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The Daily Tar Heel

88th year of editorial freedom

Interracial couples

Communication still key to overcoming prejudice

By MATT COOPER

Imagine sitting with a friend on one of the stone walls on campus. As you contemplate the autumn leaves covering the cobbled walk, he nudges you to look at something. You look up to see what he's pointing at. It's an interracial couple. Shrugging, you look back to the leaves.

"Hey, didn't you see that?"
"So?"
"Man, that really burns me up!"
"Why?"
"I don't know, it just does."

Sex. Racism. Two totally unrelated subjects, right? Wrong. The more than 40 black and white males and females interviewed for this column all agreed that there are definite relationships between the subjects.

This may seem to go against the attitudes of sexual and social awareness that we, as members of the "now generation," are characterized as having. However, the fact is that even here, on a campus considered one of the most liberal universities in the South, attitudes seem as conservative as ever. Even the myths we've created about each other through the years persist.

"I think sex is a major draw, but whites don't admit it to themselves," one black woman said. "We all know that white men aren't as well-endowed as black men are, and that white women are experts in bed, and black women will spread their legs as soon as you ask them; stereotypes."

"Sure, I've heard myths about blacks being so-called sexual supermen," a white male said. "I'd like to know more about black women. I heard they're good in bed."

Everyone interviewed had some comment about areas strongly tied to sexuality and racism. The most immediate concern was interracial relationships.

Among white males there were mixed views about this issue. About a third of those interviewed shared feelings similar to this: "I'm for people doing what's good for them."

Another third fell somewhere in between: "Although I wouldn't let a sister or daughter become involved in a mixed relationship, I still believe in individualism. Because I come from a closely knit family and because I want to get to where I'm headed in society, I wouldn't become involved in one."

At the other end of the spectrum came the last third: "I don't think races were meant to be mixed. I just consider mixed relations to be unacceptable in this society. But a friendship between a black guy and a white guy or a black girl and a white girl is OK."

The majority of white males interviewed, it seems, would rather maintain a separate but equal relationship with blacks.

One thing is certain. If the reaction of the white males interviewed reflects the mood of the white male population on campus, mixed relationships are not viewed favorably. And the myths about black sexuality persist.

Black women on campus are even more set against mixed relationships than white men. With only one exception the black women interviewed said they looked down on mixed relationships, at least when black men and white women were involved.

"I become irritated when I see a black guy with a white girl," one black woman said. "I feel like I understand him better and have more to offer him than she does."

While this resentment to black-male-white-female relationships is almost unanimous among the black women interviewed, so is their tolerance of mixed couples involving white men and black women.

"When I see a sister with a white guy, I think she's got to be strong to do what she's doing...but with a black man and a white woman, I see this and can only ask why?"

Why indeed?
A few black women said it could be



love. Most, however, said it was sex. Many black women (and many white men and women) believe the goal of every black man is to make love with a white woman. They believe that white women become involved in mixed relationships because of myths of black sexuality.

Most black women interviewed agreed that many white women would like to become involved with black men, if only to talk to them, but don't because they feel pressure from society.

Some white women, reluctant to pursue communication with black men, turn to black women as a source of information.

"They want you to confirm or deny their myths because they are afraid to find out for themselves," one black woman said.

White women hesitated to respond to questions about their attitudes toward black men or to accusations made about them by black women.

But white women took a more liberal stand on mixed relationships than the other groups.

"I treat interracial couples just like I would treat any other couple," one white woman said. "Sometimes I think what a struggle that must be, but it doesn't bother me to see a mixed couple."

Only one white female clearly opposed mixed relationships. "Friendships between blacks and whites are fine, but I was raised against mixed

relationships. I try to ignore them when I see them," she said.

Almost all the white women agreed they felt better about relationships involving black men and white women than they did about those with white men and black women.

One might be led to believe that black and white women are rival groups, but this isn't true. The black women and white women interviewed share at least one view—that the white male has placed the white female on a pedestal. This is not a pedestal of equality; it is one reserved for a special kind of chattel, the sex object, beauty incarnate and the mother of man, all wrapped up in a neat little bundle called "woman."

Both black and white women agreed that white men tried to put women, particularly white women, in a separate and unequal position. Women interviewed made several references to the beauty market and to TV shows like *Charlie's Angels* as examples of how white men promulgate their specifications of beauty.

White males generally responded to this image females have of them by saying, "Other guys are like that, but I'm not."

Black men interviewed were more reserved than other groups. Though the black men agreed sexuality and racism are closely related, most said racism, by itself, is still their overriding concern.

