GENDER EQUITY INSIDE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

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by

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GENDER EQUITY INSIDE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

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Date

Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

GENDER EQUITY INSIDE FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

by

Nicole Marie Mehta

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this work was to survey First Year Experience (FYE) faculty of two California State Universities in Northern California about their understanding of gender equitable instructional methods, use of curriculum focused on gender, and their discussion of gender in FYE courses. The study also measured the number of hours faculty spent in professional development trainings on particular subjects. The study focused on the following questions: What are the First Year Experience professors’ understandings of gender equitable teaching approaches in the classroom? Do First Year Experience professors incorporate gender equitable instructional methods into the required courses of the first year programs? What training, if any, has the professors who teach the First Year Experience courses received on gender equity in the classroom? Additionally, does the faculty discuss gender, specifically sexism, in the FYE courses? If so, what curriculum do they use?
Sources of Data

Twenty-nine professors from two California State University campuses in Northern California participated in this study. Convenience and snowball sampling was employed to obtain participants for survey research methods. The questionnaire was designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data from participants. The close-ended questions provided quantitative data to conduct statistical analysis. The open-ended questions provided qualitative data used to determine themes within instructors’ attitudes and beliefs about gender equitable teaching strategies and their use of these strategies in the First Year Experience courses.

Conclusions Reached

The results of this study run parallel to similar studies conducted on this topic (Carinci, 2002; Olivieri, 2011). The awareness level of gender equitable teaching strategies of this sample was significantly higher than research indicated, however the amount of time invested in equitable teaching strategies was exceedingly low. The results indicated the least number of respondents were trained in gender equitable teaching methods, with only 8 out of 29 instructors. FYE faculty spent a total of 32 hours, averaging 1.10 hours per participant.

Awareness, attitudes and beliefs about gender equitable teaching strategies were relatively positive overall. This data indicated to the researcher that this particular sample holds a high regard and respect for the equitable teaching methods, however uneducated they may be on the topics. A lack of awareness among the
faculty showed up through the large number of non-responses overall when the questions discussed equitable teaching strategies. Of the respondents who were aware of the methods, a small number understood the purpose of equitable teaching methods and types of strategies. Continual training for faculty should not only occur inside the First Year Experience programs but across all disciplines and programs.

An extremely low number of instructors discuss issues of sexism in their FYE courses. Nearly 35% (10 out of 29 instructors) of the sample does not currently teach about issues of sexism in their FYE courses. This passive behavior from the faculty runs parallel to the attitudes thirty years ago about discussing issues of racism (Campbell, 2000; Carinci, 2002). Just as racism is more than violent acts, or stereotyping whole groups of minorities or prejudice; sexism and racism both work systematically to keep minorities and women at “the bottom of the social and economic order” (Campbell, 2000, p. 69). When instructors dismiss these issues, they are sending a signal to the first year students that these important social justice issues do not occur in college or in our society. Education is the key to alleviating gender inequities and the first year student deserve to have content on how to become social justice advocates.

__________________________, Committee Chair
Sherrie Carinci, Ed.D.

________________________
Date
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my first-born. If it were not for him, I would not be where I am today. You give me strength every day. To my daughter and my husband, you both light up my life so much. To my mother and my father, you are so special to me. Your intuition to seek higher education to create a better life is inspiring and purposeful. If you had not attended college, I would not be here to tell you thank you. It is no accident that two completely different people, one from the farmlands of Sedan, Kansas and the other from the metropolitan city of Karachi, Pakistan, created life together. I have succeeded because of your endless support and love.

To my dearest friend, Susan, you are always in my corner no matter what. I am so grateful for you. To all of my friends and colleagues, you entered into my life for a reason. You shared your life with me and made my life better for it. You contributed to my growth and my success.

Finally, to one of the most genuinely caring, selfless professors I have ever had the pleasure of knowing - Dr. Sherrie Carinci. Your dedication to the Gender Equity program and to the on-going advocacy of living in a fair and decent society is over-the-top outstanding. I greatly admire you and hope to continue to learn from your wisdom.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all of the bi-racial women and men who stand in two worlds with grace and dignity. I look forward to seeing a world where we all can be fully embraced for where we have come from and who we want to become. I am eternally grateful for all who believed in me and gave me the strength to get where I am today.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A first year college student stared down at her desk, terrified to move a muscle. The instructor hurried into the lecture hall, and threw his jacket onto the desk. Within days, the professor created a chilly climate for the female students. The professor only discussed male theorists during lectures, interrupted his female students as they spoke, and gave more praise to the male students. Gender discrimination such as this example permeates the college classroom, even 40 years after the development of anti-discrimination laws such as Title IX (Dyer, 2001; National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education [NCWGE], 2012).

Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972 passed by Congress addressed the gender inequalities arising across several sectors, including athletics, education and career fields (NCWGE, 2012). The legislation (20 USC §§1681-1688) states: “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance” (para.1). Title IX extends protection to “about 51.7 million elementary and secondary school students; about 14.4 million college and university students;” and includes 3,600 colleges and universities (Riley & Cantu, 1997, p. 3).

Gender discrimination and untrained professors also exist among college orientation programs, such as First Year Experience (FYE) programs which provide students with an academic setting that challenges undergraduates to meet their
personal and academic goals (Daddona & Cooper, 2002). FYE programs are intended to be student-focused, community building opportunities. When instructors who are unaware of inclusive teaching models, such as gender fairness teaching strategies, lead these FYE courses, then the students and the instructors lose. The students lose a chance at building stronger connections with their peers and instructors. More importantly, the first year student could lose a chance at succeeding inside this new college experience. First Year Experience programs were designed to prevent students from falling through the cracks and dropping out.

This exclusively designed course addresses the different learning environments inside college compared to high school. Through the review of several national and Northern Californian First Year Experience programs, most institutions address issues such as time and stress management, and study skills. However, few institutions across the nation address gender issues. The intention of this research is to analyze the First Year Experience faculty’s awareness to build an unbiased classroom, focusing on the training received on gender equitable teaching methods and the curriculum chosen for First Year Experience courses.

Research indicates when instructors who promote confidence, give encouragement and sincerely care to lead a classroom; their students are more likely to continue attending college (hooks, 1994; Noddings, 2005; Schreiner, Noel, Anderson & Cantwell, 2011). For example, when students and faculty interacted with each other often both inside and outside the classroom, students reported confidence and motivation in academia (Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010). The more
confident and motivated the students feel the greater chance the students have to succeed through college (Komarraju et al., 2010; Tinto, 1975). Well-trained instructors who understand both the purpose of the First Year Experience program and the continued practice of equitable teaching strategies will motivate their students to accomplish their dreams.

Instructing takes a great deal of training, education and willingness to acquire new knowledge continuously throughout the teaching career. However, many higher education institutions do not require instructors to attend any training (Gardiner, 2000). Conversely, according to the law, elementary and secondary school teachers must receive training often. California law states that kindergarten-12th grade educators are required to complete certification from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 1997). The Program Standard 5: “Equity, Diversity and Access to the Core Curriculum for All Children” states all teaching credential programs must: “provide ongoing opportunities for each candidate to systematically examine his/her stated and implied beliefs, attitudes and expectations related to gender and to apply pedagogical practices that create gender-fair learning environments” (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 1997, p. 1).

Whether Program Standard 5 is being enforced and monitored, the standard specifically calls out K-12 teachers to learn about gender-fair learning environments. Unfortunately, higher education systems present no such training standard, nor require
the faculty to attend training. Without the requirement of self-examination and continued education, the impetus is on the professor to seek out further instruction on effective teaching practices.

When a professor is aware of equitable instructional methods, the use of these methods increase and curriculum changes to mirror the received training (Marouchou, 2011). Equally, instructors need more than simple scripted curriculum or skills and that this particular type of training “will not necessarily improve their teaching practices and thus improve student learning” (Marouchou, 2011, p. 127; Ho, Watkins & Kelly, 2001). An instructor who is willing to address the conception of teaching may progress the student education process in the long-term (Ho et al., 2001). Awareness of gender equitable training is the first step for instructors. The next level of training is for the instructor to discover the concepts behind gender fair teaching methods, and then, reconcile their own perceptions and stereotypes with the intention of better learning for the students (Trigwell, 1995).

**Purpose of the Study**

The college classroom can nurture democracy and challenge young minds, especially with a highly trained, compassionate professor at the helm. Instructors who value fairness create a safe classroom culture where all students feel they can succeed in their education. All students should feel confident in their classroom to express their opinions, brainstorm with their peers and understand what it means to be in college, hence the purpose of First Year Experience (FYE) courses.
FYE courses attempt to set the stage for first year students to gain the skills necessary to complete their education (Barefoot, 2000). Regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, or religion, students need to feel self-reliant and safe to express new thoughts and ideas in the classroom and out, to build critical thinking abilities and to use their acquired knowledge productively. Gender equitable teaching strategies coupled with equitable curriculum in the First Year Experience courses complete this crucial task.

The purpose of this study was to find out the First Year Experience faculty’s understandings of gender equitable teaching approaches in the classroom; incorporation of gender equitable instructional methods into First Year Experience courses, and finally, the number of hours in training, if any, which the instructors received on gender equity in the classroom. The researcher will examine the top five First Year Experience programs in the United States and Canada. Next, the researcher analyzed the two participating institutions located in Northern California, and included additional investigation of the curriculums for gender discussed in the institutions’ offered FYE courses.

**Statement of the Problem**

Every college professor should understand and implement gender equitable instructional methods and use unbiased curriculum in their classrooms because every student should experience an equitable learning environment to succeed, especially during vulnerable transitions into their first year of college. If the professor invests the time to become self-aware of the prejudices or bias they may hold for any group, then
the students will benefit tremendously because they too can invest in self-awareness through modeling the instructor (Carinci, 2007).

Using Olivieri’s (2011) survey research model, the goals of this research were to analyze the top five First Year Experience programs nationwide and two institutions within Northern California. The researcher identified who is teaching first year students; their educational and demographic background; how many professional development training hours completed, either pre-service or in-service training. Additionally, the researcher wanted to find out the faculty’s understanding and opinion on gender equitable instructional methods and the curriculum choice for the FYE courses. The instructors disclosed this information through an untested questionnaire developed by the researcher. Though untested, the researcher modeled survey design and questions from previous studies completed within the teacher education field (Carinci, 2002; Olivieri, 2011).

