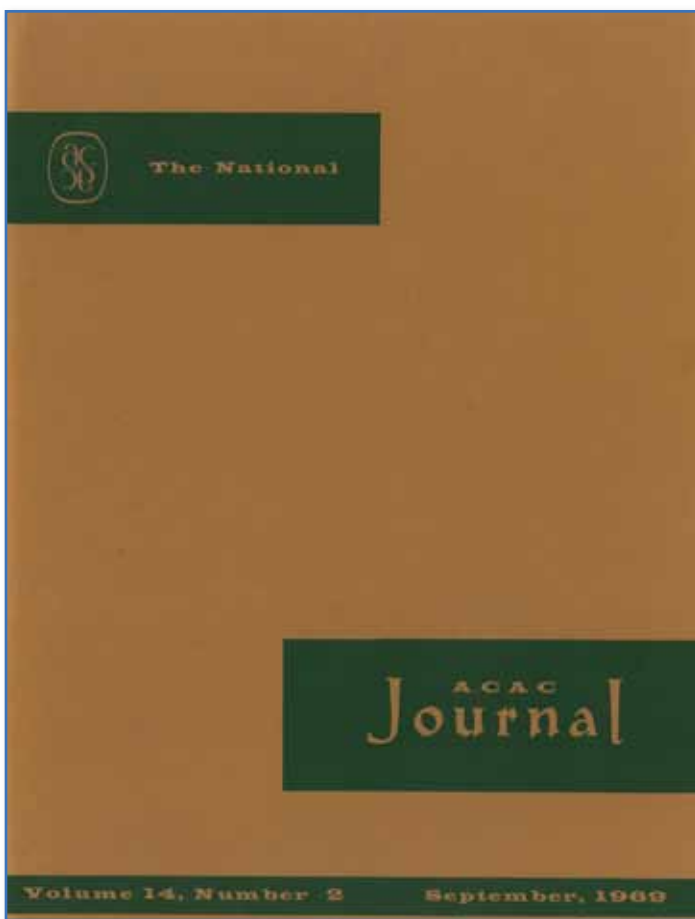


September 1969

The Cultural Bind on the American Male

Response: “A Letter of Apology Nearly 50 Years in the Making: How We’ve Failed to Solve the Cultural Bind of the American Male” by Greg McCandless on page 18



On psychological tests, as a group, girls always score higher in the verbal section than do boys; the boys do correspondingly better on the use of mathematical symbols. This is an invariant sex difference. And we must note that college admissions officers invariably give more weight in their indexes to the verbal score when predicting academic achievement in the college program. So, in terms of the tasks we set before our pupils, the dice are loaded against the boys.



From 1969: Most schoolboys have become so accustomed to the hordes of bright girls surrounding them in school and running off with all the gold stars and laurel wreaths that they have come to accept it unquestioningly as a fact of life.

Some thirty years ago the same situation was accepted as prevalent in grammar school and high school but was thought to be reversed through college when the male presumably came into his own. This may have been caused by a preponderance of men who went on to college, or by differing admissions criteria, or by the total education system which has been changed over the years. But what may have been irrelevant now as the girls are firmly in control wherever charts and percentages are tabulated.

GENE CHENOWETH, Director of Admissions, Butler University, is no stranger to these pages. His observations are presented here as part commentary and part fiction but they are solidly based on tabulated data that is still in the “privileged” category.

The process starts with conception. If the spermatozoid that fertilizes the egg contains only X chromosomes a girl will be produced. If a single Y chromosome out of the 24 produced by the father is included, the baby will be a boy. From this point on the girls have a pronounced genetic edge on the boys in many ways. Not only is the infant mortality rate higher among boy babies, but the girls will have, in the main, a longer life expectancy. Most of them will survive their husbands. The boys will be sick more frequently and they are prone to many more diseases.

The myelin sheath, which is a fatty white substance forming about certain nerve fibers, develops more rapidly in the female infant. The girls, on the average, talk and walk earlier than their male counterparts of the same age. In fact, the lag is so great among the boys that they may be said to fall behind by several years by the time of puberty. Therefore, we know that it is erroneous to compare mental ages, or educational achievement, or emotional or physical development between boys and girls of the same chronological age.

Girls usually exhibit a readiness to read before boys of the same age. My friends in the elementary schools tell me that most of their students with reading problems are boys.

