

Current Issues/Theory Paper

Submission 3 Final Paper

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Introduction

Throughout our American history, men had always shaped our society; this includes the American higher education system (Belenky et. al., 1986). Women first gained access to higher education in 1837 (Martin Aleman & Renn, 2002) and according to President Karen A. Holbrook of Ohio State University, women is now predominate gender in higher education, 60 percent as opposed to 40 percent men (2002). Despite the growth in the number of women in higher education, our education system is still set up to teach in a more pedagogical technique that is geared towards men over women (Belenky et. al., 1986). Men's experience and competence has always been the standard in which men and women are both being judged upon, thus impacting women's development (Belenky et. al., 1986).

A critical issue within higher education involves classroom instruction and how it can positively or negatively impact students' cognitive development and psychosocial development. In this paper, I define classroom instruction in terms of lecture based classes versus smaller seminar based classes. Lectured based classes benefits students who prefer to learn and engage with the course materials from a more separate knowing orientation. According to Belenky et. al., separate knowing is more detached and critical (1986) which then favors men's learning style (Evans, et. al., 2005). Lectured based classes are not set up so that students have an opportunity to engage, reflect, evaluate, analyze, synthesize or communicate about the information presented (Adrian, 2010). This type of instruction, also known as connecting knowing, is an orientation which women tend to learn best in (Evans, et. al., 2005). Thus, classroom instruction and how instructors teach in those spaces can impact students' engagement and development with the course materials. In other words, instructor-student interactions can impact students' level of understanding and as a result, impact their development (Emanuel & Potter, 1992). Lectured

based classes are not constructed so that students can easily have a relationship with their instructor. This is an important component for first-year students, as forming a relationship with faculty/staff members are essential to student success and development (Astin, 1999). As higher education administrators, we have to analyze how classroom instructions are being constructed and who they are benefiting.

The American education system was created for men by men (Belenky et. al, 1986). How our higher education system is set up and who it is set up for in terms of classroom instruction is a critical issue in higher education. Our student population is becoming more diverse in terms of student identities and as a result, we must analyze how our classrooms are set up and who they are set up for (Evans, et. al., 2005). “Ignoring gender can make us blind to the significant impact that it can have on our learners, and to ways that we can improve learning experiences for all learners,” (Hayes, 2001, p. 40). “Providing additional programs and opportunities...to help women succeed will ensure their momentum in higher education. By recognizing that women face and are affected by myriad challenges, educational instruction and government can help continue the progress women have made over the last several decades,” (Holbrook, 2002, para. 10). Within public higher education, institutions are set up to offer classes in a lectured based format that can serve hundreds of students. Instructors talk for the duration of the class, while student takes notes (The College Board, 2016). This type of format, in terms of lectured based classes is a critical issue within higher education because they are not taught to support all identities’ cognitive development or psychosocial development. Theories can help explain phenomenon, and thus by looking at Perry’s Intellectual and Ethical Development theory, we can begin to analyze how classroom instruction can play a crucial role in how students develop intellectually.

Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory

Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory analyze how students process information and thus how they relate/make commitments to the larger world. "The sequence of structures preceding this position describes a person's development from a dualistic absolutism and toward this acceptance of generalized relativism," (Perry, 2011). In other words, Perry's positions begins with the Authority as Absolute mentality and as each position progresses students gain a wider perspective of processing information and making their own decisions and commitments (Love & Guthrie, 1999). Classroom instructions during the first two years at a public institution can be formatted in a lectured based format (The College Board, 2016). Within a lectured based class, instructors typically lecture while students take notes and are tested through a formal assessment. Instructors are the Authority and students listen and are asked to restate what they've learned in a very structured style assessment (Magolda, 2011). This type of learning is closely related to Perry's Dualism position within Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory. Perry describes Dualism as the ability see knowledge as right versus wrong and that Authorities know the Absolute knowledge (Love & Guthrie, 1999). Courses taught in a lecture style are set up for dualistic thinking, where instructors hold all the answers and students are expected to regurgitate answers. "The world of Authority is free from conflict, and a student's job is to listen to the Authorities in order to receive the right answers – the Truth," (Love & Guthrie, 1999, p. 8).

