goal of more male students attending NM colleges will require public institutions of higher education to lower their standards and accept unqualified male students. However, the evidence indicates that many more males are capable of going to NM colleges than are currently attending. The 2007 *Ready for College* report submitted to the NM legislature, for example, shows that the proportion of males attending college and needing remedial education is less than females (45% compared to 53%).¹ So it seems reasonable to assume that for some reason many boys, who are as prepared to attend NM colleges as girls, are getting turned off to pursuing higher education.

What might be done to address this gender imbalance? Increasingly, those who study what is happening to boys see the educational origins of this college attendance imbalance in elementary schools. Speaking in Santa Fe a few months ago, Leonard Sax described the growing alienation of boys from school as originating in kindergarten. In the last 30 years, Sax told an audience at Santa Fe Community College, kindergarten curriculum has been accelerated from an em-



phasis on socialization and playing games, finger-painting, singing, recess and naps to learning the letters of the alphabet and starting to read. Many more boys than girls are not ready for this. They become bored and restless, and aware that they are in the “dumb” group that is not getting it. Their fidgeting and lack of attention often leads to prescriptions for medicines for ADHD (boys receive about 80%) and/or placement in special education classes (67% boys), further confirmation of their declining status and a message to each child that something is wrong with him. In short, boys in school, much more than girls, get the message from an early age, “this place is not for you.”

Today in New Mexico we see the easy acceptance of the 60-percent female to 40-percent male ratio among current recipients of bachelors degrees without comment from public officials. Could it be that politicians, school administrators and teachers, who must be well aware of the free-falling male participation in NM colleges, fear that they will be branded anti-female? Is the silence on this issue the tyranny of political correctness?

This situation is likely to get worse if not addressed. Elsewhere in the United States some private colleges are being pro-active. A recent issue of *US News and World Report* (June 25, 2007) noted that a few private colleges and universities, taking affirmative action, are “putting a thumb on scale” for boys. These institutions increasingly fear their ability to survive as they become more imbalanced and so are favoring boys in admissions to bring their student ratios closer to even. However, in New Mexico few go to private colleges and none who do receive Lottery Scholarships, which are only for attending public institutions.

In the United States, the traditional route to mobility has been higher education. When we start to see a 58:42 ratio (and do not hear a peep from public officials), young men start to wonder if the American dream of social advancement is any longer for them. [1]

[1] Winograd, P. et. al. (June 28, 2007) *Ready for College: A report on NM high school graduates who take remedial classes in NM colleges and universities*, NM Dept of Administration and Finance, p. 19. <http://hed.state.nm.us/cms/kunde/rts/hedstatemus/docs/347567093-06-27-2007-16-17-25.pdf>.

Take Your Boys on Field Trips

By Elisabeth Keller, Educational Programs Director, Santa Fe Children’s Museum

Despite the increased risk that something might go wrong, most teachers will agree that the benefits of field trips can be enormous. A good field trip can kick off a new unit of study, tap into local expertise, or promote bonding and good will.

Although my evidence is anecdotal, I am convinced that boys especially benefit from field trips and from certain types of field trips in particular. An outing that allows students to take new risks, take on leadership roles, get physical and share information that may not come up in class is ideal.

As a teacher I have seen boys blossom in outdoor games such as those played at the Audubon or the Mountain Center. Though the games are designed to be cooperative, a plus for many of the participants and the group as a whole, most games still need some

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Looking Behind the Dropout Rate:

Boys more likely to drop out of school; less likely to feel welcomed in school and to receive support from family for school

