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Equal opportunity by gender division Overcome stereotypes with single sex math, science classes

Don't get me wrong, I love my major. I've always felt that reading and writing was what I did well, so it never really bothered me that I wasn't as comfortable doing math or studying scientific subjects.

I felt this way during high school and my first two years of college. Then I came to A&M and attended a calculus help session at the Center for Academic Enhancement. I got excited about math and made an 'A' in the first math class I had taken in four years. It certainly wasn't something I was expecting... after all, I couldn't do math. Who woulda think it?

And now I am taking my last science class, and I love it. Why did it take until my senior year at A&M to think of science as something I could enjoy?

Well, because I am a product of American public education. Though my math and science teachers were nice men, I knew that I wasn't "expected" to do well in those subjects. After all, I had English and music and like subjects. I didn't need physics.

I had female friends who did excel in mathematics. Both of them loved science, too. But for most of us, those advanced science and math classes simply weren't a part of our high school plan.

I have discovered my high school was no anomaly. In schools across our country, females are eliminated from the pool of students who excel in math and science. While there are exceptions, more men than women take and do well in those subjects. And yet there is no evidence that men are smarter than women, so why the disparity in participation in these subjects?

In a recent survey of high school students, only one girl in seven said she considered herself good at math, while one in four boys considered himself to be good at it. It was also discovered that

ERIN HILL

Columnist



boys assumed girls performed at a lower level than they did. Both sexes believed it was more useful for males to know mathematics than females.

It doesn't help that in many classrooms girls are invisible. According to a study by the American Association of University Women, teachers praise and criticize men more, as if their academic experiences are more valuable, while girls are "merely acknowledged." This favoring of male students sends the message that "women's lives count for less than men's."

A byproduct of public education is fewer numbers of women going into science-related fields. Though women make up 44 percent of the labor force, only 13 percent of scientists and engineers are women. At A&M the college of Engineering has 7,801 men and 1,644 women, which means things won't be changing much around these parts.

In the '80s, someone noticed that most of the female college students majoring in sciences and mathematics came from women's colleges. Someone decided to investigate.

They discovered that in Germany, 60 percent of female science and chemistry students came from all-girl's schools, especially interesting because only 4 percent of the high schools are all-girl.

In Westerland, Germany, one of the teachers was asked about the success of these single gender

classrooms. He said, "Previously, the girls barely participated in physics classes. They have more confidence now." He also said that in his mixed gender class, not one girl raised her hand to ask questions or give answers.

In single gender classrooms, females feel more comfortable asking questions and taking risks. They do not have to compete against males for the teacher's attention, which is good since studies show that males receive the lion's share of attention from teachers.

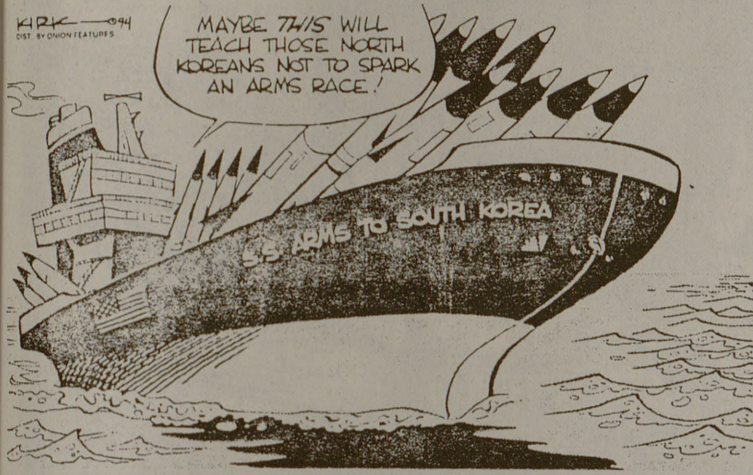
Ventura High School and Anacapa Middle School in Los Angeles, and Marin Academy in San Francisco implemented this type of classroom, and not only did the standardized test scores of their women students rise dramatically, but 64 percent of females said they "liked math." (Of the males, 71 percent said the same.) You can be assured that this percentage won't be found in traditional schools.

Evelyn Flory, the principal of Marin Academy, said the single gender classes are very popular electives. The females in them are more likely to take on leadership roles and to work together on problems.

It is for these reasons - higher test scores, improved subject mastery and better academic experiences for females - that we ought to implement single gender classrooms in mathematics and science on a national level. The gender specific stereotypes we carry around about what girls can and cannot do exist in part because of the way classrooms are currently run. Getting rid of those mixed gender classes may help eliminate stereotypes.

Some may cry segregation, but if the end result is equal opportunity and achievement, how can we complain?

Erin Hill is a senior English major



EDITORIAL

Cleaning house Gun sweeps right on target

President Clinton recently announced plans to ask tenant associations to include a mandatory clause in public housing leases that would allow warrantless gun searches. This latest policy is in response to a federal judge's ruling that the Chicago Housing Authority had violated the Constitution in conducting sweep searches without warrants.

