

We enter the new millennium with young women and men in an uncomfortable dance of courtship for which the old rules are sadly inadequate, and no new rules yet exist. No amount of nostalgic return to swing dancing and romantic comedy will bring back the old gender roles. Many faculty members may feel inadequate to speak to students about such matters, given their own awkward attempts to adjust to new roles and their difficulties in intimate relationships. In our reluctance, we are missing an opportunity to participate positively in what could be the greatest transition in history in the relationships between women and men. We all must help each other change.

Barbara Kerr is a professor of counseling psychology at Arizona State University and author of *Smart Girls: A New Psychology of Girls, Women, and Giftedness* (Gifted Psychology Press, 1997).

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often happens is that the males simply begin to drop out when the proportion of females to males becomes high. As a young man said to me when I asked him why he wasn't involved in student government, "It's just a bunch of girls playing politics."

College majors are showing some interesting shifts as well. Biology is becoming a female ghetto, as undergraduate women pour into the one natural science that they perceive as friendly to them. Prelaw classes have shifted since 1990 from predominantly male to predominantly female. Astin's study of trends from 1966 to 1996 shows that when women's interest in a scholarly field grows, men's interest in that field declines.

As females broaden their choices, males may be narrowing theirs. In our studies of honors students, using data from American College Testing, Nicholas Colangelo, a professor of counselor education at the University of Iowa, and I found that bright males are crowding into the few majors -- including business, engineering, and computer science -- that they deem appropriate to both their intelligence and their gender. As women enter traditional male careers in ever-larger numbers over the next decades, men may find themselves increasingly disengaged from those pursuits, unless they can recast their definition of masculinity so that they are less threatened by association with women.

Conflicts among races and classes obscure the immensity of the gap between the sexes. Rita J. Simon, a law professor at American University, argued in an opinion article in *The Chronicle* (October 2, 1998) that "Race and Class Drive Most Conflict Now" in our society, and that gender issues are the province of white professional women who are concerned about equal pay. But if racism decreases and more of the poor join the middle class, gender may emerge as a major issue for people of color as well. Many of the acclaimed works of creative fiction by people of color deal with the troubled relationships between men and women. Isabel Allende, Louise Erdrich, Toni Morrison, and Amy Tan all have shown how race, class, and gender roles interact to limit the choices and dreams of both women and men. Given the magnitude of the changes under way in our society, I think our gender problems have just begun.

As academics, we can help men and women address these issues. First, we need to do fewer studies of date rape, and more studies of alternatives to dating. We need more research on how men and women can work toward their goals, based on their own deeply held values rather than on traditional gender roles. The creative ways in which some women and men have built truly equitable relationships outside of the culture of romance also need to be investigated. And we need to make sure that the results of those studies are clearly written, so that they enter the mainstream of social-science research, as well as the popular media.

Second, we need to offer our students more courses on personal relationships, in such departments as psychology, education, and family studies. We need to examine gender relations in the classroom, and confront the culture of romance directly. That means showing our students how the traditional dating system has made it harder for them to have open, friendly, and satisfying relationships. Faculty members need to share information about their own successful egalitarian relationships, as well as talk openly about marriage, family, and dual-career issues.

Third, in our one-on-one relationships with students -- as their advisers and mentors -- we should not consider their career and relationship goals separately. We should encourage men and women to discuss the ways in which those goals interact. All too often, I have seen counselors subtly lead female clients into a discussion focusing on relationship issues, and male clients into a discussion of career issues.

Fourth, we need to realize that gender equity in our relationships with our colleagues is not merely a matter of preventing sexual harassment and attaining equality in terms of pay and promotion. True equity is far broader and affects how we work together. We need to focus on the details that make equality between the sexes possible, such as not expecting young parents to teach courses or attend meetings that take place late in the day, and monitoring interactions in meetings to make sure that men don't constantly interrupt women.

A "culture of romance" on college campuses, Holland and Eisenhart say, continues to force women onto the sexual auction block, and to trap men into competing for them. Based on in-depth interviews with 23 college women and surveys of 362 other female students at a large, predominantly white state university and a large, predominantly black university, the researchers found that women put an extraordinary amount of time into grooming, talking about dates and relationships, and participating in dating and events to attract dates. Additionally, women show their interest in men by compromising their own goals in order to support the men's goals.

Holland and Eisenhart comment that such behavior may make sense, because our culture measures men's achievement by their accomplishments as well as their relationships, but assesses women only in terms of their relationships with men. The researchers found considerable dissatisfaction with the culture of romance among the students they interviewed, but little support for those women and men who chose to resist that culture.

The kind of work done by Rose and Frieze, and by Holland and Eisenhart -- work that examines everyday social relationships of men and women -- is quite rare. A review of the research on social relationships of college men and women shows that the vast majority of published studies in this area pertains to dating violence or date rape. Is this because of the morbid interest of social scientists in the pathologies of human relationships, or because dating truly is in deep trouble? Whatever the cause of this bias in the research, there is precious little scholarship on positive models of male-female interaction, and virtually none on alternatives to dating.

