

SANTA FE BOYS

TRIENNIAL PUBLICATION ABOUT THE SITUATION OF BOYS IN SANTA FE

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New Mexico Men: Scarce at NM State Colleges and Universities

The statistics on those attending New Mexico's public colleges and universities on page three underscore the decline of male performance in New Mexico's educational system at all levels. The fact is males are attending college at a dramatically lower rate than females in New Mexico. While this is a national trend, New Mexico data point to a greater current difference between males and females than elsewhere.

Overall, only 41 percent of the public post-secondary institutions' students are male compared to 43 percent nationwide. This male-female discrepancy in New Mexico is consistent across all ethnic groups, although it is slightly greater for Hispanic and Native students. The gender difference is also more pronounced at community colleges where only a little more than one-third of the students are male.

Michael Gurian, the author of *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* (2001) wrote in a recent *Washington Post* op-ed article that "... a dismal future lies ahead for large numbers of boys in this generation who will not go to college. Statistics show that a young man who doesn't finish school or go to college in 2005 will likely earn less than half what a college graduate earns. He'll be three times more likely to be unemployed and more likely to be homeless ... divorced ... engage in violence ... develop substance abuse problems and be a greater burden on the economy."

How does the New Mexico Higher Education Department look at this problem? According to an email response to Santa Fe Boys' inquiry on the matter from Cabinet Secretary Dr. Beverlee J. McClure, "Our department has no 'stance' per se other than we are looking at increasing access for all students. And, though ethnicity will be our main focus, we will, of course, look into gender." Secretary McClure did however recognize personally that, in the long run, the trajectory of this gender data may not be healthy. "The

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The TalkBack group at Capshaw Middle School. Seated front: Cody Montgomery, David Gonzalez, Dennis Dauber, Max Holliday. Seated back: Deakota Marquez, Aaron Shultz. Standing: Tex Dimas (leaning), Owen Gray.

Capshaw Boys: Talkin' Back

By Cody Montgomery, David Gonzalez, Max Holliday, Deakota Marquez, Aaron Shultz, Tex Dimas, and Owen Gray. With Dennis Dauber, counselor, and Paul Golding, Editor, SFB

The BackTalk group at Capshaw Middle School is made up of seven young men, pictured above, who have spent the last three months together in a daily class/discussion group with counselor Dennis Dauber. Over several sessions, Santa Fe Boys newsletter interviewed the participants about the experiences of these eighth grade boys with friends, school and family. Since the BackTalk group had developed a high degree of confidence and closeness with one another, the boys were open to talking about some of the important and intimate issues of their lives. After each session, the participants were given the text to edit and make it their own by adding or subtracting material. The topics fell into several categories:

Friendships

SFB: Imagine that, instead of being a group of boys sitting around this table, you were all girls at Capshaw, and a question came up about what was the best thing you liked about being a girl. What do you think you would say?

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social implications are huge," she wrote. "The chances of our daughters and granddaughters marrying an educated male are small. The number of male faculty and counselors, etc. that we will be able to employ will decrease."

What about the gender imbalance at Santa Fe Community College? Jill Janov, a spokesperson for the college, said that the institution has a great concern for raising the attendance of all at risk students but has no specific program to address the issue of the declining proportion of male students. Nonetheless, only 37 percent of students enrolled for credit in the Fall Semester of 2004 were male. Retention rates, i.e. the number of degree seeking students who stay in SFCC from one fall to the next, similarly reflect the overall situation. For example, 46 percent of the females enrolled in the Fall 2002 semester were in college the following Fall (2003). The comparable statistic for the males was 36 percent. A year later, Fall 2004 saw 49 percent of the females return from the previous year,

but only 36 percent of the males.

What should we make of this distressing picture? Is there is something about pre-college education which is turning boys off well before they graduate from high school? In the absence of targeted attempts by post-secondary institutions to attract males, are colleges and universities, in their "gender neutrality," missing a chance to help a crucial at risk group? In past issues, *Santa Fe Boys* has discussed some of the problems boys face in elementary and secondary public education in Santa Fe. Several articles here deserve special mention in this regard: an interview with a group of eighth graders, "Capshaw Boys: Talkin' Back," provides an example of how these boys feel in school. Another clue to what might be happening is in the list of "Things That Schools Do Which Might Hurt Boys' Education." There is also a short description of how another state, Maine, is dealing with this problem by being more pro-active, starting with acknowledging that a problem exists.

It's a male thing Are boys struggling to achieve because schools are too girl-friendly?

