

Inquiring Minds topic – 6 May 2022

Albert E. Myers, Moderator

Boys In Trouble

After reading the opinion piece, below, consider these questions:

Are boys really in difficulty in America?

If so, how and why?

Have expectations changed? - how and why?

How deal with peer pressure on our boys and young men?

Should/can society respond? - government? - schools? - other?

Can parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles help? - how?

Opinion: The data are clear: The boys are not all right

[washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/02/08/andrew-yang-boys-are-not-all-right](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/02/08/andrew-yang-boys-are-not-all-right)

February 8, 2022

By Andrew Yang [*Andrew Yang is the founder of the Forward Party and a former candidate for New York mayor and U.S. president.*]

The data are clear. Boys are [more than twice as likely](#) as girls to be diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; are five times as likely [to spend time in juvenile detention](#); and are less likely to [finish high school](#).

Economic transformation has been a big contributor. [More than two-thirds of manufacturing workers](#) are men; the sector has lost [more than 5 million jobs](#) since 2000. That's a lot of unemployed men. Not just coincidentally, "deaths of despair" — those caused by suicide, overdose and alcoholism — have [surged to unprecedented levels](#) among middle-aged men over the [past](#)

20 years.

Research shows that one significant factor women look for in a partner is a steady job. As men's unemployment rises, their romantic prospects decline. Unsurprisingly, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of data from 1960 to 2010, the proportion of adults without a college degree who marry plummeted from just over 70 percent to roughly 45 percent.

Many boys are thus often growing up raised by single mothers, the share more than doubling between 1980 and 2019, from 18 percent to 40 percent. A study from 2015 found that "as more boys grow up without their father in the home, and as women ... are viewed as the more stable achievers, boys and girls alike [may] come to see males as having a lower achievement orientation. ... College becomes something that many girls, but only some boys, do."

Yes, men have long had societal advantages over women and in some ways continue to be treated favorably. But male achievement — alongside that of women — is a condition for a healthy society. And male failure begets male failure, to society's detriment. Our media, institutions and public leadership have failed to address this crisis, framing boys and men as the problem themselves rather than as people requiring help.

This needs to change. Helping boys and men succeed should be a priority for all our society's institutions. Schools that have succeeded in keeping boys on track should be expanded, by both increasing the number of students they serve and exporting their methods to other schools.

Vocational education and opportunities should be redoubled; the nation's public school system should start the process for early age groups, and apprenticeship programs should be supported by the federal government.

Nonprofits helping boys and men — such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and the YMCA — should receive more investment.

Resources that keep families together when they want to stay together, such as marriage counseling, should be subsidized by the government — a much more cost-efficient approach than dealing with the downstream effects. The enhanced child tax credit should be renewed, helping stabilize families.

Drives for national service and contribution, such as an American Exchange Program or national service years, should be resuscitated. And

businesses and industries that employ large numbers of men, such as manufacturing, should be invested in and reinvigorated.

On a cultural level, we must stop defining masculinity as necessarily toxic and start promoting [positive masculinity](#). Strong, healthy, fulfilled men are [more likely to treat women well](#).

The above is, of course, a prodigious undertaking. But I see the need around me all the time.

A number of my friends have become detached from society. Everyone hits a snag at some point — losing a job, facing a divorce — but my male friends seem less able to bounce back. Male dysfunction tends to take on an air of nihilism and dropping out. As a society, we don't provide many avenues for healthy recovery.

Here's the simple truth I've heard from many men: We need to be needed. We imagine ourselves as builders, soldiers, workers, brothers — part of something bigger than ourselves. We deal with idleness terribly.

“A man . . . with no means of filling up time,” [George Orwell wrote](#), is “as miserable out of work as a dog on the chain.” Left to our own devices, many of us will fail. And from our failure, terrible things result for the country, well beyond any individual self-destruction.

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Please consider reading the following before our meeting:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/live-life-creatively/201906/society-is-failing-its-boys>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/06/090608125114.htm>

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/what-challenges-are-boys-facing-what-opportunities-exist-address-those-challenges-initial-findings-o>