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The question naturally follows: If we enter the boys in the first grade, and they are not fully ready to cope with the usual program of reading, what are we going to do with them? A logical answer would be: Give them non-verbal activities to some extent. Develop their creative, expressive, and socializing activities.

give more weight in their indexes to the verbal score when predicting academic achievement in the college program. So, in terms of the tasks we set before our pupils, the dice are loaded against the boys. They start their formal education with less growth than girls of the same chronological age, and henceforth they will compete with girls who are not only more advanced in their development, but faster at handling the verbal symbolism which is the tour de force of our educational system.

These facts are not new. They have been known for some time, but they have not been used in any formula that can be put to practical use. We may ask, why not? The answer seems to be that our school laws appear to be passed by legislators who see only that each child must be weaned from his family by the age of six in order to enter upon the formal schooling required by the state. We are creatures of convention, but it is time for unconventional thinking. While it is not for us, as college admissions officers, to suggest specific remedial procedures for our elementary system, it does appear reasonable to assume that we might examine students in some way to determine their readiness to embark upon their formal schooling. Or, perhaps, if some sort of involvement with a formal school situation seems desirable for boys at age six, separate classes for boys and girls may be in order with somewhat different curricula for each. Many of the six-year-old boys may well require more time to complete their programs. At some point in the future—say the sixth grade—the sexes might be judiciously grouped together again, although there might occur a marked difference in the chronological age of the two sexes, most of the boys being older than the girls in the same class. All of the above suggestions have been made with the assumption that marked individual differences will occur in both sexes, and should be taken into account. In other words, there will be precocious boys and slow girls. But, we know enough now to handle these situations as they occur, although a well-conceived program for educating anxious parents will be a necessary adjunct. Unless the parents are fully enlightened as to the rationale of such a novel educational approach, such a program can hardly attain its full potential.

The question naturally follows: If we enter the boys in the first grade, and they are not fully ready to cope with the usual program of reading, what are we going to do with them? A logical answer would be: Give them non-verbal activities to some extent. Develop their creative, expressive, and socializing activities. Give them art, music, woodworking, games—and take them into the outdoors. Give them some elementary-science nature study.

We have mistakenly developed the idea that it is the brain that thinks. This is not so. The whole body thinks. The hands think. The stomach thinks. The eyes and ears think. The nerve endings, for instance, constantly make decisions regarding which impulses are significant enough to send to the brain. If anything, we have over-intellectualized our orientation to the education of the young, and in our haste to equip our students for the symbolic (abstract) aspects of our culture, we have fragmented the individual. We see the fruits of this most vividly in the behavior of the male intellectual who has escaped the failure trap in our educational system, has succeeded beautifully in mastering the symbolic and abstract tasks we set for him, but now confuses levels of abstraction.

At this point I can anticipate a basic anxiety on the part of the reader that we are going to end up with a mass of retarded boys. But, when we ultimately examine the evidence ahead of us, we will have to ask the question: Can we possibly do worse? I am compelled to draw an analogy between our haste to educate and the haste to toilet-train the young. In talking with the anxious mothers of bed-wetting young males, I have frequently made the observation that, personally, I knew of no male who did not, eventually, succeed in training his bladder; and that, at any rate, Mother's anxiety over the problem was certainly not the solution to it.

