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. Specifically, this study investigated how faculty and students make sense of gender relations and roles, how attitudes and assumptions about gender roles affect peer dynamics, pedagogy and faculty-student dynamics in the classroom and how these attitudes and assumptions influence and affect women’s educational experiences and aspirations.

- **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.

**Two Significant Research Reports on the Chilly Climate:**

While federal and state laws and educational policies in the late twentieth century were designed to grant full access to higher education institutions for all, some practitioners and researchers have questioned the quantity and quality of educational opportunities afforded to women.

In 1982, Roberta Hall and Bernice Sandler prepared a report for the National Association for Women in Education entitled The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women? In this report, Hall and Sandler argued that despite Title IX legislation and historically unprecedented numbers of women in higher education, female students still did not enjoy full equality in educational opportunities. The authors summarized numerous studies from colleges and universities and documented that the campus experience of women was considerably different from that of men. They labeled this limiting and stifling experience a "chilly climate" and described such a climate as one in which many small inequities as well as faculty and peer behaviors (overt and subtle) create a negative atmosphere for women to learn, teach, and fulfill professional roles on campus.

Nearly fifteen years later in a follow-up study, Sandler, Silverberg and Hall (1996) suggest that classroom style and communication patterns are more hospitable to men’s speech preferences than to women’s (i.e., competitive versus collaborative); that typical teaching behaviors reward autonomy, objectivity, and the more verbal students; and that the curriculum to a large extent does not include the contributions or perspectives of women. These and other factors affect female student participation patterns, their satisfaction with the educational process, and their self esteem as they report that “inadequate” participation originates from within themselves.

**Chilly Climate Behaviors:**

Faculty use subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors that influence women’s experience in the classroom. Although most instructors would like to believe that they are free of sexist prejudices, stereotypes, and biases, each individual has deep-seated beliefs and expectations of which he or she may not be fully aware. Professors may unknowingly treat women differently in a number of ways, including:

- yielding to the influence of internalized stereotypes;
- excluding women from classroom participation;
- treating men and women differently when their behavior or achievements are the same;
- giving women less attention and intellectual encouragement;
- discouraging women through politeness;
- singling out women;
- defining women by their sexuality;
- engaging in overt hostile behavior toward women or making disparaging remarks;
- not stepping in to prevent student-to-student hostility and harassment (Sandler, Silverberg & Hall, 1996).

Besides the negative behaviors mentioned above, faculty affirmation may tend to flow more naturally toward students of the same sex than toward students of the opposite sex (Sandler, Silverberg & Hall, 1996). With more male than female faculty, men are more likely to receive commendation. One important point from the Hall and Sandler (1982) study is the effect that the aforementioned chilling behaviors can have on women when they appear in concert. Overall, such a cumulative effect can contribute to feelings of incompetence, insecurity, and alienation for college women.
Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist standpoint theory maintains that a culture’s best beliefs and whatever it calls knowledge and truth are perspectival and socially situated within the “material life” or the human activity of any individual (Harding, 1990). There are different “locations” within stratified societies from which one’s understanding of life and knowledge is shaped and constrained.

Scholars who embrace feminist standpoint theory argue that less powerful members of society may have a more complete view of social reality because of their disadvantaged position for three reasons. First, as “strangers” or outsiders to the dominant culture, they maintain that members of non-dominant groups can often see patterns of belief or behavior that are difficult for those immersed in the culture to detect (Harding, 1990). Second, these scholars argue that the view of the dominant group will always be partial and perverse in contrast to views of the subordinate group.

According to standpoint epistemology and research, then, it is necessary to understand the perspective of the disadvantaged group in order to gain a fuller and more accurate view of reality.

Sampling and Methodology: Two studies: Wheaton College (1998) and Bethel University College of Arts & Sciences (2011); interviewed 48 junior and senior students (16 men and 32 women) in groups of two or three for a total of eighteen focus groups; interviewed eighteen faculty members individually; sought to reflect diversity and representation in terms of gender, disciplines, race, and ethnicity and to include those who represented disconfirming viewpoints.

Sample Questions from Student Focus Group Interview:

I’m wondering if you are aware of anything that has happened on campus to increase your awareness of gender roles. Similarly, have you ever been in a situation in which a gender role expectation was placed upon you or someone else? Describe one or two of these situations. Where did the expectation come from? What was the response of those involved?

