

## Controversy in the classroom

STAFF EDITORIAL

We've had several discussions as a newstroom about some of the data Amelia Montgomery '12 presented in last week's feature article "Students React to Party Themes, Gender Relations." The range of responses among our staff to one statistic in particular was striking.

In response to the statement, "I feel comfortable discussing in class how themes sexualize women," 78.5% of females agreed, but only 36% of males agreed.

The females on our staff were shocked that twice as many females as males felt comfortable discussing gender issues in class, given Davidson's commitment to unfettered intellectual inquiry and its emphasis on open classroom discussion, where all students are invited to participate. Yet many of the males on our staff weren't surprised by this statistic, explaining that even they wouldn't feel comfortable voicing their opinion about such sensitive issues in the classroom.

They explained that their hesitation to participate stems from their view that some professors are expecting a particular response that favors women over men and that these professors assume this is the consensus among students. Therefore, they believe many professors would be unwilling to entertain a contrary opinion, even if it was argued well. Out of fear that their grades might be affected or that the professor would look down upon them for disagreeing, the males would rather withhold their true opinion to remain non-confrontational. They would "pass" on this particular discussion.

Another topic that some in the newstroom admitted caused similar discomfort was race. They expressed a fear of not being politically correct or of saying the wrong thing that would make the professor think less of them. At the same time, they recognized the necessity of being tactful in discussions that broach sensitive subjects, desiring to express their own opinions while remaining respectful to others. This intentional respect is what the newstroom believes ought to predominate all classroom discussions, regardless of the popularity of one's views.

All in all, we believe this issue can only be addressed properly if both students and faculty play an active role. Students must be more willing to make themselves vulnerable in the academic setting, courageously offering their beliefs in a respectful way. At the same time, professors need to be direct with their students about their openness to opposing ideas and should promote respectful, thoughtful debate among students. The first step in effecting change is to continue having conversations like this, asking, "How can we make the classroom environment a safe one in which to have discussions about sensitive issues?"

## Racial tensions persist

Jordan Starck

A couple of weeks ago I was going through the town of Davidson asking people to fill out a survey. I went out twice. The first time I was in a lovely part of town, where the houses are large and the lawns are trimmed. It was nice enough that residents there felt comfortable enough to let their little, elementary school-aged girl answer the door when I knocked. When the little girl called her mother at my request, the mother strolled down the stairs, came to the door, and almost slammed herself in the face with the door as she shrunk so quickly behind it at my sight. I am a black male, she a white female. These sorts of responses I'm used to. I didn't pay it much mind, conducted my business at that house, and then moved on without much more on my mind than amusement at the near prospect of that lady slamming herself in the head because of a prejudiced reaction. Whatever.

The next time I went out I thought I'd be more intentional about reducing such responses. Before leaving my apartment I made sure that I was as non-threatening as possible. I was wearing eyeglasses and changed to make sure that I wore my Davidson sweatshirt and put on some Sperry's. By my estimation, that was as good as I could do. So, my friend (another black male) and I rode out to look for more respondents. We went to the block behind Brickhouse, on Delburg St. It was Sunday and broad daylight. I went to the porch of one house with somebody clearly inside and knocked on the door. No response, except for the pitbull in the window that barked at me for a couple of minutes. Cool. So I moved on down the street in my car, headed to the next block.

As the car rolled onto the next block, my friend noticed a white girl of about 6 or 7 playing in the yard who, upon seeing us in the car, bolted in the house and slammed the door. No big deal, we're used to that. More amusement for us. Then I noticed a "No Soliciting" sign up on that block and decided to leave the folks of that neighborhood alone. As I turned the car around and brought it to the intersection that we had just crossed, I noticed a white male standing in the street out in front of the house that we had just visited. I thought it curious that he was in the street now when he had just acted like he wasn't home—more amusement—but then I became suddenly un-amused. He stood in the street, facing the car in an aggressive posture. I noticed something peculiar in his hand and was wondering what it was when my friend pointed out that it was a gun. The man was standing in the street with his hand gun, staring down our car as if saying "you [so-and-so's] better not come down this block again." Not amusing. Turned down another street.

Survey done.

One could try to justify this man's response if one so desired, but to me I could find no satisfactory justification other than racism. Perhaps he thought we were robbing him, on Sunday, in broad daylight, with a bunch of surveys in hands, and wearing glasses, a Davidson sweatshirt, and Sperry's, and with one guy in the car's passenger seat listening to music. But if so, why didn't he try to run me off his property when I was at his door? And I'd have a hard time thinking this would have happened to any of my white peers in the same situation, regardless of how threatening my actions and presentation may have been.

I share this experience for those who like to make light of race, racial frustrations, concerns, and tensions at Davidson, to those who think that minorities make too big a deal of things and that race is no longer a real problem. To those who think that I or someone like me has just been waiting for something like this to happen in order to stir up

"I share this experience for... those who think that race is no longer a real problem."

some trouble or bring up problems that don't exist, I invite you to consider living in a world wherein your collective memory and collective current experiences make real and present racial hostilities that are invisible to those who can and do choose to ignore them. In Mississippi, white teens are killing black men for fun. In Georgia, the government has sponsored the killing of a black man whose defense had presented very serious doubt regarding his guilt. In New York, and in Florida, and in the country-wide over White cops are killing black men. This is just the surface of what's happening that escapes our popular attention. Racial violence and murder is real and still with us, and this threat is unfortunately present even at Davidson. So for those who refuse to see it, look at this story for what it is, or for what it certainly looks like (barring some bizarre coincidences and extreme misunderstandings). For those minorities who don't like to think of their minority status or feel that it doesn't matter, I invite you to be alert, and be wary always. And for those who consider Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and other black "extremists" to offer doctrines of hate when they call for armed self defense, consider how horrible the feeling is to feel completely helpless at the brunt of racial aggression.

Jordan Starck '12 is from Columbia, MD. Contact him at jstarck@davidson.edu.

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## Ask Lunsfordamus

Lunsfordamus

Dear Lunsfordamus,

I've recently been frequenting the union gym. How do I get the attention of the ladies while pumping some iron?

-Beau Flexstein

Dear Beau Flexstein,

While summer has come and gone, beach season never actually ends. Consequently, it is paramount that Davidson's gym enthusiasts make the daily trek down to the Union fitness center. Doing so will allow you to enrich your mind, (upper) body and spirit.

Before working out can commence, the aspiring gym rat must consider several small, but not insignificant matters. First, take note of when the football players and other serious athletes typically work out. If you see them, flee, and return another time. To impress women, you do not have to be the absolute biggest guy on campus, just the biggest relative to those in the gym. The odds are in your favor late at night. The second pre-workout consideration involves apparel. Discard all of your shirts and purchase them in a much smaller size. After you cut the sleeves off, you will be good to go.

Once you enter the gym, your workout options are limitless -- so long as you focus on the arms and abs, otherwise known as the "glam" workout. Lower body exercises are not recommended, and are, in fact, counterproductive. No woman has ever gotten excited over a man's ripped quads. Fact.

I would recommend starting off with several sets of bicep curls. These should be done in front of a mirror, grunting slightly to ensure those around you are aware of your feats of strength. If you find yourself on one of the many machines, do not worry about how much weight you are actually lifting. Just be sure to raise the resistance after you finish so the next person on the machine will be awestruck over your incredible might.

With this toolset at your disposal, I have no doubt that the ladies will take note. Whether they think your antics are "hot" or douchey is another matter completely.

-Lunsfordamus

Lunsfordamus '12 is an economics major from Raleigh, NC. Contact him or send him a question at jolunsford@davidson.edu

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