By Paul Golding, Editor, SFB

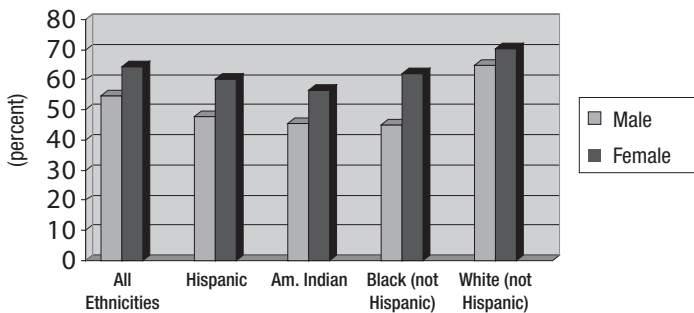
When only 130 seniors graduated from Capital High School last year (student enrollment about 1200), the Santa Fe Public Schools experienced public scrutiny and concern over performance. How is it possible that fewer than a third of those who started the ninth grade made it to the end? What does this say about the quality of engagement and commitment of students, parents and schools to the process of high school education?

Some news that did not come out when the spotlight was focused on the low graduation rate at Capital:

- Santa Fe has lots of company in this problem in New Mexico.
- Boys are less likely to graduate than girls.

Education Week, a national educational journal, presented the following picture in June 2007, reflecting the situation three years ago for the state of New Mexico:

High School Graduation Rates by Student Group in New Mexico, 2003-2004



High School Graduation Rates by Student Group in New Mexico, 2003-2004		
Student Group	Male (percent)	Female (percent)
All ethnicities	54.7	64.2
American Indian	45.6	56.7
Hispanic	47.9	60.2
Black (not Hispanic)	45.0	62.0
White (not Hispanic)	64.7	70.2

Source: *Education Week*. (2007, June 12). *Diplomas count: Ready for what?* (www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2007/06/12/index.html retrieved July 22, 2007).

What is the cause of this bleak picture? In a series of interviews carried out with Capital High School seniors a few months before graduation, we can see why boys are more likely to leave.

In April and May 2006, I interviewed 16 boys and 13 girls who were a month away from their high school graduation at Capital. The focus of the interviews was on what the experience is like of high school seniors about to graduate from high school with regard to planning for the future. I asked open-ended questions about their interests and their plans. I also enquired into the kinds of support they received for pursuing their interests and their plans from friends, school personnel (teachers, administrators, and counselors), and also from their parents and other relatives.

Driven girls, discouraged boys

The first two interviews, one with a female student and the second with a male student, provide a sense for the striking qualitative difference observed between female and male students. The girl in the first interview was interested in pursuing a career in an art field. She said she had a 3.0 average and that was good enough to get into one of the better public state universities. She had close friends who shared her interests and she had thought about the kinds of funding she needed in order to go to college. Several teachers at school had advised her and kept her on track for the field she had chosen. She was concerned that it would be hard to make a living in art, but she loved it so much she did not care, saying, "I'll sleep in my car if I have to." Her single parent and younger brother were supportive, and her grandparents would help her with some of the financing. She was adamant she would be involved in her chosen profession in the future and at the close of the interview said, "I will not stop. You will hear about me in the future!"

The second interviewee was typical of the boys. He mentioned several radically different kinds of jobs he wished to pursue, but seemed to know little in depth about a career in any one of them. There was little connection between them except that they would all involve some further training. But he was clear that he did not want to go to college, saying, "I'd rather spend my money on something I like doing than on something I don't like. I could easily see myself enrolling in college and then dropping out. It would be money down the toilet." He described his friends as supportive but not making a lot of difference. One teacher at school was "kind of" helpful in advising him about one of his possible careers. Paying for the necessary training seemed to be mostly a function of how well he tested on entrance exams, but he seemed to have little idea of where the money he needed for the training would come from.

Most striking in the two interviews was the difference of energy—one excited about the future and her continuing education and the other looking forward to "kicking back" for the summer without much apparent clarity about what he might be doing afterward. Of the 16 males interviewed only eight expressed a clear plan, while of the 13 females all but one presented a plan that had been researched and was purposeful. For both males and females, not all of these plans involved going on to college; some were for training in a trade in automotive mechanics, cooking, massage therapy, beauty school, or firefighting, for example; and some of the interviewees were planning to travel or try other alternatives such as performing music

before college. However, for the girls much more than the boys, life immediately after high school involved higher education. Hence, the word “energy” as used above refers to more than whether a student, girl or boy, is planning to go to college; it also includes whether they expressed a direction for their future and a sense of commitment to that direction that comes from within them.

