Purpose and Design of the Study

- Purpose of the Study: to understand how female students experienced the learning environment and the effects of gender role attitudes and assumptions present in the evangelical Christian environment.

- Definition of “Chilly Climate”: the subtle ambiance in which many small inequities can create a negative atmosphere for learning, for teaching, and for fulfilling professional roles on campus (Hall and Sandler, 1982). Relates to classroom style, pedagogical patterns of the instructor and the course, and the curriculum.

Outside the classroom

Section A: General campus climate: When students discussed gender and leadership and the general feel of campus, they indicated that the campus has a “male-dominated” atmosphere based on the number of men in leadership and faculty positions, how topics were addressed in public forums or communications, and on their perceptions of the way in which decisions and administrative functions were carried out. They perceived expectations of who they should be or what they should do based on their gender.

1. Male student: Ideals do not line up with practice. How many women are on the board of directors at [college name]? How many women are chairs of departments? This is not just. How many women are inspired to follow their dreams at [college name]? I’m not a woman, but I must question this. How many women say they want to accomplish 1,2,3, or I’m so excited to get engaged? Is it just relationships? Who holds the power? Who can do most anything and get away with it and who can’t.

2. A male student commenting on a chapel speaker who addressed issues of sin as though the male experience were the norm: “He said, ‘You’ve got sin in your life, like lust or anger.’ [These] are not only male sins--it’s certainly what we think of as characteristic with males.”

3. Female student: I’ve often felt more valued as a woman in secular communities that I’ve been a part of…in high school, in classes that I was taking…or just friends of mine that aren’t Christians…that sometimes I’ve felt more encouraged to pursue the things that I’m really interested in more so than I have when I’ve been involved in really tightknit Christian or evangelical communities.

4. A female student: The main tension that I’ve seen here is this idea that somehow men are more or should be more spiritual, like they’re the spiritual heads of the family and the church…But I think that’s the biggest tension for me personally, being told overtly and sometimes very subtly, that I’m maybe less spiritual because I’m a woman or [that I] should be that way. It’s less about spiritual sensitivity and more about spiritual power. That’s where I see the difference lying. A woman professor or woman student, in certain contexts, can only go so far in leading spiritually.

5. A male student regarding changing the status quo on campus regarding women’s roles: In the academic realm, women at [college name] tend to be more assertive, tend to have more leadership roles because they’ve been able to succeed before even coming here and then because of that they’re able to get into [college name]. So they’re able to already have kind of masculine characteristics. But as far as the other two realms [social and spiritual], there’s not a lot that’s done at this institution to really undo any of those role expectations.

6. Female student: Another tension would like mostly be with like women preaching in the church…we have a woman at our church who is like the children’s ministry person and she’s called the children’s ministry director…and then there’s the women’s ministry director but then there’s like the youth pastor who is a man…a different title because I guess our church believes that women can’t be pastors but they can be directors.

Section B: Peer relationships: Students expressed difficulty in “just being friends” because of the emphasis among peers on dating and marriage. This creates pressure and confusion about “appropriate roles” in peer relationships (i.e., initiating, courtesy and etiquette; exposure to conflicting messages about women’s roles within a marriage, a family and a career). Strong, capable women were intimidating and/or confusing to some men, and the women knew it so many adjusted accordingly in order to not be “left out” socially.

7. Female student: At [college name], there’s so much pressure with being in a relationship or that [college name] culture that you have to have a North Face, or Ugg boots, or pearl earrings or that blond hair, that there’s so much emphasis on that.

8. Female student: that magic romantic relationship and so much drama in that regard that it was really hard for me to reconcile [with] why does one pursue an education

9. Female student: kind of a broad stereotype that I have…an emphasis on becoming a mother, an emphasis on having a relationship with a guy
10. A male student: One role that I see very strongly, a role expectation that’s placed on me here in this context, is I’m expected to be an initiator in friendships, in dating relationships. Even this concept of dialogue, I would think that the onus would be upon me to be the initiator of that dialogue. I think it’s mostly up to the man to begin that and the power or the luxury rests upon him.

11. A female student: I know that there are tons of boys here who would never ask me out or other women like me who are in a lot of leadership roles, just because it’s intimidating.

12. Female student: Whenever I feel like we’re gathering together to eat or something and it’s a mixed gender group, I always feel that we have to wait for the guy to pray. A woman can’t pray. It’s like “Oh it’s the guy’s job” kind of a thing.