Reprinted by permission of the *American Teacher Magazine*

Boys and girls are different. There's no disputing that. How schools deal with those differences—or not—is an entirely different matter, and one that can generate plenty of disagreement.

Some basic facts do seem to confirm the concerns of authors such as Michael Gurian, who believes that boys are not being well-served by what he calls our "girl-friendly" schools. Boys receive 70 to 90 percent of the D's and F's given in high school, they create up to 90 percent of classroom discipline problems, and they account for 80 percent of high school dropouts and less than half of college students, notes Gurian, whose most recent book is titled, *The Minds of Boys: Saving Our Sons from Falling Behind in School and Life*.

By girl-friendly, Gurian means that success in school comes more readily for students who can read and write well—areas in which girls tend to do better than boys. The flip side is that boys—obviously the generalizations don't apply across the board—learn better when they can move around rather than sit still. That can translate into discipline problems in a classroom where quiet and order are expected. What's more, the majority of teachers are female. Gurian, who has trained more than 15,000 teachers through his institute in Colorado, argues that teachers who deal better with a nosier and more disorderly atmosphere tend to connect better with boys.

Single-sex classrooms are one extreme approach to boy-girl differences. That approach has drawn more interest lately, and not only among those like Gurian who see the merit of different instructional approaches based on gender. Others recognize single-sex classrooms as a way to reduce distractions that result from having boys

and girls in the same room, especially after elementary school.

Gurian's solutions to address the needs of boys include some physical changes in classrooms, as well as modifications in curriculum and learning materials. Some of his more controversial suggestions focus on what Gurian sees as the physiological differences between the sexes. For example, he believes teachers should have more light in their classrooms and should speak louder to boys because males don't see or hear as well as females.

Likewise, to appeal to boys' visual nature, teachers should use more visual aids rather than just reading a story, for example. Increased use of videos, movies and other multi-media in language arts might encourage more reading and writing among males. Schools should also provide a wider variety of reading materials to include topics that appeal to boys, he adds. Technology can be another tool to help boys. Because Gurian believes boys don't take notes as well as girls, schools should consider making laptops more available for note-taking. And back to the difficulty that boys have sitting still, schools should allow them to move around more during activities, which Gurian says might also give their creativity a boost.

Clearly, Gurian's ideas are controversial and are not shared by all experts, especially some of his notions about gender-based brain differences. But there is growing evidence that more boys are being left behind in school, so the more discussion there is about how to prevent that, the better.

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SANTA FE BOYS

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If you would like to receive *Santa Fe Boys* in the future, please contact us at the addresses above.

Gender and Ethnicity of Students at Selected Public Post-Secondary Institutions, 2004

Santa Fe Community College: For 100 Females, 53 Males

	Number of Students	Percent Male	Percent Female
Total	5170	37	63
Hispanic	1868	34	66
White, non-Hispanic	2742	38	62
Am. Indian/Alaskan	142	41	59
Other ^[1]	417	41	59

UNM (Main Campus, undergrad): For 100 females, 72 males

	Number of Students	Percent Male	Percent Female
Total	18673	42	58
Hispanic	6430	41	57
White, non-Hispanic	5880	43	56
Am. Indian/Alaskan	1224	34	66
Other ^[1]	2472	46	54

Northern NM Community College: For 100 Females, 53 Males

	Number of Students	Percent Male	Percent Female
Total	2195	37	63
Hispanic	1543	37	63
White, non-Hispanic	473	36	64
Am. Indian/Alaskan	150	38	62
Other ^[1]	29	38	62

NMSU (Main Campus, undergrad): For 100 females, 81 males

	Number of Students	Percent Male	Percent Female
Total	12987	45	55
Hispanic	5888	42	58
White, non-Hispanic	4304	48	52
Am. Indian/Alaskan	403	36	64
Other ^[1]	2392	49	51

NM Highlands University: For 100 females, 59 males

	Number of Students	Percent Male	Percent Female
Total	1931	37	63
Hispanic	1104	35	65
White, non-Hispanic	453	38	62
Am. Indian/Alaskan	124	24	76
Other ^[1]	200	60	40

All New Mexico Public Post-Secondary Institutions: For 100 females, 69 males

	Number of Students	Percent Male	Percent Female
Total	114202	41	59
Hispanic	43961	39	61
White, non-Hispanic	47215	43	57
Am. Indian/Alaskan	9639	37	63
Other ^[1]	13387	46	54

Age Cohort	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44
Percent Male	51	51	50	50	49	49
Percent Female	49	49	50	50	51	51

Source: New Mexico Higher Education Department, Research and Planning Unit.

