

OPINION

What is happening to our boys?

There are several studies which show that women are out distancing men in higher education. For example, females are now earning 58 percent of bachelor degrees in the U.S.

Their numbers totally dominate in veterinarian and pharmacy schools where high intelligence is required.

Anecdotally, there is reason for additional concern. In my conversations with a variety of college admission directors, many of them acknowledged privately they have surreptitiously lowered their standards for males in order to have a more balanced freshman class.

A president of a prominent northeastern university told me that if they admitted solely on quality, the school would be 65 percent female. He rues the fact he must secure several men because the alumni insist on having a football team!

There has been a great deal of research on what is becoming known as the feminization of education. Nationwide girls are doing better than boys in school.

Now the question to ask: Are we here in Central Texas a part of this trend of females outperforming males in the classroom? In particular, what about our high schoolers? That is, is there a significant difference, by gender, in the



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scholastic achievements of our students?

The data is available. In the Comal Independent School District's publication, *School Life*, there are pictures of our highest-ranking high school graduates in 2013. Their levels are summa cum laude, magna cum laude and cum laude.

All three Comal ISD high schools (Canyon, Canyon Lake and Smithson Valley) are included in this computation. There were 68 males and 100 females who achieved the high status. This is certainly not a normal distribution (one would expect a 50-50 distribution but instead we have a 40-60 difference in the sexes).

Let's apply the rigorous chi-square analysis technique to test the results scientifically.

Those of you who have taken a course in statistics know that first we need a null

hypothesis written in the typical manner. It is: There is no significant difference between Comal County high school males and females in scholastic achievement. Now let's test it.

To use the language of this method, we begin by taking the expected (84 males and 84 females (that is the 50-50 percent) and compare them to the observed 68 and 100 (that is the 40-60 percent). It is a simple process, only four cells are required. After calculating the differences, squaring them and dividing by the total number of students the derived critical value is 6.08 with one degree of freedom (sorry, folks, but this is how it is done — stay with me).

After looking at a probability table, we find that the relationship between gender and scholastic achievement is statistically significant at the .02 level. The lower the level, the less likely there is sampling error. This is quite low so there is a high probability there is a strong link between the variables. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

For everyone who skipped the previous paragraph and want to go straight to the conclusion, the data indicates our boys fit into the national mold of underperforming.

Additional evidence may be helpful.

Direct comparisons between our high schools are difficult because equivalent data is not publicly available.

For example, on the Canyon High School website, we can find the officers of the latest senior class but not on the other schools' sites. Here are some indicators of male/female participation in activities which were found either on the Internet or year books.

At Canyon High School, the class of 2013 had six officers from president through historian. All but one is female (also interesting is that all three of the faculty sponsors were women).

Canyon Lake High School's Student Council in 2013 had 19 girls and eight boys. The Smithson Valley High School National Honor Society's officers were five girls and one boy (the faculty sponsor was female).

While it is true that all data analyses are susceptible to various errors, and to interpretation, the probability that some intervening variable, other than gender, is at work seems remote.

However, I leave it to readers to make their own conclusions. What is happening to our boys?

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