The researcher asked the following research questions: What are the First Year Experience professors’ understandings of gender equitable teaching approaches in the classroom? Do FYE faculty members incorporate gender equitable instructional methods into the required courses of the first year programs? What training, if any, has the professors who teach the First Year Experience courses received on gender equity in the classroom? Additionally, the questionnaire asked the participants whether the instructor discusses issues of racism and sexism, and if so, what type of curriculum is used.
Methodology

Research data collection occurred using the survey research method. The participants were FYE faculty from two California State Universities located in Northern California. The basic premise behind survey research is to map a particular population (Cowan, 2001). Convenience, snowball and cluster sampling methods provided the distribution process (Bryman, 2012). The questionnaire provided quantitative data on the total hours of training obtained in particular subjects, attitudes about teaching First Year Experience courses, beliefs about equitable teaching methods, and the topics discussed in the courses. Using the interpretive paradigm, the researcher attempted to evaluate smaller populations, human behavior, and perceptions (Basit, 2010).

The researcher developed the questionnaire using mixed methods. Qualitative data provides non-numerical information and insight for specific types of questions (Muijs, 2011). Quantitative data, on the other hand, converts phenomena that does not “naturally exist in quantitative form into quantitative data, which we can analyze statistically” (Muijs, 2011, p. 2). The purpose of employing mixed methods for this study was to capture the larger picture of First Year Experience courses and the faculty who teach the courses. The quantitative method quantified the attitudes and beliefs about gender and education. The qualitative method gave the researcher further information about which curriculum is chosen for the First Year Experience courses and the reasons behind their choice, and finally to analyze the responses to discover any possible trends.
Each participant received a short consent letter with the questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of four multiple-choice closed-ended questions and five open-ended questions. Participants provided demographic information, and indicated the number of hours spent in professional development training within specific andragogical topics. The majority of returned questionnaires were in-person to the researcher inside of a provided manila envelope.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. The researcher developed an untested questionnaire based on previous studies conducted (Carinci, 2002; Olivieri, 2011). The sample size of this study was small and limited to the universities which the researcher received permission to dispense the questionnaires. First time instructors completed a majority of the questionnaires. Therefore, the questions regarding the curriculum discussed in the FYE courses were limited to what the new professor planned to do. This limitation indicated to the researcher that the setting and timeframe for distribution of the questionnaires are important. The researcher could have distributed the questionnaire at the end of the academic year, and this slight change could have given the first time instructors to test the curriculum.

The majority of the questionnaires distributed were during the two institutions’ large group convocation meetings for First Year Experience faculty. The participants had limited time to complete the questionnaire due to the convocation’s agenda and therefore completion rates were low.
Theoretical Basis for the Study

Several theories support the relevance of equity issues in education. Social Role Theory and Feminist Theory provided the theoretical foundations to address gender inequities and bias occurring in the college classroom. The two theories also provided supportive evidence on how students benefit from instructors who employ gender equitable teaching methods. Additionally, Vincent Tinto’s Integration Framework theory was included to demonstrate the purpose of First Year Experience courses in higher education. Collectively, the theories provided the framework needed to develop the purpose of the study, the data analysis, and the conclusions drawn from the data and the research.

Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory demonstrates that the “beliefs that people hold about the sexes are derived from observations of the role performances of men and women and thus reflect the sexual division of labor and gender hierarchy of the society” (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000, p. 124). The gender stereotypes and social roles could influence teaching methods without proper training and ongoing discussion of the topic inside the classroom. The role of gender is not static and the roles change throughout the development of one’s life (Eckes & Trautner, 2000).

In order to understand the Social Role Theory, the researchers explained the background of developmental social psychology of gender. Three summarized intentions are as followed: (a) gender is subject to change throughout a person’s life; (b) society influences gender and changes accordingly at any time based on “gender-
based cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors” (Eckes & Trautner, 2000, p. 12). Lastly, the third intention is developmental stages and social norms are interwoven, “that is, gender development cannot be adequately studied without considering social processes” (Eckes & Trautner, 2000, p. 12). During the advancement of the Social Role Theory in the 1980s, Eagly et al. (2000) argued that social behavior distinctions between the sexes stemmed from the contrasting role assignments developed by society: the division of labor and gender hierarchy (Eckes & Trautner, 2000). For this study, within higher education, Social Role Theory plays out in similar patterns. Male and female faculty play out roles in the classroom through their communication style, their demeanor, their curriculum choices and students attempt to mimic these roles in order to fit the expectations given to them by the instructors (Eckes & Trautner, 2000).

**Feminist Theory**

According to hooks (2000), Feminist Theory and feminism are the processes to eliminate sexist oppression. The topic of feminism can encompass all groups, and is not limited to the oppression of women solely. “Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men” (hooks, 2000, p. 28).

The theories support tangible evidence demonstrating the power behind equality for all, especially the majority: women. “Not only do women need to have the freedom to unfold their faculties and discover their own truths as individuals, they need collectively as women, to discover who they really are” (Donovan, 2000, p. 49).
Socratic teaching tradition, where instructors elicits “probing questions,” which have indisputable right or wrong answers (Maher & Tetreault-Thompson, 2001, p. 3). Instructors who utilize this authoritative teaching method limit the ability of the diverse student population (Maher & Tetreault-Thompson, 2001). The “liberatory pedagogies” encourage students to “gain an education that would be relevant to their concerns, to create their own meanings, and to find their own voices in relation to the material” (Maher & Tetreault-Thompson, 2001, p. 4).

For this study, the application of current feminist theories to higher education systems indicates significant changes in the college classroom. For example, feminist approaches inside colleges are found with the creation of women’s studies programs, service learning and academic support systems. The philosophy behind the feminist theory supports the researcher’s hypothesis, which promotes an unbiased, equitable learning environment for all college students.

**Tinto’s Integration Framework**

The Integration Framework developed by Vincent Tinto (1975) applies mostly to community college student integration levels and persistence rates or completion. The theory discusses that in order for students to succeed in college, the students need two important elements: academic and social support (Tinto, 1975). The integration of a student is dependent on factors such as the university or college’s commitment, the individual student, the family, money, social norms, prior experience and instructors (Tinto, 1975). The theory also discusses the psychological and sociological background of the student who chooses to dropout. Tinto (1975) describes the power
behind the perception of the student’s reality and the impact the reality has on their persistence of college. For example, if the student perceives their instructor in college to be unapproachable, then this perception becomes the student’s reality and limits their academic success.

For this study, the researcher questioned the one size fits all model of higher education. Integration of all voices in and out of the classroom fosters academic growth. Through academic and personal growth, first year students are more likely to persist through into the second year (Tinto, 2012). First Year Experience programs that approach the college experience with a noticeably all-inclusive view, as supported by Tinto (1975) create long-lasting changes for the student, the faculty and the community.

**Definition of Terms**

*First Year Experience* is a “course intended to enhance the academic and/or social integration of first-year students by introducing them to a variety of specific topics, which vary by seminar type; to essential skills for college success; and to selected processes, the most common of which is the creation of a peer support group” (Barefoot, 2000, p. 49).

*Gender equitable instructional methods* are specific methods, which incorporate gender in the classroom through foundations, skills, methods and strategies across the curriculum. For example, the instructor discusses both male and female historical figures in a history course (Sadker & Silber, 2007).
Gender equity is the act of engaging in supportive instructional practices in the classroom and every student understands they have an opportunity to learn (Noddings, 2005).

Gender stereotypes are “beliefs that members of a culture hold about how females and males ought to behave” (Hetherington & Parke, 2003, para. 3).

Persistence is the duration or length of time engaged with instruction, typically reported as hours of instruction “during a specific period of months, usually in increments of 1 year” (Comings, 2007, p. 24).

Retention is the process of maintaining enrollment continuously throughout the semester or term, and school year (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). Additionally, retention rates typically measure the number of first year students who continue into their next academic year (Arnold, 1999).

Stereotype threat is “defined as a situational predicament in which individuals are at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their group” (Inzlicht & Schmader, 2012, p. 2). Societal pressures and negative stereotypes on particular groups can affect school success for these groups (Steele, 1997).

Organization of the Remainder of Thesis

The organization of this thesis follows the guidelines established in the Graduate Student Handbook through the College of Education, Teacher Education program and contains five chapters. Chapter 1 incorporates the following: the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, methodology used to carry out the study, limitations of the study, theoretical basis of the study, definition of terms, organization
of the thesis and background of the researcher. Chapter 2 consists of a review of relevant literature on the topics of history of the First Year Experience programs, issues facing female entrance into college, awareness of gender equitable teaching strategies, and curriculum for First Year Experience programs. Chapter 3 concentrates on the methodology of the thesis and details the design process and the procedures employed in the study. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the quantitative and the qualitative data. Chapter 5 consists of the conclusions drawn from the study, as they relate to the proposed research questions and relevant literature, followed by the proposed recommendations for further study. Following Chapter 5 are the Appendices and a complete list of references utilized in this study.

**Background of the Researcher**

Nicole Marie Mehta earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in General Social Science from the University of Oregon in 2006. She discovered her true passion for advocacy and gender equity throughout her college career and as a co-chair of the Oregon Students of Color Coalition. As the co-chair, Ms. Mehta discovered the power of representing the underrepresented through teaching workshops and conducting presentations on racial and gender inequities. The Masters of Arts in Education, Behavioral Sciences and Gender Equity Studies in the Teacher Education program at California State University, Sacramento provided Ms. Mehta with additional opportunities to seek out further knowledge about gender fairness and equity among populations.
Ms. Mehta’s support team consisted of many fantastic leaders in the Sacramento region, but one person in particular championed Dr. Sherrie Carinci. Ms. Mehta has had the opportunity to student teach courses on gender stereotypes in education and present to undergraduates in multiple interdisciplinary departments at California State University, Sacramento. Ms. Mehta hopes to affect her community through educating teachers, public and private sector officials about the solution-based models, which promote gender equity.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Even the most well intended, highly trained graduate level professor creates stereotypes in their mind as they meet their students (Steele, 1997). The faculty’s behavior could be unintended and the parties involved oblivious (Wood & Lenze, 1991). The inadvertent behavior of faculty originated from institutionalized concepts (Wood & Lenze, 1991). These concepts play out in everyday processes, consisting of, but not limited to “instructors’ language, classroom style, and ways of responding to students” (Wood & Lenze, 1991, p. 17). Furthermore, biases occur in most classrooms by instructors who value particular actions from the students, actions such as rewarding assertion versus waiting to speak, and valuing individual achievement versus collaborative efforts (Wood & Lenze, 1991).

