

GENDERSCOPE

**Feminist agenda
in education
disrupts balance**

Children used to come home from school proudly clutching spelling tests, book reports and math quizzes as proof of their hard work.

Nowadays kids are coming home with gender-neutral dating methods, kites proudly proclaiming their vitching of sex roles and a lot of self-esteem. Not surprisingly, they so own rock-bottom test scores and diplomas they cannot read.

The culprit is "gender equity," founded on the belief low test scores (specifically among girls) are the result of low self-esteem due to institutional sexism, it is committed to eliminating all "gender bias," and the latest fad among the feminist fringe is doing more damage to schoolkids than the patriarchy they believe oppresses them.

Supposedly, differences between men and women are merely anatomical, and any masculine or feminine behavior is the product of an evil male-controlled society. It is up to the omnipotent and all-caring public schools to correct sexist behavior and reprogram gender roles.

Gender equity is simply a vehicle feminists use to sell their anti-male, anti-Western culture snake oil. The reason girls lag behind is not because a conspiratorial patriarchy wants to make them second-class citizens, but because feminists infuse an ideological agenda into education, reducing classrooms of girls and boys who cannot read or write, but instead "feel."

If gender equity were a religion, then high self-esteem is its nirvana. Long hailed by feminists and other leftists as the key to learning, more classroom time is being devoted to raising children's confidence than actually teaching them.

However, as study after study shows, American children consistently rank highest among all other nations in how intelligent they rank themselves (the result of liberal teaching methods). Unfortunately, they consistently rank first or next to last in actual performance (again, the result of liberal teaching methods).

Children in the District of Columbia rank themselves highest in math skills, but finished dead last in mathematical prowess. Clearly, self-esteem is not central to learning.

Even more disturbing than gender equity's goal is its outrageous methods. Proponents employ extreme methods in their quest to abolish all perceived gender bias.

From bashing etiquette to blurring sex roles to turning language and textbooks into a politically correct minefield, gender equity is destroying public education and distorting children's views of everything from relationships to American history.

According to "Comparisons of Traditional Social Customs and Gender Equity," traditional male-to-female etiquette can be degrading and urges students to question the protocol. The guide refers to acts such as men paying for dinner, seating the woman, offering his chair and opening the door for her as stereotypical and offensive and even attacks wedding attire (perhaps they would be happier if the groom wore the dress and the woman the tuxedo).

Michigan's Department of Education's Office for Sex Equity suggests children build a personalized kite with plenty of room on the tail. Children are awarded a bow for the tail whenever they do something "nontraditional" for their sex, such as boys playing with dolls. The children are told, "My kite tail grows as I do."

The long arm of gender equity even extends to textbooks and language. History books must depict equal numbers of men and women, even if history occurred otherwise and evil words like "fireman" are replaced "firefighter." Gender equity obviously has nothing to do with education and everything to do with indoctrination.

For example, California's textbook guidelines state "illustrations must contain approximately equal proportions of men and women" and "the contributions of men and women ... must appear in equal numbers." Though feminists may think men and women contributed equally to history, the facts read otherwise.

The history of America and the world is dominated by men, though sexual discrimination played a role in that dominance. However, feminists cannot correct the actions of the past by rewriting history and any attempt to depict equal numbers of men and women in historical texts shortchanges history and cheats children out of a quality education.

Not even speech and language are safe from feminists' hands. Many teachers are required to speak in "gender inclusive language." They must operate from a "speech code" which strictly forbids the use of words like "weatherman" and "manhole." Teachers must say "weather reporter" and "utility/access cover."

John Broyles, former editor of the left-wing *Educator's Bulletin*, writes, "The day is fast approaching when schools will be acknowledged for what they are becoming: society's agreed-upon vehicle for social change," and Marx and other theoreticians of social change ... have all taken of the necessity of destroying the fabric of family in order to accommodate the needs of society undergoing ... transformation." Feminist educators have taken Broyles and Marx's words to heart by exploiting public education to practice gender equity.

