Why Should We Care About The Gender Difference in Classroom Participation?

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Abstract

It has been commonly understood and empirically demonstrated that co-ed undergraduate and graduate classrooms tend to derive greater male class participation from course discussions than from female students. Despite their equal ability to contribute substantial comments toward course topics female students still do so less frequently. In this paper, I present a normative argument for why we should care about this occurrence because of its impact on facets of a woman's personal and professional development.

I. Data

To introduce the evidence revealing gender disparity in class participation, I have looked at studies conducted across undergraduate and graduate environments, that focused on observing and measuring the amount of this behavior between genders.[1] A majority of studies reflect that there is a significant enough difference demonstrated in the frequency of comments made, across a variety of lectures settings, between male and female students that it is something to be concerned about.[2, 3, 4, 5, 6] The trend exists for a varying number of classroom conditions such as ratio of males to females, course subject, and classroom size. Furthermore this phenomenon carries over through different age groups of students.[7] While there are a variety of studies that manipulate different variables to make conclusions about participation rates, a common finding is that female students tend to participate more in courses led by a female professor whereas male participatory behavior, while consistently dominating that of their female colleagues, reflects much more variation across studies.[8] Male students are deemed to offer bolder responses in their interactions with professors.[9] Furthermore, only 30% of men, as opposed to 50% of women, reported perceiving any form of sex discrimination in college.[10] Such a substantial difference in perception highlights how many times male students may fail to do their part to correct for these gender dynamics because they fail to recognize that a problem exists. Finally, it has been found that male students are much more likely to dominate class conversation when the course is directed by a male professor.[11] Such a trend is highly concerning given that only 24% of all full-time university faculty positions in the US are held by women.[12] Moreover, women may be less motivated to join academia upon realizing that at each full-time

faculty rank, they earn less than their male counterpart.[13] Between the 1970s to the early 2000s, the disparity in income among male and female academics has remained virtually unaltered: female faculty earn, on average, 81% of the amount earned by their male colleagues.[14] It is even more discouraging for women to consider careers in academia, thereby increasing pressure for a more gender-balanced faculty, when we examine the opportunities for promotion. The percentage of women in non-tenure track faculty positions is nearly double that of male faculty.[15] Given that research confirms the comparatively higher comfort female students feel more comfortable participating in classrooms led by female professors, the data pertaining to gender inequalities in academia becomes extremely relevant and concerning for this paper. Even academic research environments reflect male students being much more likely to directly connect with professors in informal meetings.[16] On the other hand, female students demonstrate a greater inclination towards electronic correspondence over personal interactions.[17] Females also report holding fewer research assistantship positions than males.[18] This is yet another exemplary case of young educated women forgoing direct collaborative interactions that may serve to enrich their academic experience. Students' attitudinal differences towards their learning environments have also been connected to the differential faculty behavior towards male students versus female students. By way of illustration, it has been found that professors of both genders tend to reward men for their participation more often than women by offering these students more attention or following up to their comments.[19]

Delving into an analysis of graduate school environment, most frequently looking at law school environments, I have found similar or even lesser gender parity.[20] Certain law school environments have reflected a female student population that tends to grow less critical of their inferior social status quo from the first to third year.[21] This may reflect the dissipating discomfort that women exhibit with the differential treatment that they receive after being admitted to the same institution as their male peers. Disparate participation rates have also been attributed to discouraging women from feeling empowered, within law school culture, in their ability to perform academically. Furthermore, this discouragement affects females' actual performance from their first year onward so that "men are consistently more likely to be within the top tenth percentile of their graduating class for all three years of law school," despite all students entering with relatively equal qualification.[22] Female graduate students report feeling less support from the faculty than their male counterparts report.[23] I will later argue how trends, such as the example of reduced student attention paid toward gender status quos, are problematic. I aim to convey how these trends may contribute to women's enduring disposition towards complacency.

Finally, a brief glance at the broader professional opportunities for women is similarly discouraging and supports the idea that women may be inadvertently stunting the trajectory of their careers because of the participatory habits that they develop within higher education field. Women comprise only 13.5% of president positions at research institutions, less than 17% of general counsels representing Fortune 500 companies, and only 4.2% of CEOs for these same companies.[24 & 25] Based on

association tests run between character traits and gender, the current assessment that working professionals reflect is one that lacks faith in promoting women to managerial positions during the prosperous periods of company; rather, women are associated as good leaders for the rougher periods in a company because of their perceived strength in taking the blame for a company's shortcomings or failures.[26] Rather than being trusted to direct their company or firm towards periods of innovation and success, women endure the "glass cliff."[27] Such an experience positions women into promoted roles that involve many more crises and thereby more opportunity for relatively more censure from colleagues and the press. This data offers only a peek into the window of studies concerning gender differences in academic and professional participatory behavior, from which I will analyze and argue for the importance of gender in student contributions within classrooms.

II. Objective

Amid what appears to be a resurgence of the strand of feminist rhetoric that reintroduces issues of gender inequalities in the workplace and the need for women to "lean in,"[28] my own observations of disparate gender class participations were the inspiration for this paper. In alignment with some of the data presented above, my most poignant experience of this phenomena was during an in-class exercise within an undergraduate two-hundred student game theory course. In this instance, the professor asked for volunteers to participate in "game" that the vast majority of students were exposed to for the first time. The professor chose players based on the first ten people to come forward into the game. There was no special knowledge or advantage that any particular student had going in, yet nine out of the ten students to initially volunteer were male. The winner of the game ended up being the one female volunteer, something that the professor joked about at the end of the game. To my surprise, the next two rounds of the game displayed nearly equal ratio of male and female volunteers. Witnessing how one female's success could inspire a significant proportion of the female population in our class to subsequently participate sparked my interest in measuring the importance of this phenomenon.

This paper ultimately seeks to answer the question of why we should care about the fact that female class participation rates, in both undergraduate and graduate level courses, are lower than those of their male colleagues. I have presented the quantitative data evidencing that a gender disparity in classroom participation exists. The rest of the paper will be divided into two broader sections: "Why Participation Matters" and "The Social and Professional Implications of Not Participating." There are six subsections within these two umbrella sections. "Why Participation Matters" will begin with a subsection addressing the importance of participation to one's sense of identity. Subsection 2 considers how participation contributes to one's evaluation of her self-worth. Subsection 3 explains how participation is relevant to reaching better, truer conclusions about course matter as well as to how participatory behavior can be used to evaluate the relative capacities of one's peers.

Raising the connection that class participation has on an individual's development will serve as a launching pad for the argumentation found in the second section, "The Social and Professional Implications of Not Participating." In the latter half of the paper, I will extend the argument for why greater attention needs to be paid to this phenomenon by illustrating its broader ramifications in both women's academic and professional environments. Subsection 4 will set to prove how failure to participate hinders the development of self-confidence as a worthy participant, which is causally linked to increased complacency in co-ed deliberative environments. Subsection 5 will explain some of the ways by which a lack of female participation harms her academic community. Subsection 6 contains the argument that less frequent participation negatively impacts females' professional experiences and the implications it may have on their career trajectory. Finally I will conclude my argument by offering some prescriptions for academic institutions to make a more concerted effort to enhance women's participation in the classroom in light of this data.

Why Participation Matters

III. Self-expressions' importance to a sense of identity

In the first of three justifications for the importance of class participation, I argue that this form of expression has a significant impact on one's sense of identity. I will use a transitive argument to justify the significant positive impact that participation has on one's sense of identity. I begin by stipulating that participation is a manifestation of one's freedom of speech. Presenting the justifications for protecting freedom of speech, I seek to highlight the argument that free speech fosters self-fulfillment; therefore participation, as a practice of free speech, also fosters self-fulfillment. I will subsequently present self-fulfillment as a core component of developing a true sense of identity, thereby completing the transitive argument that seeks to emphasize the importance of class participation, as a mode of realizing and refining of one's identity. Finally, I will supplement this transitive argument with the direct relation that I believe exists between participatory expression and one's identity.