As explained in the Social Role Theory, the instructors learn these values through observation (Eagly et al., 2000). Dulin (2008) explains gender differences and behaviors are the consequences of social structures including schools, parents and peers. The significances of gender social norms and the indoctrinated traditions of the education system make progress toward equity difficult (Jacobs, 1996). This difficulty is in large part because changing everyday classroom behavior that expresses devalued and limited views of women is difficult, because much differential treatment that may occur in [the] classroom and related interaction is inadvertent and often below
the level of consciousness of both faculty and students. (Hall & Sandler, 1982, p. 13)

However, raising the level of awareness of gender equitable practices in higher education have proven to affect the education system in a more positive light. Over thirty years of research provides the evidence that the faculty, administration and student services personnel who receive training on gender fairness do change the learning environments (Hall & Sandler, 1982; hooks, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Wood & Lenze, 1991)

For the purposes of this thesis, the literature assessed for this chapter cover the impact of social construction of gender. Additionally, the researcher analyzed the research on the issues facing female student entrance into the education system; faculty awareness of gender fair teaching methods; and the history of the First Year Experience programs. In addition, the literature review analyzed award-winning First Year Experience programs offered by universities and colleges nationwide; curriculum used in FYE courses; and analysis of curriculum used in the two universities participating in the study.

Impact of Social Construction of Gender

The moment a baby is born, and gender is announced: “It’s a boy!” or “Congratulations on your baby girl,” the cultural expectations for this little person begin automatically through gender targeted toys, clothes and interests (Lorber, 2004). When the child begins to talk, self-identified gender occurs because “as a social institution, gender is one of the many ways human beings organize their lives”
Society creates the division of labor based on predictable patterns, values and systems (Lorber, 2004). Which member of society is responsible for what task is assigned through both “talents, motivations, and competence” and “on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity- ascribed membership in a category of people” (Lorber, 2004, p. 55).

In the Western gender-stratified culture, men’s activities and jobs are typically valued higher than the jobs of women (Lorber, 2004). The repetitive behavior mimicked by the child from the parent and reinforced by the culture, peers and society, creates a social gender norm for the growing child (Eagly et al., 2000). Once the child goes to school, the gender roles are reinforced by the children and the teacher (Eagly et al., 2000). Social Role Theory explains the reasons behind gender differences and behaviors. Again, the reinforced gender norm pattern and division of labor forms a normalization of male and female opportunities. This specific pattern occurs frequently in schools (Jones & Myhill, 2004; Sadker & Sadker, 1994) Teachers hold social norms for boys and girls simply by growing up a participant in the society. Walkerdine (1989) found that teachers carry specific assumptions and beliefs about learning potential based on gender. Through extensive research using observations and semi-structured interviews, schoolteachers’ assumptions expose drastic differences in teachers’ perceptions of boys and girls (Jones & Myhill, 2004). The United Kingdom-based study revealed how the gender of the student influences the teachers’ opinions of what an underachiever looks like in the classroom (Jones & Myhill, 2004). For some teachers, the underachiever looks like the
boy who is bright, but bored. Girls, by contrast, are not bored: they are keen and hardworking, they will succeed without any special strategies, they will knuckle down and make the best of all school experiences because they make the effort. (Jones & Myhill, 2004, p. 560)

Therefore, the teacher may ask more critical thinking, open-ended questions to the male students and engage the female student less often or not at all (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). “That is, making people think about a particular stereotype that applies to a group to which they are a member (e.g. “girls are bad at math”) influences the way people perform on a given task” (Cassidy, 2007; as cited in Sadker & Silber, 2007, p. 56). The impact of these gender stereotypes could be one of the causes for the assumed superiority given to boys by the teachers, parents and others in academic settings (Sadker & Silber, 2007). In addition, these negative assumptions about girls’ educational performance could prevent further confidence, ultimately influencing self-esteem and success in school (Sadker & Silber, 2007).

The teacher’s behaviors indicate to the male students that females are below them academically (Kaminski & Sheridan, 1984; Powlishta, 1995; Yee & Brown, 1994; as cited in Sadker & Silber, 2007). When children see this gender biased behavior repeatedly, the teacher has normalized the bias (Cassidy, 2007). The literature on teacher bias described the results of the negative stereotypes as “improving or impairing the children’s academic performance” (Cassidy, 2007; as cited in Sadker & Silber, 2007, p. 56). Research on the stereotype threat describes limitations to young children based on their gender, race and class (Steele, 1997). The
role of education, especially in higher education, should be to discredit these limitations. Education should reveal to all opportunities to both genders. Inclusiveness and non-assumptive behavior modeled by the teachers and instructors improve students’ chances for academic success, especially once the students are in college.

**Issues Facing Female College Students**

Starting college can make any person feel nervous and lonely. The first year student is taking a major step into adulthood (Komarovsky & Kimmel, 1985). At the women’s college, Barnard, in 1979, feminists and sociologists, Komarovsky and Kimmel (1985), addressed some of the personal conflicts of women who feel forced to balance their self-identity between new and traditional ideas of femininity in the book, *Women in College: Sharing new Feminine Identities*. Komarovsky and Kimmel’s (1985) research analyzed the student’s peer relationships and self-awareness struggles during this important transitional time. The research revealed that the female students’ experience several societal pressures to behave a particular way. The qualitative interviews of the Barnard college students revealed several academic and social barriers to feeling connected to the college.

Refrains such as “No one knew my name” and “I felt alone walking on campus and didn’t see any familiar faces” were reoccurring themes in the interviews (Komarovsky & Kimmel, 1985, p. 19). The majority (57%) of the participants felt alone and isolated (Komarovsky & Kimmel, 1985). One female student recalled, “I went for days without talking to anyone, and it was depressing to walk across the campus and not even see a familiar face. I felt lonely and intimidated, as if I didn’t
really belong at the college” (Komarovsky & Kimmel, 1985, p. 19). The feelings of loneliness and isolated experiences have long-term impact on students, especially for women and students of color (Komarovsky & Kimmel, 1985).

Academic programs such as the First Year Experience programs, led by instructors trained in gender fairness teaching methods could have assisted the students to feel more connected to their university. Furthermore, female students faced pressures from the professors to complete their coursework and degrees without much support (Komarovsky & Kimmel, 1985). The study’s participants indicated feeling intimidated by their professors and unsure of their approachability. The college cannot expect first year students, male or female, to understand how to maneuver through this vastly different educational structure without some guidance.

**Faculty Awareness of Gender Fair Teaching Methods**

Gender equitable or gender fair teaching methods (terms will be used interchangeably) are specific methods which incorporate gender in the classroom through foundations, skills, methods and strategies across the curriculum (Sadker & Silber, 2007; see definition of terms). For example, when an instructor understands connectivity to the material and selects specific content with equal representation of genders, races and classes (Sadker & Silber, 2007). Additional research from Carinci (2002) and Olivieri (2011) found that faculty had low levels of awareness of gender fair teaching methods. According to Olivieri’s (2011) study, the results indicated that “only 34 % of educators [out of 250 surveyed]…had obtained training in equitable teaching approaches, and only 24.6% felt they were effectively trained” (p. vi).
Similarly, Carinci (2007) indicated that overwhelmingly educators receive training on “classroom management techniques, developing teaching strategies, and understanding the pedagogical style” (p. 7). The topic consistently missing from teacher education is gender equitable teaching approaches (Carinci, 2002).

Campbell and Sanders’ (1997) research aligns with the findings of Carinci (2002) and Olivieri (2011). Results from national research conducted among professors in the mathematics and science disciplines “found that two thirds of education professors spent two hours or less teaching about gender equity, and rarely provided practical classroom strategies to neutralize bias” (Campbell & Sanders, 1997; as cited in Sadker, 1999, para. 20).

Some instructors trivialize gender (Sadker, 1999). Hanson (1997) discussed the ways in which future educators dismiss gender fairness to focus on content instead. Educators are not malicious people who intentionally build a bias against females; simply the instructor does not notice the need for change in the classroom (Sanders, 1996). Consequently, the issue of “gender equity may be perhaps the most challenging diversity issue to tackle” (Sanders, 1996, p. 2). Ignoring the diversity is worse than committing acts of discrimination. The idea that sexism no longer exists is quite naïve, to say the least. Instructors must overcome their hesitations to discuss gender in their classrooms. The literature discussing teacher education provides proven ways to eliminate this barrier.

When an educator learns about gender fair teaching methods, there are significant behavioral changes in the classroom (Jones & Dindia, 2004; Jones, Evans,
Byrd & Campbell, 2000; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Sanders, 1996). Education on gender fair teaching methods have occurred in the United Kingdom and other countries within Europe and the training was proven to change the minds of the educators (Marouchou, 2011). Through a study conducted within 22 institutions across eight countries using longitudinal research methods, Marouchou (2011) discovered what may appear obvious to the general population. The more training the instructors receive, the more improved their teaching methods became (Marouchou, 2011). Over the course of the past decade, the research proved to the universities within places like Norway and United Kingdom that providing training for all permanent faculties will improve their institutions, student’s evaluations and overall give a morale boost to the instructors (Marouchou, 2011). Some education researchers disagreed and called for more data to proclaim the correlation between the training of faculty and the improved student learning (Hobson, 2003; Radloff, 2002; Rust, 2000; Trowler & Bamber, 2005). However, limited literature exists that disclaim the connection. This researcher found more examples of teacher education effectiveness, specifically when the teachers were trained on issues of equity.