[1] Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, non-Hispanic, No response, Non-resident Alien.

Maine, First to Officially Address Boys' Decline in Academics

Like Australia, the United Kingdom and several other countries, the State of Maine has officially started addressing the poor academic performance of boys in its schools. This effort is being carried out by the Maine Department of Education's Gender Equity Task Force. The Honorary Chair of the task force is First Lady Karen Baldacci.

The Task Force is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Summarize recent studies and gather data on the discrepancy between male and female achievement in Maine students, as manifested in: pre K-12 performance measures; student expressions of aspirations; post-secondary plans, education, training; career choices/readiness; college application/acceptance rates; and post-secondary performance measures, *in order to*
- Identify societal norms and specific factors (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, level of parental education, geography, instructional practices) associated with the discrepancy, *in order to*
- Develop proposals for action to guide both State and local educational policy and program development designed to ensure gender equity for Maine students, *and to*
- Suggest additional areas of study that may contribute to an understanding and effective response to the gender equity issues identified, *and to*
- Identify indicators to monitor progress on promoting gender equity.

Among the specific research questions the task force will address are:

- How do the educational experiences, achievement, and aspirations of K-12 male and female students in Maine compare?
- How do other factors (socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, geographic location, rural/urban situation, school size, and writing skills) interact with gender in influencing Maine students' educational experiences, achievements, and aspirations?
- In which instances is gender a key determining variable? How do findings for Maine students compare to those using a nation-wide student population?

More information on the task force may be obtained at the web site: www.maine.gov/education/gender_task_force/

Some School Practices that May Harm Boys

This condensed list is reprinted by permission of Kevin Killion, Director, Illinois Loop web site where it first appeared. The full list may be found at the web site: www.illinoisloop.org.

- Emphasis on multiple simultaneous classroom activities – a major source of distractions – instead of focused, whole-class, engaging instruction.
- De-emphasis of correct answers in math, in favor of verbal ability in describing the approach taken. (Albert Einstein would not have done well in today's math classroom. He once said, "I rarely think in words at all. A thought comes, and I may try to express it in words afterward.")
- Assessment via chatty essays emphasizing verbal skills and expressions of feelings, instead of objective measurement of knowledge and understanding.
- For whatever reason, boys tend to be less skilled than girls in producing neat, clear handwriting. But research finds that "Illegible or poor handwriting can hinder students in getting fair and objective grades from their teachers ... The quality of students' handwriting influences how teachers evaluate papers; students with better handwriting receive higher grades than those with poor handwriting." The result? Boys get lowered grades due to the written form of assessment. (Sommers, C. H. "The Write Stuff" in Women's Quarterly, Independent Women's Forum, Summer 2001.)
- Scoring of these essays by factors unrelated to the subject material at hand (e.g., math

exams that give points for use of complete sentences, use of upper and lower case letters, reference to personal beliefs and experiences.)

- Inattention seen as a psychological disease to be drugged rather than a social deficiency to be corrected.
- Collaborative workgroups, which favor social interaction over personal skills and knowledge.
- Over-medicalization of attention issues: Instead of harnessing the enthusiasm of "hunter"-type alertness and guiding students in its control and application, typical lack of classroom attention is seen as a psychological malady that requires use of powerful psychotropic drugs.
- Classroom decorations, postings and colors that are over-the-top, resulting in an environment that is jarring and distracting rather than simply warm, inviting and encouraging.
- Elimination of recess, a healthy outlet for physical energy.
- "Softening" of gym activities, reducing or eliminating vigorous or competitive ones (e.g., dodgeball), while increasing yoga, stretching, and other less active ones. The result is the loss of this physical outlet, and a conveyed sense that something is less acceptable about those other activities, which are enjoyed by many boys.
- More girls than boys report that they are called upon "often."

Boys still vastly outnumber girls in local crime

A December conference of the New Mexico Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee in Albuquerque hosted many special sessions on the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. While this is an important and growing proportion of the juvenile justice inmate population, females still make up a small part of those committing crimes that require incarceration in Santa Fe's juvenile detention system. This seems to indicate that, in addition to focusing on girls, the needs of boys may need a fresh look also.

Recent data supplied by the Santa Fe County Corrections Director, Greg Parish, shows that in 2004 the local population in the detention center was on average 88 percent boys. For the first nine months of 2005, this proportion dropped to 82 percent. At the same time, the overall local number of inmates had grown. In September 2004 total local admissions of both sexes was 235. For the comparable period in 2005 total

admissions were 255.

