

Gender Gaps

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*Please note: this hand-out is intended as a **supplement to** the presentation, not as a **substitute for** the presentation. This handout is NOT intended to be read separately from the presentation; it cannot “stand alone.” If you would like to get a sense of the presentation but did not have the opportunity to attend, please read my second book **Boys Adrift**, especially chapters 3 and 8; and also my third book **Girls on the Edge**, especially chapters 1, 2, and 3. You can reach me at mrcrad@verizon.net but please also send a copy to my personal email leonardsax@gmail.com.*

Let’s talk about the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The United States Department of Education regards the NAEP as “our nation’s report card” because the NAEP is the ONLY objective assessment of student achievement which is administered in all 50 states; and because it is the ONLY assessment which allows measurement on a constant yardstick over 40+ years. The NAEP has been administered since 1969. Results are not traceable to individual school districts, but only to states. No administrator in Largo is going to get in trouble because the State of Florida did not fare well on the writing examination. So the NAEP is NOT a high-stakes test; and that’s precisely what makes it so valuable. You can download these data at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata>, click on “Main NDE” and review the Data Usage Agreement, then proceed.

White female, not eligible = 168; White female, eligible = 153

White female, not eligible, = 168; White male, not eligible, = 153

Black female, not eligible = 147; Black female, eligible = 131

Black female, not eligible = 147; Black male, not eligible = 133

We all understand why affluent kids have an advantage over kids from low-income homes: affluent kids have more resources. But when we compare a girl and boy *from the same home*, the gap separating the girl from her brother (on this parameter) is comparable to the gap based on household income. And that’s true regardless of whether the family is Black or White.

It's not about ability. It's about motivation. The big differences between girls and boys are not in what they *can* do, but in what they *want* to do.

So why are American boys (Black, White, and Latin) less motivated today, on average, compared with their sisters?

The five factors which (I believe) are driving this phenomenon:

- 1) **Changes in education over the past 30 years**
- 2) Video games
- 3) Stimulant medications for ADHD
- 4) Endocrine disruptors (DEHP, BPA, PET)
- 5) "The revenge of the forsaken gods"

That first factor, **Changes in Education**, has four components:

- A) Schools becoming "unfriendly to boys"
- B) Abolition of competitive formats with well-defined winners and losers
- C) Shift away from experiential to didactic learning; from outdoors to indoors
- D) Acceleration of the early elementary curriculum

Most popular video game for American girls: Candy Crush.

Most popular video games for American boys: *Grand Theft Auto*, *Call of Duty*, *Halo*, *World of Warcraft*

Playing video games has little effect on academic achievement below a threshold of 6 hours per week. Beyond that threshold, there is a negative and roughly linear effect.

"Displacement."

Video games tend to shift motivation away from the real world, to the virtual world.

No more than 40 minutes/night on school nights

No more than an hour/day on weekends.

Minutes do not roll over.

In a large, prospective, longitudinal cohort study, Professors Craig Anderson and Doug Gentile found that boys playing violent M-rated games – particularly games which deployed a *moral inversion* – exhibited changes in personality over a period of 3 or more **years**. They become more selfish, more hostile, and less patient. Douglas Gentile, Craig Anderson, and colleagues, "Mediators and moderators of long-term effects of violent video games on aggressive behavior," *JAMA Pediatrics*, volume 168, pp. 450 – 457, 2014.

After hearing testimony from Anderson and Gentile, The California State Assembly passed a law prohibiting the sale of video games to minor children if the games depicted "killing, maiming, dismembering, or sexually assaulting an image of a human being, if those acts are depicted" in a manner that "[a] reasonable person, considering the game as a whole, would find appeals to a deviant or morbid interest." The United States Supreme Court, in a decision written by Justice

Antonin Scalia, ruled the statute unconstitutional, rendering it null and void. In his concurrence, Justice Alito shared his concerns about the implications of the research, but emphasized that regulating what games a child may play is the job of the parent, not the job of the state. Justice Scalia's opinion, and Justice Alito's concurrence, are both online at <http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/10pdf/08-1448.pdf>.

Anderson and Gentile have created the following guidelines, based on their research:

Video games (Craig Anderson, Doug Gentile)

- 1) No more than 40 minutes/night on school nights**
- 2) No more than 1 hour/day on weekends / vacations**
- 3) No games rated M**
- 4) Is a moral inversion present?**
- 5) Is violence depicted as fun, or funny?**
- 6) Are real-world consequences of violence lacking from the game?**

Please see chapter 4 of *Boys Adrift* for citations regarding video games.

No devices in the bedroom! – i.e. no UNSUPERVISED Internet access.

The latest guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, published online on October 28 2013, are available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2013/10/24/peds.2013-2656.full.pdf>.

Let's talk about social media.

In the past ten years, the social media have displaced the diary. It is now unusual to find a child or teenager who *regularly* writes in their diary.

Mike Stefanone: girls post 5 times more photos on their Facebook page than boys do; and the girls point the camera at themselves. Michael A. Stefanone, Derek Lackaff, and Devan Rosen, "Contingencies of self-worth and social-networking-site behavior," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 14:41-49, 2011.

