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Males leaving college classrooms to females

Well, our colleges around the country just finished their graduation ceremonies. If you could have attended just about any one of them, you would have one obvious question: "Where are the guys?"

Thirty years ago, fewer women than men went to college, graduate school and professional school. There is still a gender gap, but now the problem is that 58 percent of college students are female and only 42 percent are male. Among Hispanic college students, 40 percent are men. Among African-American university students, only one-third are male. Every year, about 300,000 more women than men enter graduate school. One expert calculated that, if current trends continue, the last male to get his college degree will graduate in 2068.

This development is a positive reflection of gains women have made in our society. At the same time, there are disturbing indications that males are struggling academically.

According to the principal at Hanover High School in Massachusetts, "Girls tend to dominate the landscape academically right now." At Hanover High, virtually all academic honors are going to women. In the school's advanced placement classes, 70 percent of the students are female. In AP biology, there were no male students.

"Girls outperform boys in elementary school, middle school, high school and college, and graduate school," says Dr. Michael Thompson, a psychologist who has written a book entitled "Raising Cain." He notes that girls are receiving a lot



of encouragement, while young men tend to take academics off the list of priorities these days.

Boys comprise 75 percent of children categorized as learning disabled today. They are placed in special education at a much higher rate than girls. The current educational system emphasizes self-control, obedience and concentration, qualities that are often lacking in young males.

According to Christian Hoff Sommers, author of "The War Against Boys," some elements in our country "exaggerated how vulnerable girls were and understated the needs of boys. They depicted boys as "the privileged beneficiaries of a patriarchal society that oppresses women, demeans them and trains young men to be sexist."

While the gender gap in favor of females is receiving more and more attention, experts don't have any real understanding of why education has become less attractive to males. Studies are under way, but for now all we have is speculation.

Some say that female learning styles are more conducive to modern education. Some say that academic success is now seen by males as a girl's thing. To achieve status among male peers, young boys pursue athletics or some other activity, but they are clearly disengaging from academics. As for entering college, it appears that an increasing number of male high school graduates are opting for jobs which do not require a college education.

As a remedy for the current gender gap, one strategy that has been tried successfully in a few places has been separation of genders. Where there are no girls in the

classroom, test scores for boys have increased dramatically. The boys are not distracted by girls, and teachers use more physical activity and competition in their teaching methods.

My own thought is that the gender gap in education was bound to happen. If women compete academically with men, the girls will consistently outperform the guys. Females, as mentioned above, are more conscientious, more diligent, more organized, more motivated. The second reason is that guys are not going to compete with women. Given time, they'll find something else to do. They want to know how they stack up against other guys, not against females.

Third, many courses in college today have an anti-masculine content. Most universities have gender studies programs, for example, and you're not likely to find classes in such programs which devote attention to the positive attributes of men.

Finally, many of the jobs you can get today with a college education are not appealing to men. Expecting men to work in communications seems like an oxymoron. Although a few men are meant for professional life, most men want to grow something, make something, fix something, or shoot something. Corporate life, as experienced for the past 50 years, may well be on the way out for men, which wouldn't be all bad.

Where will all this lead? How will it change our society? Who will the modern, educated woman marry? Can we just accept the fact that it's time for women to run the show, and not be concerned about the young men? I guess we'll see.