

Co-education: Help In Search For Male Self-Concepts

By Earl Clooner

The following article was written by Earl A. Clooner, Director of Student Counseling Center, of the request of the Co-education Committee of the Virginia Human Relations Council. Mr. Clooner received his Ph.D. at Indiana University where he worked with the counseling program for nine years. He came to the University two years ago after holding his consulting post at Southern Illinois University. — ed.

The question of admitting women students to the undergraduate college has received considerable attention in recent issues of *The Cavalier Daily*. At the risk of beating the proverbial dead horse, I would like to share some of my observations with Cavalier Daily readers.

In 1967, while still a "prospective faculty member" from the Middle West, my first reaction upon discovering the relative celibate status of the University was the usual "You're kidding! U.Va. is a men's school?" In the

provinces of Illinois, and Indiana, one can find a number of first-rate institutions that are, indeed, single sex (male) in nature: Walsh, Notre Dame, and Joliet State prison to name a few. However, with the exception of the last named institution of learning, none of the state institutions exclude women from the basic core of undergraduate studies. As a matter of fact, I cannot think of another single state that currently enjoys the "separate but equal" arrangement we have here at U.Va.

Frankly, I do not believe the Board of Visitors will decide the issue by choosing between jumping on the 49 state bandwagon or simply standing pat because it retains a kind of unique statistical distinction for U.Va. There are many obvious practical problems of a legal, economic, psychological and ethical nature that must be weighed before the controversy can be reasonably settled.

My principal goal at this time is to examine some of the psychological implications that

co-education or, the lack of it, brings (or may bring) to the grounds. In particular, I want to draw upon my experience with University students who have come to the Counseling Center and expressed normal concern about their relationships with the opposite sex. I use "normal concern" here because the problems predominantly presented are not sick or neurotic so much as they are cases of misunderstanding based upon lack of simple information. In short, a great many bright young men are woefully ignorant about themselves and about intelligent young women... and, vice versa!

This alleged ignorance appears to be the product of multiple inter-related conditions currently evident in middle class American life: (1) an extended period of dependent, adolescent development, carefully fostered by family, school, government, business and industry, and church; (2) a lack of opportunity to freely explore healthy heterosexual relationships in a

wide variety of settings; (3) a gradual erasing of the traditional differences in sex roles commonly played in the family and larger economic society; (4) the increasing awareness of mass society and its incumbent pressures; (5) the relative ease with which affluence can be obtained (and thus the loss of personal meaning for the acquisition of things); and (6) the changing role of formal religion from the giver of absolutes to the creative search for God in daily living.

Certainly the net effect of this interweave of influences must be confusion concerning the vital question of "who am I?" Further, it must and does not leave college age men and women with numerous misconceptions, and irrational ideas concerning their masculinity, femininity, competence, lovableness, worthwhileness and ability to belong to any "community." I regard the search for relatively successful individual solutions to these "identity crises" as a prerequisite for developing human beings capable of meeting the myriad problems of mankind. Could anything be more central to the goals of liberal education?

Perhaps the area least open to a search for truth in American academic teaching departments is that of sexual identity and the peculiar condition called "love" that sometimes accompanies sexual relationships. To be sure, many departments of English, Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, etc., have helped stu-

dents explore segments of this complex situation; but the intimate centrality of love, sexual identification, and sexual relationships has worked against open discussion (and laboratory exploration!). The conspiracy of silence has been a destructive element in American sex/love life for many generations.

In my own experience (academic, that is) I vividly recall an undergraduate psychology course entitled "Marriage and the Family." Only two days out of the entire semester's work were devoted to the sex and love aspects of marriage! In addition, on those two days the men in the class met at one hour and the women met at another! No discussion that forces outside the classroom (a guiding nod to Sigmund Freud) could best start a reconsideration of such a controversial, but vital, life issue. Historically, of course, the Kinsey research group grew as a separate entity at Indiana University and its birth required great moral courage on the part of the President & Board of Trustees in the face of public criticism. Masters & Johnson's work at Washington University enjoyed similar administrative support. However, more typical of

over extended periods of time. It is a marvelous stroke of luck that the College is also currently examining its goals and curriculum, for the success of coeducation is closely tied to the processes and content of academic offerings. I have always assumed that masculinity could best be understood, appreciated, and affirmed when healthy examples of femininity were available for comparison. In such a setting the unique and the complementary aspects of each identification could be worked out through normal explorations which would move at mutually agreeable pace. Frantic weekend body grabbing in an alcoholic haze would not cause, but its shallowness would become strikingly evident when more satisfying alternatives are available.

