

Has the 'War on Boys' Entered the Workforce?

This morning *The Washington Post* reported on a growing problem afflicting the American workforce: fewer men are participating.

The *Post* [explains](#):

"The [workforce downturn] problem is particularly pronounced among men between the ages of 25 and 54, traditionally considered the prime working years. Their participation rate has been declining for decades, but the drop-off accelerated during the recession. The high mark was 98 percent in 1954, and it now stands at 88 percent. A new analysis from the White House's Council of Economic Advisers, slated for release Monday, found that the United States now has the third-lowest participation rate for 'prime-age men' among the world's developed countries."

According to *The Post*, this drop-off in men in the workforce is largely attributable to poor education and high rates of incarceration, two facts which the White House's Council of Economic Advisers believe can be solved by "raising the minimum wage and expanding the earned-income tax credit."

But instead of treating the symptoms of this problem, perhaps we should consider the fact that declining male workforce participation might be a direct result of what has been called the "war on boys."

More than 15 years ago, Christina Hoff Sommers [issued a warning](#) that it is not girls who are being shortchanged in school, but boys. This occurs through policies that [eliminate time for play](#) and activity. Minimizing areas that appeal to the [boy imagination](#) (such as fighting) and removing classes in

which boys have [traditionally enjoyed and excelled](#) (such as shop class) have further served to make boys feel insignificant and less capable than their female peers.

The education system, however, seems to have ignored the alarm Ms. Sommers sounded so many years ago. In fact, they actually seem to have intensified the push for more seat time, more zero-tolerance discipline policies, and more pressure to only pursue the college path, instead of offering higher education alternatives that may be more appealing to boys.

Will a continuation of such policies only serve to further discourage boys from success and continue to drive down the male workforce participation rates in future years?

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