

Opinions

Studies in aggression: Gender ratios change atmosphere on campus



Rebecca Smith
Columnist

With all the recent attention on the gender divide in college, one must wonder how the higher percentage of females enrolled at most universities has impacted the social atmosphere of college campuses. Sure, it may be easier for a guy to get a date on a campus full of females, but does the gossip and backstabbing increase too?

Females are expected to handle aggression differently than males. While two males may get into a physical dispute to settle their issues without intense consequences to their reputation, two females who use physical means to handle a problem spark major controversy.

Instead, society has come to expect females to partake in more covert acts of retaliation when they are attacked. Backstabbing, manipulating, gossiping and other ways to indirectly express anger have become the norm. In academic circles, this type of action to display anger is called relational aggression.

People learn how to exclude other people on their preschool playgrounds, and this behavior continues on in college life. College students are just as likely as 5-year-old schoolchildren to pick a group of friends and isolate those who they do not want in their social circle.

A study conducted by the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships observed 300 college freshmen and observed that males were more likely than females to self-report physically aggressive acts. Surprisingly, males and females both showed a tendency toward relational

aggression during their college years.

One theory on the increased levels of relational aggression in males is because of a change in social networks. Men and women are interacting at a higher rate than ever before. Now that females have higher enrollment numbers at universities and are working side-by-side with men, males are beginning to adopt relational aggression techniques. At a school like Elon University, where 60 percent of the students are females, the males have to adapt. Males have become just as likely to gossip or backstab as females — normally as a survival technique.

A study titled Psychological Warfare: The Media and Relational Aggression among Female College Students researched this. The study surveyed 202 female undergraduate students enrolled in southeastern universities during the 2008-2009 academic year. The study examined the correlation between media and aggression in females, but they did not find a positive relationship. What the study did find is when people have stronger friendships they are less likely to partake in relational aggression.

If you talk to students from Elon, one thing you will hear continually is how great the "Elon community is." I have reason to conclude that the close relationships that students create with other students, professors and staff decreases the level of aggression — overt or otherwise — on campus.

People at Elon understand how they are supposed to act and in general are moderate in their behaviors, and I think it is because Elon students have developed a community. The student body has created a safety net for themselves among the friendly smiles abundant on campus, and we continue to preserve that sense of bELONGing.

Hidden implications lurk within 'post-racial' society



Jasmine Gregory
Columnist

I remember being about 13 years old when my older cousin told me that she didn't see skin color when she looked at people. It was the kind of statement that both baffled me and stuck with me, as I had no idea how she could look at someone and not see their race.

Recently, a discussion hosted by Lambda Chi Alpha and the Black Cultural Society delved into a discussion about whether we live in a "post-racial" society. Immediately, students jumped to the conclusion that our country's election of a biracial man as president, has helped our country evolve into one that recognizes and seeks to prevent all racial injustices. I beg to differ.

Electing President Obama was one gigantic step in the right direction as far as race matters go, but it doesn't magically erase all past injustices. For African-Americans, there is still a lot of controversial ground that needs to be covered before we as a race can progress forward.

Within the realm of a "post-racial" society, the entire connotation of "Black America" would not exist. There would be no divide. Although the media rarely suggests this divide, it is definitely a theme existing among black leadership. Without "Black America," black Americans would cease to be identified as a diverse group, blending into the masses of some historically indifferent counterparts of the American population. It is with that differentiation that the struggle for freedom becomes appreciated. Diverse races also visibly gravitate towards

one another. In a "post-racial society," this gravitation would cease to exist.

Because certain races share a common experience by simply living in America, a sense of unity develops, though it is sometimes misinterpreted as a form of self-segregation.

As a black female, I am just as big a part of two worlds as I would have been during the Civil Rights Movement. In one world I see "America the Beautiful" with the great colors of red, white and blue — in the other I see the great struggles my ancestors faced as slaves in America. Never are these two worlds viewed as a disadvantage. They are simply my reality when living as a minority in America.

