

**Title:** Exploring Issues of Classroom Authority, Teaching Credibility, and Effective Pedagogy at  
Community Colleges

**Sabbatical Summary:**

Professors know that conflicts, disruptions and obstacles are inevitable aspects of their chosen profession. However, for many women professors, acceptance of classroom authority and teaching credibility is an on-going process of bargaining and negotiating. Research studies note that when a teacher's classroom authority is not accepted or viewed as illegitimate for whatever reason, the student-teacher relationship is weakened or nonexistent. Thereby, when the classroom authority of women professors is not accepted or valued within the classroom environment, quality teaching and learning suffers. In addition to classroom authority and teaching credibility, literature suggest gendered expectations also affect women professors' teaching evaluations. Students expect women professors to show more compassion, more concern and increase leniency and understanding toward their issues or situations. Teaching evaluations are highest when instructors are perceived to conform to their stereotypical, gendered-appropriate roles and positions and straying from such roles could indicate lower teaching evaluations.

The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of women faculty teaching at community colleges to gain a greater understanding of pedagogical interactions and its impact on course instruction. This study argues that women professors experience many difficult situations in the classroom setting in regard to inappropriate student behavior and questioning, which may have a negative impact on teaching effectiveness. This interview-based study examines the teaching experiences of ten (10) women professors teaching at community colleges. Each face-to-face interview was conducted using a semi-standardized format, which incorporates a set of

predetermined questions related to the research topic. The semi-standardized interview structure allows for consistency in questioning across interviews while eliciting the participant's personal thoughts on their pedagogical experiences. The benefits and usefulness of utilizing this research approach is the consistency and standardization in interview questions, comparison across interviews and flexibility during the interview process. Participants for the study were purposively sampled. Purposive sampling is a technique where the interviewer uses special knowledge or expertise to select subjects who represent the population for inclusion in the sample. The objective of a purposive sample of participants is to maximize variation in participants selected and gain a greater understanding of teaching experiences among individuals of different race/ethnic groups.

Findings in this study reveal that the women faculty interviewed believe their gender, at times and depending on the subject matter being taught, were viewed negatively by students.

Interviewees often weighed the teaching method and timing for when to approach particular subject matters in their courses. Findings also reveal that interviewees believe they were being held to a higher standard of scrutiny by students in areas such as course preparation and knowledge of content when being evaluated. In sum, this research provides a transformative way for understanding classroom experiences of women teaching in community colleges and the impact on teaching effectiveness, faculty retention and emotional well-being. The big picture lies in the critical importance of understanding the personal teaching experiences of women and how their lived experiences form an interdependent relationship between faculty and administrators. It is this interdependent relationship in conjunction with clear, deliberate and supportive efforts for studying the classroom environment that can help provide effective teaching and learning for both faculty and students, respectively.