Superiority Myths
As it stands now, many U.Va. undergraduates are free to develop or retain unchanged myths of male superiority. This pleasant but false security blanket is sometimes worn to hide from unconscious fears that women may really be stronger (equally mythical) but it is usually constructed to bolster the normal male doubts about his competence before he tests himself in the world of work. Success as an adult male is tied closely to job success and college is "make believe" preparation.

The fear of a woman's power of acceptance or rejection is not without foundation during this phase of male development. Many U.Va. men were largely raised by women and largely taught by women. As children they heard the message that this is a man's world, but women seemed to be in charge of everything in their world (including sex).

Money Pump
The overexposure to feminine influence and power is frequently made possible by the psychological abdication of the Father from his male role. Dad spends much of his time at the office, in front of the TV, or pursuing hobbies that take him away from his wife and family because they offer greater self-esteem than the uncertainties of intimate familial roles. Good old Dad becomes identified with a money pump because this is only function his son has observed.

Another equally disastrous situation is encountered when Father, invoking his myths of male superiority, tries to over direct his son's life. Usually the wife/mother "rescues" the boy with misguided, overprotective, dependency producing, love and attention. Little wonder that numbers of young men want to attend all male school and literally get away from the de-masculinizing influences they have known! However, it is a short lived escape and the real world demands more effective adjustments.

Ukasean Nonense
Modern marriage requires educated partners and open, non-defensive, communication to survive and grow in depth of meaning. Modern families need intelligent, sensitive husbands/fathers who are secure in their sense of masculinity (not threatened by women or intimacy) and who can act as authentic models for their children. Yes, a U.Va. man can adequately learn to accept and accurately assess himself after his college days; it just means he often has to learn jobs of nonsense he acquired while living in a heterosexual vacuum.

This vacuum also produces immediate problems as well as those of the future. Some recent discussions with fraternity men and residence hall counselors lead me to think that much frustration expressed directly via physical dam-

age to furniture and living quarters and/or indirectly via drinking and depressed attitudes. It is related to the feeling that a girl just available to date did talk to during the week.

These men have asked me point blank, "Don't you think a man can more successfully respond to his academic work when his love/life has adequate expression?" As a matter of fact, a young man can tolerate dull courses, uninspired teaching, and lousy counseling if he feels secure in his relationship with a girl although I'm not sure we would want to encourage such indifference!

In general, I think our students are saying, "We're busy but we get bored with ourselves. That's why we blast on weekends and join EB Banana. More coeds on the grounds will loosen things considerably on a day to day basis." Despite the fact that over 1200 women are now enrolled, the mass of male students are still looking "off grounds." I have a hunch that U.Va. coeds will remain "invisible" until this first year class is integrated sexually.

Walking Phosies
Perhaps one of the greatest practical psychological aids that men can provide for men is the sympathetic listening ear of the trusted girl friend. Whereas many a U.Va. gentleman will encumber himself with the attitude that he dare not admit weakness in front of other male friends, he can often overcome this more easily with his girl. This helps relieve his anxiety and he frequently learns that having "weaknesses" is human and nothing to get all hung up about. He also learns that she needs him and this realistically supports his own sense of male competence. I definitely regard this pseudo-masculine image (super-cavalier?) of apparent external infallibility as one of the major psychological deterrents to self understanding on the grounds today. Many of our students are walking around feeling like phosies because they are "acting" a role they sense is not authentic.

Partnership of Equals

It should be evident by now that my theme is "Let's realistically evaluate the partnership possibilities with women. Let us understand the healthy and progressive sense of well being which comes from complementary relationships worked out in real life experiences. Let us understand the retarding and self-destructive aspects of unchallenged fantasies built upon unconscious threat and fear." I definitely believe that men can lead productive lives without women — and vice versa: what we are arguing for is an environment considered most preferable — not perfect! — bringing undergraduate women to U.Va. must not be likened to sacking the girls to join us in the men's locker room! We can appreciate the best aspects of femininity when women are not available 100% of the time and the right to solitude is respected.

As I consider the future of relations between the sexes in this country, I can only conclude that we had best face up and fully acknowledge the situation as a partnership of different, but complementary, equals. The concept of a relationship built upon the archaic attitude that one member is inherently superior and the other inherently inferior should pass into an appropriate limbo. U.Va. can help the majority of male undergraduate search more effectively for realistic and acceptable masculine self concepts by providing for the admission of women students to the College of Arts and Sciences. The students will take it from there.

Operating Cost Problem

Success Bankrupts Universities

Reprinted from *The Economist*, October 26, 1968.

