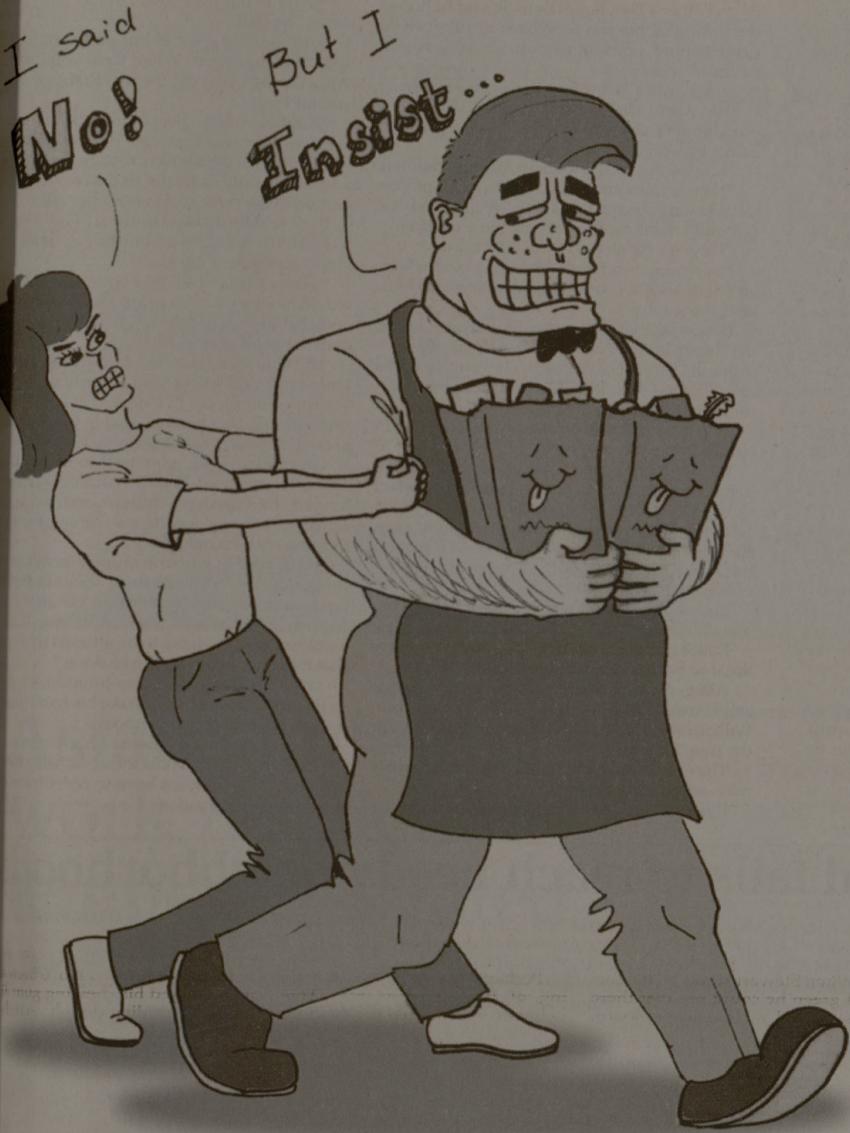


No' means 'no'

Vocabulary of female consumers does not allow room for negotiation



Within the realm of consumerism, a woman is constantly challenged.

Many times a salesperson views a lone woman as an easy target. She is the darling prey of "Consumerland," Little Red Riding Hood walking to Grandma's. She is unsuspecting of Big Bad Wolf lurking nearby, ready to sell her beach front property in Arizona.

Whether car shopping, car repair, banking, etc., the myth of the frail and flimsy female consumer exists. This myth arbitrarily categorizes female consumers as inept.

When big bad wolves hear "no," in "Consumerland," various elements enter their minds...

A. The female consumer might not know or be aware of what she really needs.

B. The female consumer might not have the intelligence to know what she needs.

C. The female consumer might be declining something.

A through C are not options. "No" means exactly "no," nothing else.

The notorious adage, "she says no but she really means yes," is a bonehead statement that has become acceptable in society. Women have endured torment in connection with this motto, not just socially or with regards to issues of sex, but within "Consumerland."



ALISON LACKEY
columnist

When a man says no to something, it is final, nothing more is said, end of discussion. However, when a woman says no to something, it is often seen as negotiable.

The word "no" from a woman is seen as a verbal cue that says, "time to negotiate and persuade into affirmation."