One example of a program that appeals to boys at the detention center is provided by Outside In, a local non-profit. Their program, Youth With Promise, offers weekly art, music and dance workshops for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders. By providing positive male role models in the context of teaching art and guitar to incarcerated boys, Outside In offers an outlet for emotions, such as anger and sadness. Those running the programs say that boys who have taken the music and art lessons are calmer and better able to understand their situation, and, in this way, learn to avoid delinquent acts in the future. Boys who stick with the program may be given guitars, which have been purchased from donations to Outside In. This tangible reward gives boys a way to continue to engage in positive behaviors, on their own and with others. It also shows them how to "strut their stuff" without being "bad."

Small Learning Community at Santa Fe High Shows Benefit for Boys

By John Harnisch, SLC Program Coordinator, Santa Fe Public Schools

Last year's "Small Learning Community" (SLC) pilot program for 110 randomly chosen male and female students at Santa Fe High School (SFHS) showed that ninth grade students in the program improved more in reading and math than ninth graders not in the program, as measured by standardized tests. SLC male participants benefited even more than females, especially in reading, a subject area where boys at local schools often test poorly. Small Learning Communities might therefore be a way to help remediate some of the poor academic standing of boys in local public schools. This is especially notable as students not in SLC actually regressed in some cases, as measured by standardized tests.

Background: In the fall and in the spring, ninth graders took standardized tests in mathematics and reading to measure academic growth during the year. These tests, known as Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), measure achievement and improvement relative to national norms.

Student results are reported as RIT scores. The RIT score is an equal interval scale, like feet and inches, which aids in comparing annual academic growth against a national norm. Table 1 below shows average reading and math RIT scores for Santa Fe High School freshman who entered in fall, 2004, for both SLC students and those in regular classes (non-SLC). Table 2 shows the growth, fall to spring, disaggregated by gender.

Table 1. Academic Achievement Scores, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 (mixed genders)

	READING		MATH	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
SLC Mean RIT	215.2	222.0	224.2	230.5
Non SLC Mean RIT	217.9	215.3	229.0	227.2
National Norm	221.0	224.2	229.8	240.9

Table 2. Academic Growth, Fall 2004 to Spring 2005, (disaggregated by gender)

	READING		MATH	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
SLC Boys	6.74	5.39		
Non SLC Boys	-1.42	0.93		
SLC Girls	4.97	4.78		
Non SLC Girls	0.54	-0.21		
National Norm	2.90	5.80		

With regard to table 1, SFHS students in the SLC program started in the fall with scores *below* their non-SLC peers, but overtook them by the time they were tested in the spring. Although the average RIT scores show that all ninth graders tested below the national norm for their grade level, it is clear that academic growth in the SLC was superior, and far outpaced even the national norm in reading.

[Note: The student population is not the same for both tables. In Table 1,

some students who took the fall test did not take the spring test (due to absence, drop out, etc.) and vice versa. In Table 2, the population is only those students who took *both* the fall and spring tests, which depicts growth more accurately.]

How does SLC work? First, SLC provides a relatively small and stable peer group. The students stay together with their team of four to six teachers throughout the year. Second, teachers meet frequently as a team to share their practice and to discuss their small student groups' social and learning progress. In this manner, SLC teachers closely follow individual student attendance, learning style, behavior, and achievement. If a student misses some of his classes but not others, all of his teachers will know; there is no falling through the cracks in the SLC. Parents also are informed on a regular and frequent basis. Furthermore, because teachers follow students together, they are more aware of behavioral or learning problems, and at their meetings they are able to communicate these to one another and to parents.

What are SLC future plans? A modified set of freshman SLCs is in place at SFHS this year. Currently, full implementation of freshman SLCs is scheduled for both SFHS and Capital High School in 2006-7. There is also an option under study to continue the same peer communities into sophomore year, which is being practiced with the SFHS pilot program this year. Simultaneously, career pathways leading to academies are in the planning stage and two or three of these are expected to be in place at each school during the next academic year. SLC development and implementation will continue over a span of several years with the objective of all high school teachers and students functioning within SLCs.

Desperately Needed: Big Brothers

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern New Mexico has more boys who are requesting mentors than men volunteering. Many of these boys have no consistent adult male presence in their lives, and they are willing to wait for one. It's the kind of commitment that means much more than just the number of hours spent. Is it a commitment you are willing to make? To put it another way: BBBS has lots of boys waiting. Is one of them waiting for you?

