

Graduate school article controversial

By Barbara Watts

How important is it to get into graduate school? According to an article which was handed out in a graduate school seminar for psychology majors, it is important enough that a person should be willing to be both racist and sexist, not to mention dishonest on a graduate school application. This article originally appeared in print in 1974 when issues of equality were not as widely recognized; however, there is no acceptable excuse for using this stereotyping and negative language in 1995.

What part does humor play in the perpetuation of prejudices? It is a documented fact that both written and oral language impact the beliefs and customs of a society. Though this article uses humor to describe the processes involved with applying to graduate school, and a little levity could certainly be helpful in this stress-filled process, there is most certainly a way to do this without being racist and sexist.

Here are some examples from the article, "How To Get Into Graduate School Without Being Very Smart... Or Even Very Industrious," written by James W. Kalat, Department of Psychology, Duke University:

- What foreign languages do you speak or read? ...Never mention Spanish, even if you are fluent in Spanish. . .no one ever takes Spanish courses except to get an easy grade.

- Enclose a recent photograph of yourself. . . Enclose a picture of yourself and three black women. (If necessary, pay them to cooperate, it will be worth it).

- On weaknesses, say something flip-pant and as irrelevant as possible, e.g. 'I have a definite weakness for tall women.' Women, however, are not encouraged to mention a weakness for some type of man, as women graduate students are generally expected to be asexual. And under no circumstances should a women applicant mention a weakness for small children for obvious reasons. About the only safe weakness for a woman to ad-

mit is 'a weakness for dark chocolates.'

- [reasons for poor grades] If you are a woman, you add that you had your hysterectomy that year. This is not only a great excuse for your crummy grades, but it also provides the best assurance that you won't drop out to have a baby.

- ...Avoid courses that are easy at every university, like Spanish, geology, meteorology, and sociology. These impress no one. What you want is a particular chemistry or physics professor who grades easy, or something that sounds much harder than it really is, like math331 which is really 'statistics for sociologists.'

The above are just a few examples of the type of hateful and injurious information included in this article. No matter what the motivation for this type of literature, it does not belong on the Meredith College campus unless it is used as an example of racism, sexism and prejudice. Certainly, it is not a necessary part of the information needed by students planning to attend graduate school.

Dean Burris made the following comments when asked about this article, "This is satire directed at graduate schools that could be misunderstood. Personally, I would not give it out." Once again, the issue of humor (satire) and how it is

used to excuse negativity comes into question.

Dr. Aubrecht had this to say: "If I had the opportunity again, I would choose not to use it [the article]." The context in which it was shared was as follows, "I have an article that some of you might find amusing." He also stated that he would have welcomed the opportunity to talk with any students who felt that this article was inappropriate. Dr. Aubrecht feels that the article was a way of "drawing people's attention to certain issues."

Dr. Kirk-Duggan gave some insight into the magazine in which this article was first printed by saying, "It is a very sophisticated magazine of satire. Irony and satire should always be presented carefully, particularly to student because it can sabotage the teaching process." Dr. Kirk-Duggan also mentioned the importance of the sense of integrity here at Meredith. Her other concern was that the article in question was outdated since it is over 20 years old.

As women, it is important to be able to critically assess what is being written and how it affects us. This may seem to many as a "tempest in a teapot;" the British probably thought the same thing about the Boston tea party, and look what happened there! All of us should be more aware of how insipid these kind of -isms can be. It is not acceptable to excuse them under the pretense of humor or satire.

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Everyone in the Meredith community is invited to write a letter to the editor. All published letters must be typewritten with contact name, address and telephone number. All letters must be signed by the author, but names will be withheld upon request.

The *Herald* reserves the right to place any other article submissions on file until needed or to choose not to print them.

COATS FOR KIDS

Do you have coats in your closets that for years you wanted to get rid of, but never knew where to take them? Well, this year the Student Development Staff is inviting you to help participate in the Coats for Children Project. We are working with WRAL to collect coats that are in good condition for children of all ages. Zippers on the coats should be in working order. Starting midweek, you can drop off your coats in the boxes located on 1st floor Cate Center and Belk Dining Hall.

WRAL also is in need of people who can help sort coats at Long Transportation during December. This would be a great family project during the holiday.

Also, WRAL needs help with the Telethon on December 8 from 10 p.m. until midnight (the contact person for the telethon is Phyllis Parish at the station).

We anticipate a great collection of coats this year. Last year's project collected 10,000 coats. We appreciate your efforts and thanks for helping to keep Raleigh warm.

If you have any questions, please contact either Sam Carothers (Campus Minister) or Jennifer Corrigan (Vann Residence Director).