13. A female student: And [my boyfriend] feels the need to protect me and cherish me. [Yet] to reconcile that with a woman who seems like she needs nothing, is difficult. I often seem that way. I have very few insecurities and don’t need anything from anybody. I can take perfectly good care of myself.

14. A male student: [Women] are expected on one hand to do one thing, but also expected to do something else. [Sometimes] they would be expected to assert themselves, be assertive if you have your own mind but at the same time kind of know your place--where you should be.

15. A female student: My mom has always been a stay-at-home mom and a lot of my friends’ mothers were, and I just always thought that if you have children you stay home with them. That’s understood. Coming here and meeting women who have been my mentors or my professors, they have a family or they’re married or their career is important to them, seeing that that can be a really good thing. I’ve never thought of that as an option.

16. A female student: I’m dating someone fairly seriously [now], and I still want to go to med school. And people don’t see the two as being compatible. [My boyfriend] totally supports me and wants me to go. It’s just funny how people are. People in my church don’t think I’ll actually go. They don’t say it, but they’re thinking “Now she found a man, now she won’t go to med school.”

**SECTION C: Identity development:** Women expressed feeling labeled and limited about what they should do and be. Many had fear, low self-esteem, confusion, and anger about their own femininity or about other women in their lives. They also sought to balance who they were as individuals with their needs and desires to connect with others in friendships or dating relationships.

17. A female student: If it had not been for the lit department teachers telling me that I could do it, I would have stayed in the conservatory, and I love the intellectual world. I really do. I love discussion. I love studying. It’s a different kind of studying in the conservatory, not that the people in the conservatory work very hard. But it’s a different applied level. But through taking those gen ed lit courses and realizing “I can do this and I’ve done well on these tests and this really excites me. I learn a lot from these things,” and [realizing] I don’t have to be submissive to what my family or what I think my family wanted me to do. It took a lot to convince my family that I could be a lit major.

18. A female student: I wish that I had been born a man because then these things would be more legitimate--these leadership qualities. [While this student felt that she was simply being a good steward of the gifts she had been given, she also feared the “cross-eyed looks” she received from others who perceived her as “out to prove something.”]

19. A female student: One of the things that has troubled me, seeing it with a lot of the girls on my floor this year, is just a sense of inferiority. This may stem from our culture and from the way that we’re saturated with ideas and thoughts from that. But there tends to be--and I wouldn’t even say it’s the guys on campus, neither the male students or the male professors that promote this idea--but I think women themselves have this idea that masculine abilities are somehow to be preferred. They’re somehow more acceptable and more beneficial in the community.

20. A female student: My dad is a doctor. His family is very concerned about making money and with success, and they’ve always wanted me to go to medical school or higher education. And my mom has pretty much lived her whole life defining herself by men…So I’ve been pretty angry with her…So [my choices have] been a reaction to that and as a reaction to seeing women confined to certain roles where they have lots more to offer, when I was growing up and here, too.

21. A female student: A lot of issues that I have with my mom I can trace back to a struggle with respect for her and her position and trying to sort through all of that. So, because it’s my mother, I’m constantly running up against these things. It’s constantly there and I’m constantly faced with the issue of a woman’s place and her role and what she should be achieving and doing and what is that? What is good and what is bad? Is there a good and a bad?

**Inside the classroom**

**SECTION D: General classroom climate:** The environment was most conducive to women’s learning when they felt welcomed, involved, and connected with other students and with the professor.

22. A female student: [My Advanced Developmental Psychology class] made me realize how messed up the whole gender thing was for me. I don’t think I realized it until I had it thrown in my face…I think it was that I was all of a sudden being faced with an awareness [of societal] differences and especially in the evangelical subculture. No people in particular, but as a whole, churches, [name] College, everything I’d experienced as an evangelical up until that point that just didn’t [fit]. It was much more of an emotional thing than an intellectual thing.
23. A female student: If a professor knows my name, it makes me so much more willing to talk or participate in class, even come to class. Also eye contact with professors, sometimes they will not look at girls if they’re men teachers. And I’ve actually talked to people about this, guys, they’re like “What do you mean the teacher didn’t look at you?” [I would say] “Well he never makes eye contact with me. Does he with you?” “Yeah, he always does” [they say.] So that always throws me for a loop. Also teachers who want to be your friend, I learn much better from them. If I walk into their office and they’re like “Hey, how’s it going? I have some time – you want to talk?” And that’s huge for me.