The freedom of speech has been justified from a number of rights-based approaches. One of the central arguments for protecting speech is its integral role in self-fulfillment[29]. For the purposes of this paper, I am referring to the self-fulfillment argument as a validation of speech, without speaking to whether it applies to forms of quasi-speech, such as such as blind class polls or the use of clickers. In employing the term self-fulfillment, I am referring to the actualization of "our deepest desires or worthiest capacities," one of the keys to achieving a high degree of human satisfaction.[30] However, in order to actualize these wants, we need to be able to first recognize what they are by engaging in conversations that inform us of all of the possible paths to our personal self-fulfillment. This is where the open ability to express one's sentiments becomes crucial for not only eliciting information about particular desires, but to also engage in conversation that helps one hone in on her on aspirations and goals. One

may argue that attaining such knowledge is feasible by simply listening rather than actively participating in class dialogue. In response, I take an empiricist perspective and argue that the passive act of listening only provides the individual with a part of the full experience. This is due to the fact that they are largely taking in the thoughts and ideas of others without any subsequent engagement of their own curiosities. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however, it does not lead to any enlightenment beyond what is proposed by others. Speech offers one the opportunity to openly question statements and receive further edification on those remarks. Listening leads the individual to accept, reject or hold off on any judgment at all. Without the useful exercise of actively expressing their own sentiments, one cannot immediately unravel a potentially more enlightened perspective on a particular topic because they have not accepted or rejected any of their own questions to others' remarks.

Participation, as the fulcrum on which speech rests, is therefore putting this theoretical justification of self-fulfillment into action. Firstly, presenting one's ideas aloud offers her the chance to reevaluate them in a manner that she is unlikely to do when the same thoughts are voiced solely in her mind. This is because many times we do not think to clearly and completely construct our thoughts until we are forced to compose them aloud. Furthermore, the feedback that we can immediately perceive from our peers also highlights the benefits of speech. More importantly, this exercise forces an individual to succinctly convert the somewhat abstract thoughts floating her head into cohesive statements. Speech forces the speaker to consciously reassess her *own* ideas by either confirming or rejecting them.[31] Verbalizing ideas in this manner pushes an individual to keep her desires, as well as the identity she wishes to project to others, consistent. I believe that this action of simultaneously reassessing beliefs and expressing them reveals how participation better facilitates the recognition of one's inner desires, or their path to self-fulfillment. Furthermore, such reassessment strengthens one's convictions, which can be held with newfound certainty and clarity.

Lastly, the recognition and actualization of one's goals is fundamental to one's identity.[32] Without ascertaining one's needs and capacities, it would be difficult to claim that one has a full grasp on her "self." In referring to the term "identity," I am referencing its role in shaping who we are in our personal and social spheres[33]. More specifically, identity refers to distinctive characteristics that form the foundation of how we see ourselves and how we wish others to interpret who we are. While there are a number of mental and behavioral components contributing to an individual's impression of her identity, I argue that one of these facets is how well one understands and can complete her path to self-fulfillment. In realizing one's desires and capacities, an individual is confirming who she is in the deepest sense because she actively chooses what is it that makes her content. Through speech, the individual can actively question and polish her understanding of the concepts she may or may not find appealing. Speech offers individuals the ability to engage in a conversation about matters outside of the scope of their knowledge. In this way, it fuels self-fulfillment and transitively, self-identity. The path to finding and realizing such a core component of one's being helps to build one's sense of self in the awareness of what one has

discarded as irrelevant to self-fulfillment and what one has held onto in the pursuit of it.

In drawing the connection between speech, participation, self-fulfillment and a sense of identity, I now turn to establishing a direct relationship between participation and the development of one's identity. Our opinions, reactions and judgments are all extensions of our identity, therefore our public expression of them contributes to their attachment to a part of our identity. There is social value derived from expressing one's perspectives and intuitions. In communicating one's stance on particular subject matters, an individual clarifies the broader labels that are encompassed within her identity[34]. In doing so, speech enables her to reaffirm this knowledge both to outsiders and to herself. By its very nature, participation necessitates a dialogue between individuals rather than simply with oneself; this inherent aspect of participation forces an individual to question herself more, with every critique or challenge she may encounter. From such back and forth exchange, individuals can further clarify aspects of their identities by being put in a position to outwardly defend beliefs that they possess.

Thus far, I have shown that verbal exercise helps an individual have a more complete understanding of who she truly is because it forces her to project her thoughts in a multi-dimensional manner: she is questioning, defending and elucidating portions of her views that may not have been as clear before. The manner in which one presents her "self" to others can also reveal an individual's temperament in reference to particular topics. For instance, presentation of and conviction of her expressions can illustrate her comfort in speaking about specific issues. Demonstrating other characteristics such as one's degree of patience and understanding, speech reveals more aspects of her identity that would not be as easy to gauge without her voluntary participation. Without another's active participation in a conversation, we may interpret an individual's passive involvement in a class discussion to mean they cooperative or agreeable. Their silence, by default, makes them appear to operate this way; however we can only truly confirm this theory when they are actively engaging in the conversation and remaining equally as cooperative and agreeable. This exercise can also be revealing to the individual herself because it may cause her to realize the degree to which she can be more vocal or passionate about issues raised in class. The act of speaking thus allows the individual and her peers to observe this side of her identity.

A study called *Speak Up,* conducted by the Yale Law Women, provides a nice summary of this relation between in-class contribution and self-identity[35]. In describing the motivations behind conducting its own study on class participation based on gender, Yale Law Women states that classroom participation is important because it shapes the academic environment, "which influences the values, intuitions and identities of students and the school as a whole."[36] Helping to shape the school's identity, aggregate class participation plays a broader role in creating institutional distinctiveness. Yale Law Women introduces another dimension to this connection between participation and identity. The identity of an institution is indeed a reflection

of its individual parts, with one significant piece being its students. Therefore, in order to improve or continue to project an identity of academic vigor, continuous generations of students need to individually maintain such vigor. Maintenance of the intellectual identity of an academic institution is at least partially controlled by the picture that active class participation paints across courses in an academic institution. Moreover, neither the Yale Law School nor its student body is a monolith; it (and other law schools) is comprised of diverse members. To capture this diversity, we require participation from the wide spectrum of voices.

IV. Verbalizing one's ideas contributes to one's self-worth.

As a second justification for the importance of participation, I contend that this exercise augments a student's perceived self-worth. Firstly, participation serves as an individual's conscious signaling to the professor and her peers that she values and wishes to contribute to the class discourse. Secondly, the feedback from each of these groups as a result of the student's participatory behavior serves to further contribute to her self-worth.

I begin the self-worth argument by unraveling the idea behind participation as an active signal. Classrooms are environments where, to a certain degree, there exists a level of asymmetric information.[37] Neither the professor nor one's peers are fully aware of which students have the most to offer to each of the course topics in terms of enriching the class's insights through personal experience, empirical knowledge and/or unique perspectives. This is where individuals' behavior becomes useful as a signal of their intentions. The conscious decision to participate within the discussion functions as a signal to one's peers that one has value to add to the discussion and one is confident in this belief. Employing this action to demonstrate her individual merit contributes to her self-worth because the student proves to herself that she is not only able to develop ideas in reaction to intellectual questions but also that she can synthesize her thoughts in order to reproduce them into commentary for the class.

The perceived self-worth one possesses can inflate as result of both successful and unsuccessful instances of participation as a signal to her peers. Successful instances of signaling can be characterized as moments where the student feels a sense of pride in the act of publicly offering her thoughts or in the significance of her comments. Additionally, such success can be characterized in moments where one's comments are deemed valuable enough that they influence the direction of subsequent discussion. Observing how a student's thoughts impact the ideas and interests of others can heighten her self-worth in relation to her perceived value in the class. According to general laws of economics, we experience a diminishing level of utility over time to positive experiences that are comparable to one another. Keeping this idea in mind, we can find that unsuccessful instances of signaling can prove valuable to self-worth over time as well. The logic behind this is that these experiences will yield a relatively higher feeling of accomplishment for subsequent successful signals as opposed to having consecutive instances of successful signaling. Successive instances of fruitful participation are more likely to provide a diminishing marginal value. Thus,

the experience of making an influential remark after contributing less appreciated comments can feel much more rewarding than a steady chain of successful comments.

In a similar sense, a student's signaling, via class participation, to her professor can also lift her perceived level of self-worth. If we assume the veracity of the statement that students generally respect all of their professors from an intellectual viewpoint, we can perceive class participation as a signal of the following initiative: students actively contribute in class because, to some degree, they are reflecting their respect for and interest in the material being presented by the professor. If a pupil was apathetic to the professor's theories or lesson plans, he or she would be much less motivated to illustrate such initiative. As a result, class participation, in the form of statements meant for one's professor, also heightens one's self-worth because the individual is confidently signaling her interest in the course, which is something that she knows her professor values. Lastly, her participation signals the student's recognition of the classroom as a cooperative venture, which she identifies as a constructive space for her thoughts. Thus, knowing that their comments are appreciated to some degree enhances the value that a student gives herself as a class participant.