Looking at the interview comments again and comparing the energy and excitement the girls had about their futures to the relative lack of these in boys, one senses a lost or arrested quality in the process of development from one stage of life to another for many of the young males. It is as if something deep inside is not being cared for and supported in many of the boys. This lack of nurturance for boys, I believe, happens at both the family and school level.

Do girls get more family support to graduate than boys?

In a large scale (25,000 participants) national study of parental involvement in their children’s schooling, Carter & Wojtkiewicz, conclude, “Daughters received more attention from their parents than did sons.”¹ In the Capital High School interviews, a conclusion consistent with this finding can be said of the interviewees when asked about the kinds of support they received from their families for planning their careers. A typical response from a girl was, “My parents and family support me. My mom and dad push me to get good grades.” Or “My parents give me support. They say if I don’t get a scholarship they will work harder and get the money.” Some of the boys also reported receiving support: “My parents support me 100%. They have been pushing me and because of them I have good grades. They give me a good work ethic.” But some were very negative about their parents. One declared, “I haven’t seen my parents since I was very young. They were practically bums and got in a lot of trouble. That’s OK, I don’t need them. I don’t get support, but can handle it by myself.” Another said, “I needed more direction.”

With regard to the students who were interviewed, the fact that more of the boys, in describing their living situations, related that they lived with someone other than a parent at the time of the interview might account for some of this lack of support.

Carter and Wojtkiewicz speculate that the reason for greater parental support for girls may be “due to current social conditions, such as delayed marriage and more divorce, which require females to be capable of supporting themselves rather than relying on a husband.” They also wonder if it might be the result of “traditional gender socialization,” that is, adolescent females are raised to be more dependent upon others than adolescent males. Or perhaps this is the result of a more “reciprocal relationship between daughters and their parents.”


The Capital interviews do not, definitively, shed light on how much each of these factors may have played a role. However, several of the girls made statements that seem to confirm the first of these alternatives having to do with the instability of marriage. For example, three girls said:

- “My dad would not care if I go to college or not. But my mom is really supportive . . . She was divorced, a single mother with a full time job and went to college at the same time, so she wants me to apply myself and get education so it’s not so hard for me down the road.”
- “You get married these days and have kids and it doesn’t work out; you end up alone with kids. I don’t want to do that. I want to be able to support myself without the help of anybody. This is what happened to my mom. My dad left my mom with three kids. She had to fend for us. I think that a lot of girls feel that way. Society is changing. Everybody knows that if you want to be successful, you need to go to school.”
- “My father has very different expectations for me than for my older brothers. He never pushed them so hard to go to college. He sees me succeeding more than they did. He doesn’t want me to have a dead-end job.”

Dislike of school; a common boy experience

Looking locally, in the *2003 New Mexico Youth Risk & Resiliency Survey* for Santa Fe high schools only a minority of males—38 percent—responded positively to questions that would indicate a positive commitment to learning. In contrast to this lack of interest on the boys’ part, 65 percent of females showed a “Positive Commitment to Learning.”² Another study, also carried out in 2003 with Santa Fe seventh through twelfth graders by the Search Institute found boys similarly disengaged.³

In the interviews with Capital High School seniors, many of the boys found school an unpleasant experience they wanted to be finished with.

- “Guys probably just want to get out of school. They are tired of it.”
- “Girls are better at school. They get more help and boys are seen in a negative light. I can’t really get into school. It just goes to show that girls are going to be more and more smarter. College makes you a better person. You can make more money that way. You have to bust your butt for some years after you graduate from high school, but you deserve to make more money.”
- “My friends don’t want to keep studying. A lot of my friends have small businesses or go into the military. Very few want to pursue higher education. They can start making money off the bat. Girls see education as a means, as an investment.” 