The more Facebook friends you have, the more pressure you feel to post something every day. Facebook pushes kids – especially girls – to value acquaintances above close friends (*Girls on the Edge*, chapter 2). See also Stephen Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?" *The Atlantic* magazine, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/05/is-facebook-making-us-lonely/8930/. Girls are also more likely to Photoshop their photo than boys are.

Most girls present themselves in a positive light on social media. But most girls don't realize that the other girls are doing the same. That may be one reason why girls are more likely than boys to experience toxic effects from social media.

I recommend that parents deploy programs such as NetNanny, WebRoot and CyberPatrol. Parents need to tell their kids that **it is the parent's job** to be aware of how much time their kids are spending online, and which sites they are visiting.

Nick Bilton, *New York Times*, February 9 2014, "For a restful night, make your smartphone sleep on the couch," http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/for-a-restful-night-make-your-smartphone-sleep-on-the-couch/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0

For more information about how sleep deprivation mimics ADHD, Inattentive Type or ADHD, Combined Type – and also on the risks of using stimulants such as Adderall, Concerta, Vyvanse, Metadate, etc. – please see chapters 4 and 8 of my book *Boys Adrift*.

You should take the mobile devices away from kids at 9 pm (the latest) and plug them into the charger. The charger stays in the parent's bedroom.

Sexting (rare) and Not-Quite-Sexting (common)

Pediatrics, September 17 2012: Rice et al., "Sexually explicit cell phone messaging associated with sexual risk among adolescents", <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22987882>.
Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Jeff Temple and colleagues, "Teen sexting and its association with sexual behaviors",
<http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1212181>.

Not-quite-sexting (*New York Magazine*, "They Know What Boys Want", January 30 2011)

For parents: I recommend parents install either mymobilewatchdog.com or Net Nanny Mobile for most smartphones (except the iPhone; these programs won't work on the iPhone). This program, and others like it, sends every photo taken with a cell phone IMMEDIATELY to parent's laptop and/or cell phone. Programs like these give your daughter an excuse to say NO.

No child under 13 years of age should have a smartphone. That doesn't mean that all 13-year-olds should have smartphones. It depends.

The iPhone is not suitable for any child, because any user can uninstall any program without the password. This problem is built into the operating system. If you are convinced that your teenager must have a smartphone, purchase an Android phone instead. I have no commercial affiliation, connection, rebate etc. with any manufacturer of any phone, hardware or software, operating system, etc.

Who is responsible when kids send pictures on their cell phone? My answer: PARENTS are responsible. See my op-ed October 25 2013 for the *Wall Street Journal*, <http://on.wsj.com/1dp0OXO>. See also my discussion of this topic on Fox News, October 29 2013, <http://video.foxnews.com/v/2781648798001>.

The most important thing parents must teach kids about online communication: **there is no privacy**. That's the lesson of General David Petraeus and Paula Broadwell.

Your job is to be a parent, not a best friend. A best friend can't tell you what to eat, or forbid you to watch violent pornography, or take away your phone at 9 pm; but a parent can, and must.

My fourth book will be published next year by Basic Books. The title is *The Collapse of Parenting: the three things you must do to help your child or teen become a fulfilled adult*. Please visit my website www.leonardsax.com for updates.

Here are some comments about my first three books:

Why Gender Matters, Boys Adrift, and Girls on the Edge:

Why Gender Matters “. . . is a lucid guide to male and female brain differences.”

New York Times

Boys Adrift “. . . is powerfully and persuasively presented. . . Excellent and informative references and information are provided.”

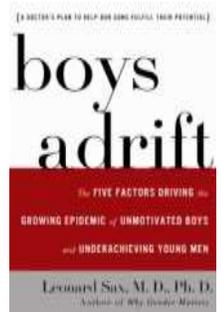
Journal of the American Medical Association

Boys Adrift: “A must-read for any parent of boys. This is real science, and Dr. Sax thoroughly uncovers the important health issues that parents of boys need to be tuned into.”

Dr. Mehmet Oz, host of “The Dr. Oz Show”

Girls on the Edge: “Packed with advice and concrete suggestions for parents, *Girls on the Edge* is a treasure trove of rarely-seen research on girls, offering families guidance on some of the most pressing issues facing girls today. Dr Sax's commitment to girls' success comes through on every page.”

*Rachel Simmons, author of *Odd Girl Out**

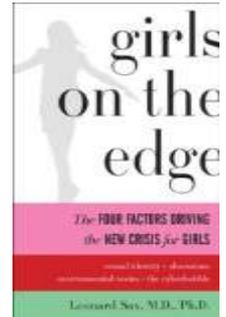


Girls on the Edge: *“This is essential reading for parents and teachers, and one of the most thought-provoking books on teen development available.”*

Library Journal

Girls on the Edge: *“The best book about the current state of girls and young women in America . . . offers astonishing and troubling new insight . . .”*

The Atlantic



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