Gender equity fails to solve the problem of low test scores because it addresses self-esteem, not education and wastes time teaching children to be "gender sensitive" and adopt the role of the other sex, instead of teaching reading, writing and math.

The problem with falling test scores is not a lack of self-esteem or an oppressive patriarchy, but a gaggle of far-left feminists who place their agenda ahead of the education of schoolchildren.

Gender equity education is not the solution to our educational problems, purging public schools of feminists is.

Donny Ferguson is a junior political science major.



DONNY FERGUSON
columnist

PERSPECTIVES

Ads target 'fashionable' depression

America — land of the free and home of the brave. And increasingly, of the mentally ill.

That does depend on perspective, of course. If the standards of mental illness, namely depression, were taken from a psychiatric journal or manual, then symptoms of depression are somewhat drastic. However, if the standards are taken from an advertisement about Prozac, depression is more prevalent than sex on prom night. An excerpt from the Prozac ad: "... You may have trouble sleeping. Feel unusually sad or irritable. Find it hard to concentrate. Lose your appetite. Lack energy. Or have trouble feeling pleasure."

I was somewhat offended, admittedly. That just described half my week.

With those standards, maybe we should all give our local psychiatrist a visit. Because we are sick. Yes, yes, I am unhappy sometimes, you are unhappy sometimes. That must mean something is wrong with us, right?

As it turns out, no. Yet, more and more Americans would rather have a prescription for Prozac than face the fact that life is not all sunshine, and pharmaceutical companies could not be happier about that. According to Eli Lilly, the company behind the production of Prozac, by June of 1997, 17 million Americans received prescriptions for Prozac, making Prozac not only a very profitable drug, but almost a fashionable one.

This fact should not come as a surprise. As a nation with an increasingly short atten-

tion span, we need solutions that work at a breakneck pace. Prozac is just one more product that has gained social approval because of society's quick-fix mentality.

More and more, this mentality is encouraging people to try and diagnose themselves for illnesses such as depression, and ads for products such as Prozac, if taken at face value, can make a person feel very sick, if only by means of rationalization. That is disturbing, considering the fact that rationalization is almost a national pastime, coming second only to generalization.

Depression, as diagnosed by a professional, is a serious illness that affects the sufferer physically as well as mentally. For the people who are actual victims of depression, Prozac is a very helpful drug. However, being simply unhappy, or irritable, as the ad suggests, does not mean everyone should jump on the over-medicated bandwagon.

Easy fixes are nice to have, but they are not always practical. Popping a pill will not end war, hate, discrimination, nor will it find a solution for these problems. Sometimes suffering through a problem will necessitate an idea for its solution.

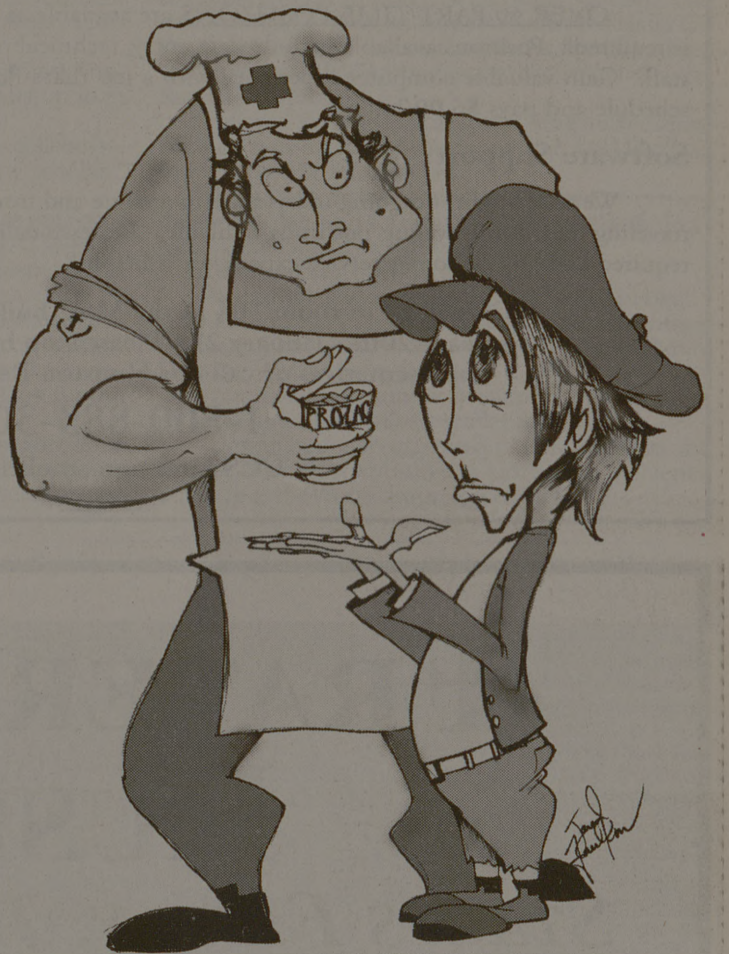
Of course, people who exhibit actual symptoms for depression — self loathing, suicidal thoughts, sudden and drastic changes in personality and other symptoms — should get help.