From these influences and your own thinking, what are the attitudes and assumptions you carry around with you regarding male and female gender roles in general?

Think about your classroom interactions. Who speaks most often? Whom does the professor affirm most enthusiastically and most frequently? Who, if anyone, is interrupted most frequently? Who are the most active participants in the classroom?

Have you had any courses in which the contributions and perspectives of women in that discipline have been discussed as being different or separate from those of men? If so, could you tell me about them? How did the professor present this material? How did you react to it? How did your peers react to it?

Could you paint me a general picture of how you think men and women students view one another as peers in the classroom? In your experience, do you think students interact with or perceive female and male students differently in class? Do men treat men differently than women as class peers? And vice versa? Can you help me to understand your views better by providing me with some examples that support your perspective?

What are your perceptions of women and men in your classes as students? Are there certain situations in which you would view men or women as more skilled or gifted as students? I would like to hear more about your views.

In general, how would you describe your level of confidence as a student? Are you encouraged and enabled to use your academic abilities fully? Why or why not?

(For male students): Do you think that evangelical Christian attitudes and assumptions affect how women students are viewed by their male peers and male professors at [college name]? (If yes, then ask) In what ways do you think that these views help or hinder the educational experiences of women students? Their view of themselves as learners? Future professionals? Future wives and mothers? Future members of the church?

(For female students): Do you think that evangelical Christian attitudes and assumptions affect how women students are viewed by their male peers and male professors at [college name]? (If yes, then ask) In what ways do you think that these views have helped or hindered your own educational development? The educational experiences of your fellow women students? Your view of yourself as a learner? Future professional? Future wife and mother? Future member of the church? Your peers’ views in these same areas?

Major Findings of the Study

On campus, perspectives about gender roles are communicated through chapel and public meetings (i.e., who is invited to speak, what speakers say, translations of Scriptures that are read); through coursework (i.e., content that addresses gender concerns; inclusive curriculum, the gender composition of the class); through out-of-class programs and discussions (i.e., formal and informal, who serves in leadership roles); peer group (i.e., friendships and “the dating scene”); and through events in the broader evangelical community.

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Three themes: 1) general campus climate; 2) peer relationships; and 3) identity development

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—but 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 tight-knit 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.

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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 they don’t study. 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

Four themes: 1) general classroom climate; 2) participation; 3) perceptions of female students as learners; and 4) curricular considerations.

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.]
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.

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 would be better at that.

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.

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.

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

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.

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 on e…

Female student: guys [are] able to speak in front of the classroom with more ease

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.

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.

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.

Female student: guys [are] able to speak in front of the classroom with more ease

Female student: but it’s expected of me to be silent during the presentation of that group project

Male faculty: I do think my women students in my class are more frequently interrupted, particularly if they talk about feelings

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, 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 smart-pants attitude. Whereas men will never be seen as a smart-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 women or men 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 language 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. 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.”

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-verbals – 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.

CONCLUSIONS

- the difference in the way in which male and female students perceived and understood gender dynamics
- the classroom experience of female students was different from that of male students
- female students experienced many tensions related to gender dynamics both in and outside the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- First, in order to affect the campus climate, administrators, faculty, and student development personnel must recognize, understand and commit to actively addressing problems related to the chilly climate experienced by women on campus. This includes listening to female students, clear communication about what is and what isn’t sexual harassment, and acknowledgement of additional time and energy female faculty invest in mentoring.

➞ Suggestions for Administrators

Assisting Administration
The following are suggestions that could help the administration affect change toward a friendlier campus culture for women.

- Women’s concerns should be considered institutional issues of concern to everyone. Administrators should work actively to create an atmosphere in which all members of the academic community—including trustees, students, faculty and staff—become educated about issues related to the chilly climate literature and to women in evangelical Christian higher education. Specifically, attention should be given to the conflicting messages about gender roles within evangelical Christianity; to identifying problems related to the “chilly climate” and differential treatment towards women; and to developing collaborative solutions that represent the institution’s commitment to creating an equitable climate for all students.

- It is imperative that administrators listen carefully to female students to capture the articulations of their experience at [college name]. A college-wide committee to explore the experiences of women related to gender messages and the problem of the chilly classroom climate should be developed with the expectation that this group would provide a report containing recommendations and strategies.

