

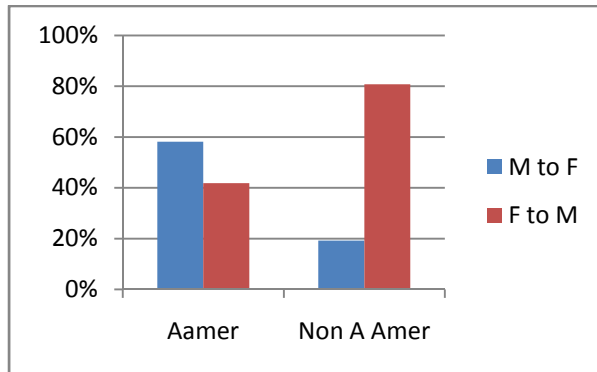
Sociologists write about “the male gaze”. It is said that because males tend to have power in society, their gaze is more important than the woman’s gaze. In other words, following the male gaze leads you to what is important. If a male employee is talking with his boss, for example, he will tend to keep his eyes on his boss, although with a long term mate, his eyes might close or wander. Women often complain that their men do not look at them. (Tannen 1999). An insubordinate employee of either sex might not look at his boss when the boss speaks. A teen seeking his own power often avoids looking at a parent, causing the parent to say, “Look at me when I talk to you.” What do we find with romantic couples on a college campus: who is looking at whom? Is there a correlation by race? Our two variables are race and gaze. Our hypothesis is that we will see the traditional romantic directionality of woman gazing at man more among non-African American couples than among African American couples because in the latter, women tend to have more marketplace power.

To gather data, I visited two college campuses with different racial compositions, one more African American and one with fewer. I observed couples at lunch tables which sometimes serve as study tables. As I picked out a couple, I would observe them for approximately a minute. It was up to me to be fair and not pre-judge any couple. In most couples, it was easy to assign gaze to one or the other. I captured 130 cases. Eighty of the couples were African American; 50 were not. At each setting, observation took two hours. As my “minute” with each couple progressed, I would make an estimate of who looked more at whom and code them accordingly. One would look down or around more than the other. The latter, relatively speaking, would keep her or his eyes glued to the partner, watching and seemingly listening intently for something. I threw out the couples who could not keep their eyes off one another, figuring they were in courtship or on “first date,” each empowering the other.

Class: note that in the first paragraph I set up the sociological interest and had one citation. In the second paragraph I detailed how I gathered my data and gave my “N” (number of people in the

study). Next I am going to insert my major data chart, making sure it is clear, labeled, and not too large for the page. I will use percentages, because you already know the N.

When I cross-tabulated race and the gendered gaze, I found a profound relationship:



Among African American couples in my

sample, I discovered a strong correlation between race and the gendered gaze. Namely, African American men gaze more strongly at their women whereas among non-African American couples, women gaze more strongly at their men. These data support the larger theory that it is the sociological variable of power rather than the more biological variable of gender that determines gaze . (Rushmore 1998). When women hold more power, as they do in the African American community, they also command more gaze. When women are relatively powerless, they hold to the male for income, attention, and meaning.

The power of the African American woman can be traced back to family, where a higher proportion of all children are raised by a woman, so for all children the woman is the authority. This also links back to slavery where children were often separated from their families, but particularly from their fathers. (Dubois, 1910). We even see this among African American men anecdotally on TV in sports: how often do you see a black football player thanking his father? It is almost always to the mother that they look to trace their accomplishments.

The chart also shows that the variation in gaze is more striking among non African Americans than among African American couples. This group was a combination of Latinos, Asians, and Caucasians.

Not only in those cultures does the woman more often look at the man than vice versa, the data show that this difference is more extreme than the difference between African American men and African American women. We can speculate as to why this is so. These three cultures, Latino, Asian, and Caucasian, might be said to be more traditional in two respects, explaining the steep difference: not only do they hold more dearly to the patriarchal or even “macho” ways, but also men in those cultures either do or are expected to earn higher salaries and command more respect in the marketplace. Were we to hold constant for those variables, we would expect all groups to equalize. For example, were we to go to Ivy League law school lunch tables, we would expect to equalize the variables between both races and sexes.

The Latino culture in America is in rapid transition, with population on the rise rather than the decline, with political power coming center stage because of this, and with women propelling themselves through education even more so than Latino men. Still, the Latino culture has strong roots in “machismo”, giving the men power by dint of their sex, so a focus on them compared with other ethnicities, holding constant the variable of marketplace power, could cast a special light on our look at power in romance.

Another way to direct data to this point would be to study work settings, for example, departmental meetings, where sometimes the boss is a woman and other times a man. Do employees pay more visual attention in one case versus the other? When staff members speak up, do their peers look more at one sex than the other?