Correspondingly, receiving feedback from professors is also an important result of one's participation that contributes to one's self-worth. Considered as experts in their fields of study, professors many times carry much more authority when they respond to a student's insight or take the time to entertain a particular remark. In result, this amplifies the pride that one feels about her status as a participant in the course. Receiving any form of positive remark from one's professor impacts one's self-worth in a slightly different manner than obtaining recognition from one's peers. In their responses to student input, professors provide a stamp of academic approval that cannot be replicated in receiving reactions from others students in the class. Because it is a part of a professor's job profile to be somewhat of an expert in a particular field of study, his or her outward impression of students' statements will be a compelling indicator that they are supplying something unique to that course. Just as we are more inclined to find an experienced art critic's judgment of our work to be more influential to an artist's self-confidence than the impressions of a layman, we are more disposed to shifting our self-image as competent students based on the rejoinders that our professors provide us. The resulting effects of a student's participation can thus also be helpful to building her self-worth.

In critically analyzing the impact of professor feedback, one could make the counterargument that participation is not conducive to self-worth because negative reception from professors will actually harm an individual's confidence as a student. I do not contest that there exists a risk in having one's contributions critiqued or taken unenthusiastically, which can hurt how one values oneself in the class. Instead, I respond that this potential cost is worth paying because, despite the mental or psychological setback of being told one is wrong, it makes her more aware of whether she is reasoning incorrectly. This gives rise to the student having a chance to alter her critical thinking in subsequent discussion. In this context, negative feedback primarily galvanizes self-improvement and in the long-term, it cultivates a deeper sense of self-

worth based on such improvement. Some scholars do make the argument that students can feel so discouraged by negative reception to their commentary that it deters them from speaking up more or leaves them permanently disengaged from the material.[38] I counter that this occurrence is limited in scope and that the benefits from receiving feedback outweigh the risk of disenchantment for a minority of students from professor feedback. A fundamental aspect of academia is being tested and receiving grades that reflect, to a certain degree, one's knowledge or skills. Therefore, real-time feedback in class is not something that is so overwhelmingly different from the other forms of evaluations, such as exams or essays.

V. Peer engagement as a metric for sensing one's relative capacity to peers and collectively reaching truer conclusions about discussion topics.

A third argument for the importance of class participation is that is enables the speaker to gauge her capacity, relative to her peers. In conjunction with this type of assessment, students can come to truer conclusions about intellectual questions because they have established who the relevant authorities on certain topics may be. I will first provide a theoretical basis for this argument and then provide two examples of how peer engagement leads to these benefits.

Observing her peers' reactions to her remarks, the student can better understand their relative capacities. This understanding derives from one gauging how articulate her classmates are, how sophisticated their ideas are, and how respectful to dissenting viewpoints they may be through their own speech. Being able to gauge the relative qualities in the classroom is important because it signals which students are best to engage with for particular topics in future discussions. This knowledge is particularly relevant for collaborative work assigned within a course. For instance, one will seek to work with those she has judged to share similarities with; or, contrastingly, a student will seek to collaborate with those who possess contrary ideas to her own in order to make the project more comprehensive. In the same sense, signaling one's own acumen through her class contributions can allow her to elicit respect for her ideas and attract equally capable individuals to work with her.

As further illustration of the important role that participation plays for gauging the capacities of one's peers, I will apply the rationale that the philosopher Ronald Dworkin presents in favor of permitting the ability to ridicule.[39] Although disagreements arising through class participation are not necessarily considered forms of ridicule, the idea behind Dworkin's argument is very much applicable to conceptualizing the important role that participation plays in building peer understanding. In his *The Right to Ridicule*, Dworkin asserts that democratic thinking and law can only be considered legitimate, and therefore rationally accepted by parties with diverging viewpoints, through public discourse[40]. In political settings much of this discourse will be fueled by the opposition poking holes into a particular piece of legislation that it considers weak. However, in doing so, we can expect some

challengers to accept the verdict reached by a majority of participants because it has taken into account the various points of view for that specific matter. The majority, in reaching a democratic verdict, will have gauged the minority dissenters' capacities and arguments by the strength of their verbal argumentation. Among a group of rational participants, individuals with the most lucid and reasonable arguments will prevail. Dworkin concludes that virtues asking for a greater degree of respect for fellow citizens "would be self-defeating if [the manner in which respect was obtained] were thought to justify official censorship."[41] In the same sense, we can find value in the ability of class participation to provide a chance at arriving at a correct opinion by first respectfully eliciting other's opinions and second, enabling the most convincing point to prevail. Discussions, where all of the participants are contributing, can weed out the weaker considerations and allow the stronger, truer argument to prevail. This would mean that any type of self-censorship would prevent sufficient peer evaluation and become an impediment to this academic endeavor of seeking the truest of conclusions.

From these foundational arguments, I seek to establish a connection between participation and evaluative peer engagement by focusing on the effects of a specific type of participation: question-making. This form of participation can signal a student's confusion with the professor's presentation of a concept. In effect, those are her colleagues who understand the material may react to this signal by offering to relay the information in a manner that may be more intelligible to her[42]. Students are able to assess the relative comprehension capacities of their classmates through observations of question-making. Moving forward from this kind of interaction, an individual can also use her experience of receiving clarification of an idea to inform her judgments of her peers' capacities, signaling which peers she should defer to for guidance, for at least some topics. On the other hand, participating to offering substantive questions in class can distinguish the well-informed students for particular discussions[43]. Recognizing that particular peers have raised concerns that are not initially intuitive for an individual enables her to mentally note their relatively more complex capacity in evaluating information for that particular topic. Rather than asking about the definitions to terms, these students may be inquiring about the application or limits of a concept. This kind of participatory behavior will push one's peers to also analyze that material in a more sophisticated manner. Furthermore, by adequately responding to peer inquiries about confusing concepts, students can facilitate more dynamic class conversation by ensuring that their peers understand the foundational points in order to be able use their own unique backgrounds to supplement the discussion. Without understanding the foundation of the class discussion, students are often inhibited from sharing potentially substantial comments. Similarly, the frequent respondents to peers' questions can also be identified as the relatively reliable authorities for that class topic.[44] This interactive questioning of proposed ideas clarifies the relative capacities of each individual, which in turn serves to develop more profound discussion. Recognizing the contributions that others are making and elaborating on their own ideas, students generate respect from their peers. With a mutual understanding of each other's capacities and the use of participation as a means to showcase their capacities,

students can create more meaningful, insightful environments of discussion.

Secondly, the peer reactions to one's comments can also serve as a useful tool to measure one's capacities in relation to the rest of the class. These reactions need not be positive but may still be valuable based on their strength and the outcomes their produce. Generating any form of passionate feedback from others reflects the power of a remark. This is because it touches upon important trigger points in the minds of one's peers, sparking new ideas. Such triggering power can strengthen the content of the discussion, advancing its path toward finding substantive answers to the class's central questions. Moreover, disagreement with one's comments, insofar as it retains a respectful tone and manner, can simultaneously raise one's self-worth and encourage additionally valuable participation. Despite the differences in opinion that students may have, there can still be personal value derived from knowing that the class takes its peer's views to be worthy of disagreement rather than simply dismissing them. Frequent agreement can reflect that a student holds widely shared intuitions and opinions, whereas increased skepticism from one's peers may suggest that she is approaching the subject matter from a completely different perspective. Peers' responses to a student's remarks serve to demonstrate if they understand the points, thereby assuring her comments are clear. In addition, feedback reflects students' relative capacities in how well they elucidate their responses or counterarguments.

Finally participation is particularly relevant to making peer evaluations in light of the data reflecting a progressive decrease in pronounced gender biases (among both male and female students) against females' abilities.[45] Specifically, women have been much less likely to discriminate in their judgment of a scholarly article based on the gender of the author.[46] Prior to the 1960s, both men and women were likely to deem a female-authored article of poorer quality after being given the same article with either a male or female name. Such an effect is no longer being found in contemporary replications of the study. Such changed notions speak to the need to continue to enforce such perceptions in the classroom.[47] However there are still studies confirming the tendency of both sexes to value other forms of work more highly when it is performed by a man over a woman.[48] I believe that more frequent classroom participation becomes all the more valuable because it affords women an opportunity to create microcosmic environments that better support the notion that women are equally as capable thinkers as men. In order for these gender-authored article studies to really reflect pronounced change in perception, individuals should be reporting equal impressions of the texts because they truly believe that both genders have equivalent capabilities. There is a real possibility that people today are simply providing the politically correct answer. In order for attitudes and thereafter behaviors to change, individuals need to be witnessing women's strengths for themselves. By demonstrating their complex and unique thought processes outwardly, women can create a more pronounced statement of their value. These more frequent instances of women showing of their insightful thinking will result in people having more easily retrievable memories of this. Various studies have confirmed that while women do not verbalize their efforts to the same degree as their male colleagues, they possess equal

capabilities.[49] When more examples of women's importance in deliberative discourses can come to mind quickly, people can more effortlessly change their actual gender perceptions. Our society has become hyper-sensitized to labeling many statements as prejudicial. In order to reduce the possibility of individuals displaying a façade of political correctness, we need to produce indicators that naturally shift social attitudes and give us more confidence that they are legitimate changes. In seeking to engage their peers with their interpretations of concepts, females can use their class participation as a means to directly contradict (and hopefully eliminate) the historical prejudices or underestimations that are placed on their gender.