As students journey through their education, they typically become more developed cognitively and are able to think more critically (Perry, 2011). Typically, by the time students reach this position, they have reached position 4, Relativism Subordinate or position 5,

Relativism Correlates. Reaching this level of intellectual development could be influenced by classroom instruction. For example, by the time students enter their third and fourth year courses, lectured based classes are replaced with smaller class sizes, sometimes in the form of seminars. Within these types of classes, instructors have more opportunity to form discussions and provide students opportunities to engage with the curriculum. In other words, classroom instruction could play a role towards students' developing intellectually, towards Relativism Subordinate or Relativism Correlates. The classroom instruction allows room for interpretation and dialogue, thus students can create own meaning and knowledge rather than accepting Authorities as Absolute Truths. "The notion of Authority becomes authority, that is, authority loses its status as not being open to challenge...students recognize the existence of multiple (and often conflicting) authorities," (Love & Guthrie, 1999, p. 12). Because students are able to engage more with the course material, work with groups of students to gain different perspectives, build a closer relationship with instructors; the classroom instruction is set up to promote towards the Relativism position.

Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory was based off a study done on students from prestigious institutions such as Harvard University and Radcliffe College, however Perry only used interviews from the men of Harvard to validate and illustrate his theory (Evans, et. al., 2005). Given that women make up over half of our undergraduate population (Halbrook, 2002), we must look at Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's Women Ways of Knowing Theory which was based off of Perry's Intellectual and Ethical Development Theory. By comparing and contrasting these two theories, we can begin to see the differences in intellectual development amongst men and women.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule's Women Ways of Knowing

Belenky et. al's., Women Ways of Knowing Theory begin with the Silence and Received Knowing perspectives (Belenky, et. al., 1986). According to Clinchy (2011), the Silenced perspective consisted of women who did not have a voice or are of blind obedience to authority. These women are considered invisible in their education (Belenky, et. al., 1986). The Received Knowing perspective correlated with Perry's Dualism position, which consisted of some women understanding truth as Absolute and Unambiguous (Clinchy, 2011). Both of these perspectives promote the idea of an instructor containing all the answers. In the context of lectured based class, instructors are perpetuating this idea of them holding all the knowledge and it is the students' responsibility to learn and regurgitate the knowledge. In relations to women, Belenky et. al. (1986), indicated women tend to struggle with this form of learning because they prefer more of a connected teaching style as it "help[ed] women nurture their own voices," (Evans et. al., 2005, p. 123). According to Belenky, et. al., (1986):

"The 'real' and valued lessons learned did not necessarily grow out of their academic work but in relationships with friends and teachers, life crises and community involvements. Indeed we observed that women often feel alienated in academic settings and experience 'formal' education as either peripheral or irrelevant to their central interests and development," (p. 4).

Lectured based classes can have a negative impact on female students than male students, given that males identify more with the separate knowing approach (Belenky et. al., 1986 & Magolda, 2011). "Women's educational needs are different than men...strategies of teaching and methods of evaluation are rarely examined by faculty to see if they are compatible with women's

preferred styles of learning,” (Belenky et. al., 1986, p. 5). Lectured based classes do not typically allow students opportunity for discussion or the ability to ask one-on-one questions between the student and instructor. As a result, women are neglected the opportunity to connect or engage with the instructor or curriculum. Once you’ve progressed towards the last perspective within the Women’s Way of Knowing Theory, Constructed Knowing, the qualities in that perspective resemble what a third or fourth year students should resemble in their cognitive development (Belenky, et. al., 2011). The constructed knowing perspective resembles qualities from a smaller class type of instruction such as seminar. Within these types of smaller classes, instructors can engage in lecture while managing small group discussions. This type of learning fosters both connected and separate knowers (Belenky et. al., 2011). Navigating through these perspectives, or in some cases not being able to navigate effectively, may influence how women chose their field of study as mentioned in Magolda’s Epistemological Reflection. In other words, how women receive and process new knowledge can impact how they will encounter uncertainty.