[1] Carter, R.S. and Wojtkiewicz, R.A. (2000). Parental involvement with adolescents’ education: Do daughters or sons get more help? *Adolescents*: 35, no. 137, pp. 29-44.

[2] New Mexico Department of Public Health, et al. 2004, 2003 New Mexico Youth Risk & Resiliency Survey,

[3] Search Institute. (January 2003). Development Assets: A Profile of Your Youth. Executive Summary, Participating Schools in Santa Fe County.

Leonard Sax vs *Time Magazine*, continued from page 1

In *Boys Adrift*, Sax considers the causes of this decline. Indeed this is the subject of his book, or as the subtitle puts it: the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men. Why are so many boys giving up on school, work, and outside interests? In addition to the changes in school, mentioned above, Sax notes several others, each of which comprises a chapter:

- Video Games—The “addiction” to games displaces interest in school, family, friends, and social life.
- Medications for ADHD—The diagnosis, much more likely for boys than girls, is hardly science-based and there is evidence that use of the medications decreases personal motivation.
- Endocrine disruptors—These are chemicals that get into our bodies from plastics, fertilizers and hormones injected into animals whose meat we eat. There is mounting evidence that they affect both the physical and psychological development of children, especially boys, negatively.
- The loss of the masculine ideal (the chapter is titled, “The Revenge of the Forsaken Gods”)—Boys need to be led to manhood through male role models, not by devaluation and disintegration of the masculine ideal.

3. Are more boys going straight to college after high school?

Quoting Leonard Sax from his *Boys Adrift* web site:³

At least more boys are going to college than ever before, right? The “favorite statistic” in the *Time* cover story, the statistic which Mr. Von Drehle says serves to “sum up all the others,” is the one which supposedly proves that “fewer boys today are deadbeats” (p. 45). This statistic refers to the fact that more boys between the ages of 16 and 19 today are in school or working than was the case 20 years ago. That’s true, primarily because more boys today attend college than in the 1980s. The *Time* cover story concludes that boys therefore “are pulling themselves up.”

But such a conclusion neglects the larger picture. It’s true that more boys are going to college than was the case 20 years ago. In affluent suburbs, in particular, essentially every boy *goes* to college. The only requirement for a boy to *go* to college, after all, is a parent whose checks don’t bounce. A more meaningful parameter is how *well* boys do at college. According to a recent front-page article in the *New York Times*,⁴ at many colleges and universities, roughly four out of five students earning high honors now are women. According to the latest report from the US Department of Education,⁵ only 30% of men who enroll at a four-year college or university will earn a degree within four years, compared with 39.7% of women. According to a May 2007 report underwritten by the Pew Charitable Trusts,⁶ young men today (30 to 35 years of age) are the first generation of American men to earn significantly *less* than their fathers did at the same age. They are also the first generation of American men *ever* to be less well-educated than their sisters. In this age group, 32% of women have earned a four-year college degree, compared with only 23% of men.

Much of the issue of the growing proportion of young men who “fail to launch” is covered in chapters six and seven of *Boys Adrift*. Sax

stresses that the problem is NOT that more young women are earning college degrees; the problem is that their brothers aren’t keeping up with them.

Why not? Answering that question is the main mission of *Boys Adrift*. **SEB**

[1] L. Sax, (2007). *Boys adrift: The five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men*. New York: Basic Books.

[2] <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-24.pdf>

[3] <http://www.boysadrift.com/home.php>.

[4] *NY Times*, “At Colleges, Women Are Leaving Men in the Dust,” July 9, 2006.

[5] <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007154.pdf>.

[6] http://pewtrusts.org/news/news_subpage.cfm?content_item_id=4200&content_type_id=16&page=nr1.