But for those of us who simply are not having a great day, contentment might be found in the admittance that we cannot always be happy, not even at the bottom of a Prozac bottle.

Beverly Mireles is a freshman microbiology major.



BEVERLY MIRELES
columnist



CAMPUS CONNECTION

Students should embrace activism, involvement

If you are a freshman, you should not be reading this column. And you certainly shouldn't be holding a newspaper.

In fact, according to the University of California at Los Angeles' annual study surveying college freshmen, this year's class is the most apathetic, bored and lazy in a generation. An inspiring commentary to say the least.

Academically, students spend fewer hours on homework, miss more classes because of oversleeping and are more bored in class than freshmen in previous years. Civically, interest in political affairs has dropped over 13 percent since the beginning of the decade, social activism has decreased and although volunteerism has increased, only 19 percent of students say that there is a "very good chance" they will continue this type of community service in college.

This seemingly indifferent attitude toward governmental and social issues is not a new trend. Over the last decade, the interest shown by incoming freshmen about politics, government, racial understanding and the environment has slowly decreased, particularly when these issues targeted personal involvement.

In an age where access to most anything is at one's fingertips, it is easy to fall into a pattern of laziness. Bank transactions can be conducted via computer, Web sites can be accessed for information that once had to be looked up in a card catalog, fajitas can be delivered right to one's front door — it is amazing.

Because of these advances, America has become an impatient society, bemoaning the fact

that it takes three whole minutes to nuke a pot pie. Is it a wonder that college students have picked up on this attitude?

It would be nice to think that the results of this survey do not apply to students at Texas A&M. After all, A&M is known for its leadership, its school pride, its tradition.

Of all schools, A&M should be one of the few that enjoys political and social activism. And with such a wealth of knowledge available through research, libraries and faculty, no student should ever find themselves bored. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

There are many things to worry about as a freshman — studying, working, adapting to college life. It does not, however, excuse the total lack of initiative students take to positively manipulate the world around them.

Boredom was highlighted as one of the biggest academic concerns. Students report finding it harder than ever to find classes stimulating. Most, however, plan to continue their uninspiring education. Close to 40 percent say they plan to seek at least a master's degree. Academic credentials seem to be the primary motivator for staying in the educational system rather than knowledge.

So what can be done to rekindle the desire to learn? Granted, there will be times when it is unavoidable to take a less than inspiring class, but students can influence their education by taking a little time to flip through a course selection guide. Every student at A&M is required to take hours of science, humanities, social science and history. However, instead of choosing standard classes like Introductory Biology or History of the United States, take introduction to zoology or American society and culture. Or, if a college requires certain standards like Introductory Biology, select an interesting elective each semester, not just a course

that is purported to be an "easy A." If a course is not interesting to a student, the work becomes difficult by default because there is no motivation to study, to read or to learn. By becoming excited about one subject, it is easier to see the overall benefit of education.

