

These small omissions probably make the book more accessible to the public. FDR wanted as many citizens as possible to feel connected to their nation's revenue raising apparatus. Thorndike provides them with a nonpartisan book will help them understand just why it feels the way it does.

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The Rise of Women: The Growing Gender Gap in Education and What It Means for American Schools. By Thomas A. DiPrete and Claudia Buchmann. New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 2013. Pp. 296. \$37.50, paper.
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For many economists researching the causes of women's disadvantage in wages, earnings, and labor market outcomes, it is easy to forget that women's educational attainment has exceeded men's in the United States for 30 years. *The Rise of Women* is an interesting account of how this gender gap came to be and what explains it. Among individuals 26 to 28 years of age, college completion rates of women surpassed those of men during the 1980s. As of 2010, that difference stood at 8 percent with 36 percent of women and only 28 percent of men in that age range having completed college.

The book is rich with interesting facts and statistics that help us understand the gender gap in college-completion. Two facts are remarkable. The first is that the tendency of women to overtake male educational attainment is common to all industrialized countries as well as across ethnicities and social classes in the United States. The second is that U.S. women overtook the educational achievement of men thanks to a remarkable stagnation in men's achievement. This stagnation is puzzling as it took place during the time when a college degree gained importance as a determinant of economic and social success. From 1980 to 2000 individual earnings, employment rates, and the probability of marrying and having children all grew much more for the college educated relative to high school graduates. Women, much more than men, took advantage of the increasing returns to college education by increasing their graduation rates.

These facts are analyzed in the book. The authors do a very good job of considering how economic and labor market developments, the evolution of the family structure, and changes in school curricula and characteristics contributed to the emergence of the female advantage. While their analysis is nuanced and identifies several important factors, I find two of the proposed explanations particularly enlightening.

First, girls have outperformed boys for a long time in middle and high schools. Even during the 1920s and 1930s, when college access was quite limited for women, the high school grades and graduation rates of girls were higher than those of boys. When a more egalitarian approach to college access became the norm, these differences translated into higher college enrollment and graduation rates for women. The authors emphasize the importance of academic performance (grades) in high school as a proximate predictor of the probability of college graduation. The authors also emphasize, however, that the gender gap was not in test scores (in which men perform similarly to women and even slightly better in math tests) but in grades. Grades likely not only reflect intelligence but also social attitudes, attentiveness

and focus, and organizational skills. These skills are as important as IQ to college success, and seem to be where the female advantage lies. The authors also find that school and family environments could be very important in the enhancement of those skills, especially for boys.

The second fascinating hypothesis is that the rise of the one-parent family (with absent father) has damaged boys' attitudes toward education. Lacking a positive adult male role model, boys are more likely to adopt models that consider school and academic success irrelevant to their male identity. In fact, the authors show that the presence of highly educated fathers played an important role during the 1980s and 1990s in encouraging boys to graduate from college. Although families with college-educated fathers had an equal rate of college graduation among both sons and daughters, families with absent or poorly educated fathers had daughters who were much more likely to graduate than sons. This difference existed in the 1950s and 1960s and became much stronger in the 1980s. This can explain a large part of the gap in high school performance and subsequent college attainment.

The last chapter of the book presents data on the choice of college major. In this case what is remarkable is the stability of gender segregation across majors and the large gender gap (favoring men) in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) majors—a gap that remained essentially unchanged even as women increased their college enrollment. The authors show that the choice of major is not driven by academic ability (in science) or by job perspectives. The largest determinant is interest in math and science as expressed by girls at the end of high school. Choice of major explains about 30 percent of the wage gap between men and women as the earning premium for STEM majors (over humanities) can be as large as the college-high school premium. High schools that provide a good science curriculum, the authors find, increase the likelihood that women (more than men) will choose a STEM major. In my recent paper with Massimo Anellie (“The Long-Run Effects of High-School Class Gender Composition.” NBER Working Paper #18744, 2013) looking at college major choice in Italy, we find that having a larger share of women as high school classmates significantly increases the probability that women choose to pursue majors in Engineering, Math, and Business. This suggests that a less gender-polarized environment in high school can also increase the participation of women in STEM fields.

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ASIA

Mabiki: Infanticide and Population Growth in Eastern Japan, 1660–1950. By Fabian Drixler. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013. Pp. xx, 417. \$75.00, hardcover.
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The drama of Japan's population history continues to fascinate.

Sandwiched between two periods of population increase—the 1600s and the century and a half after 1800—was a period of plateau-like stagnation. For instance in central Honshū, Japan's main island, bristling with great metropolitan centers like Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto—an urban graveyard effect checked population increase.