"I agree that there is a relationship between sexuality and racism, but racial

oppression is my bete noire," one black man said. "The economic, social and political situation of black people is as severe now as it was 20, 30 or however many years you want to go back. A lot of people fail to realize that it does still exist, only in more subtle manifestations. Most of the advances that people claim to see are nothing more than mirages to soothe the angry masses."

An outsider, a black student from South Africa had a different view. He said race and sexuality could not be separated.

"Until recently we had legal segregation. Mixed relationships are new. It's a novelty to see them here in the U.S. In South Africa we're told that mixed relationships won't work. I think mixed relationships are beautiful if they can work. I think they can."

"I came here from South Africa. You come here and learn that there is no legal segregation, and you expect paradise. But there are problems here, problems that will never be resolved. Blacks here have to deal with much more than their color. They have to deal with themselves."

"We must ask ourselves if it is better to have legal segregation, and know what we can and cannot do in this country."

One black male made a statement about the uncertainty black American men face. When asked of his feelings about mixed relationships, he paused for a moment and then said, "There are still a lot of trees out there."

Sexuality. Racism. Race. Sex. Prejudice. There are relationships. Strong and subtle. It would be nice to draw a clear and concise conclusion full of rhetoric and hope, but that would be too simplistic and such analysis would only be meaningless.

What could be said anyway? That even in the minds of educated people, the rational human animal, there is a vein of irrationality? Perhaps. Or maybe it's just that we as humans give ourselves too much credit. Maybe it is because we've written a lot of rules that sound nice and labeled them morals, that we have to act differently from how we feel. This could explain the way we talk or don't talk about subjects like sex or racism. This could explain the "ignore it and it might go away" attitude that caused most of the students who were interviewed for this story to hesitate in their responses.

After reading this, one might be inclined to believe the social situation between black and whites, and males and females, is bleak. But there is hope.

Communication is the key. Conversation could kill the myths and stereotypes that plague this thing called human relations. Communication could still the waters of fear and uncertainty that surround subjects like sexuality. Communication could do it all. But without sincerity, communication is useless. And sincerity comes from the heart.

You kick at the leaves under your feet as you sit back down on the wall. You wonder if you should say anything to your friend about his reaction to the mixed couple that got him so excited.

"Maybe you ought to go over and talk to the guy," you suggest. "At least you might be able to find out why you hate him."

Your friend laughs. "Me? Talk to that guy? You've got to be kidding!"

You shrug, and tell yourself it doesn't matter anyway.

Matt Cooper, a junior journalism major from Littleton, is a staff photographer for The Daily Tar Heel.

The tax referendum

Three times during the past several years Carrboro residents have voted against referendums that would have levied a tax on property owners and stabilized the public transportation system in this area. This year, such a defeat must be avoided.

If passed, the referendum, which calls for a property tax of up to 10 cents per \$100 valuation, would add about \$80,000 to the transportation fund. Carrboro presently finances its transportation operations with federal revenue sharing funds. Repeatedly, Doug Sharer and other members of the Carrboro Board of Aldermen have emphasized that these funds might not always be available.

The tax revenues generated would allow the transportation system to expand in the future if necessary, and it would free revenue money for making capital improvements in the Carrboro area.

While there is some opposition to the referendum in Carrboro, we do not believe the counterarguments warrant its defeat. Most opponents, including Carrboro Alderman John Boone (who cast the lone vote against having the referendum vote), complain that the tax would force residents who don't use the bus system to pay for it. In fact, students probably will pay as well through increased rents. And, after all, the bus system is available to all residents. That some don't use it only indicates another problem in the attitudes of people who refuse to deal with the realities of national gas shortages, and traffic congestion in Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

It seems somewhat ironic that conservative members of the Carrboro community would oppose this referendum. After all, those who would call themselves conservative generally oppose the incursion of the federal government into their lives. By refusing to pay for public transportation and similar services on a local level, they only invite the federal government to move into the neighborhood.

While we are aware that increasing taxes are a real concern, we do not see a stable public transportation system in this area as anything but a necessity. The tax referendum on the Nov. 4 ballot should be passed.

For commissioners

Most students care little, if at all, about this fall's race for the Orange County Board of Commissioners. Although there is a tendency to separate the campus from the "real world," it is in fact part of Orange County, and the commission's decisions affect students as much as they do the people of Hillsborough or anywhere else.

There are three candidates for the two open seats on the board: Incumbents Don Willhoit and Richard Whitted are both Democrats, and Josephine Barbour is a Republican. All three agree that county government can be run more efficiently, but they differ on the means to improve it.