The Disappearing Male in Community College: A Call for Action

By Lisa Ebert, editor of *Dispatch*, the newspaper of The Council for Resource Development, which educates and advocates for community college leaders dedicated to securing resources.

(Editor’s Note: This article, reprinted by permission of the Council for Resource Development, points out that nationally only 40 percent of the students at community colleges are male, which is also the situation in most of New Mexico’s community colleges. At the Santa Fe Community College, the percentage of males is 36 percent.)

As proponents of a collective community college “mission,” we pride ourselves on our efforts to include the traditionally “unincluded” and “underserved”: minorities, low-income individuals, seniors, the illiterate, those for whom English is a second language, and women. We have adjusted our programs, strategies, teaching methods and curricula in order to meet the needs of our changing populations. We strive to celebrate and honor the differences among us with recognition of the enhanced educational experience that such diversity brings higher education. And yet, at educational institutions nationwide, from community colleges to universities, female students outnumber male students by an average ratio of 60:40, with all indications being that the disparity will only increase in the next ten years. This begs the question: How did we get here? And is this acceptable, inevitable or desirable?

Is this acceptable?

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* did explore the issue in a 2002 article entitled “Community Colleges Start to Ask, Where are the Men?” Beginning with the finding that female students at post-secondary institutions of all kinds have been besting their male counterparts in enrollment and graduation, the discussion focused on whether there is, in fact, an overall crisis in male enrollment and graduation patterns.

It seems there is a crisis. To be sure, nearly every institution would agree that it is important to have a good balance of males and



females in higher education. The reasons are many, but a few main ones are noted here. Critically, and most importantly, it is simply wrong to not address the fact that an entire segment of society is falling short of making it to college. Any education model that is not reaching a large sector of the population is an ineffective and disrespectful one. This aspect alone requires at least another full article to explore, so I will focus instead on the more pragmatic rationales for increasing the pipeline of males in higher education.

Is this inevitable?

The US Supreme Court has not directly addressed the issue of affirmative action involving the use of gender in the admissions process, (as it has for race, and the use of race as one of many factors considered was endorsed). But we do know that it is important for institutions of higher education to maintain a good balance of students in regard to race, background and gender. Some institutions are beginning to successfully address the gender disparity with strategies such as creating football teams, emphasizing “hands on” learning approaches, producing brochures with visual representations of males engaged in college activities, and reaching out to all-male high schools. Clearly, more needs to be done. Boys and men may now be said to be “underserved,” and resources must be dedicated to addressing their needs, just as they have been for other underserved populations. It is not inevitable that this trend continue, but in order to reduce the disparity we need to examine what is happening to them and what we can do to change it.

Is this desirable?

Dr. Judith Kleinfeld, director of the *Boy's Project*, an organization that showcases colleges that have succeeded in engaging and retaining more males, notes that this gap begins as early as kindergarten. “We are losing boys to a sense of failure that comes from schooling poorly adapted to their needs.”

Males bring their perspective to classes and discussions, and this perspective is as necessary and valuable to the learning experience as the female experience. If, in a sociology class, there are three males and seven females, the likelihood of any of the males being bold enough to challenge, question or proffer an honest opinion is reduced or eliminated completely. Without enough males in the classroom, that perspective is not brought forth adequately, and the entire educational experience is diminished for all students. Further,

the experience of higher education contains a social component, with students meeting and making friendships and possibly dating. With so few men attending colleges, in relation to women, the possibility of this is greatly reduced. This is not desirable! What can be done? As stated there are those who are trying to address this gap, but to be sure, sexual politics have made the issue a “hot button” topic and have clouded the underlying issues, making open debate difficult. It seems we are loathe, as institutions and members of society, to look closely at this issue or speak out too loudly on it, for fear that we will be labeled or judged for the appearance of speaking out against females. This need for more balance need not divide us—for we all agree that a gender-balanced higher education experience is a worthy goal. We simply need to shape our programs, brochures and recruitment efforts to align with this goal. **SB**