Our data, give a clue to the particular intersectionality of gender and race. Indeed, while several Sociologists used the word intersection, it was an African American woman who popularized it in the latter part of the last century. It was, perhaps, C.Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1958) who first drew our attention to what he considered these important questions when he urged us to find the political in the personal, i.e., to trace personal problems to their social structural roots. Then a

couple of decades later Patricia Collins (1981) detailed her experience as an African American Sociology student sitting in classes on sex and gender learning all about the patriarchal society in which we lived. Inside her she was saying, “I didn’t.” she just spent the last 20 years of her life in a matriarchy—and so did all her friends. When one sociologist studied why women join sororities, he discovered that white women do so to meet men; black women do so to meet women, because they want those professional relationships throughout their careers. (Soandso 1976: 132).

Sociologists urge us not to look at social life with a “flat” view of just one variable at a time. Life is more complex, and each of us lives in an intersection of relationships embedded in a society that structures those relationship either in accord or “against” the set up in our personal lives. America may be a very modern, individualistic society, but many young people live in very traditional, family oriented settings. A young college student who lives at home with three generations, none of whom would ever consider anything but “family first” might feel lost when learning about individualism. Imagine learning about the rules of courtship if you are gay. Imagine learning how to criticize capitalism if your goal is to start a successful private company. Imagine what a “native” might think of an anthropologist’s study of his culture: in the West we cannot imagine “arranged marriages” could give us pleasure since “love” is so important—and yet self reports find that the experience among the traditional folks seems to be a much higher satisfaction level.

In couples, one tends to be more oriented to the other than vice versa. This can be for the return of a gaze, the return of emotional support in general, and the return of financial support. As we become more equal across the sexes in the marketplace, the dynamics of our most intimate connectional also shift. This no doubt could be seen in popular culture as well. Were we to compare the lyrics of songs in the new millennium with lyrics of the last century would we find a shift in the “need for” one sex by the other just as we observed it here over the lunch tables at two local universities? How else is the marketplace reflected in our intimacies and our intimacies reflected back in the market?

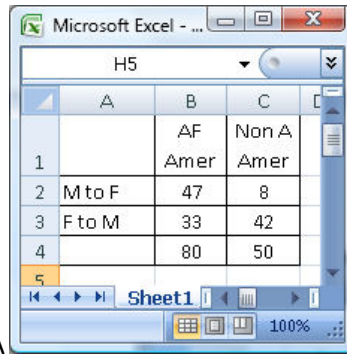
References

Collins, Patricia

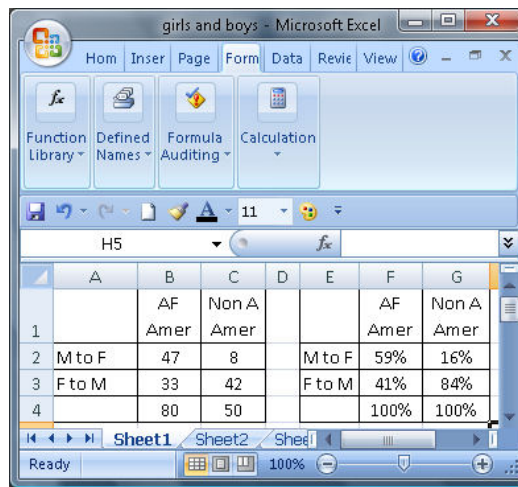
Dubois, W.E.B.

SoandSo, Mark

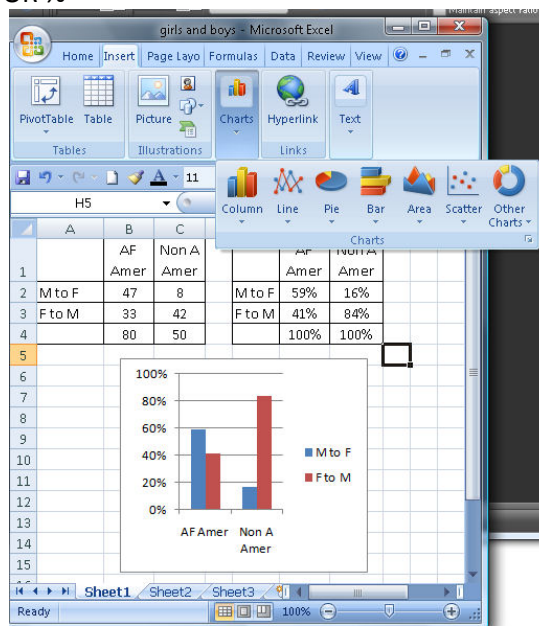
Tannen, Deborah



1. TALLY THE DATA



2. TURN IT INTO %
 formula, e.g., for F2: =SUM(B2/B4)
 FORMAT CELLS FOR %



3. INSERT A CHART

4. COPY PASTE CHART INTO WORD, making it small