In spite of the sizable proportion of men who expect their wives not to work, most students are eager for guidance on how to meet possible mates outside of a bar or a blind date, how to create an equitable relationship, and how to plan for dual careers and shared family responsibilities. It seems to me that when students flock to courses on human sexuality, it is not simply for the fun of talking about sex, but because they hope the courses might include some pointers about how to have a happy and supportive relationship.

Students often do not consider their parents' marriages -- a high percentage of which have been unhappy -- as good models. Nor do the media give many examples of the kinds of relationships students hope to have (I heard the commentator Elvis Mitchell opine on National Public Radio that the success of *The X-Files* could be at least partly attributed to the fact that Fox Mulder and Dana Scully represent the first truly equal, romantically attracted male and female in television history). In the absence of any popular literature based on sound scholarship about male and female relationships, students turn to *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, *The Rules*, and other pop-psychology books. Those works perpetuate the myth that men and women are so alien to one another that they can get along only by using intricate strategies of manipulation.

Although students may enjoy the amusing simplicities of such books, they quickly learn that the authors provide few answers to practical questions such as: "Should we go to graduate school at Purdue together or have a commuter relationship between Purdue and Indiana University?" "How do you decide whose job is most important?" "How do you balance family responsibilities with your career?" "How can a guy help with a newborn baby if his wife decides to breast-feed?"

Only a few well-written books by scholars provide an alternative vision of male-female relationships -- Carol Tavris's *The Mismeasure of Woman* and Pepper Schwartz's *Peer Marriage: How Love Between Equals Really Works* come to mind -- but those books lack the visibility of less scholarly works.

Another disturbing trend that seems to be emerging in gender relations is the disengagement of young men from leadership positions in organizations dominated by women, and men's apparent flight from college majors once dominated by males that now attract large numbers of women. The disengagement of young men from leadership was first called to my attention by Lyn Fiscus of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, whose research for the association shows that girls now hold about two-thirds of the leadership positions in high schools. On college campuses as well, women are surging into leadership positions in student government, college newspapers, and social-service organizations. What

Chronicle of Higher Education, 1999, March 5, pp. B7-8.

When Dreams Differ: Male-Female Relations on Campuses

By BARBARA KERR

Over the past three decades, women have made great educational and social progress. Significant numbers of women are now active in professions that were traditionally dominated by men, such as medicine, law, and business. Most female undergraduates expect to have a career after marriage. Yet many male students think they will marry women who will stay at home. What can we -- as researchers, teachers, and mentors -- do to help our students be more realistic about their futures? Can we do anything to change the social patterns on college campuses that foster conflicting expectations for men and women?

My research concerns the ways in which talented young women and men fulfill -- or fail to fulfill -- their promise. For 20 years, I have observed groups of students as they discussed their dreams and goals with their counselors and their peers. My favorite technique for assessing students' expectations about their futures is an exercise called "The Perfect Future Day Fantasy." In this fantasy, students imagine a day in their lives, 10 years in the future.

A typical college male's fantasy goes something like this: "I wake up and get in my car -- a really nice, rebuilt '67 Mustang -- and then I go to work -- I think I'm some kind of a manager of a computer firm -- and then I go home, and when I get there, my wife is there at the door (she has a really nice figure), she has a drink for me, and she's made a great meal. We watch TV or maybe play with the kids." Here is the typical college female's fantasy: "I wake up, and my husband and I get in our twin Jettas, and I go to the law firm where I work. Then after work, I go home, and he's pulling up in the driveway at the same time. We go in and have a glass of wine, and we make an omelet together and eat by candlelight. Then the nanny brings the children in, and we play with them until bedtime."

Additional evidence of the different expectations of men and women comes from Alexander Astin's analysis of trends in the attitudes of college freshmen from 1966 to 1996, which he published in *The Review of Higher Education* in 1998. The proportion of female college freshmen who agree with the statement "The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family" has dropped to 19 per cent from 44.3 per cent. Male college freshmen are now also less likely to agree with the statement -- 30.8 per cent in 1996, as opposed to 66.5 per cent in 1966. But the figures show that three out of every 10 male undergraduates whom a college woman meets probably expect that, after marriage, their wives will "confine" themselves to caring for them and their children. In fact, it is likely that even more men who publicly endorse equitable relationships secretly wish for a more-traditional life style.

The old-fashioned dating system that still holds sway on most campuses contributes to the problem. In the archetypal date, the man invites the woman out, picks her up, and pays for all the expenses of the date, while the woman decides what kinds of intimacies she will allow. As the psychologists Suzanna Rose and Irene Frieze wrote in a 1993 article in *Sex Roles*, dating relationships follow a script that clearly perpetuates traditional, inequitable gender roles -- even when students claim that they are behaving equitably.

In *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, and College Culture*, the anthropologists Dorothy C. Holland and Margaret A. Eisenhart rather baldly describe the model that men and women take for granted as follows: A man and a woman meet and are attracted to one another. The man shows his attraction by treating the woman well, paying attention to her, buying her things, taking her places, and showing that he appreciates her special qualities. She in turn shows her admiration and affection for him by allowing the relationship to become intimate. If a woman is unattractive, she can only win a man by accepting bad treatment. If the woman is more attractive than the man, then he usually compensates by treating her especially well.