Abuse of Boys Calls Out for More Attention

In Santa Fe, violence in the schools and gang culture receives a lot of interest. Usually this focuses on incarceration and what is wrong with young men. In contrast, a new study by the Washington, DC-based Healthy Teen Network wants us to look at boys with more sympathy. Instead of seeing them as criminals, *Boys will be boys: understanding the impact of child maltreatment and family violence on the sexual, reproductive, and parenting behaviors of young men* maintains that we should look at young males as victims with public health issues. They need more prevention and less punishment.

In 2001, the Healthy Teen Network did a similar study on the situation of girls and abuse. Now they are looking at the other half of the problem. “It’s the boys’ turn,” say the authors, Abby Kahn and Pat Paluzzi. “Now we must shift our focus: As long as our society reinforces stereotypes of males solely as perpetrators and females as victims, male survivors of child maltreatment and family violence will lack parity with their female counterparts in efforts to develop and access prevention and treatment resources tailored to their specific needs.”

The study posits a direct relationship between the experience of pre-adolescent boys with maltreatment and family violence and future sexual, reproductive and parenting behaviors. The kinds of early experiences of these maltreated boys include physical and sexual abuse, psychological injury including witnessing family violence, and rejection and neglect. The authors declare that the available evidence shows boys are as likely to undergo this kind of ill-treatment as girls. There are differences of course. Boys are more likely to be beaten and physically punished and more likely to be forced into non-penetrative sex acts. Also, male survivors *report* victimization less frequently.

If we wish to deal with the problems of teen pregnancy, gang violence and sexual violence, we need to make a cultural shift to see that boys get early treatment. But first we need to change from seeing girls and their ready acknowledgement of wounding as the only victims of a traumatized childhood.

The study is available on-line at www.healthyteenetwork.org under the “publications” tab. **SB**

Take Your Boys on Field Trips, continued from page 3

leadership to accomplish the goal. Boys who might not be academic leaders may still be happy to take a risk and assert themselves in a new environment where other skills are needed. I have also seen boys who may be less present in class passionately engaged in sharing their information about snakes, scorpions or owl pellets with a new, excited instructor, especially after a short hike has gotten them energized and focused. Ropes course challenges and camping trips are ideal ways to get boys to gain both insight and earn self-confidence that greatly impact their performance back in the classroom.

It is indisputable that most boys like to build, dig, work with tools and explore nature at its most seemingly yucky or dangerous. After kindergarten, (and now, often, after pre-school) many of these opportunities disappear. Class trips to places like the Children's Museum or Explora allow for building activities, waterway construction and investigations with worms or cockroaches. Socially, boys often bond while working side by side with others. These venues foster this style of social interaction as one boy pumps and another mans the water wheel or similar challenges are worked out informally but purposefully.

Field trips can give boys a way in to history. While many girls can imagine themselves part of an historical time period and place such as colonial New Mexico by reading a good book, it often helps boys to physically participate in the work of the time to get them to

empathize and find connections to their subject. Las Golandrinas is a wonderful place to bring boys where they can move, work and try their hand at rope making and other colonial crafts and trades. It is remarkable how much students remember after a trip where they get to fully, physically participate.

I believe that all students gain so much from time away from school shared with their classmates. Concerts, museums, the zoo, firehouse or theater can all be amazing learning adventures. For those of you concerned about the special needs of boys, try to get out as often as you can, and try to include some trips especially suited to boys' strengths, learning and social styles that are not as easily accommodated in the classroom.


Elisabeth Keller has taught for the last 14 years and is now the Educational Programs Director at the Santa Fe Children's Museum where new classes for elementary school groups include Fort Building, Make Your Own Hot Air Balloon, Worms! and Building Challenges. 



Photo by Santa Fe Children's Museum