Sanders (1996) developed the Teacher Education Equity Project to address this difficult issue of gender bias inside of the teacher education sector. Sixty-one teacher educators in 27 states participated in the project. All of the pre-service participants worked in mathematics, science and technology. The completed project lasted five days and after one year, “61 teacher educators taught a total of 5,000 pre-service education students about gender equity in mathematics, science and technology”
The results reported in their pre/post findings were 85% of the participants changed “in a more equitable direction” and the amount of educators who mention gender equity in their syllabi doubled from 23% to 48% (Sanders, 1996, p. 4). This particular study reinforces the limited research stating the instructors exposed to gender fair teaching methods can adopt and implement the practice.

Awareness of gender equitable instructional strategies is crucial to the process of building an inclusive learning environment. The research of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) stressed the importance of well-trained teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Though the original studies were in elementary schools, researchers can infer that similar behaviors conducted by the schoolteacher are occurring by the instructors in the First Year Experience courses. Sadker and Sadker (1994) uncovered a shocking truth for the education sector. Boys and girls treatment was drastically different inside the classroom. The teacher called on the male students eight times more than the female students (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The boys spoke up in class more often without raising their hand and the teachers listened to the boys (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The girls did the same, and the teacher “told them to raise their hand if they want to speak” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994, p. 30).

This example of gender bias is only one of many that Sadker and Sadker (1994) revealed using taped observations of the teachers. The more detrimental examples of bias include teachers not acknowledging the quality of work based on the content for their female students, but based on the appearance of the work (i.e. good
penmanship) (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Indirectly expressing to the females that certain professions are out of their reach, such as science or math; and encouraging male students more often and challenging their minds to think more critically (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

**Gender Equity in Higher Education Settings**

In college, faculty members present ideas to students imparting their own personal set of beliefs about the discipline (Marouchou, 2011). The culture of higher education has supported this authoritative teaching method for hundreds of years (hooks, 2000). This style of instruction, although proven ineffective, continues to permeate college classrooms (hooks, 2000). Researcher, Marouchou (2011), made the argument that the instructors and lecturers need to understand how they teach, what they believe and how the information transmits to the student. Broadly speaking, a teacher-conception of teaching is one where the faculty members’ job is to know the subject and then accurately communicate the knowledge to the students. In this way, students are dependent on the lecturer for knowledge- the conception referred to as “lecturer-dependent” (Varnava-Marouchou, 2007, p. 24). The opposite conception also occurs. The instructor expects the student to decipher his or her own ideas and the faculty’s role is to encourage this responsibility (Marouchou, 2011). Research is limited on the topic of higher education instructors’ conception of themselves, the teaching process and the impact on the students. However, Marouchou (2011) uncovered some unique findings.
Gibbs and Coffey (2004), researchers in the United Kingdom, developed a study on the topic of teaching instructors and its effectiveness. The participants were “trainee lecturers and their students in 22 universities in eight countries” (Marouchou, 2011, p. 125). The results of the said study support the hypothesis presented in this thesis. Training can improve instructors understanding of how they teach, and improve their students’ learning (Trowler & Bamber, 2005).

International education communities have moved toward training policies, providing extensive required trainings to all lecturers (Marouchou, 2011). For example, the National Council of Universities (NCU) of Norway implemented a 3-4 week training (about 100 hours) to address the “basic pedagogical competence” (Marouchou, 2011, p. 125). The term pedagogical refers to the instruction of younger populations. Trowler and Bamber (2005) stated that the trained lecturers would develop the necessary tools to “develop the competences of a new type of student for a post-industrial society” (p. 83). Marouchou (2011) did not mention that the trainings provided by the NCU specifically discussed gender training, however the instructional workshops taught teachers how to “examine, confront and challenge their [teaching] conceptions” (p. 129). These workshops on self-discovery included conceptions related to gender, race and class (Marouchou, 2011).

Teachers and college faculty can invest their time into professional development training, but without the support of administration leadership, the efforts could be mute. Riehl (2000) described a need for principals, educational leaders and others to become aware of gender fair teaching methods. The greater community,
including school district board members, parents, and principals need to invest in the professional development of teachers and instructors (Metz, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; as cited in Riehl, 2000). Professional development trainings for instructors of all grades and populations should include gender fair teaching methods and prepare educators to build gender equitable curriculum.

**Equity in Curriculum**

Coffey and Acker (1991) set out to survey the instructors who wanted to present their curriculum, ideas and thoughts with impartialness and balance. However, the teaching presented to the instructors reinforced a gender-blind approach (Coffey & Acker, 1991). The gender-blind approach simply defined as to ignore the gender differences (Coffey & Acker, 1991). The instructors surveyed believed this strategy would improve things for girls and women (Coffey & Acker, 1991). “We are supposed to produce impartial, balanced teachers…but so often this means blind teachers,” commented one of the 14 teacher educators interviewed for the study (Coffey & Acker, 1991, n.p.). Not presenting gender in the classroom is similar to not presenting issues of race and not seeing color in the classroom thirty years ago. Gender continues to be an avoided topic. Instructors have to want all students to have the opportunity to become unbiased, active citizens and overcome the resistance to discussing gender in the classroom.

Gender equitable teaching methods continuously receive a backseat, or are not present at all, to the more popular trainings, such as classroom management (Carinci, 2002). The research repeatedly proves the point by the lack of awareness of gender
equitable teaching strategies from instructors and missing use of equitable curriculum. Non-action on the importance of gender equity reinforces discrimination in the classroom and in society (Carinci, 2002; Olivieri, 2011). Action in a practical sense is paramount. Extensive research completed by the AAUW (1998) on the lack of representation of females in the math and science fields. These efforts are to be applauded, however Carinci (2002), this researcher and others believe that it is “the lack of attention to or absence of, gender equity training being provided at all levels of education to faculty” which stifles the students’ experience and limits our growth as a society (p. 7).

Once trained on equitable teaching methods, instructors need further education on incorporating the equity into the curriculum (Carinci, 2002). Removing traditional rote learning from the classroom takes practice and awareness. Equitable teaching methods provide more than mentioning a woman once during a history lesson. The gender fair approaches could include “cooperative learning classroom structure,” which means everyone participates in smaller groups and every student gets a chance to speak; “an extended wait time for students’ responses” (Carinci, 2002, p. 10). Other approaches include “a review of the curriculum for equitable representation of females and males in the course material” (AAUW, 1992; Sadker, Sadker, & Long, 1989; as cited in Carinci, 2002, p. 10).

Most teachers and instructors receive minimal to zero training and education on how to build equitable curriculum (Carinci, 2002; Olivieri, 2011). The absence of gender in the college classroom ties into the researcher’s study through acknowledging
this gender-blind approach influencing the avoidance of gender equity training.

Several faculty members indicated on the questionnaire that they attended one hour of sexual harassment training and so, they are set. Olivieri (2011) experienced similar results, with some professors simply refusing to participate in the study based on the content of gender equity. The First Year Experience students deserve to have a well-trained professor showing them how to become productive, informed citizens.

**History of First Year Experience Programs**

First Year Experience programs developed out of the political unrest among students and faculty in the late 1960s (Watts, 1999). Administrators were stricken with an influx of students who arrived out of the baby-boom era and the need for student development increased tremendously (Watts, 1999). Prior to the attendance increase in diverse populations, institutions worked on the development of research, and frequently warned students of the possibility of failure. This “academic atmosphere of impersonality” consumed the research-orientated institutions across the United States (Watts, 1999, p. 2). The institutions expected the student to succeed with minimal support from faculty, staff and administration (Watts, 1999). In 1972, the University of South Carolina’s President Thomas Jones created a course called University 101, under no discipline and strictly focused on student development (Watts, 1999).

Additionally, Jones required training for all faculty members before they taught the course and continued to champion this new philosophy of approaching education through supporting the students’ success versus the outdated research model of developing the discipline, not the student (Watts, 1999). The decision for the entire
faculty to attend mandatory training prior to teaching First Year Experience upset the instructors in large part because of the instructors resisting change (Watts, 1999). Additional reasons for the instructors’ resistance to training could have risen from fear of this new student-centered approach limiting the faculty members’ professional careers (Watts, 1999).

In recent years, FYE instructors have evolved to understand that the collegiate system is less about individuals and more about the collective whole (Cuseo, 2010). For the most part, instructors who subscribe to the student-focused learning structures could be more open to teaching methods that promote fairness and equity. Based on this researcher’s study, the instructors celebrated the equitable teaching methods, regardless of limited exposure. First Year Experience programs foster an equitable experience (Cuseo, 2010). Nevitt Sanford’s (1967) Where Colleges Fail presented an argument that said colleges fail whenever they treat students as less than a total person, and ignore the fact that effective learning depends on the whole being, not merely on his or her ‘abstracted intelligence’. (Cuseo, 2010, para. 7)

FYE programs provide this “humanistic philosophy,” and the movement to retain students is only part of the “higher and more altruistic motive” (Cuseo, 2010, para. 7). As hooks (2000) and Noddings (2005) believe that education should create experiences, which develop the students and raise the level of consciousness over time.
John Gardner, first director of UN101, believed in a similar educational process and transformed First Year Experience programs into an organization serving first year students. Gardner also began educating other institutions across the United States and Canada about the effectiveness of FYE (Watts, 1999). The purpose of the First Year Experience (FYE) programs are to provide the incoming first year student with an extended orientation of the academic, social and emotional changes which naturally occur after beginning higher education (Barefoot, 2000). One of the many goals of FYE courses is to provide a stronger safety net to ensure retention and persistence [graduation] (Barefoot, 2000).

Finishing college, however, cannot be the sole purpose for the FYE programs (Barefoot, 2000). The first year student must feel connected to their institution and understand the expectations of the drastic change from high school to college. Nationally, there are 85% reported colleges and universities offering some form of first-year seminar (Tobolowsky, 2006; as cited in Vander Schee, 2011). Typically, the first-year seminar is “an extended orientation program, study skills class, a full-length academic course, or some combination of these” (Griffin & Romm, 2008; as cited in Vander Schee, 2011, p. 382). The goals of most courses are academic and social integration for the students, and related to student retention for the university (Tinto, 1993).

The institutions participating in this study state specific goals for their First Year Experience programs. University A and University B were the labels used by the researcher and will be referred throughout this thesis. The goals listed for University
A’s First Year Experience program included phrases such as creating a sense of community within a diverse student population, supporting first year students personally and academically, and encouraging retention. The goals listed for University B addressed the exploration process of being educated at the university, exposure to career options, and nurturing the diverse culture in an academic setting.