Willhoit and Whitted have been members of the board for the last four years, and in that time it has taken significant steps to broaden the range of services the county offers. It has begun a county health department, and a recreation department. It has expanded human services and made efforts to improve the county's schools.

These changes have been expensive, but the incumbent board has thought them worth the tax increases that have been required. That view has been challenged by a number of conservative county leaders, Barbour among them.

The Democratic primary pitted Willhoit and Whitted against challengers Ben Lloyd and Bo Dunlap, who called for reduced county spending. They face the same argument in Republican Barbour. She points out that the county's tax rate has increased for five consecutive years and that the higher tax rate places a heavy burden on rural landowners who own large tracts of land. Barbour's call for more efficient, frugal government should not go unheeded.

However, Willhoit and Whitted seem to be aware of the need for fiscal responsibility as they work toward more responsive government. The present board has taken a more progressive stance toward county services than that proposed by Barbour. It would be a mistake to alter that course now, or to remove Don Willhoit and Richard Whitted from the seats that they have filled for the last four and eight years.

The perfect gift for graduation: ZZZZZZZ

By DAVID POOLE

A friend asked me during Fall Break what I planned to do right after graduation. Most people, he told me, spend a little time traveling or just sitting around before tackling their long-prepared-for careers.

I had no such plans at the time, and his query got me to thinking. I have since decided that for one month after graduation I am going to do something I haven't been able to do much of while in school.

For 30 days, I am going to sleep. Good night world, wake me up in June.

On many occasions since I have been a student at this hallowed institution, I have wanted to do cruel and abusive things to my alarm clock-radio. In the moments when I am rational, I realize that this appliance has served me well and that without it I would have never made it to a class on time. But I am seldom lucid when it rings at 8 a.m.

For all of us, the beginning of the process that eventually deprives us of needed rest is the freshman plague known as the 8 o'clock class. My 8 o'clock class was Spanish I, a near-fatal scheduling mistake. My instructor, of course, was born in Madrid and spoke both English and Spanish more fluently than did I. She was also one of those people who are very energetic early in the morning. She would, without fail, ask us the same question every morning as she called the roll.

"Senor Poole," she'd say. "Como esta usted?" Unfortunately, I did not know how to say "Please leave me alone, 20 minutes ago I was sound asleep and

dreaming about a ski weekend with the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders and I don't particularly want to be here," in Spanish. I'd always say "muy bien," which meant very well, and I would always be lying.

One morning, she threw me a curve. "Senor Poole," she chimed, "Dónde es su casa?"

At 8 a.m. I have trouble remembering where my feet are, much less my house. I squinted at her through sleepy eyes and thought a minute. My mind formed what I thought to be an appropriate response.



"Mi casa es en mis calzones," I said. The class laughed hysterically. It turned out that I had just announced that my house was in my shorts.

I have friends who don't sleep, period. I complain when I don't get to sleep six hours or more a night, but there are people who can go for days without even dozing off. Many of these people think this is fun.

"I pulled three all-nighters this week," a friend told me during the recent rash of midterms. He was bragging. I told him I thought he was loco. I have stayed up all night on a few occasions and I can therefore say from experience that it is impossible to absorb anything more complex than a bad horror movie after 3 a.m.

My problem is not that I stay up all night. It's not even that I stay up real late. My problem is that once I

get to sleep, no matter what time that happens, I simply can't get up.

If I had a dollar for every time I have missed a class because I wanted to sleep "just 10 more minutes," I could buy all the clock-radios ever assembled. One of the first tricks I had to learn was putting my alarm completely across the room from my bed. That forces me to get up out of bed to throw the alarm clock on the floor.

Once I'm out of bed, I can usually make it the rest of the way.

I always get paranoid around finals time about falling back to sleep and snoring my way to an F. It nearly happened once. I had set the alarm for 7 a.m. so I could shower and eat breakfast before an 8:30 exam. When the alarm went off, hygiene and nutrition were suddenly a long way down the priority list. I dozed off and then woke back up at 8:15. Have you ever seen anyone jump from his bed and into a pair of pants in one motion?

With these facts in mind, I sat down and did some quick computation. I figure that, on the average, being a college student has cost me about six hours of sleep a week. At 15 weeks per semester, that comes to 720 hours of lost sleep. That's 30 days.

I hope my alarm can be set for June.

David Poole, a senior journalism major from Gastonia, is assistant sports editor and columnist for The Daily Tar Heel.

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