

## SEXUAL HEALTH

# Gender inequality stunts chances for academic growth

As recently as 1978, women were banned from enrollment in certain colleges. Now, women's lead in enrollment compared to men has capped out at 57 percent. In students 25 and older, the gap has settled at an even more drastic ratio: two women to one man.

A recent study by the American Council on Education, however, shows the gender gap in college has stopped growing, the only exception being with Hispanic students. There are many theories as to why the gap has plateaued.

It's possible that supply and demand has as much influence on gender roles as it does on Wall Street. During World War II, women rushed to fill the empty jobs left by so many enlisted men. Now, with the recession limiting employment, many men are returning to school in a similar surge.

But why did the gap get so big in the first place, especially in older students?

Are women just "brainier"? Anything women and men tend to have different aptitudes, there's nothing showing that one sex is smarter than the other.

What about the feminist movement? More women are putting off raising families to focus on

### Sex and Sensibility



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their careers. But considering that the population ratio of men to women is fairly even, that should just put women's enrollment at the same rate as men's.

That is, if they had to work the same amount as men to reach the same goals.

One of the possible reasons that so few men over the age of 25 go back to school is that men consistently get paid more for their work. Before the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1963, women made half the pay of men.

Today, regardless of the job, women still earn an average of 30 percent less than men. There is less incentive for a man at Job A to take off from work and go after further qualifications than there is for a woman at Job A. Basically, women have to rack up the credentials for Job B to get the same pay that a man is getting for Job A.

It's ironic that inequality in

the workplace is creating inverse inequality in the classroom. I experienced the result of this first hand in my honors proseminar class, where all but one student was female. The class was enjoyable, but as a women's literature class, certain discussions were definitely one-sided. I felt I could have gained more if so many of us hadn't been white 20-something females.

Many countries with similar problems have talked of Affirmative Action-like quotas for gender equality in schools and businesses. I'm not sure if quotas are the proper response or not; perhaps making gender-study classes a graduation requirement would raise awareness enough to make a difference.

Whatever action is taken, it's clear that something has to be done to even out the gender gap. It creates a rushed, have-to-achieve-it-all mentality for women post-graduation, and it deprives students of a properly rounded education just as much as racial inequality does.

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