Here in Santa Fe, you can be in a school or community program. You can participate as part of partnerships with businesses that send employees to local elementary schools as part of the Lunch Buddy program. There are also High School Bigs who go to schools and Afterschool programs. As part of a partnership with one of Santa Fe's largest elementary schools, members of the Roadrunner's hockey team mentor Little Brothers weekly. These are not tutors; they are there to listen, to hang out, to have fun.

The community-based program is where traditional matches take place. Bigs and Littles spend three or four hours a week together, two to four times a month. The relationship is one of support and friendship. There is no special agenda. These kids thrive on focused attention. Their self-esteem improves; their relationships within the family and the community are strengthened.

For more information, call the Big Brothers Big Sisters office at 983-8360

BackTalk: If we were girls we would have friendships where we could share the sad, angry, and lonely feelings that we have about what is going on in our lives. We have friends, but it's not the same. Like everyday you can see a girl crying in the hall here and you never see a guy do that. We always have to "take it like a man" and hold it in. It's not the guy way to behave and frankly sometimes we like it that way.

Sometimes it seems as if the girls cry in order to get attention. But for us the message is clear and it even comes from some of the teachers here who tell us we have to tough it out. If a girl starts to cry she'll get sympathy, but we'll be made fun of. We also get that message from the girls. They say, "It's OK to cry" around us, but if you do it, then they think less of you; if the guys see you, they will think less of you.

When I was in the third grade, my dog died. I felt so sad that I cried almost everyday. But then I felt embarrassed that I was still crying about my dog in the fifth

"Everyone expects the girls to succeed, and the guys are the ones who will be flipping hamburgers."

grade. I said I would never cry again in school. I said to myself that it was stupid to be so sad all of the time. If you want to be a popular guy here at Capshaw or other schools, you can't cry.

Some of us have a true friend. That is a guy who you can really talk to and he may even know ahead of time when things are not good with you just by the way you look. If you have a true friend, it is very deep and you can trust him, but it takes a long time to find one. My friend and I started out just talking about 4-wheelers and bikes, but then we got real close. In this way, I think guys are lucky; some of us have a true friend. With girls I think you can't always trust your friends so much. It seems like they tell other friends' secrets.

But all in all, guys are lonelier than girls. Guys cannot connect with other guys the way girls connect with other girls. Guys

don't have people to talk to the way girls can. I'm lucky. I can talk to my girlfriend and don't have to keep it bottled up. The hardest thing is to trust other guys and to know that they will be loyal to you.

School

SFB: Now imagine that you are a teacher at Capshaw and that you are sitting around this table with other teachers and discussing how your boy and girl students are different. What do you think you, as one of the teachers, would say?

BackTalk: I think the teachers would be talking about how they think the girls in the class will go further than the guys. The

In general, guys don't want a lot of attention from the teachers, although there are a few who crave it. Everyone expects the girls to succeed, and the guys are the ones who will be flipping hamburgers. I have an older sister and all the teachers told me I wasn't as good as she was. They would always ask me why couldn't I be as nice as my sister or why I can't get as good grades? The truth is that I don't want to be anything like her.

When we bring something to read for a current event assignment, the teachers tell us that we can only do sports once a year, but if a girl wants to read something about cosmetics, that's OK, because it's "science."

The male teachers here are easier to relate to. After school, I like to visit the male

"The teachers are always thinking that the guys will blow up and create problems, and that we aren't as interested in school."

teachers are always thinking that the guys will blow up and create problems, and that we aren't as interested in school.

Teachers are tougher on guys when they get answers and problems wrong. Usually they don't yell at the girls because they are afraid they will hurt their feelings and they will start to cry. With guys they don't care. And really, we do feel like we can take anything the teacher can dish out.

Guys are not as interested in school, it's true. But some of the ways that it shows up, like in not having pencils and paper, are partly because of the difference in dress code. A girl can carry all that stuff in her purse, but the school doesn't let me carry a book bag. We can't even wear cargo pants. It's against the dress code. But to a guy, pockets in cargo pants are like a girl's purse. And if guys try to carry a purse, we'll get questioned about what is inside of it and the teachers will think we stole it and take it away from us.

Girls do seem to find it easier to get interested in school. And they are always trying to do better than guys. They are always the ones who raise their hands. You can see the way we get pictured in the public service ads; it's always the guy who is drinking or smoking or doing drugs.

teachers, but I don't feel comfortable with the women teachers. Also, I think the men teachers are more fair. They know what it is like to be a thirteen year old guy. They know that if I walk down the hall holding a girl's hand, it does not mean that I will make out with her and so they don't get upset.