"No" is implied as a way to alter and twist words into a way that is suitable.

There is nothing wrong with female pronunciation. The last time I checked, the word "apple" was pronounced the same way by both sexes.

When a man says "no," it is taken as "no." A man has no more of an eloquent language pronunciation than a woman. His gender does not allow it. His gender should not be the defining element of his language. Socially and within consumerism, individuals feel men are blessed by linguistic gods that command them to speak with domineering stature.

Why must virility be a master over words? Why has our society exhausted virility in this manner? A woman's word is ambushed, where as a man's "no" reverberates louder, longer and with more force? This is absurd.

Men and women are equally capable of attaining and achieving knowledge. Gender should not determine a person's language or its value. The quality of the individual is the determinant.

A woman is just as dependable and committed to the conviction of her words as a man. Women are not malleable creatures who need the assistance of men in resisting other individuals and

their agendas.

When John the car salesman tries to convince Jane that she needs six cylinders instead of her requested four, John uses persuasion and coercion to convince Jane she is very wrong.

A woman's thoughts and feelings should not be altered to coincide with or suit another. It is important to be confident in decision making, Jane must be even more confident than a man, preparing for John's coaxing, "Now are ya sure, darling Jane?" She is expected to smile pretty and allow the male aggressive nature to erode her conviction.

Women's decisions do not need to be double checked. Women are not completely indecisive individuals.

This issue of language and the yes-and-no game is a politically crammed issue. It is a smaller issue engrossed in the larger feminist frame. This seems like a minor issue of women's rights; however, it escalates into something enormous. It is part of a larger picture. Women want to be equally heard and respected.

Don't relent. Don't "behave" when a car salesman tells you to have your boyfriend or husband come in to the store later to discuss a deal. If someone pushes you to reconsider your word, don't get intimidated and inhibited. Be firm with them. Cancel their intrusive methods with confident action. Repeat your answer and let them know that "no" means "no" and nothing else.

Alison Lackey is a senior English major.

Cliques and popularity contests continue to exist in college

In high school, there were jocks, preps, nerds and gangstas. Not much has changed. Now there are neck cowboys, frat rats, corps whores and poor white trash.

Labeling and categorizing people is a sign of immaturity, people continue to do it. All around Texas A&M, cliques have formed and popularity has once again become reality.

When entering a local bar, most girls would like to turn a few heads. However, when the heads being turned are saying, "Where did she get that outfit — the bargain bin at Weiners?" there exists a problem. Obviously, these people don't know how to spot a spirit store special.

Seriously, nothing has changed as far as vanity and popularity go. The same way the cool people had to have name brand jeans in high school, they have to shop at the trendsetting clothing stores now.

Trends will come and go, but it is important college students do not subscribe to the very things they made a mockery of in high school. Plenty of A&M students would say they hated the trendiness, cliques and popularity that went hand in hand with high school. But these same people wouldn't be caught dead in a pair of Guess jeans.

And people are still trying to show off their campus involvement. Just like it was cool to be a cheerleader or football player in high school, college students gain popularity by involvement in a sorority or student senate.

People don't wear T-shirts proclaiming their organization's logo because it's more comfortable. They wear them to let people know they fit in somewhere.

Even the local bars have become categorized. Some would speculate there's a definite frat hangout which the alterna-teens wouldn't be caught dead in a bar filled to the brim with cowboy hats and belt buckles... it might as well have tumbleweeds and sawdust on the floor. There's a bar for the upperclass wine and ale-drinking grad students and

professors, where they can read philosophy and discuss religion and politics. And wherever you go, there always is the low-class dingy bar where everyone is wearing ragged cutoffs and ponytails. There is an unwritten, unspoken dress code in each of these bars, and don't think you won't get a few stares if you don't choose to follow it.

It is so difficult for people to be themselves, women especially. They spend hours every day before they go out fixing their hair and putting on makeup. Why? To feel good about themselves, to feel adequate and acceptable in the eyes of others?

It's not comfortable to have pounds of greasy foundation on one's face. It's not comfortable to have a head full of hairspray. But few women have the courage to shave their heads and leave home completely natural, because that's not "in for '98."

I ran into an old friend over the weekend. He was a friend of a friend in high school, and I've probably had about two substantial conversations with this person in my lifetime. In high school, he played football and dated cheerleaders. In college, he plays football and dates sorority girls. In high school, I wrote for the newspaper and had a really good personality. In college, I wrote for the newspaper and, well, my mom thinks I'm beautiful. Nothing has changed.