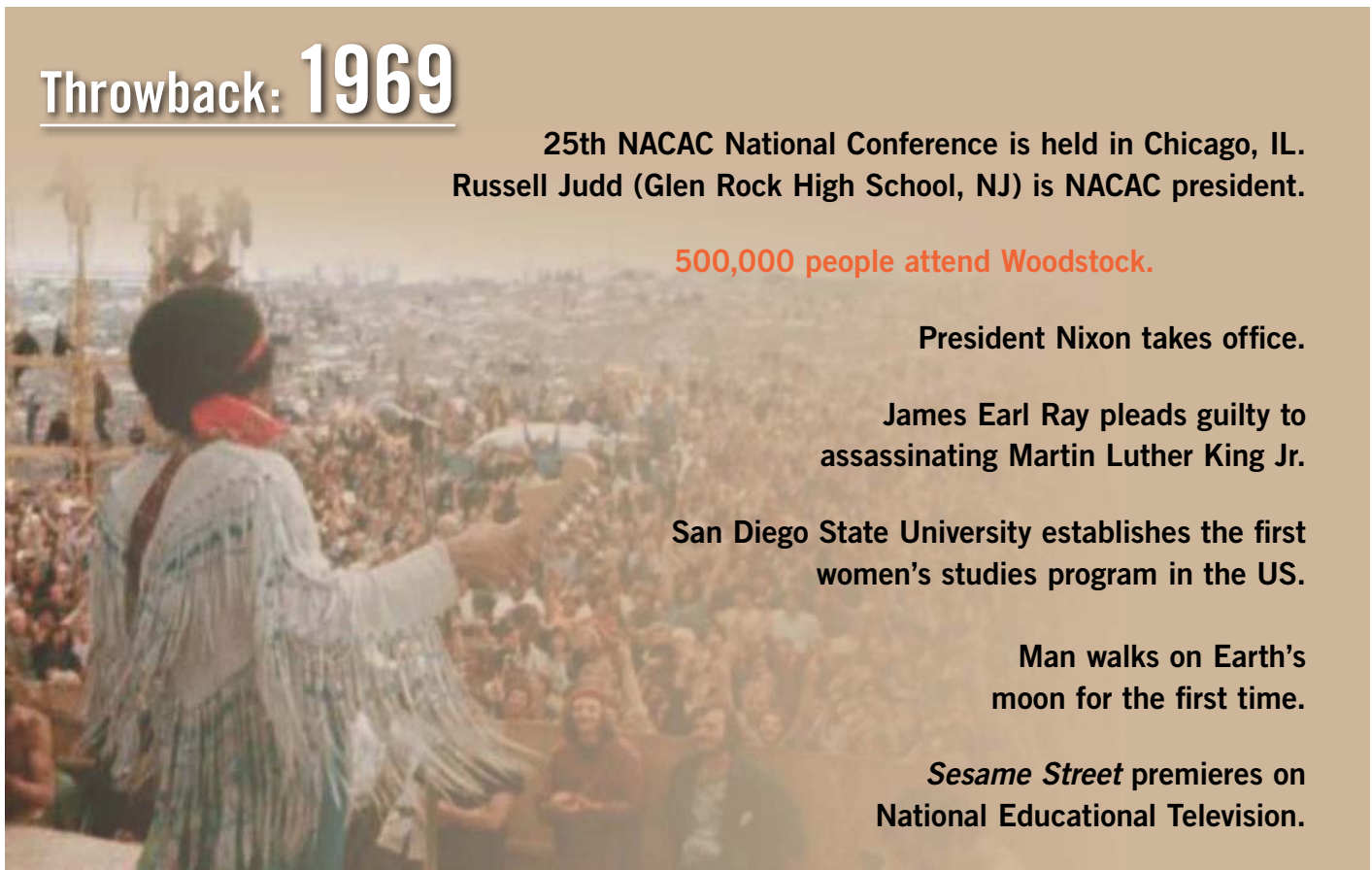
In fact, she may have contributed to it by increasing the little boy's anxiety about his own ability to achieve control. We just don't have a relaxed, easy, acceptance of the growing problems of children!

It is time to examine the implications of what we might term the "sex gap" on college admissions. To illustrate this we create a story, which could be a true one.

The Story of Dean Brown

Let us take the case of Joe Brown, Dean of Admissions at Sometime College. Like most colleges, in its early history, Sometime was an open-door institution, admitting virtually all high-school applicants from the surrounding area. In examining the freshmen matriculants for his college during that period, Mr. Brown was startled to discover the following ratio of males to females:

1953		1954	
M	F	M	F
62.3%	37.7%	64.8%	35.2%
1955		1956	
M	F	M	F
66.1%	33.9%	67.7%	32.3%



Throwback: 1969

- 25th NACAC National Conference is held in Chicago, IL. Russell Judd (Glen Rock High School, NJ) is NACAC president.
- 500,000 people attend Woodstock.
- President Nixon takes office.
- James Earl Ray pleads guilty to assassinating Martin Luther King Jr.
- San Diego State University establishes the first women's studies program in the US.
- Man walks on Earth's moon for the first time.
- Sesame Street premieres on National Educational Television.

Examining the high-school rank of entering candidates for these years, Dean Brown discovered that most of the freshmen had come from the lower half of their graduating classes. Indeed, a considerable bulk of the boys ranked in the lower third.

Entrance tests, such as the SAT, were not required for admission evaluation, of course, but academic aptitude tests, such as the ACE or SCAT, were administered for advising purposes during freshman orientation week. And, these tests, coupled with the high-school records of achievement, had clearly revealed that the students, particularly the boys, were probably not going to be able to cope with the academic demands placed upon them by the faculty.* Internal studies at the institution during those years verified this. Students—particularly male students—were going through the college like a sieve. As fast as Dean Brown admitted them through the front door they were going out the back windows.

Aware of this situation, the faculty finally took the bit in their teeth and decided to do something about it. After several years of study and debate (the wheels of democracy grind slowly), and tug-of-war with the president who prided himself on keeping the college in the black, the faculty voted to require an entrance examination of all applicants for admission (SAT).