Summarily, active participation is pertinent to peer-evaluation because it conveys students' strengths on particular topics, thereby informing the group of each student's relative capabilities. This in turn, facilities more robust and informed conversation that can allow a class to reach a better understanding of what the academic consensus may be on a particular intellectual question.

The Social and Professional Implications of Not Participating

VI. Failure to participate deprives one's academic community.

From another perspective, the absence of equal female participation in scholarly discussions denies academia the opportunity to reap the benefits of women's participation. I argue that because this demographic has unique and substantial contributions to make to the academic community, its relative absence within intellectual conversations prevents higher education institutions from tapping into their full potential.

To formulate this argument, I will transpose two arguments used to justify gender-based affirmative action. These rationales apply with equal strength in justifying the importance of gender-balanced class participation. The first fundamental tenet behind enacting gender-based affirmative action is the diversity principle[50]. Both the courts and universities have recognized the positive impact that diversity in race and gender can have on the larger student body. It both widens the amount of understanding for these traditionally underrepresented groups and helps to shape more well-rounded perspectives of the individuals within the larger demographic. This occurs in part because students are exposed to a variety of opinions and experiences of minority students as they interact with a greater number of individuals from categorized groups. Both of these factors then contribute to a greater awareness of implicit biases that individuals may possess for these groups. Fortunately, students may reassess and remove such biases through interactions with increasing more individuals from socially prejudiced groups.[51] Tailoring the diversity rationale to gender, I assert that exposure to and awareness of the array of female experiences can help eliminate student biases against women's abilities or their potential contributions to academia. Hearing from more women in academic conversations can serve to counter some of the gender stereotypes, such as female inferiority in math and science. A stronger

female voice in higher education would push individuals away from subscribing to education-specific gender stereotypes.[52] I contend that the existence of a disparity in class participation leads to students, and perhaps professors too, being less prone to have their current gender stereotyping challenged because the participatory behavior falls in line with their notions of gender ability. For instance, if female students are not answering many questions in an engineering course, though they know what is going on in class, male students and professors perpetuate the stereotypical thinking that only males have a strong grasp on material in this field because they are reflecting such knowledge in their participation. Thus, by failing to illustrate the accurate potential that females possess, we face the threat of a broader perpetuation of unfair prejudices against women in academia.

The second rationale I will be using to highlight the importance of female participation is one that takes into account the epistemic-value that women possess. Supposing we accept that a rational theory is comparative, relying on the relative strength that a theory has to its rivals, we can deduce that the rational status of a theory is only as good as its rival may allow it to appear.[53] Consequently, in order to ensure that we select the best theory among rivals we need to diversify the pool of intellectuals creating and shaping these theories.[54] This epistemic rationale underlines how we can cancel out the erroneous prejudices only after allowing the entire pool's personal biases to undergo a kind of natural selection. This ideally results in the optimal ideas being recorded, having withstood the most complete tests of scrutiny.[55]

Applying the epistemic-value rationale to gender, we can arrive at a similar justification for the importance of eliciting as many alternative views as possible. Women inherently have a different set of experiential biases, which can expose a proposed theory's weaknesses from an avenue unexplored from male experiential biases. Subjecting a theory to as many adversarial forms of analysis as possible will strengthen its deservingness to be epistemologically valuable. An illustration of this principle is the difference found between male and female decision-making processes.[56] Social psychologists assert that the manner by which women make decisions may be more compatible with particular environments with more "intricate concerns."[57] Reaching conclusions to intellectual questions requires deciding on what issues must be considered, how to weigh these considerations and ultimately resolve all points to an agreed upon judgment. If we are to accept that there are gender-differences in decision-making styles, we must accept that the considerations that each gender is incorporating into its conclusions may be different. From an epistemic approach, there conclusions would still be equally valid to raise. Applying this idea of differential decision-making to colleges and universities, one can conclude that we may be left with incomplete answers to our intellectual questions in the classroom without fully acknowledging the range of considerations that exists. There can be an entire set of concerns within a discussion that are not adequately addressed without the input of female student experiences. Ensuring such natural constraints exist on theory formulation can encourage everyone to have greater confidence in the validity of future theories; they will have withstood a variety of scholarly criticism that incorporates the

perspectives of both genders.

Apart from the deprivation that classroom dialogues suffer because of unbalanced student participation, I purport that academia is also negatively impacted by this phenomenon because it is an impediment to academic mentorships. Studies have shown that female students are comparably more reticent in courses led by male professors and thereafter less comfortable initiating mentor-mentee relationships.[58] I argue that this is partly due to the fact that women are not utilizing a vital launching pad for the beginning of such mentorship: class participation. Contributing to the exchange of ideas in the course dialogue provides students with a natural opening to an after-class conversation with their professor, where they can offer their thoughts on the course topic. Such an informal conversation is a frequent way in which students organically create mentorship relationships with their professors. This rapport can be developed in other ways but without active class participation it may become more uncomfortable to open such post-class exchanges. A professor who has no prior exposure to a student's capacities is likely to seem more intimidating than one who may have heard and responded to her in-class comments.[59] Some studies reflect that professors within certain classroom environments have been shown to suppress females' confidence to contribute in class by treating their comments dismissively.[60] This data is important not because it establishes a causal relationship between the professor's behavior and a student's in-class participation but because it prompts the intuition that unwelcoming in-class behavior on the part of the professors indirectly closes the door to a mentorship opportunity. Regardless of whether unfavorable behavior towards female students is intentional, the mere fact that it continues to exist threatens to limit women's expected resources in the form of informal academic and professional guidance. While this unfortunate outcome is not the norm, it reflects the potential that lies in finding a more uniform approach to instructing and engaging students, irrespective of gender. Studies find that attaining adequate professor attention can, in general, foster increased self-confidence and acquisition of valuable professional guidance for female students.[61] Among both genders, instructor interaction in certain class types has also been shown to inspire greater political motivations as well as impact critical thinking skills.[62] More specifically, by engaging with professors who have both the passion and knowledge of divisive political or socio-economic issues, students have the opportunity to feed their own curiosities in a particular matter. Additionally, students may utilize professors as resource to learn about the various routes through which they can transforms their passion for a particular issue into a career or public service project.[63] Research demonstrates the importance that professors have as advisors to students in the sense that they are not only building the knowledge of students in the classroom but they hold power to enhance the quality of the student body and provide it with more direction. Further illustrating the particular importance of this interaction for women, it has also been found that females report feeling comparatively more intellectual stimulation from their course instructors than male students.[64] If female students are already putting more weight, in some respects, on their professor's presentation of information they will surely extract a great deal of value from having classroom interaction evolve

into a mentorship.