24. A female student: I hate to sit in a class and feel like I’m just one of a million. I like to know that my professor knows me, knows my name and we can interact. It really worries me sometimes because it comes across as brown-nosing. That’s not my intention at all. I just hate feeling like there’s someone walking in, throwing out information and I leave. And then they leave. [Another female student in response: It’s sort of like the information they’re saying leaves with it if you don’t have a connection with whose teaching.]

25. Female student: One of the biggest and funniest things that affects me is just the way the desks are set up. I know that rows are traditional and it has that sense of order. But there again, because my favorite way of learning is that collaborative circle type environment…a non-intimidating environment and he was in the circle with us and facilitated discussion, but I can distinctly remember, he wanted to hear everyone’s voice and affirmed all ideas.

SECTION E: Participation: Female students’ participation ranged from eager to cautious and was influenced by several factors (student’s year in college, familiarity with the material or the department, personal connection with the professor, personal characteristics such as confidence, particular classroom activity.) Differences in men’s and women’s communication patterns were also noted by interviewees (i.e., verbal jousting, disclaimers and self-demeaning comments). Friendship and dating also affected the manner of women’s participation in the classroom.

26. A female student: I’ve seen it come out in talking with different girls on my floor where they’ve said they don’t feel comfortable speaking up in class. They don’t feel comfortable taking a certain position or being a leader in a certain area because they feel that a male should do that and be better at that.

27. A female student: [This friend of mine] wants to be a housewife. She respects men. [She says,] “Men are where they should be and I am where I should be. I’m submissive.” She’s just said for most of her classes she walks in feeling dumb and like she chooses classes on the basis of whether or not she will feel dumb in the class. She rarely talks in class. But she doesn’t feel uncomfortable with that. She just feels that most of the men in the room and even some of the women are smarter and because she is the way she is, she’s “dumber” here.

28. A male student: [When] I look at a woman sitting next to me in class and I give her full respect and see her as equal (if not ahead of me), I will assume that she has the freedom to speak up and to say what’s on her mind in the same way that I feel that freedom. I’m coming to realize that that is not true. That’s something that I’m becoming aware of. I’ve always had the attitude of “Well, if you feel this way, speak up. I do.” And if they don’t feel that, that’s a false assumption that I would have--kind of a label--that I would put on her that may not be correct.

29. A male student: It seems likes guys are a whole lot more apt to interject or just kind of come out with something but, at the same time, professors are more likely to be critical of them. I’ve just seen a whole lot more male students argue with predominantly male professors… I rarely see, [no, I’ve] never seen a woman argue with a professor. My experience has been that the guys will come out and be real direct and the prof will be direct.

30. A male student: At times, it seems like they [women] come out with a strong point or a great thought, but they put a curve to it so it becomes softer. If they want to attack something that the professor’s saying, well, I’ll just come out and say “What are you saying?” … I see that sometimes where they have a great thing [to say], but they pull back a little bit to make it not as forceful.

31. A female student: When I say something stupid or feel awkward about things, then I punt and think, “Well, I’m a girl. I’m one of two girls in this class, and that’s why there’s a problem.” I definitely can use [my gender] as a crutch.

32. A female professor talking about a group of very bright women in one of her classes: They had a lot of fun, laughing, not so much participating in the class but just with each other. I think they came across as not serious students. Some women do that; they underplay their intelligence, not pretending to be stupid, but pretending to be fun loving. Why?…They hesitate to be taken too seriously in terms of their intellect. They would like to be seen as something less threatening to males.

33. A female student who held leadership positions in several extra-curricular activities, said: “I feel like I’m automatically not going to be that person [for group leader].” On the same topic, a male student: “It’s just natural that the man is the leader.”

34. Female student: forming groups if it’s up to you who you want to be in a group with and often times I want to be with the female students because they’re probably going to know the deadline, send out emails and reply to them on time and that’s not even something I do, but it’s something I value.

35. Male faculty: One thing I do see when they work in small groups it almost always a woman who is assigned to take notes or reports out. So I force them to choose a guy sometimes just to balance it out sometimes.