To most American university administrators, the crisis in higher education means not the noisy demands of student demonstrators, but the quiet swish of bills through their letter-boxes — bills which are becoming harder and harder to meet. There are about 2,200 universities and colleges (including two-year and four-year institutions) in the country, some supported privately, some by the states and cities, often with substantial help from private sources. Almost all of them are feeling the pinch. A year ago Mr. McGeorge Bundy, the president of the Ford Foundation, who was urging the university to be more candid about their "imminent bankruptcy," recognized that the public might be hard to convince, since the American university has every appearance of success.

Tidal Wave
Certainly in scholarship the best have few rivals, while in terms of accessibility the record is unique. Over half of America's graduates from secondary school go to college, a university population twice that of western Europe and more than double America's own enrolment in 1955. Nor has the trend toward higher education for the masses worked itself out. President Johnson hopes that by 1976 two-thirds of all secondary school graduates will go on to colleges of some kind, turning today's six million into nine million or more.

This tidal wave means more classrooms, more staff, more dormitories and facilities. The great problem is operating costs. In spite of all the talk about computers and television, productivity in higher education has grown little besides

students, who require specialist staff and equipment, gives the screw another turn, even though universities receive a federal grant for each Ph.D. student. Federal loans and grants for undergraduates have eased the problems of young people but have sharpened those of the universities, for tuition and fees provide well under half of the cost of instruction. In 1966-67 the academic deficit on current account was put at nearly \$4 billion.

Federal Aid
This spring the Association of American Universities, speaking for 42 leading institutions, both private and public, appealed for comprehensive support from the federal government — something which the same association scorned in the nineteen-fifties. Its report argues that no other source of support can be expected, realistically, to grow fast enough to fill the gap, particularly if spending on higher education is to rise from two per cent of the gross national product to three per cent in the decade ahead. State tax systems are inflexible; competition from other fields for private giving is growing; charges for tuition are rising fast and to raise them much more would exclude many of the underprivileged.

Block grants are sought from Washington to supplement, not to take the place of, these present sources of income; diversity of support for them from state and private sources. A few years ago this committee might have been concerned with issues that have faded considerably — the controversy over government aid to church-related colleges and fear of federal control. If today the real issues are different, they are not less far-reaching or controversial. If there is to be federal aid that is not

needed, it should not be imagined that the institutions have got off scot-free. Mr. Bundy has scolded them for not managing their endowments better and for not making their accounts understandable to the public; when he examined private colleges in New York State he found their plight less desperate than he had been led to believe and recommended only a modest subsidy. Mr. Pifer has spoken of the "almost total irrationality, complexity and disorderliness" of American higher education, with its 2,200 institutions of widely varying types and wildly varying standards; its failure to add up, to anything like a national system or to agree on any policies to guarantee that the country's needs are met. He was equally scathing about the lack of federal co-ordination.

Longrange Plan
When in February the President asked a high-level government committee to prepare a long-range plan for the support of higher education, he laid down his aims: elimination of race and income as bars to advanced study; efficient use of educational resources; promotion of high quality; the blending of support for students with that for institutions; the safeguarding of the independence of colleges and universities, and the continuance of support for them from state and private sources. A few years ago this committee might have been concerned with issues that have faded considerably — the controversy over government aid to church-related colleges and fear of federal control. If today the real issues are different, they are not less far-reaching or controversial. If there is to be federal aid that is not

each student than the public ones do, insist that there must be an allowance for quality.

As examples of other questions involved, Mr. Harold Howe, the Commissioner of Education, asks whether federal aid should be confined to existing institutions (which would perpetuate any defects or omissions) or whether it should be used in part to launch new ones. Perhaps the geographical distribution of higher education needs changing, with more opportunities in the metropolitan areas where most people live today. How can the government make sure that all sections of society, including minority groups, get their fair share? Are more graduate schools needed and is there not a risk that, if more were created (and the money for them spread more thinly), some would be second-rate?

Those who know the political process suspect that any additional aid to federal education is almost bound to be spread evenly (and meagrely) over the whole country (indeed, unless every state is to get something, there is unlikely to be enough political steam to push the Bill through Congress). Many experts would consider this regrettable. Mr. Pifer suggests deliberate discrimination in favour of the institutions which are already distinguished, to create a group of "national universities"; these would provide superb training for professional of all kinds. Mr. Clark Kerr, now chairman of the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Higher Education, agrees that there must be incentives for the improvement of quality and that the growing number of American universities of world rank is among the country's greatest resources. On the other side of the coin there is some doubt of



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