

The Weaker Sex

Far fewer boys than girls are going on to university, and nobody seems to care.

By Lorne Gunter

Of the 52 traditional bricks-and-mortar universities in Canada, only one has more male students than female. Just one.

Ontario's University of Waterloo has a male-female ratio of 54 to 46, according to *Macleans* magazine's 2005 "Guide to Canadian Universities".

At all the rest – every last one of them – women outnumber men.

At Carleton University in Ottawa, it's nearly equal. The numbers there reflect the split between men and women in the population as a whole – 49 to 51.

But at most post-secondary schools, it's not even close.

At just 10 of the schools *Macleans* surveys each year are men as much as 45% of the student body. At 20 schools – nearly two-fifths of Canadian universities – men comprise under 40% of the student body.

At the University of Alberta, the ratio is 43 to 57. At Calgary, it's 45 to 55, and at Lethbridge it's the same as at the U of A: 43 to 57. Those are pretty typical of the country's large, multi-facultied universities.

At prestigious universities such as McGill, Queen's, Western and Laval, men are 40% to 42 % of students.

At Memorial in Newfoundland and York in Toronto, they are 38%. At Brandon and Winnipeg, they are 34%; at St. Thomas in Fredericton, 32%; and at Nipissing in North Bay, Ont., a mere 28%.

Throughout the five campuses of the Université du Québec system, men are nowhere more than 38% of the total.

The imbalance is even greater at most two-year and community colleges. Mount Saint Vincent in Halifax has the lowest level of male enrolment of any university in the country, just 19%. I guess that's understandable. Until 1967, MSV was an all-female university.

But if I said it was understandable that Waterloo has more male than female students because of its focus on math, engineering and computer science, there would be a lot of feminists and other assorted politically-correct types who would be anything but understanding.

Lawrence Summers, Bill Clinton's former treasury secretary who is now president of Harvard University, wondered aloud at a closed-door academic conference in January whether the alleged under-representation of women in math and science might, just might, be due to some innate difference between the sexes rather than systemic discrimination or social conditioning alone. And ever since, he has been pilloried for even suggesting such a sacrilege.

And that's my point. If the shoe were on the other foot – if men outnumbered women, significantly, at all Canadian universities but one – we would never hear the end of it. Yet Canadian universities have become dominated by female students (women now also earn ten degrees for every seven awarded to men, according to Statistics Canada), and no one even notices.

If men and women both are in our schools of higher learning on merit, then the male-female ratio is unimportant. But it would not be treated as unimportant if the ratio went the other way, even if merit were the explanation, because merit would not be an acceptable application. It wouldn't feed the cause.

Political correctness, feminism, even modern liberalism are outrage "-isms". They feed off the indignation of perceived slights and injustices. If an outraging explanation cannot be found for a difference between men and women, rich and poor, whites and non-whites, then one must be invented. One that cannot be disproved – an invisible conspiracy, imperceptible social conditioning, sys-

temic discrimination – is the best kind, since it permits the outrage to be stoked indefinitely.

As women have roared past men in total post-secondary enrolment – there are now nearly 515,000 women at universities, colleges and technical schools in Canada, compared to 375,000 men according to StatsCan – the only "facts" that get reported are the outraging ones: that men still earn more doctorates and master's degrees.

Never mind that the number of men receiving doctorates in the most-recent six-year period fell by 18%, while the number of women doing so rose by 19%. It is an outrage to the PC and feminist crowd that parity has not yet been achieved. Only now is soon enough.

When the number of women receiving advanced degrees surpasses the number of men – sometime around 2014 – expect some new outrage to be found.

If the number of men studying law had risen 2% in the past decade and the number of women had fallen nearly 18%, instead of the reverse, there would be calls for royal commissions. If male enrolment in business programs had increased 11% and female fallen 2%, instead of the other way around, newspapers would be filled with stories decrying the imbalance, the unfairness.

The CBC would have several special reports pointing fingers at the patriarchy or cowardly politicians for their lack of funding, or both, if male enrolment had risen 35% in natural resource courses since 1995 and female had fallen by 10%. But let the opposite be true and ... silence.

An imbalance in favour of women is considered justifiable payback, un-newsworthy, the universe unfolding as it should.

(Reprinted with permission from The Edmonton Journal, Apr. 1, 2005. Mr. Gunter is a leading columnist.)