36. A female student: [If I’m in a] small group and I’m the only woman, if it’s something where notes are to be taken, then, even if nothing is said, I automatically feel this expectation that I’m supposed to do that even though I’m really bad at that and have really bad hand-writing. I don’t like doing it and feel like I’m expected to do it.

37. Female student: guys [are] able to speak in front of the classroom with more ease.
38. Female student: but it’s expected of me to be silent during the presentation of that group project
39. Male faculty: I do think my women students in my class are more frequently interrupted, particularly if they talk about feelings
40. Male student: I interrupt women.

SECTION F: Perceptions of women as learners: 1) From peers -- “Women must prove themselves;” expectations for confident and capable, but “not too much;” 2) From faculty -- Female students assessed most of their relationships with faculty members as positive; however, some felt excluded, demeaned, sidelined or invalidated (i.e., “how do you expect to handle a family and a career?”); joking about the capabilities or concerns of women; blatant favoring of men; sense of less access to mentoring and professional relationships with male professors)

41. Female student: girls are more vocal in class and have more to share, lead the discussions more and are affirmed more by the professors, probably because they’re just the ones who talk and speak up and the guys just sort of don’t, probably because girls are just more vocal.
42. A male student: I’m sure women have been told growing up that if you want to succeed, you have to work harder, you have to be better, and they do that. And as a guy, I’ve never been told that. No one’s ever told me I need to work harder than a woman. I’m not worried about not succeeding when I grow up because I’m a man.
43. Male student: If women want to do anything it’s judged on her ability to be a man. How close is she to that?
44. Female student: male voice was more valued
45. Male faculty: But I’ve heard men in class discounting women’s contributions at times.
46. Male student: definitely men speak more often, women hardly ever speak. Sometimes I get up and say women, speak up.
47. Male student: inherently in the classroom men are viewed as better than women.
48. Male student: I’m sick and tired of being around women who are not very ambitious.
49. A male student: It’s not a good impression and I’m sorry I have it, but my impression is that the women who do speak out are abrasive. Sometimes it’s true but part of it is an awful stereotype and the other part of it is that it’s probably difficult enough for women to speak out that the ones that do might have a bit of an edge--like any man who speaks out too much…And that’s immediate marginalization--deserved or not. And anytime there’s a woman who consistently speaks up she’s any number of things, but…it’s never positive. I can’t think of a time [that it’s been positive], I’m sure there has been, but the women I think of, one of them I think of as obnoxious. Another one I think of as kind of this miss-prissy.
50. A female student: When the women are confident it’s seen as something on the negative side. When you know a little bit too much or you take on the professor, you think “you’re so smart”--and it’s kind of a smarty-pants attitude. Whereas men will never be seen as a smarty-pants even if they’re saying all the right things all the time.
51. A male student: It depends on how she speaks up. If she speaks up confident in herself and confident when she’s presenting and even challenging sometimes, I think that it’s looked down upon. For those who are constantly asking questions, even if guys ask the same amount of questions, that girl is looked down upon. [On the other hand,] there are a lot of girls in [my] department [who] have good things to say. My perceptions, my initial [negative] reactions might still be there but right behind my initial reaction is “This girl has a story behind her and that story involves one of silence and one of oppression.”
52. A male student: Let’s face it--we like the women who maybe know what they’re doing, but don’t talk about it too much. Whether or not we do, I’d have to say that’s probably how I am. [Men] as a whole, I think it’s what we like. We like a capable person but someone who doesn’t think they’re too capable because then they’re a threat to us.
53. A male student on an underlying “male pride” that affected men and their attitudes: [When women correct men’s statements, men fear] losing their comfort… and it threatens [their] masculinity or [their] role of what masculinity should be. And I think that women who are stronger in other areas, maybe more initiating than regressive--that’s the same thing. It threatens the stereotypes of what men or women should be.
54. Male student: but I think males would be more likely to give another male a hard time in class for whatever reason than a female, particularly if they didn’t know the person as well.
55. Female student: guys are going to have their own commonality that they share like sports or their little hand gestures or handshakes or what not or their own attention they share and girls they share their own culture
56. Male student: Gender does play a role or maybe it’s just the culture, women are often referred to as girls. Girls are children who need protection.
57. A female student: When I’m in classroom settings where we are making vocal pronouncements (like in philosophy) and we’re extremely dogmatic or maybe not as diplomatic as women should be, I haven’t felt it so much from professors but from other students who are shocked that I would make a declaration about something. I said something in class and someone turned to me and said, “I can’t believe that you said what you said. I don’t think women should be saying things like that.” It’s just a very candid passing [remark], but it’s a correction. I experience it as a correction. I haven’t experienced that from male professors necessarily but I have experienced it from [male] students.
58. A female student on why some women choose to remain hidden or silent: “Not wanting to show off, not wanting to draw too much attention to myself…It’s safer to remain hidden.”