This had some remarkable results. The size of the freshman classes shrank for several years, and the sex balance of the classes started reversing itself as admissions criteria were raised. But the dropout rate at the end of the freshman year was reduced dramatically.

For the period from 1963 through 1966, Dean Brown found the following male-female balance.

1963		1964	
M	F	M	F
55.2%	44.8%	49.7%	50.3%
1965		1966	
M	F	M	F
46.6%	53.4%	43.6%	56.4%

*During this period of time, it should be noted, Sometime College was a formidable power in athletics. Both the basketball team and the football team won their conference titles year after year.

Deep in the throes of admitting his class for September, 1967, Dean Brown took a hasty inventory of the decisions made by the admissions committee, and discovered Sometime College was in the following situation:

	M	%	F	%
Number of applicants	733	100.0	643	100.0
Number refused admission	215	29.3	97	15.1
Number admitted	518	70.7	546	84.9
Number admitted students accepting admission	279	53.8	331	60.6
Number admitted students declining offer of admission	239	46.2	215	39.4

While Dean Brown, the president, the academic dean, and some of the faculty were happy with the progress Sometime College was making in attracting more able students, the progress was not even. For instance, 220 of the freshman girls admitted for 1967 ranked in the upper quarter of their high-school classes, while only 101 boys achieved this rank. The difference in College Board scores were also marked. The mean verbal score for the girls exceeded that for the boys by 50 points! The feedback from the academic dean on the entering class of 1966 was also discouraging. At a point on the College Academic Index where all students would be predicted to have the potential to end up on the dean's list, 20 percent of the freshman boys were achieving less than a 2.00 (C) average, but not one girl was in this predicament. As it had been for over a quarter of a century, the mean grade point average for girls was still greatly exceeding that for boys.

So Sometime College was not only getting women with academic ability superior to the male matriculants, as a whole, but the women were out-performing the men even when the score should have been an even draw.

“Dean Brown,” said the Academic Dean, “at this rate our graduating classes are going to be top-heavy with women. Do you suppose the faculty could be exercising sex prejudice in the grading practices?”

Dean Brown didn't think so. Privately he wondered if the American educational system was geared to the nature of boys. “Too many women teachers,” he muttered to himself.

“Dean Brown,” said the Director of Alumni Affairs. “If we continue to graduate more women than men we're going to have trouble with our fund-raising programs in the future. It's the men who will run business and industry and make the incomes that will provide the support from alumni sources.”

“Dean Brown,” said the Athletic Director, “We're hurting for boys. Why are you turning down some of the best talent in the state? I can't build teams without raw material.”

“Dean Brown,” said the alumni, “The college comes to us with its hands out for money. Then, when our sons apply for entrance they aren’t good enough for you. How come? And, furthermore, what’s happened to school spirit at Sometime? The kids don’t support the teams like we used to!”

Dean Brown decided it was time to do more research on the male problem. He discovered that the departments of business, mathematics, and the hard sciences had been falling off. (Why, back in 1953 the department of business had been saturated with boys seeking careers.) But, in the departments of English, social studies, education, and the fine arts, business was booming. It seemed like he saw more boys on campus each year with long hair, and the grapevine hinted that a little marijuana was making the rounds.

Dean Brown did some outside research, too. He talked with his colleagues from the high schools about the problem.

“Well, it isn’t so difficult to understand why you’re in trouble,” they told him. “Approximately 60 percent of the upper half of our high-school graduating classes will be girls. That leaves 40 percent boys, doesn’t it? So, it’s no wonder that you admit a higher percent of your male applicants. Why don’t you adopt a double standard for admission? One standard for girls, another for boys. Other colleges are doing it. We’d like to get more of our boys into Sometime.”

“I’ve thought of that,” said Dean Brown, “But somehow, it doesn’t seem ethical. Scooping the bottom of the barrel in order to fill beds in the men’s residence halls isn’t the answer. If I admit too many poor-risk males the girls will simply shoot them down in the freshman year. And every boy is in double-jeopardy. If he doesn’t make his grades he will likely get drafted. I’ve too much heart to do this to a boy with my eyes wide open. I’d have to live with it.”

“Well, suit yourself,” replied the guidance counselors, “We were only suggesting.”

Dean Brown also did a recruitment market study on his college, and that didn’t brighten his day any.

Like all independent colleges, Sometime had been forced to increase tuition over the years in order to keep pace with mounting costs. By all reliable estimates, Dean Brown figured that only about 13 percent of families in the U.S. had family income high enough to defray the full cost of sending one child to his college. Not only had Sometime narrowed its academic market for students by raising its admissions standards, but in raising costs it had enormously shrunk its economic market.