- Administrators should develop, publish, and widely distribute a policy or statement that explicitly prohibits sexist behavior by faculty or students on campus and articulates standards of behavior for students and faculty in the classroom. Examples should be included to ensure that all understand what kinds of behaviors are prohibited and what constitutes sexual harassment. This statement or policy should instruct faculty members on how to make decisions about their own relationships with female students and how to address students who are disrespectful to women or who create a hostile environment for other students.

- Administrators should ensure that women are well represented as chapel speakers and in other campus programs. Also, they should make certain that women are invited to address a variety of topics, not just those traditionally considered “female topics.” Various translations of Scripture should be used to validate different perspectives and clear explanations of the competing gender role messages should be given.

- Administrators should track number of students by sex in departments or divisions, examining attrition rates, grades, and numbers of students who go on to graduate studies. Collecting data by sex helps ensure that the problems of women are not hidden.

Suggestions for Students

Assisting Peers

In order to enhance the campus climate for all students, strategies must be employed to assist students as male and female peers in challenging stereotypes and encouraging thoughtfulness about gender roles. While several interviewees agreed that some efforts have been made in the academic realm, little has been done in the social and spiritual realms outside the classroom. The following recommendations address concerns relative to all students.

- Student organizations should be asked to participate in evaluating the classroom climate for women and should be encouraged to conduct an “audit” of the campus climate for women, publishing results in the student newspaper.

- A brochure or flyer should be developed for students that describes what a “chilly climate” is, suggests how students can deal with it, summarizes institutional policies and grievance procedures, discusses informal actions that can be taken, and includes resource persons to contact.

- Male students who are in tune with chilly climate issues should be used to educate other male students on campus through meetings on residence hall floors, to sports teams, and classes where gender issues are addressed.

- Students who are disruptive and overtly sexist toward women (whether in the classroom or outside of the classroom) should be confronted and actively discouraged from expressing sexist behaviors, jokes, or remarks wherever they occur.

- Students should be encouraged to express concerns about group activities and should be encouraged to articulate their perceptions of how the workload was distributed for group projects.

Second, by way of affecting the classroom climate, instruct and assist professors in fostering female student involvement and autonomy through pedagogical approaches; incorporating contributions of women in the curriculum; identifying aspects of student peer relationships that affect classroom behavior of women; and understanding effective mentoring strategies for female students. (See attached information from Hall & Sandler, 1996)

Suggestions for Faculty

Assisting Faculty

Based on findings from this study, faculty decisions about classroom activities and curriculum have a strong bearing on the educational experience of female students. Further, encouragement by faculty was frequently described as one important way faculty empowered female students. The following suggestions would assist all faculty members in having a positive impact on students.
• Faculty development planning committees should use faculty development workshops and seminars, faculty meetings, conferences and colloquia to raise faculty members’ awareness about chilly climate issues and the effects of gender role assumptions on students, particularly women. Planning groups should also provide for instruction for faculty on how to reduce learner anxiety, promote connectedness, foster student involvement and autonomy, and respect the uniqueness and giftedness of each individual student.

• Faculty development planning committees and administrators should use training programs and materials to ensure that faculty understand what sexual harassment is, so they will not be fearful of working with female students in and out of the classroom.

• Department chairs and administrators should acknowledge and compensate for the added time commitment placed on female faculty who have increased mentoring and advising responsibilities because of their gender.

• Department chairs and academic administrators should encourage faculty to establish rules for class behavior at the first session of class. A handout outlining expected and appropriate behavior could be helpful.

➤ Suggestions for Pedagogical Changes

Assisting with Pedagogical Changes

Besides assistance as outlined above, specific attention should be given to assisting faculty with pedagogical changes and curriculum modifications.

• Faculty members should be encouraged and trained through faculty development experiences to construct their classes as communities of learners which work together to extend understanding through holistic and experiential processes. Faculty should seek to create learning environments that are collaborative, cooperative, and interactive; that connect with students’ personal experiences; and that challenge students’ feelings and values.

• Faculty should be trained through faculty development experiences to enhance student participation in their classes, being sure to define participation broadly—asking questions, answering questions, listening respectfully to others. If some students are reluctant participants, faculty should be encouraged to meet with them individually to explore what could be done to help the student. Faculty should involve students in the design of courses and learning activities, which will increase their participation level and ownership, enabling them to feel more connected and valued.

• Academic administrators and department chairs should help faculty recognize that changing the curriculum to include women in a significant and thoughtful way is a major effort requiring a commitment of time and resources. Administrative support should be available for rewarding student proposals that research and document contributions of women in particular academic areas and for evaluating courses for content on and by women.