Sometimes you can't say anything bad about girls. Once we were talking about why there are so few women in the military and one of the guys said it was because girls didn't know how to shoot a rifle. The teacher and the girls in the class just about beat him up. Often I feel like when I talk to a female teacher, there is a power struggle going on. She has to show me who is boss whether it's necessary or not.

The guys in the class always need to be active and so they want to move around. They can't sit still that much, and so the teachers are always thinking it's the guys who are troublemakers. But sometimes they just assume that we did it, when it is really the girls. For example, two girls would always ditch when there was a substitute. They would not get in trouble even when they were caught by teachers.



Home & Family

SFB: I wonder if we could go around this table and each of you could describe what makes you happy and what makes you sad about your family?

BackTalk: My dad stands up for me. Once I was accused in the third grade of starting fights, but my dad understood that I was just protecting myself and he stood up for

a lot. Once, I tried to defend my brother and his friends, and my dad knocked me out. When I came to, I ran away for a few days. Once he threw me and my family out of the house. We moved to a hotel for a few days until he cooled down. What I can't stand is that when he and my mom come to school, they act like we're a normal family. They act like we are OK when we are not. It makes me really mad when they put on a show for everybody.

“Some of us have a true friend. That is a guy who you can really talk to and he may even know ahead of time when things are not good with you just by the way you look.”



me in the school. My mom and dad are real strict and it helps me too. I'm glad they are both that way.

My dad has no contact with me. He doesn't call except maybe on holidays and when he does call sometimes I don't like to talk to him. And sometimes when I do talk to him, I bring up subjects like money and he tries to change the conversation.

My mom tries to be supportive, only she doesn't understand if I get in a fight where I have to defend myself. I just can't walk away or I'll lose popularity. She also lets me get away with too much. If I tell her I don't have homework, she'll just accept that.

My parents only help me when they've had an easy day at work. Ever since my mom got cancer, she says she's too tired. My dad sometimes helps me with my homework if I ask him. Generally, my whole family asks me to do everything for them because I'm the only one who will do anything

In my family, my mom always seems to think that I need "special things," for example, special education classes, special glasses, medication, etc. I just want to be left alone to be a normal student. My dad knows what it's like to have people treat him differently. So he always sticks up for me when my mom is piling on the special needs stuff on me.

‘ . . . all in all, guys are lonelier than girls. ’

My mom is really tough about grades. She puts a lot of pressure on me and it is too much. Sometimes I don't want to finish my homework at night. I like to leave some for the morning. But she is not happy with that routine. I think she is jealous of my girlfriend's mom, too. Like when I call my girlfriend, and if I have homework left, my mom sits near me and just looks at me while I talk. My dad is more respectful. He wants to see my (homework) agenda and when I get some of it done he lets me talk to my girlfriend.

My dad is very rough with me. He doesn't want my friends around and he yells at me

Summary Images

SFB: Now imagine an image that expresses how you feel about this article. What would it be?

BackTalk: I imagine a rock being chipped away. Each piece that is freed from the rock represents the truth.

I imagine finding a piece of gold in the rough.

I see a flower opening up. A kind of new, pretty growth.

I think that when people read this they will be surprised. It felt very good to be able to say the truth about the subjects here.



Harry Potter and Dads; Something to Think About

(abridged from an article by Ken Canfield, The Founder of The National Center For Fathering, www.fathers.com)

Author J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books have allowed her to amass more wealth than the Queen of England. Rising from humble origins and facing several challenging family issues, Rowling draws on many of the relationships of her past to develop the characters in the Potter series. Each of her books is dedicated to a family member or long-term friend. In an interview in Time magazine, Rowling had some comments about fathering. She said, after releasing her fifth book, Half-Blood Prince, "As I look back over the five published books, I realize that it's kind of a litany of bad fathers. That's where evil seems to flourish, in places where people didn't get good fathering."

The Time correspondent went on to hypothesize that it is her uneven relationship with her own father and the lack of connection between the father of her oldest daughter and her daughter that may be lurking behind her thoughts and feelings about fathers.

Portrayals of fathers in written works and in the media definitely impact public perceptions. One study showed that out of 102 programs on the five networks, 15 featured a father as a recurring, central figure. Of those 15, only four portrayed the father positively, four others had negative portrayals, and the other seven were mixed. Although the media has tremendous influence on our children, what should be our response in this time when there are so many negative reflections of fathers?