Baxter Magolda’s Epistemological Reflection: Encountering Uncertainty

Baxter Magolda’s Epistemological Reflection explains students’ process of experiencing uncertainty. For instance, do students see themselves as authoritative figures or if they are fixed with having an Authority figure and the Absolute Truth (Magolda, 2011)? According to Evans et. al. (2005), Magolda stressed the difference between female students and male students and how classroom instructors can support students and how they approach uncertainty. “The role of the teacher is to involve the creation of learning environment that endorses contextual applications of knowledge, discussions that include evaluation of perspectives and opportunities for mutual critiques by student and instructors,” (Evans et. al., 2005, p. 127).

Within Magolda's Epistemological Reflection, Magolda breaks down each stage in relations to how men would respond and how women would respond to uncertainty. For Absolute Knowing, women tend to process from a receiving knowledge approach, where they emphasize learning through relationships with peers and are given opportunities to demonstrate knowledge gained (Evans, et. al., 2005). This type of engagement or assessment does not typically occur in a lectured based class. Absolute Knowing is closely related back to Belenky et. al's., perspective of Received Knowing and Perry's Dualism position. The Transitional Knowing stage indicates how some knowledge is still unknown, and in order to process that, women tend exemplify interpersonal knowing. In other words, the ability to interact with peers in order to develop a sense of understanding is crucial. Men on the other hand process in a more impersonal knowing, thus, the desire to be forced to think, have debates and research to resolve uncertainty (Evans, et. al., 2005) Both men and women within the Transitional Knowing stage are not benefited through lectured based classes as instructors are often giving opportunities for class interaction or dialogue. Through Magolda's assessment and interviews, her results showed two-thirds of her participants in the absolute knowing perspective, given that they believed knowledge was certain and known by authorities (Magolda, 2011). First year students (regardless of gender) who take lectured based classes are at a different place in mind (as opposed to second year students) and thus they need to benefited from a smaller class where they have more opportunity to develop a relationship with their instructor (Vanderbilt University, 2016). Vanderbilt University (2016) indicated: "an extended orientation for first-years facilitated by older students and faculty members, help students more quickly adapt to this new environment," (section 2, para. 6). According to Magolda's research (2011), more than 50% of her participants enter the transitional knowing perspective during their second year. This trend of students

becoming more developed within Magolda's theory continues as they enter their third or fourth year (Magolda, 2011). As students' progress further within this theory, higher education administrators should analyze if classroom environment and instruction plays a role. Students in their third or fourth year tend to be in smaller class sizes where instructors have more opportunity to engage with students and thus help students reflect more critically with their peers and develop a more authentic understanding of the course materials.

How student engage within the classroom, whether it is interaction with their instructor, the amount of time they raise their hand in class, the relationship with their peers and level of engagement with the curriculum can all impact how they development in terms of intellectual development (Belenky et. al., 1986). However in terms of psychosocial development, classroom instruction can explain the aftermath of when students face uncertainty as explained in Magolda's Epistemological Reflection Theory. Depending on how women encounter uncertainty, it can help them work towards identity achievement or could lead them towards foreclosure or diffusion. Josselson's Theory can explain how classroom instruction can help navigate women's psychosocial development.

Josselson's Theory

Through Josselson's Theory, she explained the four identity pathways individuals find themselves throughout their development. The pathways include: Foreclosures (Guardians), Identity Achievement (Pathmakers), Moratoriums (Searchers), Identity Diffusions (Drifters). These pathways can explain how one develops their identity and how they make choices (Evans, et. al., 2005). Josselson's theory can be connected to Perry, and Belenky et. al.'s theories in that if they are in the lower positions or perspectives within those stages, it can correlate with Josselson's Foreclosure or Diffusion pathways. According to Evans et. al., students in the

Identity Diffusion pathway feel as a lack of commitment and are drifting through life (2005).