The term 'post-racial' indicates a time where society makes concentrated efforts to see beyond race and assimilate to the expectations of being "American." In this way, "American" becomes a one word, all-inclusive group, yet sadly, the expectations of being "American" still seem to reflect a middle-class white male. Yes, the United States can resemble a melting pot, but certain constants within our culture seem to withstand the test of time and the strides made by all races.

I would rather live in a world that allows all races to be openly accepted while still holding our heritage near and dear to our hearts. Harmony is bound to occur when people are able to unite within their respective races without penalty or criticism.

Ideally, this utopian post-racial society allows us to completely disregard skin color and simply be human beings. Unfortunately, I don't believe a day will ever come that will allow humans to be able to see past skin color unless one day, physical features cannot define ethnicity. That will be the day when we can truly label our society "post-racial."

Stop talking; start making a difference



Clint Edmondson
Guest Columnist

As someone who has been raised in a service-intensive environment since my youth, I think it's great that people feel self-fulfillment from helping others. If that's what makes you happy, then great. I've got filmmaking, you have your bleeding heart. Don't get me wrong — contributing to service efforts is on my list of priorities. It's just that the idea of "service" is diluted by people's general need for causes. They have to have a

cause, just like they have to have a religion and go to church to return to their white picket fences and cul-de-sac with a wife and three kids. This brings me to the topic of cookie cutter America, but let's not stray too far off topic — I'll save conformity for another day.

So what's wrong with causes? Isn't it important to have a purpose? Of course it is, but the problem with causes is not that people feel like they should have them, but rather the things they do to contribute to them don't achieve anything in terms of solving the problems themselves. This leads to my least favorite form of service: promoting "awareness."

When people declare, "I am going to promote awareness about domestic violence," I want to tell them to stop while they're ahead. People watch "Law and Order: SVU." We've seen enough wife beatings and rapes to suffice for this "awareness" — plus actors Mariska Hargitay and Christopher Meloni make these subjects much more entertaining, though no less serious. The reason I hate the idea of "awareness" is that it really doesn't help or solve the problem. You can make me as aware about world hunger as you want, but it doesn't change the fact that some emaciated child is going to keel over today. Is that a bit heartless? Maybe. But sooner or later, you'll have to confront reality.

People are poor. Crazy dictators commit social injustices. Decrepit men abuse their wives. Maybe you are noticing a trend here; these are all insurmountable problems. Don't walk around pretending that by holding some hour-long pow-wow, the world will become a better place. Want to help with hunger? Go help at a soup kitchen. Want to help with domestic violence? Volunteer at a shelter for battered women. Stop living in this fairytale land where talking about an issue does anything to solve it. No one is saying don't discuss social issues. Just don't do it and slap the title "service" or "philanthropy" on it.

Because if talking about solving social problems is philanthropy, then politicians are saints. Just look at any candidate's platform — they sure do a lot of talking about problems they do nothing about.

Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg charted out moral development in three main stages: pre-conventional, conventional and post conventional. Conventional, the one that most people fall within, is what I like to call the "good neighbor" front. Those in the conventional stage gravitate toward morality norms established by religion, social norms and government.

In other words, they are the people who drop the check in the basket at church in order to not look like terrible human beings. It's great that they do that, but throw all these norms out the window and they'd be singing to a different tune.

So where is this going? Another problem with causes is that people support them because they feel like they should. Causes are not fads. They don't go out of season. Causes aren't like the color white—you can still wear them after Labor Day. Don't join a cause just because your girlfriends do it. This isn't book club.

If you are going to put that cause on, try to actually care about it. You don't have to commit for life — just make sure you don't change them on every feeble whim.

We get it. You are passionate about something. Who isn't? Stop cheapening what you do by feeling like you have to show off. It is a humility thing, to an extent. If you are going around showing off your causes, then chances are your dedication to it is skin-deep. Part of Humility 101 is knowing when to shut the front door.

Causes. Be practical. Be consistent. And keep it to yourself.

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