In an attempt to avoid further constitutional violations, standard clauses will be added to tenant leases which give consent to searches for unauthorized firearms.

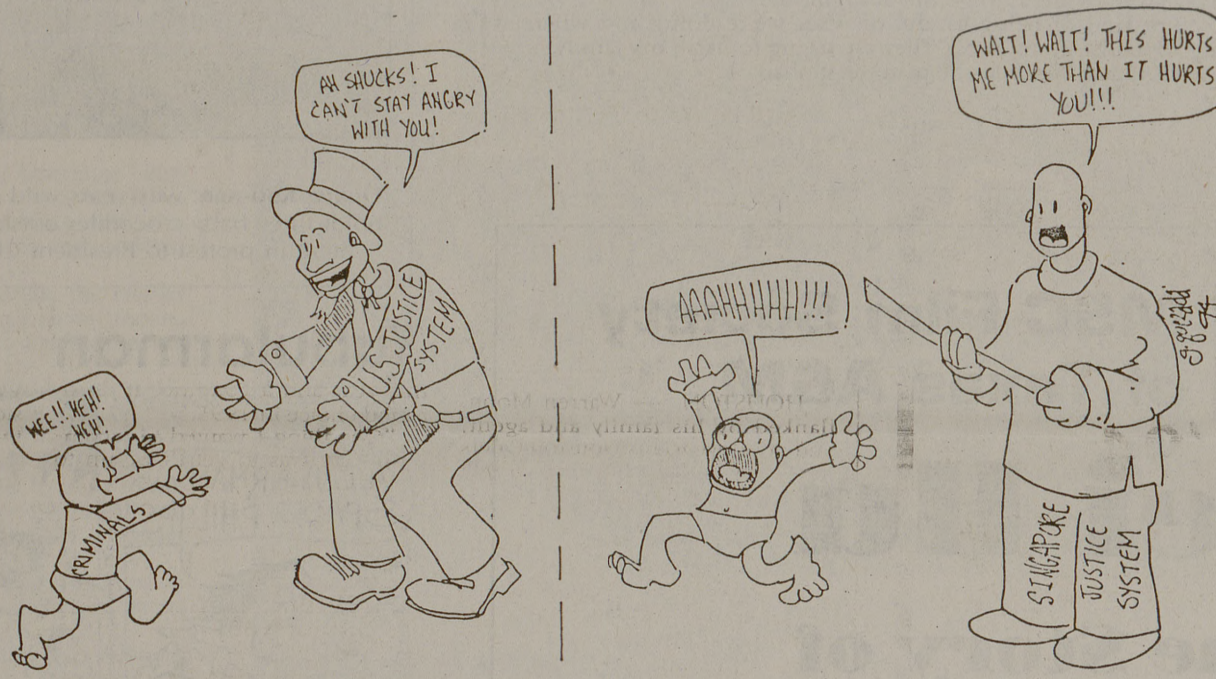
Under this plan, warrantless searches will be allowed when there is justification but no time to obtain a search warrant. Also included in the plan are weapons frisks of suspicious persons and routine searches of common areas or unoccupied apartments.

At a time when it is not uncommon for drug dealers to purchase guns and run drug

operations that earn as much as \$30,000 every day, this plan is not overly drastic. A forceful step toward allowing citizens to take back their homes and stop living in constant fear for their lives and that of their children cannot come too soon.

Tenants will be given the choice of signing a lease that includes the clause or finding alternative living conditions. Innocent children and families trying to build their lives together have to live in these projects. They deserve the right to live without fear of being shot because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time just by being at home. The tenants have the choice to vote for these measures to be instilled; no one is forcing them to do anything they don't want to.

For years politicians have debated the constitutionality of gun control. The people in the public housing projects don't have to debate, they see what guns do to families every day.



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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

We reserve the right to edit letters and guest columns for length, style, and accuracy.

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Naming that tune can lead to all sorts of problems

There I was in my statistics test trying to remember P-values and confidence intervals when my mind decided it wanted to remember some Jimmy Buffett lyrics.

I was in the middle of the definition part of the test when my mind stopped and started singing the end of "He Went to Paris." I've done poorly on many tests through the years because of this talent.

I can still remember the first time my mind winked out on me. It was my sixth grade history class and we were identifying countries and continents on our six-weeks test.

"Suckers walk, money talks but it can't touch my three lock box..."

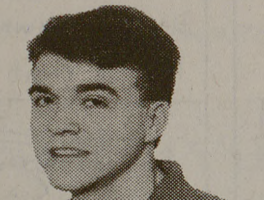
The exam was a breeze until I got to Asia. After marking my answer, I started singing a song by the rock group Asia, which made me remember the early days of MTV. I then spent the next 30 minutes trying to recall the original MTV veejays.

"Let's see, you got Martha Quinn, Mark Goodman, J.J. Jackson, that Adam guy - but who's that other one?"

Needless to say, I didn't do very well

DAVE WINDER

Columnist



because I spent all my time trying to remember that veejay's name.

Mom: "David, how could you make a 63 on this test? Geography is your best subject."