As far as social and political activism are concerned, there is a wealth of opportunity available both at A&M and in the Bryan-College Station area. Whether a student has tons of time to donate or hardly any, becoming part of an organization or movement that has a larger goal in mind can be thoroughly rewarding.

For example, Big Event is a time when students can donate one day of their year to helping out in the community by cleaning parks, painting homes or repairing buildings. If a student can spare more than one day a year, they should consider volunteering at a nursing home once a month or volunteering once a week at a crisis hot line. Whatever the organization, it should be something that a student enjoys. Volunteering is the easiest way for college students to become involved in their communities because they choose how much or how little they do.

To become involved in governmental issues, students can join a club on campus that supports their political views. They can campaign for a local government official or join Student Government on campus.

But the easiest way for students to combat the apathetic trend of incoming freshman classes is to pick up a newspaper. By reading about local, national and global events, students are automatically involved in their community. Once made aware, it becomes virtually impossible to turn a cold shoulder and stay uninvolved.

Jennifer Jones is a senior psychology major.



JENNIFER JONES
columnist



MAIL CALL

Alcohol and athletics promise to be bad mix

Aggies are not like, nor do we want to be like everybody else. So, why are we rushing to be like the University of Texas, Louisiana State University or some professional football program? Have we given in to the pull of the world to put money above all else?

One of the things we Aggies always pride ourselves in is that we respect our campus and all of the memorials and traditions on our campus (including Kyle Field).

We, and rightly so, blast our neighbors at Austin and Baton Rouge for their rude behavior and attitudes at ball games; for their slashing of opponents' tires and being drunk at their ball games.

And how often have we seen t.u. and LSU fans trashing our campus with liquor and beer bottles when they come to Aggieland? And, in essence, acting like rude and crude imbeciles.

And now, with the expansion of Kyle Field, those "in charge" have decided that in order for "us" Aggies to be "on top shelf" and "world class," we must offer alcoholic beverages in our stadium to keep up with the others and to bring in more of the almighty dollar. I think they refer to it as "a full-service open bar."

And this comes on the heels of a report that says 53 percent of vehicle-related deaths on Texas highways involve alcohol. I'm confident that if we looked into the reason for a majority of Silver Taps events, we would sadly find that many of them involved alcohol also.

Is this what we want; the message that we want to send to our children? Do we really want to put ourselves in a position of support for a full-service bar on our campus? Has drinking and athletics ever been a good mix or created a positive situation?

Aren't Aggies still about doing what's right? Can we not make a decision that doesn't have at its center the major focus on "making money?"

Besides, can somebody explain to me how those in "the club" can have

one eye on the game and one eye on the Yell Leaders and be involved as a part of the 12th Man and be ordering drinks at the same time? Come on Aggies — wake up.

Build the "End Zone" if you must — but let's leave the alcohol off campus. It is simple — just do what is right. Somebody make the tough decision — one that will benefit the students and Aggieland. Make the decision that will make us different.

Frank Cox
Class of '65

Freeze on permits creates parking woes

I want to voice my opinion about the lousy parking situation. It stinks, as usual.

My husband was in New Mexico for two weeks before the semester started working on a project directly related to his Ph.D. He didn't have a chance to register for a parking pass for this semester over the phone system, so he called later to arrange to purchase one.

Much to our surprise, we learned that Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services is no longer selling parking permits. What a great way to treat students. Due to logistics, he

can't ride a shuttle bus, walk, or bike to campus. So where is he to park? The only solution we were given by a "parking counselor" was that he could park in a visitor garage. Those same garages where all the spaces are filled and you have to wait several hours for a space during class hours — yes, I think that's a viable option.

Thank you, PITTS, for your wisdom in handling this situation so well. It's exactly what I've come to expect from dealing with you for seven years.

April Nolen
Class of '95

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

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