A secondary form of academic mentorship that goes unrealized is student requests for letters of recommendation. Again, a lack of participatory presence in the classroom can make it extremely difficult for a student to establish a level of comfort in asking a professor to write a recommendation letter on his or her behalf. Moreover, the professor will feel less motivated to write a stellar letter if the student has not memorably displayed an interest in the course material via class participation. As mentioned earlier, one's speech in class gives her the chance to signal to her professor that she finds the course appealing. Pushing students' interest in the course aside, participation still works in their favor by offering a more vivid memory of students' talents for the purpose of their recommendation letter. When writing these letters, professors can better access memories of students' contributions in a lively class discussion as opposed to recalling their submitted coursework. Moreover, anecdotes of the quality of a student's in-class remarks highlight their uniqueness in a way that their exam scores may not. The overall impact of the letter can be boosted with content that appears original rather than a replication of information found on every other student's resume. A concern that has been raised by the Yale Law School Women is that recommendation letter requests to male professors are also gender imbalanced, in part because of the reception that female students claim to experience from male professors.[65] Feeling inhibited in certain cases from freely partaking in class discussions directed by male professors, female students are less likely to approach them outside of class to inquire about their legal questions.[66] This, consequently, leaves female students less inclined to believe that they are justified in requesting a letter of recommendation from their male professors.[67] If this occurrence was simply a matter of feeling more comfortable seeking mentorship from professors sharing their gender, then one would expect to see similar gender discrepancies between male law students seeking recommendations from female professors. On the contrary, it has been shown that male Yale Law School professors receive a fraction of the requests that female professors receive, both from male and female students.[68] Despite the hurdle that professor behavior may present, initiating a mentorship relationship can still be facilitated by the student demonstrating engagement in the course via class participation. This would ease a student's comfort level to approach the professor because she has talking points stemming from her comments made in class. If female students would like to set a precedent for greater balance in the gender of professors writing the recommendation letters, the importance of class participation is heightened.[69] Or, it simply may be the case that a law school's most renown professor for the legal concentration that a student wishes to pursue happens to be male. In this case, it best serves her professional interest for the student to engage with the professor and perhaps later request a letter of recommendation. While the professor ultimately needs to reciprocate interest in writing recommendation letters for students, they are more likely to respond to students who demonstrate active engagement in their course. For a professor who has five requests but only time to write three letters, he or she will be likely to prioritize those students who actively demonstrated a passion for the course, outside of their noteworthy performance in

their submitted work.

Conclusively, academic institutions are somewhat deprived without gender-balanced class participation. The diversity and epistemic-value rationales both illustrate how females contribute something necessarily unique to intellectual discourse. Finally, the gender parity in participation may lead students to miss an opportunity to cultivate important mentorships as well as handicap their ability to garner recommendation letters from their professors.

VII. Implications for Professional Life

In this final section, I will make the conjecture that neglecting to make equally frequent contributions to class discussions can negatively impact females' career trajectories. Taking into account the premises drawn from the first half of this paper, I will build conclusions that lead the reader to understand how the internal effects of participation are directly related to one's professional outcomes. The scope of this section is lies within management and professional occupations in both the public and private sectors. The age ranges from those in entry-level positions to those approaching the midpoint of their careers. My intention in this section is to argue that the gender imbalance found in professional employment environments can be analyzed from the context of participatory behavior and potentially ameliorated by acting on the information presented in this paper.

Before delving into the argumentation of this section, however, I would like to first address the initial skepticism that one may have about the link between class participation and career trajectory. By simply thinking about these two concepts on the surface level, they do not appear to have any connection. I am proposing that infrequent participation is an identity shaper, rather than a cause, of the underrepresentation of women promoted to senior positions or roles that involve substantive decision-making. Women's habituation of infrequent participation in academic settings fosters a gender identity that entrenches a level of inequality in the workplace. Without a strong foundation of identity and self-worth, women will find it to be more challenging and require conscious effort to express themselves within their occupations. I suspect that the reader may question whether this connection between classroom participation and career trajectory really matters, with the intuition being that females must be behaving differently, certainly with less reservation, in professional settings because their livelihood depends on it. I argue that this is not often the case. In fact, qualitative studies would show that women continue the participation behaviors they develop in their academic careers and moreover, the many who remain reticent at work do so to the harm of their career.[70] By way of illustration, the reluctance that women admit to having in vocalizing a problem or desired promotion to their superiors runs parallel to the lines of thinking that women report for their lack of class participation.[71]

A final piece of skepticism that I will address is whether gender differences in the professional sphere really do reflect a noticeably lower standing for women. In response, I contend that though women have secured progressively more jobs in

executive management sectors over time, the rate at which they have done so has actually slowed down in the past few decades.[72] Moreover, research also suggests that despite the general increase of promotions women have obtained, a majority of women remain closed off from positions that "directly affect the company's bottom line."[73] The male-to-female ratios of most elite graduating classes are in way reflective of the operating boards for major American companies.[74] This would show that despite receiving the same education and qualifying for the same competitive schools, women are having alternate experiences in receiving rewards for their qualifications. Research has shown that many times when women are promoted, the positions are only nominally, rather than functionally, superior to their previous titles.[75] The feelings of "invisibility and isolation" that women associate with their jobs reflect one effect that occurs when the benefits conferred from strong participatory behavior are absent.[76] Therefore, it is simply not the case that developmental behavior, such as class participation, is independent of females' workplace demeanor and their subsequent career outcomes.

To begin my normative claim, I will return to each of the four previously argued benefits that women can take advantage of by actively joining in group discussions. I will discuss how each of these benefits can specifically be applied to a woman's professional career, thereby creating a solid link between one's classroom participation and her future employment. Finally, I will delve into an open-ended discussion of who is truly responsible for acting on the data and conclusions being drawn in this paper. The aim of this discussion is to make the reader think more deeply about how to solve some of the existing structural injustices women face along their career paths.

I first argued that self-expression feeds one's internal and external display of her opinions and ideas. This, in turn, solidifies aspects of her identity and gives her an obvious presence within her environment. Possessing one's own distinct identity within her place of employment is necessary for a professional to obtain recognition from senior management. It is very difficult to be considered for a promotion or monetary raise without establishing one's presence in her workplace through a somewhat pronounced identity. Relying on their talents can ensure that women keep their jobs, but alone it will not do much to excel them to the next level of their career. This is largely due to the known trend that many promotions and project assignments are done informally, through friendly relationships that particular senior officers have with those working their way up the corporate ladder. Creating an individual identity that separates a woman from her peers can highlight her unique strengths so that she stands a better chance to be assigned to important work projects in the future.

The second argument I introduced in favor of female engagement in class discussion was its contribution to self-worth as a valuable participant of a larger collective. Applying this idea to the workplace, we assume that one brings some unique value to an employer for her to have landed a job in the first place. The current standards for promotions across companies seem to incorporate a mixture of producing high quality work and conveying one's worth to the right people.[77] Even if

an individual possesses the first qualification, she may be impeding her ability to direct the upward progression of her career without establishing a strong sense of self-worth. As previously explained, one's active participation instills a sense of pride and value to her group. As they contribute increasingly more ideas to their group of colleagues, women internally feel a sense of contentment in adding value to a larger collective. Engaging her peers with her ideas communicates her belief that she is worth their time and attention. Just as a student is showing off her knowledge to the professor through her speech, outward participation in the workplace is a means to flaunt one's talents; however this time it is for a monetary or a substantively equivalent reward. The self-worth argument also touches upon the fact that speech informs an individual through the feedback she receives from her peers. Being able to obtain constant feedback about one's accomplishments in the workplace is extremely important for self-improvement to occur between projects. Without vocalizing their ideas as frequently, women are neglecting a means of receiving feedback that could be crucial for advancing her career. Therefore, peer engagement is especially pertinent in the workplace because of its role in augmenting individual self-worth. Responding to the feedback that they receive for their ideas also enables women to refine their approach to work problems in a way that may be more fitting for their firm. Thus, without comparable participation to men, women may be stunting their opportunities to not only learn and grow in their professions, but also to be recognized by the firm as candidates worthy for promotion.

Another issue previously raised in favor of more balanced participation is the benefit it gives women to better gauge the relative capacity of their peers. In addition to seeing one's value among a talented group, interacting in a constant dialogue with one's peers enables her to better perceive their strengths and weaknesses. This works better than simple observation of one's peers because she can learn much more by asking questions about another area of expertise so that she can confirm or alter what she thinks she may know. Using speech to gauge the capacities of one's co-workers is necessary to make the right decisions for one's own work tasks. For example, if a female professional is working on a matter in which she possess three of the five vital skills required, her active communication will better equip her to ask the right colleagues for help. Moreover, such assessment of the relative abilities of her peers will also assist a female professional to make strategically advantageous choices and requests for project placement. Knowing where others' talents lie will help her place herself onto a team of individuals with complementary talents or temperaments. At a more intuitive level, communication is vital in order for a professional to be accepted by a group of her peers; people enjoy working with those whom they share similar interests, even if they are only professional ones. In a similar sense, failing to strategically place oneself in a suitable team or properly taking advantage of the talent surrounding her can stunt a woman's advancement in her workplace. Hence, the assessment of her peers' relative capacities is another critical byproduct that results from active participation in her workplace.