**First Year Experience and Gender**

“Schools are major social institutions” and are not exempt from gender bias, stereotype threat or discrimination (Sanders, 2000, p. 183). Higher education institutions should provide opportunities to everyone, regardless of gender. Gender inclusion teaching methods inside First Year Experience courses should provide foundational experiences for the student to become more confident as a student. Current literature states when gender equitable courses are offered, the students’ interest and enrollment into the courses increase dramatically (Sadker & Silber, 2007). Barefoot (2000) also points out the institutions’ perspective, which states the faculty focuses on the students’ weaknesses, instead of changing the institution by providing higher quality courses.

The rationale of First Year Experience programs varies depending on the institution and the needs of their students. There are four main goals: to assist in the adjustment academically from high school to college; to help students with personal development; to give support to families who are adjusting to the changes of their child attending college; and to give opportunities for the institution to get to know the students (Perigo & Upcraft, 1989). Retention researchers confirm the most delicate
time for a college student is between their first year and sophomore year (Tierney, 2004; Tinto, 1975; Wells, 2009). Tinto (1975) believed that the institution had an estimated six-week window of time within the student’s first year semester to retain, inspire and see the person move forward into the next year. That six-week window is short considering how much time and energy it takes to obtain a degree.

**Community Impact of First Year Experience**

Graduation rates do affect and stabilize the university system in a time of instability. In 2007, the Office of Institutional Research conducted recent evaluations of First Year Experience programs and Learning Communities for the California State University, Sacramento. The report showed the 6-year graduation rate of the students participating in Learning Communities or FYE courses, with 40.7% of the 938 first year students (Sacramento State Office of Institutional Research, 2007). Another tracking report from the same institution indicated that in Fall 2006, the college enrolled 2,655 first year students. Seventy-six percent of those students went onto their second year; 64% of those students went to their third and by Fall 2009, the retention rate fell to 59% (Sacramento State Office of Institutional Research, 2006).

The initiatives organized by this CSU campus and other institutions include a comprehensive plan to increase the graduation rates overall. First Year Experience programs typically play a role in the effort to increase graduation rates. These plans explained in the report called, *Increasing Graduation Rates and Closing the Achievement Gap* tell the researcher the graduation rates remain low and
administrators, faculty and community members alike are working tirelessly to close the gap (Varlotta & Sheley, 2010).

This work includes fundamental changes to the way CSU, Sacramento operated. For example, the first tier to this plan detailed the need for training instructors on how to support first-year students. The second plan was to increase mentorship and advising for the students. “Recent data reveal[ed] that students who participate in all required advising sessions show[ed] an 11 percent increase in retention after one year” (Varlotta & Sheley, 2010, p. 7). Another part of the initiative included the creation of a First Year Experience project, which the campus started in fall 2009, expanding the program to reach more first year students (Varlotta & Sheley, 2010). The overall goal of the initiatives is to “increase the graduation rate of first-time freshmen by 8 percent by 2015” (Varlotta & Sheley, 2010, p. 7).

However, the bigger impact of higher graduation rates lies outside the university. The long-term impacts of higher graduation rates on communities, towns, cities and nations are immense. Community members who obtain higher education degrees build a sturdier pathway for the nation (Lehning, 2008). Students who leave college early change the future landscape of not only the individual student who left, but the institution loses significant funding streams, which then impact the remaining students. Most universities have seen decreased federal money and shrunken budgets over the past eight years. The income must come from somewhere. Therefore, increased fees and tuition for students become a reality forcing individuals to take out
more student loans or dropout completely, making college out of reach for a growing low-income population (Lehning, 2008).

Across the United States, thousands of college and university campuses are responding to the transitional needs for first year students by implementing First Year Experience programs (National Resource Center: First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition, 2012a). Five student advocates providing excellent services to first year students received national attention based on their high quality FYE programs (National Resource Center: First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition, 2012c). This researcher investigated these five award-winning FYE programs to determine which programs choose to discuss gender and the curriculum choices for their First Year Experience courses.

**Award-winning National First Year Experience Programs**

The top five institutions in the United States were analyzed to determine which discuss gender in their award-winning First Year Experience programs. For the purposes of this review, the researcher determined that the most updated and accurate listing created by the National Resource Center: First Year Experience and Students in Transition (National Resource Center: First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition, 2012c). The award and recognition program provides specific details about any individual-faculty, administrator or student- “who serves as an advocate for first-year students at a regionally accredited college or university” (National Resource Center: First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition, 2012c, para. 1).
The first institution listed as 2012 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates is Howard Community College, affiliated with Binghamton University. The award-winning First Year Experience course (FYEX-100) is two-credits. Howard Community College’s website indicates the course “engages students in a highly interactive, critical thinking experience designed to help you understand yourself as an intentional learner and as a civic and global citizen” (Howard Community College, 2013, para. 1). The researcher examined the course outline and syllabi and found no specific mention of gender. The students spend at least two-three days on diversity issues, and yet not stated in the topics is gender.

The next institution listed in the 2012 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates is Walsh University located in Canton, outside of Cleveland, Ohio, affiliated with the undergraduate institution, University of Toronto. This First Year Experience course (FYRE) is a residential program. It is “designed to help students make a seamless transition from high school to college living” (Walsh University, 2012). According to the Associate Dean, Andrew Grant, the focus of the First Year Experience program is the at-risk students who were dropping out of their first year in record numbers. “The loss of half the at-risk students in a class of 300 (20-25 percent of the class) by the end of the first year signaled a need for change” (Grant, 2006, p. 7). Students in the FYRE attend the same course, with the same instructors, “providing continuity” (Grant, 2006, p. 7). In the second year of the FYRE program, Walsh University retained 92% from the first fall semester to the next semester. The retention
rate from first year to sophomore year was 79% (Grant, 2006). The course syllabus was not published.

The third institution listed in the 2012 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates is Southern Connecticut State University, affiliated with Western Connecticut State University. This mandatory FYE program offers an array of resources including a two-day orientation with parents and families. Similar to Walsh University and other institutions, the FYE provide learning communities where the same 20 students attend classes together for a semester (Southern Connecticut University, 2012b.). This First Year Experience program is distinguishable from others across the country, by “the high level of collaboration between faculty and administrative faculty” (Southern Connecticut State University Alumni Association, 2012, p. 7). Henderson is the current FYE director, and recently awarded the National Resource Center: First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate (Southern Connecticut State University Alumni Association, 2012).

The fourth institution ranked high in FYE accomplishments is the University of Colorado-Denver. The optional First-Year Seminar (FYS) program primary goals are to make the “transition from high school to college” successful, “improve student retention, and boost new student confidence” (University of Colorado Denver, 2012, para. 2). The maximum class size is 24 students inside “Core Curriculum” courses (University of Colorado Denver, 2012, para. 4). The uniqueness of this FYS program is the menu of courses to choice from within varying departments and content.
Examples of the 20 courses listed are Social Science: Racial Minorities in the US; Humanities: Rereading America; and Behavioral Science: Evaluating Contemporary TV (University of Colorado Denver, 2009). In reviewing the course descriptions, not one course mentions gender.

The fifth institution is Otterbein University in Westerville, located near Columbus, Ohio. This First Year Seminar (FYS) program provides students with over 30 courses among several disciplines. A unique feature of the FYS is the program offers specific support for non-traditional students, who may not be “new to college,” called Transition Year Seminars (Otterbein University, 2012, para.3). Goal Four of the FYS program goals and objectives specifically includes gender. The goal states “To promote engaged living and learning and to explore commitments to campus, local and global communities” (Otterbein University, 2012, n.p.). One of the objectives states: “You will encounter the forms of diversity- ethnic, gender, age, class, religious, sexual, national, regional, etc.- that shape identities, perspectives, and cultures” (Otterbein University, 2012, n.p.).

None of the other colleges listed such detailed outcomes and goals, nor did the institutions mention gender. Out of the five institutions listed here, Otterbein University FYS program offers four courses (out of 34 courses total) specifically discussing gender. Examples of these courses are FYS 1013: Women’s Leadership; FYS 1019: A Thousand Cuts: Bullying, Power and Hope; and FYS 1014: How Sports Explains Us (Otterbein University, 2012).
Curriculum Used in the Award-winning First Year Experience Programs

The institutions mentioned above built successful First Year Experience programs, however the absence of gender in the syllabi and curriculum is curious and foreseeable. One out of five colleges clearly stated gender in their objectives and goals and offered more than one course discussing gender. The institutions that chose to promote “gender equitable curriculum is a reflection of [their] responsible citizenship” (Cornish, 2010, p. 68).

The implementation of a first-year seminar is a responsible act as well, according to the National Resource Center: First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition. With over 80% of colleges and universities implementing FYE across the nation, the versions of these FYE programs vary greatly from one to the next (Skipper, 2011). Therefore, the discussion of the curriculum for this section has been limited to the analysis of the five award-winning FYE programs chosen in 2012 by the National Resource Center: First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition. The curriculum used in the first-year seminar offers one piece of the larger program and for others the first-year seminar course is the entirety of the FYE program.

First, Howard Community College’s First Year Experience program (FYEX) 2010 syllabi indicated the textbook used called *Becoming a Master Student* written by Dave Ellis. This book presents several themes discussing issues such as time and money management, memory, motivation and learning styles. One of the last chapters discusses health and communication (Ellis, 2010). Inside the Communication chapter,
the subheadings list “Communicating in a Diverse World” and “Thriving with Diversity” without any mention of gender.

Walsh University website currently promotes a residential First Year Experience program where first year learning communities live together in the same hall for the entire academic year (Walsh University, 2012). What are missing on the website are the courses offered through the FYE program. The researcher attempted to contact the FYE director to obtain this information with no return response.

Southern Connecticut State University offers courses within various disciplines of the Inquiry Learning Community Course called Intellectual and Creative Inquiry and Critical Thinking (Southern Connecticut State University, 2012). The Intellectual and Creative Inquiry is a seminar course discussing the skills needed for college, and to begin “thinking like a college student” (Southern Connecticut State University, 2012, para. 1). Critical Thinking prepares students for success in “active learning and independent thinking” with an ability to assess information inside and out of the classroom (Southern Connecticut State University, 2012, para. 2).

