

The nation's schools are failing boys

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The headline from The Washington Post celebrates yet another milestone: "University of Virginia president." Meantime, the data continues to mount that our educational system is massively failing boys.

In a new book, "Why Boys Fail," Richard Whitmire points to a study that tracked every graduate from 100 schools in 2007. For every 167 women in a four-year college, there were only 100 men. Gender is a predictor of college attendance: Black women were 5 percentage points more likely than white women to attend college.

And it's not just Boston: Nearly 60 percent of all bachelor's degrees in the country go to women.

Do we care about our boys?

The Economist recently put Rosie the Riveter on its cover to celebrate a major milestone: Women are now the US workforce. Why? Massively greater numbers of men than women are losing their jobs in the recession. Is this really good news?

Yet every sign that boys or men are hurting gets turned around into a "happy news" story of female empowerment.

The disconnect between the happy headlines and the reality underneath will only be solved by addressing the fact that they cannot defend themselves or organize around their own systemic, gendered problems. Being in the position of "the weaker sex" unmans them -- and also makes them deeply unattractive to women going to happen.

So the only way we are going to identify the new problem and do something about it, is if women wake up to the cause of our own.

We have sons as well as daughters, nephews as well as nieces. We want husbands and fathers, not children who are confident, successful males and good family men willing and able to work hard for their families.

The problem is *not* that women are doing well, it's that boys are doing badly. The two genders are competing against one another without all of us losing.

A new report by the Pew Research Center finds that more younger women are marrying down. 30- to 44-year-olds have more education than their husbands, compared to 19 percent of husbands who are more educated than their wives.

One in four wives now substantially outearns her husband.

It turns out women are not necessarily happy about male failure. Betsy Stevenson and Justin "The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness," notes that "By many objective measures the lives of American women in the United States have improved over the past 35 years, yet we show that measures of subjective well-being and happiness has declined both absolutely and relative to men."

When men fail, fewer women get married. Since 1970, the proportion of 30- to 44-year-olds who are married has fallen from 84 percent to 60 percent.

What's next? Ask black women. In 1970, black wives were already more educated than their husbands. By 2007, that figure had plunged to 10 percent of black people aged 30 to 44 then were married. By 2007, that figure had plunged to 10 percent. Fewer than one out of three black Americans in prime marrying/childbearing years is now married. Why are out-of-wedlock birthrates so high.

An education system failing a generation of boys is going to produce unprecedented human suffering for the women and for the men themselves. Are we women enough to do something about it?

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