The final concern I raised about failing to participate was the detrimental effect it has on the development of self-confidence in one's speech. This occurs in conjunction

with the increased complacency to a male voice. I contend that failing to articulate their divergent opinions from males in a classroom setting can give women a degree of comfort in avoiding to do so in their professional lives. What may really highlight this connection between deference shown to men at work and female participatory behavior in the classroom is the fact that women professionals list the same hesitations for failing to approach a senior employee about advancement opportunities as young female students cite for their reticence in classroom discussion.[78] For instance both groups of women articulate their fear of "imposing on others" as an excuse for their failure to speak up.[79] Thus, in a sense, we can see a long-term continuation of the low participatory behavior women develop a comfort for in the classroom. Keeping their thoughts more internalized through their formative years means that women create a default behavioral mechanism to suppress vocalizing their thoughts. Failing to change out of this change reflects an increasingly lower confidence to verbalize their ideas. In the professional context, this complacency is also disconcerting because some women will feel trapped in workplace conditions that are not conducive to their career satisfaction. Unless they vocalize their concerns with questionable norms, women stand to enable a glass ceiling to exist for their career.[80] Deference to norms minimizes the possibility for improving professional environments so that they properly recognize and reward women for their contributions.

A problem with the structural injustices that women face is that they have been so normalized within the workplace that many times, no one even thinks to challenge them.[81] One example of a normalized process that was only a hurdle for women can be found in the case *Ludtke v. Kuhn*.[82] Melissa Ludtke, a reporter for Sports Illustrated Magazine, confronted the dilemma that female sport reporters in the late 1970s and 1980s were facing: being restricted from interviewing male players in their locker rooms.[83] The protocol for post-game interviews across sports leagues was prejudicial to women in that after a game, the players would immediately head back into their locker room, followed only by male reporters. Thus, in the moments following a game, only male reporters were able to claim the first interview questions and quotes. Without paying much attention to fairness, both the media and sports franchises were allowing for a huge, unmerited advantage to be given to male reporters. Because they were not permitted inside the locker rooms, female reporters like Ludtke were forced to wait until the players returned back outside before they were afforded the opportunity ask their own interview questions and get the quotes needed to finish their stories. This was a clear career disadvantage because women would consistently turning in their stories to their editors after their male colleagues. Unsurprisingly, this led to more promotions for male reporters and more transfers out of sports reporting for women.[84] Ludtke challenged the Major League Baseball Commissioner, Bowie Kuhn, for this structural injustice. The Court recognized the validity in Ludtke's claim under the Fourteenth Amendment, equal protection clause and right to due process.[85] Similar cases to this one followed and paved the road for requiring athletes to first answer interview questions, giving all reporters a more equal chance to do their job, before heading back into the locker rooms.[86] This example reflects how such a gender-specific

impediment would not have been eliminated without women themselves voicing their contention. It was not their reporting skills that were lacking, but rather the framework of their work that was resulting in disparate outcomes.[87] Neither their employers nor the sport leagues were the ones to initiate change.

We see that women's reticence in the workplace can stand in the way of alleviating contemporary structural injustices such as gender-biased assignments to particular projects or unaccommodating procedures for working mothers. [88] Though family-unfriendly policies constitute a powerful catalyst for pushing many women out of competitive jobs, such unaccommodating procedures are not necessarily a permanent construct. On the one hand, one can make the argument that raising work concerns is risky for women because it can jeopardize their futures within their companies. However, on the other hand, if women as a whole, are openly making their value to their companies apparent, there may not be as strong a need to fight for these qualms separately. My rationale that women are preventing their own advancement through their reticence is based on two assumptions. First, it assumes that the current male-oriented business models remain intact, leaving women to be the most obvious sources for enacting change. Secondly, the rationale rests on another aspect of a business model that focuses on retaining well-performing employees. Data shows that companies are quite hesitant to dismiss existing employees for reasons unrelated to their work output because of the high cost of training new employees.[89] Therefore the weight of approaching superiors with their concerns cannot be so easily dismissed as dangerous because it does not prove to benefit their employer to fire them if they are actually valuable employees. Without overcoming their hesitation to raise concerns with workplace norms and developing a sense of entitlement equal to their male colleagues, women cannot contribute to reforming their workplace.

This illustrates a frustrating dilemma for women on whether their increased participation should be the cause behind reforming their workplace or if external change should also be initiated. Here, I will briefly address what else may be done from recognizing the negative impact that disparate participatory behavior has in the workplace. Given what has been established about the tendency for women to be less vocal, despite their comparable productivity level, I argue that another component of this topic that we must question is the employment institution itself. The previous arguments are made under the assumption that businesses are unlikely to create change unless they have some sort of incentive to do so. However this assumption itself should be questioned with a degree of scrutiny. Why is it that we do not question whether companies themselves reconfigure workplace structures to account for the changing composition of employees? If women, an increasingly sizeable portion of the workforce, are not naturally expressing their ideas or accomplishments, is not the onus somewhat on the employer to alter the workplace structure so that it still awards these employees with their work? This would not only encourage women to continue working to their highest capacity, but would also better ensure that they are not tempted to leave the firm and offer their talents elsewhere.

One area of employment where this claim is particularly pertinent is the legal

sector, where there exist extreme gender discrepancies in workforce participation rates as well as salary.[90] If companies do not create an environment where women are comfortable raising concerns about policies they find unfair, many of them will simply leave the industry altogether. Such reasoning is demonstrated in the high female attrition rate from law firms and their representing little more than a 16% of partners among firms across the nation.[91] This propels us toward an industry that has a decreased chance of directing long-term reforms that alleviate gender-specific hurdles.[92] If women are no longer employed in larger law firms in sizable numbers, neither the firm nor its remaining employees are incentivized to change the existing policies. Moreover, higher attrition rates stunt women's abilities to climb the corporate ladder and make more potent infrastructural reforms down the road because they will have relatively shorter work histories in each firm they shift to.[93] Data reflects that part of the gender wage gap is attributed to the inferior employment patterns that women are reflecting in their resumes.[94] Shorter work histories inspire lesser confidence in a professional's expertise and her ability to remain committed to one place, resulting in lower pay.[95] On the other end, firms will also suffer from this job turnover through increased training costs and reputational consequences that may hinder its recruiting efforts down the road. Therefore, both the firms and the employees suffer losses from their current inaction.

Employers actively changing the workplace culture to be more welcoming of women's perspectives could ameliorate some of the disadvantages they face. The characterizations of professional and management occupations as unaccommodating may be reflected in the current gender disparity in workforce participation rates. There exists an overrepresentation of women in "pink-collar" careers, such as those in education, hospitality and nursing, as opposed to the male dominance in management professions and occupations involving the "hard" sciences.[96] Highlighting this gender difference between particular work sectors is not a critique of women's independent desire to seek employment in "pink-collar" work if it satisfies them. The concern here is focused on the portion of women who remove themselves from even being considered for professional and management positions because they do no feel as if they could compete in such environments. Companies which give off a sense of indifference to gender disparities make women question whether they will be able to thrive in a culture where they need to constantly defend and articulate their ideas in order to them to receive equal treatment to ideas proposed by male employees.

Though it has been found that men feel much more comfortable working alongside women today than they did twenty years ago, this is not quite reflected through the data that I have presented. Should we not see this attitudinal change exemplified in the actual changes they initiate at work? My conclusion is that we are perhaps closing off the potential for change initiated by the employer in only encouraging women to react to structural injustices. It does appear to be more logical that each side of this mutualistic relationship-the employer and the employee-is expected to react in some way if they desire better outcomes for themselves.

Conclusively, while women may execute projects and tasks skillfully, their

habituated participatory behavior does impact their career trajectory. This occurs in four ways, each derived by applying my preceding argumentation in favor of the value of classroom participation. This learned social behavior first derives importance in creating a means by which professionals distinguish themselves and their work from others. Self-expression helps shape a pronounced self-identity that gives women a better chance of receiving recognition for their work. Identifying themselves in this way is also advantageous because it keeps their name on the table for promotions rather than simply blending in among a group of diligent but less vocal workers. Secondly, engaging with one's colleagues enhances one's self-worth as an invaluable member of a larger collective. This increased self-worth will be conveyed through a woman's more confident demeanor, which demands the attention and respect of her peers. Choosing active engagement with one's peers over cooperative silence also plays an advantageously informative role in gauging the relative talents of one's co-workers; this information can serve as an arsenal to make strategic choices about whom one collaborates with in the workplace based on their skillset. Finally, given the complacency that results from habituating to lesser participation in the classroom, women can free themselves from deferring to their male colleagues by actively measuring their own experiences with their habit and making necessary adjustments.