• Third, assist female students as they negotiate significant challenges related to positive gender identity development, stereotypes associated with certain choices or behaviors, self-assured classroom involvement, and finding effective mentors.

➤ Suggestions for Positive Identity Formation

Assisting with Positive Identity Formation

• Faculty, administrators, and staff should publicly affirm women who exhibit characteristics that are traditionally thought of as “masculine” as well as those who exhibit characteristics that are traditionally thought of as “feminine.” Of particular importance is affirmation of competence and confidence. By doing so, stereotypes will be challenged and women will sense more freedom to participate in leadership opportunities and to reveal certain character traits or leadership styles.

• Faculty and student affairs professionals should instruct female students about the process of development occurring in their lives as they evaluate the beliefs of their parents and consider adopting their own set of values throughout their college years. Direct and clear explanations about the confusing nature of gender messages could help other women identify and articulate the tensions that many women in this study experienced. Affirmations should be given that confusion, fear, and uncertainty are a normal part of letting go of familial values and acquiring individuated values. Campus resources, such as the counseling center and residence hall programs, should provide opportunities for women to discuss and deal with these emotions and their experiences of inclusion or marginalization.

• To be encouraged to contribute in class or to feel affirmed for her perspectives, a female student may need verbal and non-verbal cues to reinforce the value of her ideas. “Coaching” comments from faculty members, such as “Why do you think that is?” or “tell me more,” may be particularly effective.

➤ Assisting Female students with Their Future Aspirations

Assisting with Future Aspirations
Just as women may need assistance in the development of their self-identities, they also need encouragement and guidance in making decisions about their futures. The following suggestions relate specifically to the future aspirations of female students.

- **Recommendations for Future Research**
  - **Same research, other institutions**
    - First, since this study was only a depiction of gender dynamics in the classroom at one institution, future research that carefully explores gender dynamics at other evangelical Christian colleges is needed. Specifically, future research should seek to answer questions such as: what are the gender attitudes and assumptions present at other evangelical Christian colleges? How do these findings compare with the gender attitudes and assumptions found at college? Are there understandings that emerge from these studies that shed light on factors that contribute to the occurrence of particular dynamics?

  - **Exploration of gender dynamics outside the classroom**
    - Second, while this study began to explore gender dynamics in the classroom, it raised interesting—and unintended—questions about gender dynamics outside the classroom. More research is clearly needed that explores in greater depth gender dynamics in the latter arena. In particular, what are the predominant gender assumptions that students experience in their living environments? In co-curricular activities? In leadership roles on campus? In relationships with students of the same sex? In friendships with students of the opposite sex? In dating relationships? What dynamics are present in activities at churches or in spiritual development activities or worship experiences?

  - **Same research with freshman and sophomore students**
    - Third, this study focused on gender dynamics students experienced as juniors and seniors at Wheaton College and Bethel University. It did not explore systematically gender messages students received before their arrival at college, nor did it focus on gender dynamics during their first two years on campus. Future studies could include a more specific investigation of the gender roles and relationships children are taught in evangelical homes and churches and how gender roles and relations are communicated to new students at college. How do students experience the transition to college given the particular background in which they were raised? Is there a difference between how traditional and egalitarian students transition to certain colleges as opposed to others? Additionally, what are women’s experiences with gender dynamics after they leave college? What is the relationship between what they experienced while in college and what they experience after college?

  - **More research within specific majors**
    - Fourth, studies could be conducted that focus on women in certain majors or certain day-to-day activities that influence a student’s choice of major, career, and life path. Are there different messages that are communicated in majors and disciplines? Is the strength of gender role messages different from major to major? How do these particular messages enhance or diminish a woman’s ability to navigate gender dynamics deftly?

  - **Specific research on male students**
    - Fifth, this study included men as a means of establishing a basis of comparison for women’s experience. To be sure, similar studies are needed to understand how men experience gender dynamics on evangelical Christian college campuses. Specifically, what messages are men taught as they grow up in evangelical Christian homes? How are those messages reinforced or challenged while at college? What particular collegiate experiences reinforce or challenge these beliefs? How do male students experience the classroom...
environment in terms of effectiveness for their learning? How do gender attitudes and assumptions affect the confidence of male students as they prepare to leave college?

**SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES**


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