The Intellectual and Creative Inquiry (INQ) course outlines provide specific details about the course objectives and goals. This particular course offers first year students self-awareness projects, time and money management skills and health education (Southern Connecticut State University, 2012b). The uniqueness of this course stems from the extensive curriculum options for the instructors. Southern Connecticut State University Academic Learning Communities website (www.southern-alc.wetpaint.com) offers mentors and instructors resources and
program information. The site gives detailed information on how to build your own
INQ 101 course, including a syllabi template. The Required Reading section lists the
books needed for the course, which include monthly calendar or planner; the
university catalog; “OPEN BOOK Text (common read for all first-semester
students)”; and the instructor’s choice of reading materials (Southern Connecticut
State University, 2012a, n.p.). The common read is when the students spend the
summer before the semester begins reading the same book.

In reviewing a selection of completed INQ 101 course syllabus online, the
majority of the instructors selected a non-fiction New York Times Best Seller book
called The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates written by Wes Moore in 2011.
This book discusses several themes including racial and gender inequities, domestic
violence, drugs and poverty and how “our destinies can be determined by a single
stumble down the wrong path, or a tentative step down the right one” (Moore, 2011, p.
xiv). One INQ 101 syllabi from the Department of Public Health listed the topic for
the day as “Gender” for two full class days. The next topic was “Sexual Violence on
Campus” and then, the next class debriefed “Gender.” The course sessions
supplemented by “Gender Reading” (Risisky, 2011, n.p.). Other topics included
“Degrees of Inequality,” and “Treatment of People” (Risisky, 2011, n.p.).

The course, INQ 101 - Intellectual & Creative Inquiry also requires first year
students to read Degrees of Inequality: Culture, Class, and Gender in American
Higher Education written by Ann Mullen (2010). This published dissertation details
Mullen’s (2010) research studied two institutions, Yale and Southern Connecticut
State University and their student population. Mullen (2010) asked the students their background and compared different factors, such as “how the students decided to attend college, where to apply, and what the students actually did in college” (Mullen, 2010, p. 15). Another important component of INQ 101 is the FYE program requires the instructors to send their students to out-of-class workshops covering specific topics including sexual assault and drugs and alcohol. The number of workshops or presentations is not limited to any specific number.

The University of Colorado, Denver has several courses within their First Year Experience program, from all major disciplines, including arts, sciences, and ethnic studies (University of Colorado Denver, 2012). In reviewing the course catalog, the college does provide detailed course descriptions, however not one of the courses mentioned gender. The FYE program offers one racial and ethnicity course. The common reading text contains similar themes to the other First Year Experience programs.

Otterbein University in Ohio offers an extensive First Year Experience program similar to Southern Connecticut University. The First Year Seminar (FYS) Guide provides detailed information about what the program has to offer (Otterbein University, 2012). The courses are interdisciplinary and considered general education; and, participation in the FYS program is voluntary. The university recently implemented a Leadership Living Learning Community program where first year students can participate in leadership skill assessments, training to become a FYS peer
mentor, reflection activities and shared experiences to build on teamwork and individual skills (Otterbein University, 2012).

*Women’s Leadership* is a course inside the First Year Seminar program of Otterbein University. This course focuses on the “historic, current, future challenges and opportunities associated with women seeking and fulfilling leadership roles” (Otterbein University First Year Seminar Guide, n.d., p. 5). The students follow a current woman leader using media, blogs and social networking throughout the semester. The instructor invites speakers from various fields presenting views and experiences (Otterbein University First Year Seminar Guide, n.d.).

An additional course discussing gender includes an intriguing, and important title: *A Thousand Cuts: Bullying, Power, and Hope.* The course dives deep into bullying issues across the United State for grades 6 through 12 and inside college campuses. Through films, presentations and readings, the students learn about the causes of bullying and cyber bullying; the bullies and victims’ “responses to this destructive behavior, and engage questions of individual and collective empowerment in the face of the pain and fear that bullying creates” (Otterbein University First Year Seminar, n.d., p. 7). *Please Stop Laughing at Me: One Woman’s Inspirational Story* written by Jodee Blanco is one of the texts chosen for this FYS course.

This true story includes a Reader’s Guide about cyber bullying featuring Blanco’s extensive bullying prevention program called INJJA: It’s NOT Just Joking Around!™ (Blanco, 2012). *This is What I Did* written by Ann Dee Ellis is another required text of this course discussing the perspective of a 13-year-old boy about
bullying, abuse and coming-of-age issues (Ellis, 2007). The students also watch and analyze films by Gus Van Sant, *Elephant* (IMDb.com, 2013) and a newly created film called *rats & Bullies* directed by Cassidy McMillan (McMillian & Buffer, 2013).

Otterbein University First Year Seminar program also provides courses discussing gender. *How Sports Explain Us* discusses how gender roles and cultural values define sports used in education. *The Other in World Literature, Art, and Cinema* examines “human relationships in the context of world literature, art, and cinema”; how people identify themselves within different contexts “sexually, racially, socially, or ethically” (Otterbein University, First Year Seminar Guide, n.d., p. 5).

**Curriculum of the Institutions Surveyed**

The two institutions surveyed for this thesis provide First Year Experience programs in the California State University system located in Northern California. The first institution offers three first year residential programs and academic Freshman Learning Communities (FLCs). This institution provides several academic FLCs and living-learning FLCs. Participation is a requirement for all first year students. The student can decide which program they would benefit from the most depending on their interests and major. If the first year student is undecided, the university provides different tracks to assist the students to find out which degree would best match the student.

Among the FLCs, the several disciplines and departments include a course called University 102: *Global Languages, Global Issues*. The syllabus indicates that an Educational Mentoring Team teaches the course, consisting of a faculty and peer
mentor. The course reader includes articles written by both male and female authors from diverse backgrounds (syllabus for University 102, 2012). The assignments and curriculum include developing a cultural autobiography, asking the question: “Who am I, culturally?” (syllabus for University 102, 2012, n.p.). The students discuss issues of depression, drugs and alcohol use, and affirmative action in the workplace. The class experiences student panels, film, and lecture and guest presentations. The readings offer diverse opinions from both male and female perspectives, however the course syllabi does not specifically indicate gender. Another course called University 102: Pre-Health Professions discusses typical themes from the First Year Experience program models, such as time management, career discussions, and college expectations.

University 102 also gives students the opportunity to learn more about their college through a scavenger hunt, and going on field trips together. The readings include An Introduction to Chemistry for Biology Students by George I. Sackheim; one multicultural handout; and students can choose health articles from different sources. The discussions in the class include Developing a Positive Relationship, Sexual Health, Knowing your Rights about anti-discrimination; and Sexual Assault education (syllabus for Pre-Health Professions Freshman Seminar, 2009). In reviewing several syllabus from various disciplines, the curriculum of the Freshman Seminar courses appear to follow a similar pattern with only slight variations, based on activities, and instructors’ discipline.
The next institution that participated in the study provides a First Year Experience program consisting of a learning community program and First Year Seminars. The First Year Seminars are open to all first year students, providing the students with three units to fulfill General Education requirements. The institution assists the students in determining which First Year Seminar to attend based on English and Math test scores and the students’ interest. The enrollment percentage of first year students is an estimated 52%.

Instructors are provided one textbook used across all 65 sections of the Freshman Seminar. The textbook used in the courses discussed several themes previously mentioned: study skills, time and money management. Additionally, the reader connects the student to the specific resources available in the college. The students who read this book will find one chapter, 65 pages, dedicated to race, class, inequality, and discrimination. However, gender is missing from these essays. Additionally, the required and suggested content for this course do not specifically mention either gender or race. Through reviewing the suggested activities offered in the template syllabi, the instructor can discuss issues of loneliness and college pressures.

Out of the five award-winning First Year Experience programs, only two institutions specifically offer curriculum on gender in the FYE courses. One university included gender in their overall goals and objectives for their FYE programs. Topics discussed in the first year of a student’s career help set the stage for the remaining college experience. When the topic of gender is glaringly absent from nearly 60% of
award-winning First Year Experience programs, obviously continued education on gender equity and awareness campaigns are justified. Of the universities participating in this study, neither institution specifically uses the term gender in the FYE goals and objectives, curriculum or course content. University A addresses topics related to issues around relationships, health and sexual assault and anti-discrimination, and could be viewed as gender content.

**Conclusion**

This literature review examined the impact of the social construction of gender; issues facing female student entrance into the education system; faculty awareness of gender fair teaching methods; history of the First Year Experience programs. In addition, the review provides an analysis of award-winning programs offered by institutions nationwide; curriculum used in courses; and analysis of curriculum used in the participating institutions.

Equitable teaching methods require practice and patience, as well as mindfulness and self-awareness. Therefore, an instructor must remain flexible and open-minded to new ideas, curriculum and strategies. In addition, the overall conclusion from the literature indicates that higher education instructors who use gender equitable teaching methods move our education system forward. Using the teaching methods inside First Year Experience programs advances the student into the next year giving them a skill set and confidence to succeed. History of First Year Experience programs tells us that colleges and universities are attempting to adapt to
meet the needs of incoming students. Instructors must keep gender equity in mind, whether teaching study methods or sexual harassment in the FYE courses.

Curriculum choice of an FYE instructor is important and respects the professional decision-making of the faculty. Trained faculty members will increase the likelihood of choosing to discuss gender in the First Year Experience courses. The literature discussed in this review exposes a great need for discussions, readings and presentations on gender. Out of five FYE programs profiled, only two programs truly proved their dedication to teaching gender to first year students. Of the two participating institutions, zero FYE programs address issues of gender directly.

A student’s first year of college is extremely crucial to the long-term success of that individual. When the institutions invest in the students’ development through implementing FYE courses taught by trained instructors, everyone wins. As the student heads off into the workforce, the instructor who took the time to get to know the student, model citizenry and eliminate bias, are the mentors the student will remember. As the student grows older, they will absorb the information they have gathered from college. Gender equity advocates who support the quest toward fairness must continue educating leaders, teachers and college instructors until we build a society without gender injustices.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The feminist researcher works to promote social justice issues and the study’s objective was to survey faculty for awareness of gender fair teaching methods. Data was collected from two Northern California State University institutions. Two different sources of data were collected and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Four multiple choice questions and five open-ended questions survey was used to inquire about previous training received; opinions on teaching students about particular topics such as cultural diversity, racism and sexism (see Appendix A). Five open-ended questions were asked which allowed the instructors an opportunity to provide a narrative response about gender equitable instructional methods. Twenty-nine educators from the California State University system functioned as participants in the study.