Looking at workplace inequalities from the unique lens of participation, I contend that some responsibility does fall on a company to recognize the varying temperaments of its talented staff and accommodate them equally rather than focusing on what works for a particular group.[97] Whether this means constructing different metrics for promotion or being more involved with engaging women to express themselves comfortably, the employer must play some role in reforming the structural injustices that its business model presented to women. Not only does this forecast a lower turnover rate, but it also puts action into the changing statements that companies are making in regards to their desire to hire and retain female professionals.

VIII. Recommendations

Before concluding my argument, I would like to propose three recommendations that academic institutions and professors can take moving forward from the realities discussed in this paper. Addressing some of the problematic conditions that women are facing in their undergraduate and graduate environments, these suggestions are intended to remove some of the impediments to gender-balanced participation.

The first recommendation addresses the image surrounding gender equity that academic institutions offer to women. One of the ways that women can feel more comfortable and confident in their in-class participation is their assurance that they belong to a community that values the input of their gender. Whether it be in the form of a more apparent gender-balanced faculty or initiatives that promote the involvement of women within its student organizations, academic institutions should produce strategic signals that demonstrate enthusiasm for their female student body. Closing

the gap in its male-to-female ratio of full-time professors or equalizing their relative salaries are also means by which an institution can send a clearer message of valuing of gender equity. Given that female freshman report much lower confidence levels in their academic abilities upon entering school, academic institutions should also focus on the timing of their strategic signals.[98] From this data we can also say that certain signals may be better utilized when directed to the institution's *entering class* of female students. By reassuring women that they have entered into a learning environment that actively seeks to hear from them, the college or university can set the tone for the rest of its students' academic careers. From these efforts, women can have the chance to feel and be more empowered to contribute to their learning environments.

My second recommendation is targeted primarily towards instructors and advisors, the individuals who have the most one-on-one interaction with students. Keeping in mind the trends that female students do tend to feel that they are not given equal recognition in class or fear that they may sound unintelligent, professors should make a more pronounced effort to reassure all students that their comments are valued. This can be practiced by stressing that "there are no such things as stupid questions" or by providing some sort of positive feedback to students' remarks. Making themselves available to speak with individuals outside of class is also another way that professors can communicate that they value their students' comments. This may be in the form of informal meals that the professor sets up with groups of students or in offering more flexible office hours. By making a more conscious effort to seek out commentary from female students when the conversation has been male-driven for a period of time, professors can reduce women's fears that their remarks will be unwelcome or incongruous to the rest of the discussion. Maintaining a steady flow of female conversers in the discussion, the professor can prevent them from feeling discouraged to speak or to be the one female among a group of male conversers. The ultimate goal for professors should be to make it very clear that women's insights are equally as valuable to the class dialogue and that they will not be casually dismissed for expressing their thoughts.

The last recommendation that I provide is for professors to consider establishing a friendly cold-calling environment within the classroom. Cold-calling has been found to have a positive impact on students' confidence within the course, thereby increasing voluntary participation.[99] Because all students are expected to contribute something to the discussion, professors can remove women's fears that they are going to be out of place by contributing. Though the criticism of cold-calling is that students come to class dreading being called on to answer a question they cannot answer, if professors handle this policy with the right amount of encouragement and understanding, cold-calling can be a practice that is not frightening for students. Of further benefit is the fact that professors can actually better steer the participatory habits that females form in their academic careers. If a majority of their courses strongly motivate or require them to offer their insights to their peers, women can habituate a more pronounced participatory behavior. This policy may lead to women feeling that the contribution of their ideas comes naturally and with less reservation.

In the ideal context, this will not only produce a collective acknowledgement of the gender-equal insights and capacities in the classroom, but it will cause this notion to carry over to the workplace.

IX. Conclusion

In this paper, I chose to analyze gender disparity from a dimension separate from those typically used to address this social outcome. Specifically, I drew attention to a single behavior women develop over the course of their undergraduate and graduate careers. I focused on the ways in which women's reticence in classroom settings contributes to the disparity in individual, academic and professional outcomes between men and women. After exploring how expression strengthens the development of students' identity and sense of self-worth, I shifted to the argument that her academic and professional community may be deprived in her neglecting to participate.

This paper is not meant to be an argument that counsels women to behave in a particular manner; rather, it presents a more holistic view of the effects that participation can have on women so that they can tailor their own approach to avoiding or fighting against some of the harms I have discussed. In addition to underlining the normative claim that there are intrinsic advantages to participatory behavior, I have offered a few recommendations that may guide institutions in their mission to elicit more gender-balanced commentary from its students. Ultimately, I hope to encourage the reader to think more critically about how he or she perceives classroom participation and reflect on how this action can stimulate personal and communal benefit.

Endnotes

1   Across my research, I have found there to be cases where no effect or dominant female participation to be recorded; however upon examination of the methodology, I have found that the settings in which these outcomes arise involve atypical university settings, where the majority of the class consists of commuter students or the university itself does not reflect "more selective admissions requirements." These studies are out of the frame of reference—residential, academically challenging, co-ed universities or medium size colleges—within which I aim to make my argument

2   Sarah M. Galvin, Martha R. Dolly, and Judith J. Pula. " (Fassinger 1995) (Allen and Niss 1990) (Hall and Sandler 1982)" *Bulletin* 79, no. 2 (2012), 22-4.

3   R.M Hall and B.R Sandler. "The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women?" Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1982.

4   Bern P. Allen and James F. Niss. "A Chill in the College Classroom?" *The Phi Delta Kappan* 71, no. 8 (1990), 607-609.

5   Polly A. Fassinger. "Understanding Classroom Interaction: Students' and Professors' Contributions to Students' Silence," *The Journal of Higher Education* 66, no. 1 (1995), 82-96.

6   V.R. Brooks. "Sex Differences in Student Dominance Behavior in Male and Female Professors' Classrooms," *Sex Roles* 8, (1982), 683-690.

7   Jay R. Howard and Amanda L. Henney. "Student Participation and Instructor Gender in the Mixed-Age College Classroom." The *Journal of Higher Education* 69, no. 4 (1998), 389.

8   Anne Constantinople, Randolph Cornelius and Janet Gray "The Chilly Climate: Fact or Artifact?" The *Journal of Higher Education* 59, no. 5 (1988), 537.

9   Bern P. Allen and James F. Niss. "A Chill in the College Classroom?," 609.

10   Todd L. Drew and Gerald G. Work. "Gender-Based Differences in Perception of Experiences in Higher Education: Gaining a Broader Perspective," *The Journal of Higher Education* 69, no. 5 (1998), 542-555.

11   Bern P. Allen and James F. Niss. "A Chill in the College Classroom?," 609.

12   Martha S. West and John W. Curtis. "Organizing Around Gender Equity," in *AAUP Faculty Gender Equity Indicators 2006*, 5.

13   Ibid, 6.

14   Ibid, 11.

15   Ibid, 8.

16   Linda J. Sax and Kim K. Young. "Student-Faculty Interaction in Research Universities: Differences by Student Gender, Race, Social Class, and First Generation Status," *Research in Higher Education* 50, no. 5 (2009).

17   Ibid.

18   Todd L. Drew and Gerald G. Work. "Gender-Based Differences in Perception

of Experiences in Higher Education: Gaining a Broader Perspective," *Journal of Higher Education* 69, no. 5 (1998), 545.

19   Bern P. Allen and James F. Niss. "A Chill in the College Classroom?," *Phi Delta Kappan* 71, no. 8 (1990), 609.

20   "Yale Law School Faculty and Students Speak Up About Gender: Ten Years Later," *Speak Up*. Yale Law Women, April 2012, http://yalelawwomen.org/speak-up (accessed Fall 2013).

21   Ibid, 3. By "critical" I am referring to the skepticism and frustration that women initially feel about their perceived lower status in law school due to their gender. The literature indicates that they grow less antagonistic about this lesser status over time, perhaps because they accept that it is a fixed norm.

22   Jane Balin, et al., ""Becoming Gentlemen: Womens' Experiences in One Ivy League Law School," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 143, no. 3 (1994), 2.

23   Canan Bilen-Green, Karen A. Froelich, Sarah W. Jacobs, "The Prevalence of Women in Academic Leadership Positions, and Potential Impact on Prevalence of Women in the Professorial Ranks," *2008 WEPAN Conference Proceedings*. North Dakota State University, 2008.

24   Tiffani Lennon, "Benchmarking Women's Leadership in the United States," Colorado Women's College, http://www.womenscollege.du.edu/media documents/BenchmarkingWomensLeadershipintheUS.pdf (accessed October 2013).