“They were unable to make identity commitments because of the instability and unreliability of their capacity to organize and integrate their experiences,” (Evans, et. al., 58) Students in the Perry’s Dualism position can contribute to the Identity Diffusion pathway, given that they are not having to form connections between new knowledge gained and are mindlessly going through the system. Students who are in lecture based classes are not necessarily challenged to think and form their own thoughts or draw their own conclusions on the curriculum but are instead expected to listen and learn the Absolute Truth from the instructor. Students in the Foreclosure pathway can also be linked to the Perry’s Dualism or Belenky et. al.’s, Received Knowing perspective because they are accepting what is being told by authority as the Truth. “They make choices without doubt, hesitation, or questioning childhood messages. Typically they adopt standards...based on parental beliefs and will not risk disappointing their parents,” (Evans, et. al., 2005, p. 55). How students make their commitments are based off the expectations of others and have not necessarily experienced any form of identity crisis or uncertainty. In lectured based classes, students are regurgitating what instructors are saying without having the opportunity to truly question the material. The Moratorium pathway shares similar qualities to Perry’s Multiplicity position as students are now beginning to value various points of views and are able to form their own decisions. “After internalizing the values of the family, these women are convinced of the rightness of these values but on learning of other legitimate ways of being,” (Evans, et. al., 2005, p.56-57). Classroom Instruction can impact students in this Moratorium pathway/Multiplicity position. For instance, students who are considering switching major may be influenced by the classroom environment and structure because they find it difficult to connect with the materials from a lectured based class. During this crisis, students may explore

different interests and commitments due to having a more diverse understanding of other ideas. This idea of a crisis and a crossroad is also related to Magolda's Self-Authorship theory (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005). The last stage of Josselson's theory, Identity Achievement is closely related to the final chunk of Perry's Commitment position or Belenky et. al.'s Constructed Knowing. For instance, students have now developed their own thoughts and opinions, have vetted out all the options and have committed to their choice.

Conclusion

How students learn in the classroom, their relationship with their instructors can determine the pathway they are in and where they end up by the time they graduate. Belenky et. al. (1986) indicated how classrooms have traditionally been set up to favor men's learning style. We must reanalyze classroom instruction, so that it favors all students and their development. "To assure continued access and achievement for women in higher education, we must look at the systems and mechanisms in place to support them," (Holbrook, 2002). Instructors in smaller class seminars have more opportunities to engage with students, challenge students perspectives and thus help students achieve identity achievement. Instructors in the larger lectured based classes are limited with student interaction and thus students result in thinking very dualistically and rely heavily on authorities to educate and make decisions for them.

Classroom environment and instruction can have a strong impact on students' cognitive development and how they relate to new ideas or uncertainty. Students who are enrolled in lectured based classes are typically students in their first or second year of their undergraduate education. These students typically need more guidance as they are still figuring out how to navigate the ropes of college and how to be successful (Vanderbilt University, 2016). According to Krumrei-Mancuso, et. al. (2013), class communication between students and instructors are

vital for their success and retention. Given that lecture classes can consist of hundreds of students, communication between students and instructors could be impacted as a result. To address this critical issue of classroom instruction and the impact on students' cognitive and psychosocial development, first year students should be given more opportunities to engage with their instructors in a smaller class environment. By doing so, they have more opportunities to develop a relationship with their instructor and thus the student may become more comfortable to discuss and engage with discussion. Lectured based classes are a critical issue within higher education because it neglects the opportunity for instructor-student relationships and opportunities for students to formulate a critical analysis on the knowledge being taught.

Students who are hesitant to speak up or express their concerns during course discussions are impacted by larger lectured based classes (Vanderbilt University, 2016). As higher education administrators, we must acknowledge that having these styles of instructing is a critical issue with higher education. "An overarching challenge here is the impact of class size on how instructors interact with their students. Helping students to cope with difficulties, motivating students to engage meaningfully in learning, and instructing diverse groups of students – all of these are more challenging in large classes," (Vanderbilt University, 2016, section 3, para. 4). We have to ask who is benefitting from this style of instructing and is there a way where we can better support all our students regardless of their identity.

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