Me: "It's not my fault though, Mom. You can blame it all Nina Blackwood."

Mom: "Who in the world is Nina Blackwood?"

Dad: "She's one of the original MTV veejays. Don't you know anything woman? Say, Dave, what's that Adam guy's last name?"

"She wore a raspberry beret, the kind you find in a second-hand store..."

That was just the first instance. Through the years I can remember

putting words from Led Zeppelin on English tests and Beatles lines on science exams. Needless to say my teachers were not amused.

"David, your answers are not cute. By the way, you misspelled 'Goo Goo G'Joob' on number 17."

"Old McDonald had a farm, E-I-E-I-O. And on that farm he had some ducks..."

After that I spent countless hours trying to rid myself of my lyric ability. I tried hypnosis, psychosis and "Brady Bunch" reruns, but nothing seemed to work until I tried putting my notes into song.

It made studying for my geometry test easy at first.

"Perimeter is adding all sides, Area is length times wides. Sha la la la" (Guitar solo)

It worked pretty well for that stuff, but I ended up failing the test anyway. I was up half the night trying to figure out words that rhyme with "quadriateral" and "rhombus."

"Nobody wants to get high on the town and all my rowdy friends have settled down..."

My friends started to notice my problem and decided to do something to help. After an eternity of begging, they got our English teacher to sing our vocabulary words.

The exam was a breeze until I got to Asia. After marking my answer, I started singing a song by the rock group Asia, which made me remember the early days of MTV.

At first she was shy, but by the time she got to the word "sonorous," she was roaring like Ethel Merman. When she finished the list, we gave her such a standing ovation she gave us five more words for an encore. I still failed the test though.

After I graduated, my talent kind of tapered off, but for my first test in col-

lege it was back in full force. I decided to counter by reciting the chorus of every song I knew about an hour before the test started.

"My '98 boom'n' with a trunk of funk all the jealous punks can't stop my dunks..."

I was doing great until about mid-way through the test, when my mind began to ask questions.

Did I do song number four on Marley's "Legend" album?

Did I sing the dance party mix or the extended version of that stupid "In-former" song?

If I ever turn this into a column, will it have a point?

"You put your right foot in, you take your right foot out. You put your right foot in and you shake it all about..."

I'm starting to learn that my "sickness" is just never going to go away. No matter what I do, it's going to be there, whether I like it or not. I just wish it would let me change the stations.

Dave Winder is a sophomore journalism major

Mail Call



Support Mom and Pop establishments

I would like to make a few comments concerning the column recently written by Melissa Megliola on the Mom and Pop businesses. I found it refreshing to realize that there may be some people who can see what is happening in the business world. The small business person is literally a dying breed, and it is basically the consumer who is hastening their demise.

As a restaurant owner, I have seen this first-hand in our community. For some reason unknown to me, the chains have some sort of magnetism that attracts customers. Is it the advertising, the decor, the menu, the ambience that prevails when people gather? Or is it the food quality and the low prices? I think not!

As a family-owned business, my wife and I make every attempt to meet the needs of our customers. Yet, no matter what the price or how good the food is, people like variety and don't mind paying the price for that variety. One

day a customer may patronize our establishment; the next day that same person may go to another restaurant and pay considerably more for the same items. Does that seem to make a difference to the customer? In my opinion, it doesn't.

Sometimes I wonder to myself why I make such an effort to give the customer the best possible value for their money spent. Does it matter to the customers? Do they even notice? Do they ever question the prices on the menu at the chains? Or ask themselves, how much am I really getting for my money? Again, I think not.

So, if anyone reading this has any aspirations of owning their own business, give it some thought. Maybe someday everyone will work for some huge conglomerate that knows them only by number and when it comes time to cut costs, they just dispense with a few numbers. Perhaps this is little extreme, but I hope you can understand the principle behind what I am talking

about.

As this semester draws to a close and many of you go to your summer jobs, take a good look at your workplace and how it is run. And make a conscious effort to compare the Mom and Pop businesses with the chains, because the future belongs to you. Someday you may be a Mom and Pop business!

Jim McGuire
 Owner, Cow Hop Restaurant

Aggie Ring Dance does not require ring

I would like to clear up a few myths about Fightin' Texas Aggie Ring Dance. I was very surprised when several members of the Class of '94 told me they are not planning on attending Ring Dance because they haven't received their rings.

Ring Dance is certainly a celebration of this treasured Aggie tradition, but it encompasses much more than just the Aggie ring. The true focus of Ring Dance is the camaraderie we've shared through our years at Texas A&M. All Aggies who have their rings are invited to attend, as well as all members of the class of '94. After all, the entire Senior Weekend is funded by the Class of '94. I personally will not receive my ring until this summer, and I do not want others in my situation to miss out on this wonderful tradition.

Another misconception is that only seniors can attend these events. In fact, seniors can invite anyone to accompany them. Dates need not be seniors or even students.

I hope that everyone will join us during Senior Weekend this year. Many people have put long hours into making this year's Senior Weekend the best ever.

Katie Nichols
 Ring Dance Co-Chair, Class of '94