25   Diane C. Yu, "Second Generation Glass Ceiling Issues: Advancement, the Median Strip and Career Satisfaction." *Women Lawyers' Journal* 93, no 1. (2008), 12.

26   Renata Bongiorno, et al, "Think crisis–think female: The glass cliff and contextual variation in the think manager–think male stereotype," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 96, no. 3 (2011), 470.

27   Bryce Covert, "Condolences, You're Hired!: For GM's Mary Barra and other female executives, a big promotion can feel like a kiss of death," *Slate*, March 25, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2014/03 general_motors_recall_is_mary_barra_the_latest_victim_of_the_glass_cliff html.

28   Here, I'm referring to Carol Sandberg's popular book *Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead*, that stirred national media sources to revisit topics on the ways in which women continue to experience unequal opportunity and reward in the workplace.

29   Eric Barendt, *Freedom of Speech*, 2nd ed. (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010), 7.

30   Alan Gewirth, "The Ideal of Self-Fulfillment," in *Self-Fulfillment*. (Princeton University Press, 2009), 11.

31   This can be done as an individual speaks or in preparation for openly

presenting one's ideas.

32   Here I am again referencing the concept of self-fulfillment to complete my transitive argument.

33   James D Fearon. "What is Identity (as we now use the word)?" (Mimeo, Stanford University, 1999).

34   By labels, I am largely referring to economic, social, and political labels; examples would include "liberal," "conservative," "pro-life" or "pro-choice."

35   "Yale Law School Faculty and Students Speak Up About Gender: Ten Years Later," *Speak Up*, 2012.

36   Ibid.

37   I am using this term with the intention of encompassing its economics-based definition. Asymmetric information exists when there is an incomplete amount of information of others' behaviors and motives.

38   Deborah Rhode, "Speaking of Sex: the Denial of Gender Inequality." (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 296.

39   Ronald Dworkin. "The Right to Ridicule." *The New York Review of Books*, (2006).

40   Ibid. This concept was originally introduced by John Stewart Mill in his "Marketplace of Ideas."

41   Ibid.

42   Pearson, Judy C. and Richard West. "An Initial Investigation on the Effects of Gender," *Communication Education* 40, no. 1 (2009), 22.

43   Ibid, 24.

44   What I mean to say here is that every student has strengths or helpful contributions to make in class. In an ideal classroom setting, pupils would not feel inhibited from sharing their insights to their peers. Such an uninhibited atmosphere would reflect where particular students' knowledge is especially useful.

45   Bobbie Bono, et al. "Are Women Still Prejudiced Against Other Women? A Replication and Extension of the Goldberg Study," *Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied,* 89, no. 1 (1989).

46   Ibid.

47   J.N. Burnstein and S.H. Ferchtner. "Development of Individualistic Behaviors in the Classroom," *Journal of Experimental Education*, 42, no. 4 (1974), 15.

48   Judy C. Pearson and Richard West. "An Initial Investigation on the Effects of Gender, " *Communication Education* 40, no. 1 (2009), 25. (Levinson n.d.)

49   Janice Madden, lecture for "Discrimination," University of Pennsylvania, January 2014.

50   Rosalie B. Levinson, "Gender-Based Affirmative Action and Reverse Gender Bias: Beyond Gratz, Parents Involved, and Ricci," *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender* 34, no. 1 (2011), 30.

51   James Robert Brown. "Affirmative Action and Epistemology," in *Race and*

Representation: Affirmative Action, eds. Robert Post and Michael Rogin, (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 335.

52 James J. Gross, Mary C. Murphy, and Claude M. Steele, "Signaling Threat: How Situational Cues Affect Women in Math, Science and Engineering Settings," *Psychological Science* 18, no. 10 (2007), 879.

53 Ibid*,* 337.

54 Ibid, 336.

55 Ibid, 336.

56 Rosalie B. Levinson, "Gender-Based Affirmative Action and Reverse Gender Bias: Beyond Gratz, Parents Involved, and Ricci," *Harvard Journal of Law and Gender* 34, (2001), 27.

57 Ibid, 28.

58 "Yale Law School Faculty and Students Speak Up About Gender: Ten Years Later,*" Speak Up*, 2012.

59 Gail Crombie et al, "Students' Perceptions of Their Classroom Participation and Instructor as a Function of Gender and Context," *The Journal of Higher Education* 74, no. 1 (2003), 56.

60 Ibid, 58.

61 Alyssa N. Bryant, Casandra E. Harper, Linda J. Sax. "The Differential Effects Of Student-Faculty Interaction on College Outcomes for Women and Men," *Journal of College Student Development* 46, no. 6, (2005), 643.

62 Ibid, 645.

63 Ibid, 645.

64 Ibid, 646.

65 "Yale Law School Faculty and Students Speak Up About Gender: Ten Years Later." *Yale Law Women*. 22-24.

66 Ibid, 23.

67 Ibid, 24.

68 Ibid 24.

69 Again, the emphasis here is that participation serves as a means to instill greater confidence within the student to initiate informal conversation with the professor.

70 Mary Hale, "He Says, She Says: Gender and Worklife." *Public Administration Review* 59, no 5 (1999), 417.

71 Jennifer Guenther, "Attitude and Attrition." *Women Lawyers' Journal* 93, no. 2 (2008),15.

72 Janice Madden, lecture for "Discrimination," University of Pennsylvania, March 2014.

73 Francine D. Blau, Marianne A. Ferber, Anne E. Winkler, *The Economics of Women, Men and Work* (New York: Prentice Hall, 2013), 137.

74 A glance at the gender composition of the top twenty universities' entering and graduating classes (from their respective webpages) in the past ten years will reflect roughly a 50/50 split of males and females. On the other hand,

only 6 percent of women held "bottom-line" positions as late as 2007.

75 *The Economics of Women and Men in the Workplace*, Chapter 2.

76 Hale. "He Says, She Says: Gender and Worklife," 411. Here, I'm referring to the idea that if one does not solidify previously beneficial traits such as self identity or self-worth in a group (through her class participation), she could be left with feelings of isolation or unimportance.

77 Hale. "He Says, She Says: Gender and Worklife," 414.

78 Yu, "Second Generation Glass Ceiling Issues," 13.

79 Ibid, 13.

80 Though this is troubling to acknowledge, I am basing this conclusion off of the practical assumption that in competitive work environments, it is the unsatisfied group that must raise their concerns because no other group would have much of an incentive to do so.

81 Based off of Iris Marion Young's idea that there exist constructs that individuals participate within and consider acceptable, but which actually produce systematic injustices. In this case, it is the high billable hours for attorneys with families, networking events in strictly masculine settings, etc-all which are male-centric.

82 Janice Madden, lecture for "Discrimination," University of Pennsylvania, January 2014.

83 Molly Barrett, "Ludtke v. Kuhn," *Sports and Entertainment Law Journal Case Summaries,* University of Denver Law School, http://www.law.du.edu documents/sports-and-entertainment-law-journal/case-summaries/1978 ludtke-v-kuhn.pdf, (accessed 18 February 2014).

84 Janice Madden, lecture for "Discrimination," University of Pennsylvania, January 2014.

85 Barrett, "Ludtke v. Kuhn," (accessed 18 February 2014).

86 Sara Ellen Swanson, "Women in Sports Journalism," (Masters Thesis, San Jose State University, 2009), 4-7.

87 Janice Madden, lecture for "Discrimination," University of Pennsylvania, January 2014.

88 Guenther, "Attitude and Attrition," 16.

89 (U.S. Department of Labor 2009)Guenther, "Attitude and Attrition," 15.

90 [20] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, The Editor's Desk, *Women and men in management, professional and related occupations 2008,* BLS Report 1017.

91 Paula A. Patton. "Women Lawyers: Their Status, Influence and Retention in the Legal Profession," *William and Mary Journal of Women and Law* 173, (2005), 173.

92 Yu, "Second Generation Glass Ceiling Issues," 11.

93 Ibid, 12.

94 Janice Madden, lecture for "Discrimination," University of Pennsylvania, February 2014.

95 *The Economics of Women, Men and Work*, 195.

96 Ibid, 10.

97 In this case, single white males are the models for how many corporate management positions are created and awarded.

98 Jack F. Heller, Richard Puff, and Carol J. Mills, "Assessment of the Chilly College Climate for Women," *Journal of Higher Education* 56, no. 4 (1985), 453.

99 Elise J. Dallimore, Julie H. Hertenstein, and Marjorie B. Platt. "Impact of Cold-Calling On Student Voluntary Participation," *Journal of Management Education* 37, no. 3 (2013).

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