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59. A female student: Some of the science classes I’ve been in, there may be some really intelligent guys in there and some really intelligent girls in there. But the more acknowledged ones [by peers] are the guys… I can think of some classes where I know that there are some really smart girls in there but when [students] talk about the smart people, they only talk about the guys.

60. A female student: A teacher challenged me [to speak up]. I never said anything in class, but then I’d go talk to him in his office and say “This is what I was thinking.” He would say “Why don’t you ever say those things in class?” And I said, “I can’t say those things in class. There’s no possible way.” Then he made me say two things a week in class. That has helped me ever since because I’ve [thought] now that I do have something to say.

61. Male faculty: women have to be encouraged; they tend to be more hesitant about their views... they are more ready it seems to accommodate others’ objections

62. Female student: they talk to women it’s more patronizing in a way. Like their voice and their demeanor kind of changes in a way. Yeah, I don’t know how to explain it. Just their non-verbal — it’s kind of weird.

63. Female student: a lot of professors are more…toward female students, not lenient but soft spoken.

64. Male student: professor was a little bit easier or not quite as harsh with the girls.

65. Female student: very open and supportive and I never really felt stifled.

66. Female student: male professors who’ve made a point of affirming females in their vocations.

67. Female student: affirmation of the male student occurred in a different way.

68. Female student: I feel like women professors are more motherly especially towards other female students.

69. Female student: Two classes that come to mind that were really difficult and I worked really hard in…they were both male professors…kind of like you do the work---same as everybody else and I felt really encouraged and challenged by that.

70. Female student: one professor ...talked to me really patronizing that it was so awkward for me…. it was really interesting so much so that I started to question if I was competent...But then at the same time I get a lot of people who talk to me in a patronizing way.

SECTION G: Curriculum Considerations: Women were particularly attuned to contributions of females in the discipline and commented about the inclusion of such contributions, whether these contributions are viewed as valid or valued, and the amount of time devoted to these discussions. Male students also had positive responses when a particular approach or contribution was attributed to a female. Some students (male and female) indicated surprise at their own “gut” response when the subject matter and the gender of the contributor was referenced.

71. A female student: And [the professor was] very fair in presenting the important discoveries that have been made and I take note when it’s a woman because it kind of jumps out at me…. I’m taking this class and we’re reading tons of [women writers]. From what I understand it’s a fair treatment of what’s good, but I say that as “What’s perceived as good philosophy or good science” and that brings in a whole value system that a lot of people would say is very value laden and is determined by a patriarchal male culture. Therefore how can we even find out what women are doing when it’s not valued at all. It’s never going to make it into a book which is also a very valid point view. It’s probably right. You gotta go hunting if you want to find some of the lesser known female contributions.

72. A male student: I just had a senior capstone seminar class and our main textbook was written by three females [in the field]. [The professor] picked that specifically because female [writers in the field] are relatively new and especially in Christian realms there’s hardly any at all. And these women weren’t Christians but they were dealing with a lot of Christian topics. And he really liked the book, I liked the book as well… it gave a good perspective, a different feel and it was really good. So that was the one where he specifically picked this because they were females where it’s lacking.

73. A female student: I had a prof – every time he’s talking about some scientist or something or you being a scientist, he always said “she.” Like “The scientist, she would do this or that…” It was weird for me to hear that because I’m so used to hearing the male gender being used. He was great that way.

74. A female student: We’re doing a history and foundations of math class now and by far the majority of mathematicians are men but the professor makes a good point of pointing out the different women at different times and what they do. But that amount of time we spend on them is related to the significance of what they contributed and the subject matter rather than the gender… I sure feel happy to know that there are others out there who are women in math.

75. A female student: My art professor took several days to talk about the difference there is in women and men and looking at paintings by women and paintings by men and saying “What is it that makes the emotions of this painting different? – because women are different from men.” And he went through a whole thing and the class really appreciated that. It was amazing – it was really good.

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