Study Design and Data Collection

The researcher designed a questionnaire as a “one single-event design” (Cowan, 2001, p. 85). Prior to distribution, the researcher did conduct an informal field test of the questionnaire with former professors, classmates and other professionals. Additionally, an important part of the process included planning for the response rate and the tools needed to ensure higher return rates of the questionnaire. Cowan (2001) recommends to code each copy of the questionnaire by writing a number or letter in the right-hand corner of the first page. However, the coding is not be used to identify individuals (Cowan, 2001).
The First Year Experience programs at both institutions each hosted their annual convocation prior to the new school year. The researcher attended these events to distribute the questionnaires in-person. The questionnaire was based on two separate, but similar studies conducted by Olivieri (2011) and Carinci (2002). Both quantitative and qualitative, or mixed research methods were in this study. Muijs (2011) explained the use of quantitative research in education is the process of explanation, specifically “explaining phenomena” (p. 1). Capturing numerical data on attitudes and beliefs accomplished through specific instruments such as questionnaires and the researcher assigns the numerical scale (Muijs, 2011).

Using the transformative paradigm, the research questions, data analysis and recommendations will focus on the basic principles outlining feminist research and evaluation: reversing gender inequities, which lead to social injustice. Additionally, discrimination based on gender is structural and embedded inside institutions, which shape our society affecting who has the power and access. The feminist researcher understands that the context is political. The researcher influences the results of the study through their own personal worldview.

**Research Questions**

The following questions were explored:

1. What are the First Year Experience professors’ understandings of gender equitable teaching approaches in the classroom?

2. Do First Year Experience professors incorporate gender equitable instructional methods into the required courses of the first year programs?
3. What training, if any, have the professors who teach the First Year Experience courses received on gender equity in the classroom?

4. Which curriculum do instructors use in the First Year Experience courses?

5. Do instructors discuss issues of racism and/or sexism? If so, what curriculum do they incorporate?

**Research Instruments**

The content of the questions will discuss the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of the first-year experience professors about gender equitable teaching practices in the classroom and professional settings. The questionnaires will also give the participants an opportunity to respond to open-ended questions asking about content needed for future in-service trainings, and other opinions about incorporating gender equitable teaching methods into their existing curriculum. The only cautionary prefaced inside the informed consent letter provided the participant the opportunity to not complete the surveys. The internal validity required “adequately controlling potentially intervening variables” and used the same measurement for all participants (Cowan, 2001, p. 111). The external validity demonstrated that the results of the surveys can be “generalized to all” of the faculty (Cowan, 2001, p. 114).

Participants were asked to provide information regarding demographic information such as ethnicity, sex, education levels and disciplines. Additional information was collected about the participants’ previous training experience, including how many hours spent in training on each topic. Next, the questionnaire presented the participant with a Likert scale survey, which gave specific types of
opinion statements on gender equity, racism, sexism, and classroom management techniques. The participant’s directions were to read each statement and indicate their opinion: agree strongly, agree or disagree, or disagree strongly. Finally, the questionnaire asked which topics discussed in their First Year Experience (FYE) classes and what types of teaching methods they use currently. This section of the form was simply a “yes or no” answer to the particular topic, such as racism.

Then, the participant had the opportunity to write a response to the types of teaching methods used in their First Year Experience courses. Most participants completed their questionnaires on-site while the researcher waited. If the participant was unable to return it immediately, then the researcher provided a self-addressed stamped envelope to mail their forms directly. A letter and a number in the top right hand corner with the institution’s name underneath designated the questionnaire’s code. The participant did not provide any identifying information such as their name or contact information. The researcher provided contact information on the consent letter portion of the questionnaire. Supplies used by the researcher for the questionnaires included white copy paper, pens, United States postage stamps, and white envelopes.

Participants

All 29 participants were current First Year Experience instructors employed by two universities inside California State University system. Twenty-two of the 29 participants identified as female and eight male participants. Sixteen of the 29 participants indicated highest level of education as Ph.D./Ed.D and the disciplines
varied. Twelve participants have a Masters of Arts or Masters of Science degree. One participant indicated their highest level of education was a Bachelor’s degree.

The disciplines held by the participants varied widely, from humanities and romance philology to business management and educational leadership. Additionally, the participants’ teaching experience spanned over 22 years to several participants indicating zero years, meaning the first year of teaching this course. The race and ethnicity of the participants gave further demographic information, with twenty out of 29 indicating Caucasian or white. The samples’ racial background included African American, with two participants; Asian, with two participants; Native American, with one participant; and Latina/Hispanic, with two participants. Two participants indicated ‘other’ and did not specify their background. One participant indicated their age range as 18-24. Three faculty members were 25-34 and eight indicated 35-44. The majority of the participants indicated their age range of 45-54, with nine. Eight participants marked their age range as 55 and over.

**Procedures**

To begin the study, the researcher obtained formal permission from the department chairs from the two institutions participating in the study. The researcher attended First Year Experience large-group annual convocations for FYE faculty to distribute the questionnaires. Through both snowball and quota sampling, the researcher obtained the permission of the participants in person. The quota sampling occurred when the researcher had to ensure the participant was teaching First Year Experience courses.
Ninety-three percent of participants handed their questionnaires directly to the researcher or left the survey in a manila envelope on the table. One hundred and five questionnaires were distributed and 30 questionnaires returned with a return rate of 28%. One participant only filled out the demographic portion of the questionnaire, making it unusable. For the 29 usable surveys, mixed methods analysis occurred.

**Summary**

The researcher analyzed the demographic data including the educational background of the FYE instructors. Next, the researcher analyzed data from specific sections of the questionnaire, which would measure the FYE instructors’ awareness of gender equity teaching methods and the amount of training received throughout their professional career. Finally, the researcher reviewed the qualitative data discussing the curriculum chosen for the FYE courses. Questions on if the instructor incorporates topics on racism, sexism or both provided the researcher with further evidence to support the need for instructors to receive gender equity training and understand the importance of demonstrating equity in FYE courses. The researcher acquired the qualitative and quantitative data through survey research methods.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This study examined 29 First Year Experience instructors from two California State University campuses and their awareness of gender equitable teaching methods. Additional examination included content analysis on issues of racism and issues of sexism curriculum use in their FYE courses, if the topics were discussed at all. This study explored the faculty’s previous professional trainings on various topics, including gender fair teaching methods. In order to obtain this information, the researcher assessed data collected from questionnaires. The labels identified the two participating institutions given by the researcher were University A and University B. University A offers 35 sections with 55 faculty members. University B offers 65 sections of First Year Experience courses with faculty from 20 different departments across the campus. The researcher presented the combined findings of the sample and separated the findings by the two participating universities.

Research Questions

The following questions were explored:

1. What are the First Year Experience professors’ understandings of gender equitable teaching approaches in the classroom?

2. Do First Year Experience instructors incorporate gender equitable instructional methods into the required courses of the first year programs?

3. What training, if any, has the faculty who teach the First Year Experience courses received on gender equity in the classroom?
4. Which curriculum do instructors use in the First Year Experience courses?

5. Do instructors discuss issues of racism and/or sexism in their First Year Experience coursework? If so, what curriculum do they incorporate?

**Quantitative Results**

Questions 1-4 from the questionnaire provided the researcher with the quantitative data (see Appendix A). The data was analyzed with the Universities combined. Next, the researcher separated data by institution and labeled the two sets of data points: University A and University B. Data about the training received by the FYE faculty per University gave the researcher more information about which Universities value particular training topics.

**Question 1: Teaching Status**

All 29 participants in the sample currently teach or will be teaching First Year Experience courses. Only four of the faculty indicated any special certifications or accreditations. The sample had an average of 3.46 years of teaching experience. The least amount of teaching experience was 0 months, and the most time spent teaching FYE was 22 years (see Figure 1).
Question 2: Training Received

The researcher totaled the numerical responses only. Some participants did not answer using an estimated number of the total hours in each topic. The non-numerical responses included words such as “many,” “years,” and “can’t count.” The answers were not calculable; therefore, these responses were removed from the analysis of the number of hours in training. The participants were asked to indicate how many specific hours of training received within 10 andragogical topics. This question also addressed of the training topics listed which topic the participants would like to receive more training (see Appendix A). The researcher addressed the written responses in the qualitative result section.

The sample completed 441 hours of Instructional Communication Methods, with a mean of 15.20 hours. Under Classroom Management Techniques, the participants completed 271 hours, with a mean of 14.17. Under the topic of Technology in the Classroom, the sample completed 194.50 hours, with a mean of
10.50 hours. The participants completed 279 hours in Teaching First Year Students training, with a mean of 8.79 hours. The sample completed 111 hours in Educating Diverse Populations, with a mean of 4.76 hours. This sample completed 170 hours in Conflict Resolution training, with a mean of 3.28. The total training hours for the topic of Student Success in College was 66 hours, with a mean of 2.97. The faculty completed only 65 hours of Sexual Harassment Prevention training, with a mean of 2.24 hours. The faculty completed 122 hours in Stress Management, with a mean of 1.45 hours. The lowest amount of training hours received was in Gender Equitable Teaching Methods totaling only 32 hours, with a mean of 1.10 hours (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Mean Hours of Training Received.
Number of hours in training per university. The researcher separated out each institution participating in this survey for this question. The number of participants from University A was 18 and from University B, 11 instructors participated. Gender equitable teaching methods training hours received the least amount among instructors from University A. Out of 18 instructors, the mean was only 0.22 hours. University B instructors reported a mean of 2.54 hours spent training on gender equitable teaching methods. Low training hours were also reported for Educating Diverse Populations, with University B reporting a mean of 5.18 hours and University A with a mean of 3.55 hours (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. University A and B: Mean Hours of Training Received.
Notable findings from the training hours are the vast discrepancy for University A in common topics, such as Instructional Communication and Classroom Management (see Figure 3). In these popular training topics, instructors from University B completed an average of 31.81 hours for each subject. University A instructors only completed 5.05 hours for Instructional Communication and only 3.38 hours for Classroom Management. Technology training for the University B instructors definitely occurs more than University A instructors, with University B completing 19.71 more hours than University A.

