

MIT – Conversations You Can't Have on Campus

14 March 2012

MIT-Wellesley Social Dynamics:

Reflection Paper

The Wellesley-MIT discussion made me realize that people have preconceived notions – “molds” – that they apply to people of different schools, that the prevalence of intra-school dating at MIT is worth examining, and that I am actually looking for a fairly specific “type” of girl. First, we will examine stereotypes. For example, suppose Billy (an MIT student) is at a social event in which he does not know anyone. As soon as Billy finds out that a girl is from Wellesley, he may perceive her differently. Some thoughts that might run through a stereotypical MIT male's mind – like Billy's – would be the following:

- ∞ *Wow. She must be artsy because she goes to Wellesley.*
- ∞ *She is probably bisexual.*
- ∞ *She must be easy. Wellesley girls like to hook up with Harvard/MIT guys, so I'm just gonna go up to her and ask her to dance while making sure that she knows that I go to MIT.*

It is as if MIT males, MIT females, and Wellesley females are given a mold. It is up to them to keep this mold or reshape it altogether – but there is this cloud of traits that

are associated with them before they even say a word. Is this a good or bad thing? It's good in the sense that it gives people an idea of some general traits that MIT or Wellesley students have, but in reality it is up to the person to take the time to explore the mold that has been made and either accept or reject it. It's "bad" in the sense that some people will make automatic assumptions about other people without taking the initiative to actually examine the individual in question. However, stereotypes often exist for a reason. They exist because empirical evidence suggests that they should exist. It is only when stereotypes become severely inaccurate or too general do they fail to serve a useful purpose. Nevertheless, open-mindedness is necessary when evaluating a situation involving stereotypes. I feel that MIT and Wellesley stereotypes generally serve a useful purpose – it is only when they are used as conclusive evidence for absolute judgment of others do they not serve a useful purpose.

The discussion floated towards intra-school dating, making me think about what my dating preferences would be. I shall draw upon some personal sentiments: I feel that I tend to be more attracted to girls that go to liberal arts schools. MIT girls tend to be quite well-endowed with science and mathematical intellect, which perhaps subconsciously makes me feel inadequate because it is definitely possible that they might be better at calculus or physics or biology than me which can be intimidating. From the pool of girls that I am close with, which happens to be exclusively almost all MIT and Wellesley girls, I feel that I have an easier time connecting with

Wellesley girls. I generally feel that Wellesley girls are more capable of holding a decent conversation about philosophy, psychology, and sexuality, all three topics in which I have devoted countless hours studying and researching both in my studies and recreationally. Because I see my passions reciprocated in the minds of Wellesley girls, I perhaps am more receptive towards them upon first impression.

However, there is that mystical component to this view that I hold about preferring Wellesley girls to MIT girls in a romantic context. Perhaps I have a certain attention bias, such that I feel I can connect better with Wellesley girls, hence pre-judging MIT girls as incapable of discussing humanities before I even give them much of a chance. Perhaps I give Wellesley girls too much credit for being humanities centered because I have already labeled all Wellesley girls as more "in touch with liberal arts." Moreover, perhaps there is this psychological barrier that I have self-imposed on myself. I feel that I would only date someone far removed from my social circles, preferably someone with zero mutual friends as me. I do not want to mix my social life with my romantic life. Dating outside of MIT facilitates that. I feel that college relationships are generally fleeting and of convenience, so I do not want to face unintended consequences of social awkwardness should the relationship go awry.

Indeed, it seems that it is common for MIT males to want to distance themselves from dating MIT females. Perhaps it is because of the inherent structure of MIT. MIT, although not devoid of arts and humanities, generally lacks a strong, dedicated

population that explores the creative avenues (painting, film, philosophy, sculpture, writing, poetry, etc.) of life. Because MIT lacks in these areas, MIT males are more enthusiastic about exploring females that have invested interests aside from computer science or math or biology. As in, these girls are actually studying art or politics or film as opposed to just taking part in them recreationally. Perhaps this can explain why some MIT males are so attracted to girls outside of MIT. Moreover, there is always the argument, as mentioned in class, that girls outside of MIT generally have more spare time and thus more time to devote to a relationship.

In conclusion, I feel that I have a better grasp on what I find attractive in individuals. It is not a school, but a type of personality. I prefer girls that are more on the conservative side yet have a wild, controlled spontaneous side to them. Moreover, they would generally care about their appearance and be presentable most of the time. They would be highly informed about politics and current events and have some kind of inner passion that drives them – dance, piano, or a sport. They would be well versed in philosophy and psychology. Lastly, they would have an open mind about touchy topics and would engage in philosophical debate with me. Instead of trying to find this in a Wellesley girl, I should broaden my vision and realize that the pool of women in the Boston area has more breadth at the depth that I require, perhaps even on our very own (MIT) campus. Perhaps I will take the initiative to get to know some MIT girls better instead of subconsciously labeling them as “uncreative-girls-that-study all-day-and-are-average-looking-and-are-super-

stressed-out," which would be a naïve assumption on my part.

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