



## WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE BOYS?

### The Problem

“Don’t be a girly swat!”

This used to be an insult levelled by English boys at their friends when they preferred their homework to less academic pursuits. Perhaps the insult is still used today. One thing is certain, however, the association between study and girlishness has ceased to be found only in the insults by which boys show their affection for each other. It is a stark reality.

The widening gap of academic achievement between boys and girls is statistically undeniable. And for those who have children, or who teach both boys and girls, the anecdotal evidence is there too. So what could the causes be?

### The Causes?

Certainly boys develop later than girls, but this has always been the case and so cannot explain the recent change. Then perhaps girls never aspired to academic success in the past because it was not useful to them—they just left school and

married, but then if this was true, they should just be equally as good as boys now rather than streets ahead. Perhaps then, God just made girls brighter, but then why has this never been supremely evident throughout six thousand years of written history?

Perhaps we must cast our net wider; perhaps there is no single cause but the *ensemble* of the modern world which has a more invidious effect on boys than girls.

Modern *trash culture* (fashion, music, social media, computer gaming, promiscuity, intoxication and sport worship) plays to the lower passions which boys struggle more to control.

Modern “morality” (political correctness, sexual equality, homosexuality and secular religion) inflicts more damage on boys because it directly undermines their finality as leaders in the home and in society.

Modern educational practice also plays a part. Most primary schools and middle

schools are decidedly feminine places, and the unenlightened notion that mixed education makes for more rounded boys is simply delusory—it is a distraction at best. The debilitating effect on boys of a one-size-fits-all curriculum for boys and girls might be worth investigating too. As might the hysteria of the health and safety thought police (zero risk environments turn boys into pansies).

Finally, modern economics deprives boys of their fathers as role models. Few fathers are able to spend time actually working with their sons anymore. The workplace is often away from home so that boys only ever see their fathers in the domestic environment (collapsed in arm-chair with head in the newspaper or a remote in the hand in front of the telly?).

### The Remedy

Parents should understand the modern world and isolate their children from its evil influences (regrettably few Catholics do either), and, far from leaving a void, they must occupy their sons with activities that will develop manly virtues—particularly those of charity, prudence and fortitude. Regular prayer and sacraments are a pre-requisite as natural virtue needs grace to grow. Supervision, according to St. John Bosco, is of vital importance too. Boys need role models—pretty much all the time. And if someone calls them a girly swat, they should reply with an equally affectionate: “You idle toad, get back to your books!” Ω