But the difference is this: When I saw him, it was like we were best friends. We had a great conversation talking and laughing about friends of ours and the good ol' days.

We had the maturity to see each other for our true character. It didn't matter that he wore a polo and khakis and I wore tennis shoes and baggy jeans. For a moment in time, popularity did not exist. This is the way it should be.

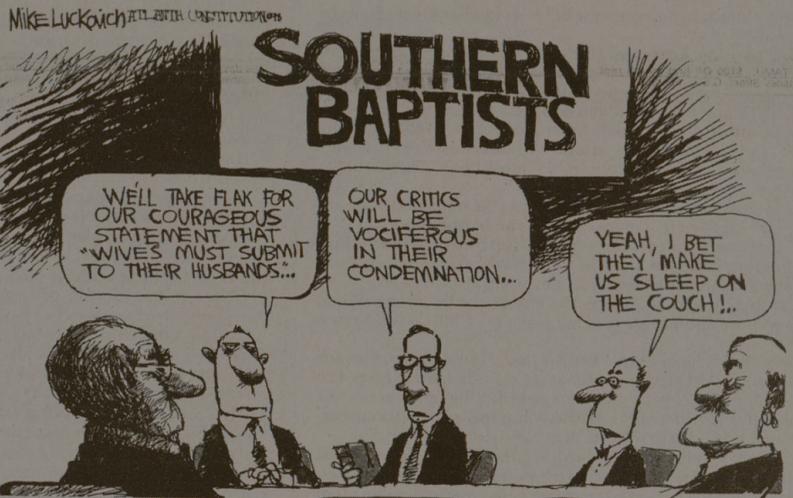
College students can be whoever they want to be. If it makes someone happy to be a member of the Corps of Cadets or a fraternity, great.

But we've got to remember that we're adults now, and acceptance is an important part of growing up. The people who belong to a clique of any sort must realize just because someone else is not in the same social circle doesn't mean they have nothing to offer.

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APRIL TOWERY
opinion editor



Baptists resurface old idea

Nobody generates more entertaining news than Southern Baptists. Nobody. Remember, this is the church that decided to take on Disney at its national convention last year. Any group that accuses Mickey Mouse of being a sleazy pervert deserves recognition. After all, according to polls, rodents with high-pitched voices rank somewhere between O.J. Simpson and Pat Robertson in terms of credibility. (Last week Robertson warned Orlando, Fla., that it risks hurricanes, earthquakes and terrorist bombings by allowing gay organizations to put up multicolored rainbow flags in support of diversity.)

Well, the Baptists are at it again at this year's national convention. This time they have issued a statement that is bound to be as unpopular as last year's call to boycott the Walt Disney Co. The Baptists believe that wives should (gasp) submit to the authority of their husbands. The trouble is, they have got a point.

It is a point that will irritate a lot of liberated women. A lot of feminists have burned a lot of bras to date only to be told by the Baptists to stand by their men. Much like the "Jerry Springer Show" and good taste, feminism and submission don't mix.

No, the Baptists are not going to make new friends with this proclamation. But what exactly is so offensive about the Baptists' statement? The statement calls on wives to "submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband."

Perhaps it is the call to submit graciously that is so troublesome. Some might argue that statement means women should not be a doormat, but a gracious doormat.

Of course, gracious submission must be examined within the context of the servant leadership required of husbands.

Servant leadership means husbands must strive to serve their wives, not oppress them. The idea behind the submission statement is not that men are superior to women, but that men and women possess different roles within a marriage.

Best idea they have had in years for adding members to their churches.

After a declaration like this, what man would not want to marry a Baptist girl?

Maybe the Baptists can come up with a slogan or two to encourage people to buy into their marriage philosophy. Something along the lines of "Marry a Baptist — she'll do the dishes for you." Or perhaps something like, "The Baptist church — where love means never having to say 'I'm sorry, honey.'"

Ah, the slogans could go on and on, but seriously, the Baptists have offered Americans an approach to marriage that they would do well to heed. Americans, after all, don't have a particularly great track record at marrying each other. Currently, four out of every 10 marriages begun today end up in divorce. This is a rate that has been nearly constant for the past 20 years.

We have come a long way when men taking a leadership role in marriage sounds like a radical idea. Fortunately, the Baptists are willing to suggest it, even if it is unpopular.

By the way, in related news, Disney announced today that in their next Mickey Mouse cartoon, Minnie will submit to Mickey's authority and they will start attending a Baptist church.

Just kidding.

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