

Boys Will Be Boys

Biff Maier

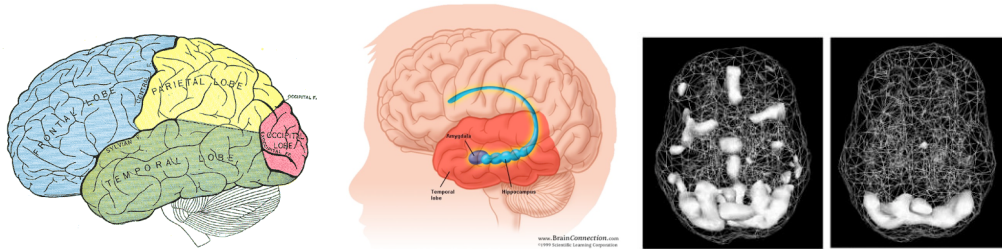
"The fact is male lives are falling apart at the growing margins of male welfare, and the utter failure of the education system to address male needs on male terms is indeed a crisis." (Thomas Mortenson, senior scholar at the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.)

Boy Trouble

- 4 ½ times more likely than girls to be expelled from preschool.
- 8 times more likely than girls to be disciplined problems; 8 times more frequently diagnosed with learning disabilities; 7 times more frequently diagnosed with behavioral disorders.
- 4 times more likely to suffer from autism, ADHD or dyslexia.
- 1 ½ times more likely to die in accidents than are girls; twice as likely to die from violent crime.
- 89% of gifted and talented underachievers are boys.
- Boy-girl gap in reading: 5 points in 4th grade, 10 points in 8th grade, and 14 points in 12th grade (NAEP)
- Boy-girl gap in writing: 17-point gap in 4th grade; 21-point gap in 8th grade; 24-point gap in 12th grade.
- Honor roll and top class rankings dominated by girls; school suspensions dominated by boys.
- College age: 51.4% boys; enrolled undergraduates 57% girls.
- Graduate schools: 58% women: 49% of med students; 79% of veterinary medicine students; 49% of law students.

"There are 60 significant studies that show differences – in the actual brain areas, the wiring and the timing of development. We don't really know what the impact is yet."

Steven Pinker Harvard psychologist



Physiological difference	Function	Possible impact
More blood flow in the cerebellum	Controls doing, physical action	<i>Makes it hard to learn when still</i>
Smaller corpus callosum	Connecting bundle between the hemispheres	<i>Less skilled at multitasking</i>
Weaker neural connectors in the temporal lobes	Memory of sensory details	<i>Decrease the ability to listen, especially to a tone of voice</i>
Hippocampus		<i>Slower memorization; makes for preference for lists and hierarchies</i>
Frontal lobes develop later		<i>Less control over impulsivity.</i>
Later development of Broca's and Wernicke's areas	Language centers	<i>Slower, language development</i>
Less estrogen and oxytocin	Control relatedness	<i>Less connection</i>
More testosterone	Controls aggression	<i>More aggression</i>
More vasopressin	Controls territoriality	<i>More aggression</i>
More compartmentalized	Less multitasking	<i>Stress; fight or flight</i>
Brain enters "rest state"		<i>Spacey, inattentive</i>
More dopamine		<i>Increased risk behavior</i>

- Michael Gurian, *The Minds of Boys*

5 factors driving growing apathy of boys

Leonard Sax, *Boys Adrift*

1. Changes that have occurred at school

“Live a balanced life — learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.”

- Robert Fulghum, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*

Kindergarten has become the new first grade. “The world has become more verbal, and boys have not, so boys end up lacking the literacy skills to compete in the information age.”

-Richard Whitmire, *Why Boys Fail: Saving Our Sons from an Education System That's Leaving Them Behind*

“...many children are facing unreal demands on their attention spans, memory, fine motor skills and verbal skills, which can set them up for behavioral problems and school failure.” -Lisa Eliot, *Pink Brain, Blue Brain*

“There is an entire subset of boys who are not ready for circle time, for rigid transitions, for following complex directions or listening to a lot of talk until well past their sixth birthdays.” -Anthony Rao, *The Way of Boys*

“Relatively low literacy achievement in first grade predicted relatively high aggressive behavior in third grade. – *Stanford study*

2. Video games

“Every investigator who has correlated the amount of time that a child or adolescent or young adult spends playing video games with that student’s academic performance has found a negative correlation.” - Sax

“The strength of the evidence linking video games to antisocial behavior is every bit as strong as the evidence linking second-hand smoke to lung cancer, or lead paint poisoning in infancy to lower IQ scores.” - Sax

3. ADHD medications

“Many clinicians find it easier to tell parents that their son has a brain-based disorder than to suggest parenting changes.”

- Jennifer Harris, psychiatrist

“I’ve come to believe that we should not medicate boys so that they fit the school; we should change the school to fit the boy.” - Sax

4. Endocrine disruptors

Phthalates mimic the action of the female hormone estrogen, and according to research done at Oxford and at Harvard, disrupt the memory and motivation functions of male neonates. Italian researchers have found the male animals suffer damage to the nucleus accumbens, the site of motivation.