I believe we have enough data to indicate the “sex-gap” is a national phenomenon. It is not restricted to any one school district or section of the country. Studies are now in progress which, to date, have maintained the same male-female achievements ratios in college as pertain to high schools.

Now, Dean Brown knew that families in the upper economic brackets demonstrate a marked propensity for sending their children, particularly boys, to the most prestigious colleges to which they can gain admittance; and he knew that the struggle among colleges to attract boys from affluent families was fierce. Check one: a further decrease in Sometime’s market. Dean Brown then mentally subtracted other boys—those wanting majors not offered at Sometime, such as engineering and architecture. Check two: would there be any boys left for Sometime?

It began to dawn on Dean Brown why Sometime was able to attract plenty of top-flight girls but never enough top-flight boys. Then he happened to run across a small item in an insurance journal which announced that, on the average, among those babies surviving to age 18, there are only 91 boys to every 100 girls!

Dean Brown wearily turned once more to his freshman statistics. He discovered that each year the girls applied early while most of the boys dragged their feet. The girls not only applied earlier than the boys, but, once admitted, they confirmed acceptance, paid their fees, and applied for scholarships and other forms of student aid before most of the boys even got into the act. Consequently, Dean Brown was horrified to discover that the Scholarship Committee was granting the bulk of Sometime’s scholarship funds to women applicants.

An item analysis of his fully admitted male applicants confirmed Dean Brown’s suspicions. They were boys who, for the most part, were not quite eligible for the Ivy League, and, among the admitted-but-not-coming group were a large number of academically able boys who

were not quite able to meet Sometime's costs, but were also not quite eligible for Sometime's academic scholarships when contrasted with the girls who presented better credentials to the Scholarship Committee. Consequently, these boys ended up at the public universities. Dean Brown began to wonder if he could ever win.

Then Dean Brown began to think about his experiences, and those of his loyal and sturdy staff, in contacting students during their visits to secondary schools. At the last meeting with his staff, he recalled, everyone asked: "Why don't we see more boys? On college-day and college-night programs we see three to four times as many girls and their parents as boys."

Dean Brown reflected, with a sigh, "As usual, the girls take advantage of their opportunities. The boys don't. I must communicate with the secondary-school principals and guidance counselors on this point. It is as much in their interest as ours to motivate the boys to get off their duffs. A cultural prod is needed all around."

Then Dean Brown decided to make a further analysis of the freshman applications for his 1967 admitted students. On page three of the application appeared the question: What factors caused your interest in applying to Sometime College? Dean Brown was greatly elated to note that seven out of ten applicants indicated that they were influenced by the recommendation of an enrolled student.

"This is good," he chortled, "This means the faculty is doing a good job. It means students are happy here. Else, why would they recommend Sometime to their friends back home? We must be doing something right!"

Then it dawned on Dean Brown that 58.3 percent of the sample was girls, and only 41.7 percent were boys. Bright, academically-oriented students tend to have bright, academically-oriented friends. So the more bright, academically-oriented girls we admit, the more bright, academically-oriented girls are likely to follow.

At this point we can do no more than leave Dean Brown with his dilemma and with all his questions verified but unanswered.

The author has had voluminous correspondence with secondary-school counselors on the subject, from which the following are excerpted:

"I took the time to go back through an eight-year span in our large, suburban high school which has had 4,500 graduates during that period, and counted both boys and girls who had a 3.00 or better grade-point average. Seventy percent were girls and thirty percent

were boys who could qualify. This usually comprises, in our high school, the top 1/4 of the senior class."

Another counselor writes: "I was challenged by the statements regarding the 'sex gap' in education. Frankly, I thought you were exaggerating the situation. So, to satisfy myself on this point, I completed a ten-year study of the classes graduating from all the high schools in our system. In the upper half of these graduating classes 59 percent were girls while only 41 percent were boys.

"We're really shook up here. We wonder what we have been doing to our males. As a result of my survey, the superintendent has ordered a massive research study that will be carried clear back to grade one."

An Eastern counselor sent the author a copy of his five-year study of the graduates from his school. To quote a portion of his table:

Class	Girls ranking top half
1969	66.6%
1968	75.3%
1967	62.8%
1966	56.6%
1965	59.6%
Five-year average	64.1%

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Affiliate Achiever

Larry Fisher

Dean of Student Life

**Western Michigan Aviation Academy,
Grand Rapids, MI • Michigan ACAC**

Why are you in this profession?

The rules may change, but the enjoyment of working with students remains the same.

Any advice for newbies?

Remember why you are in the profession when case loads increase and you feel stretched.