5. The revenge of the forsaken gods



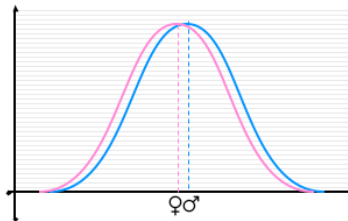
“... Teenage boys are seldom competent to guide one another to manhood. That’s what men are for.” - Sax

Male teachers: Preschool – 5%;
 Elementary - 9%

No father at home: >25%

“Gender differences begin as tiny seeds, planted by evolution and nourished by hormones but blossoming only under the hot sun of our highly gendered society.” –

-Lisa Eliot, *Pink Brain, Blue Brain*



“Most psychological differences are quite small, and men and women are more similar than different. ‘Men Are from North Dakota; Women Are from South Dakota.’”

- Janet Hyde, psychologist, University of Wisconsin

Males: the delicate sex!

- 170 boys conceived for every 100 girls
- 105 boys born for every 100 girls
- Infant mortality rate is 22% higher for boys

Language delay

- Boys’ hearing more lateralized
- Boy play emphasizes visuospatial sense, gross motor and movement
- Girls’ socializing highly reinforcing to parents

“Regardless of what parents profess to wish for them, our culture still values boys’ strength and girls’ appearance more than the other way around.”

-Lisa Eliot, *Pink Brain, Blue Brain*



By the time they are four, though, most children enter an inflexible stage when they see gender choices as a matter of *right and wrong*.

Rough-and-tumble play

- bonding through intense physical contact
- promotes physical strength
- helps boys’ vent high energy
- teaches important social skills: negotiation, turn-taking, coalition-building, and how to compete fairly and graciously

Inhibition & frontal lobes

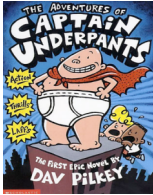
- Girls’ advantage in inhibitory control is about the largest sex difference of any temperamental trait among children between three and thirteen years old

Relationships and limbic system

- "female" limbic system: emotionally perceptive and expressive. Using both sides of the brain symmetrically, females read faces better and faster
- boys respond more intensely to emotional stimuli, but they learn not to show it.

Making classrooms more “boy friendly”

Holding boys’ attention	
<u>Use movement</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move when you teach • Use visual cues, motions • Use role-play • Shift tasks 	<u>Help them manage themselves</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seats that require balance • Fidget toys, gum • Talking stick • Storage systems • Frequent breaks
<u>Use iconic visuals</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct statements • Pronounce clearly • Face boys • Use symbols • Use cartoons • Insist on turn taking • Provide wait time • Teach note-taking • Use multiple modes 	<u>Use gore & sports metaphors</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t yell – boys will tune out • Enforce “inside voice” rule
Managing boys’ physicality	
<u>Design for big movements</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design to move • Moderate expectations • Standing room • 20-minute rule • Get outside • Allow “targeting” • Play games • Encourage building 	<u>Allow rough-and-tumble play</u>
	<u>Use manipulatives</u>
	<u>Teach handwriting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use “big writing” • Provide big whiteboard for calculations • Assess handwriting
Managing boys’ aggression	
<u>Consistent rules</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few, short, clear • Matter-of-fact correction 	<u>Use competition</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to win & lose. • Don’t accomplish much unless you really try. • Divisiveness guarantees poor results. • Trust and be trustworthy. • Cooperative competition • Rotate leaders • Charts of personal best • Bees – variety for different strengths
<u>Teach how to make an argument</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fight or flight” • Prevent defensiveness by avoiding characterizations • describe the behavior • avoid public embarrassment • Instead of name-calling; no slurs • Use peer counselors 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Building boys’ emotional literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be direct, not subtle • Develop signals • Use American Sign Language • Teach facial cues and body language • Teach emotional vocabulary • Correct with neutral expression • Know about boy’s life outside of school 	<p style="text-align: center;">Managing disorganization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redundant reminders • Assignment books • Whiteboard • Interim assignments • Underlining, highlighting • Back up multi-step directions •

<p style="text-align: center;">Help with episodic memory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize a narrative they heard • Read-pause-summarize • Memorize poems, excerpts, speeches • Teach how to take iconic notes • Insert questions into the lesson 	<p style="text-align: center;">Help with reading</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a routine of reading aloud • Expect independent reading (require weekly display of personal choice book) • Provide boy-interesting books (http://www.guysread.com) • Try reading competition • Map the book (“travel tracer”)
<p style="text-align: center;">Managing dysgraphia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft grips; large diameter • Hand-strengthening • Practice letter shapes • Use word processor • Teach organization • Allow oral reports • Use a scribe • Use wide-ruled paper • Teach caution in reading math problems • Space! Don’t crowd math problems 	<p style="text-align: center;">Help with writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize a narrative they heard • Short writing assignments • Teach “news” writing • Read - look away - write • “What did they do?” instead of “How did they feel?” • Start with facts, add description • Graphic organizers; webbing • Teach proofreading • Teach fact checking

<p>Eight Strategies That Work (from <i>Reaching Boys, Teaching Boys</i>, Reichert and Hawley)</p>
1) Creating a product that demonstrates the concept under study.
2) Imbedding the learning outcomes in the structure of a game.
3) Lessons that require students to get up, get out, and move.
4) Lessons that require students to assume a role, declare or defend a position, or speak persuasively.
5) Open inquiry to explore the relationship between actual experience and the theory to describe it.
6) Forming teams to complete a task to be judged competitively.
7) Lessons that address something deep and personal in boys’ lives.
8) Novelty, drama, surprise

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