**Question 3: Questionnaire**

The first statement asked faculty if they have received adequate teacher training on preventing inequities in the classroom. Interestingly, a large number of the sample marked ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘Agree’ with 17 out of 28 respondents. Six instructors marked ‘Strongly disagree’ or ‘Disagree’; and five chose neutral. Statement 1 was the only question where responses were marked in every category. Statement 2 asked the sample to give their opinion on the importance to teach first year students about cultural diversity, with 27 out of the 28 marking ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘Agree.’

The next statement (Q3) asked the sample if they felt their curriculum in the FYE courses supported fairness, with 25 out of 28 indicating ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘Agree.’ Three professors indicated ‘neutral.’ When asked if the instructors discuss issues of racism (Q4), 21 out of the 28 in the sample indicated ‘Strongly agree’ or ‘Agree.’ However, seven participants indicated ‘neutral.’ The final statement asked if
the FYE instructors discuss issues of sexism in their courses. Interestingly, 19 out of the 28 responded positively. Nine instructors answered ‘neutral’ (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Attitudes and Beliefs about Gender Equitable Teaching Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>5 Strongly agree</th>
<th>4 Agree</th>
<th>3 Neutral</th>
<th>2 Disagree</th>
<th>1 Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 I have received instruction on teaching strategies to prevent inequities in the classroom.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 It is important to teach first year students about cultural diversity.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 I feel my curriculum in the First Year Experience courses support fairness among all groups.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 My FYE courses prepare students to understand issues of racism in our society.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5 My FYE courses prepare students to understand issues of sexism in our society.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Choosing ‘neutral’ communicates “a lack of knowledge” about a particular topic (Pella, 2011, p. 119). Additionally, the data produced “limited response differentiation,” which “arises when respondents tend to select a narrower range of responses out of those provided to them” (Blasius & Thiessen, 2012, p. 10). The reason for this response tendency could be to “simplify the task at hand” (Blasius & Thiessen, 2012, p. 10). Given the topic of the questionnaire, the professors could have felt uncomfortable admitting they did not have information about a topic, which supports the researcher’s purpose of this particular type of study.

**Question 4: Topics Discussed in First Year Experience Courses**

The questionnaire requested more information from the professors regarding specific topics discussed in their First Year Experience (FYE) courses. Of the eight topics, all 29 instructors’ teach on the subject of Student Success (Figure 4). The next subject discussed the most was Interaction with Professor, with 28 out of 29 (96.55%) instructors. Racism ranked third out of the eight topics discussed in the FYE courses, with 25 out of 28 (86.21%) instructors teaching on the topic (see Figure 4). Discussion of Sexism in the sample’s FYE classrooms totaled only 19 out of 28 (67.86%). Interestingly, Managing Student Debt ranked last with 17 out of 28 (58.62%) instructors answering positively. The topic of Managing Student Debt is a common subject in First Year Experience courses, and available to the instructors through both the textbooks and campus presentations.
As the researcher analyzed the individual institutions’ results, an interesting pattern emerged. Discussions in FYE courses are happening in abundance on topics of School Success, Interaction with Professor, and Racism (see Figure 5). However, some topics continued to receive an absence. University A is struggling to address issues of Loneliness, with only 11 (61.11%) instructors answering. Managing Student Debt was another low topic for FYE instructors, with eight (44.44%) instructors discussing the issue from University A.

The findings related to the discussion of Issues of Race and Sexism told a thought-provoking story. The discussion of Racism in both Universities ranked markedly higher than Sexism (see Figure 4). Overwhelmingly, FYE instructors from
both Universities are discussing Issues of Race in their classrooms, with 16 (83.33%) instructors from University A and nine (90.91%) instructors from University B. Only six (40.00%) instructors out of 28 from University B discuss Sexism in their First Year Experience classrooms. More University A instructors initiate dialogue on the topic of Sexism with 13 (72.22%) instructors compared to only five (40%) instructors from University B.

Figure 5. Topics Discussed in First Year Experience per University.

The responses from this particular section of the questionnaire raised issues of passiveness. One notable response from a University B instructor about discussion of issues of sexism was quite passive, with “as it comes up.”
Qualitative Data

The open-ended questions posed to the participants explored the faculty’s use of equitable teaching methods when discussing racism and sexism. Next, the researcher asked what training would assist with the mentoring and teaching first year students. Then, the sample answered questions related to equitable teaching strategies. The data from questions 5-9 provided the researcher with the following qualitative data.

Discussion of Issues of Racism and Sexism

Question 5: Do you discuss issues of race in your First Year Experience courses? If yes, what curriculum do you incorporate in your course? (examples include using film, guest speakers, group activities) (see Appendix A). The First Year Experience instructors overwhelmingly teach about issues of race, with 25 (86.21) out of 29. Conversely, the sample discuss sexism in much fewer numbers, with only 19 (65.52%) out of 29 participants (see Figure 6). Interestingly, when the researcher separated out the data between the two universities, the results indicated that the instructors of University B discuss issues of sexism in much fewer numbers compared to University A, with 14 (77.78%) compared to 5 (55.56%) out of 29 instructors (Figure 7).
Figure 6. Percentage of Instructors Discussing Issues of Race and Sexism.

Figure 7. Percentage of Instructors per University Discussing Issues of Race and Sexism.
Curriculum Discussing Issues of Race and Sexism

The FYE instructors indicated which type of curriculum used when discussing issues of race and the responses overwhelming included guest speakers, with 16 instructors. Film was also a popular response, with 11 instructors indicating this type of curriculum. The other responses included group activities, readings and school presentations. The sample answered this question about the curriculum used when discussing issues of race with specific detail, including names of speakers and films used.

Next, the sample answered the question about discussing issues of sexism and the curriculum used in their FYE courses. The most popular response was the use of film, with seven instructors. Second to film, guest speakers were invited to only four instructors’ classrooms to speak about issues of sexism. Other curriculum choices from this sample included group activities, discussions, and lecture. Some answers given were specific with titles of books and films used in their FYE courses. Several respondents simply listed the curriculum used without any specific details when discussing issues of racism and sexism in the FYE courses.

- “Topic= African Amer[ican]; culture and history; reading and films” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., new to teaching FYE, English, University A).
- “Guest speaker, Multicultural Center; video- Skin Deep; readings-white privilege; lecture-institutional racism” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 6 years teaching FYE, Teacher Education, University B).
− “Vallerie Taliman [President, Three Sisters Media]-On racial or race crimes; Having a library day with Librarian [omitted for anonymity] on how to find materials on race, sex, gender, etc.” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 6 years teaching FYE, Ethnic Studies, University B).

− “Potential films (Crash, If these Walls Could Talk); speakers available on campus such as [omitted for anonymity]. I also incorporate issues of race and privilege into many discussions about access to college” (M, M.A/M.S., 1 year teaching FYE, Residential Life, University A).

− “We design activities growing from the reader activities on the topic. We do an intensive high-impact activity based on the “One Book” which generally covers diversity in some way” (M, M.A./M.S., 4 years teaching FYE, Music, University B).

One notable data point for the researcher was that nearly 60% of the sample use guest speakers when addressing issues of racism. Guest speakers, when utilized appropriately, can create greater meaning making and can build cultural sensitivity (Berlak, 1999; Murray & Bollinger, 2001; as cited in Sniezek, 2005). Other benefits, according to the research, include “challenging students’ stereotypes” (Butler, 1997; Guth, 2000; as cited in Sniezek, 2005, para. 3). For example, studies concluded that students’ perceptions about people with HIV/AIDS changed more positively after listening to a guest speaker with HIV/AIDS versus students who did not listen to the guest speaker (Gervais, Smith & Fisher, 2000; as cited in Sniezek, 2005).
Question 6: Do you discuss issues of sexism in your First Year Experience courses? If yes, what curriculum do you incorporate in your course? (examples include using film, guest speakers, group activities) (see Appendix A). Nearly 66% of participants answered this question positively, with 65.52%. The responses followed similar patterns to the previous question. Few respondents gave specific information about the type of curriculum used in their First Year Experience courses.

- “Videos-Speak Out and Spin the Bottle; Guest speaker from Women’s Center” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 6 years teaching FYE, Teacher Education, University B).
- “Image analysis; speakers; have used film” (F, M.A./M.S., 1 year teaching FYE, English/University Studies, University A).
- “Because this is a writing classroom feminist theory (Judith Butler) will be assigned readings as well as articles questioning the ‘Barbie Phenomenon,’ the poster for ‘Attack of the 50 ft. Woman’ and several others” (M, B.A./B.S., first year teaching FYE, English, University A).

Two notable responses reflected passiveness about the issue of sexism to the researcher. Stimulatingly, these respondents described their curriculum about issues of racism with more detail.

- “They [students] do interviews and this topic comes out. Professor discusses them” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 6 years of teaching FYE, Ethnic Studies, University B).
As it comes up” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., First year teaching FYE, but over 40 years teaching university courses, English, University A).

Training Desired

Questions related to training. Question 2: Please indicate which of the training topics listed above you would like to receive more training. (Training topics included Instructional Communication; Teaching First Year Students; Technology in the Classroom; Working with Diverse Populations; Stress Management; Gender Equitable Teaching Methods; Sexual Harassment; Classroom Management; Student Success; and Conflict Resolution). Question 7: Please list what type of training you would like to receive to assist with your mentoring and teaching of first year students. Stress Management training came out of the data frequently, with five instructors out of 29. The sample also felt they needed more training on the subject of Teaching First Year Students, with three of the 29 instructors. Additionally, four of the instructors desired trainings in all areas and expressed this desire for more training enthusiastically. “Always interested in training in all areas” said one instructor (F, M.A./M.S., 2 years teaching FYE, English, University A). Nine instructors did not respond to this question.

The majority of the sample received adequate training on common andragogical topics, such as Classroom Management, Instructional Communication, Working with Diverse Populations and Technology (see Quantitative Data). Therefore, the requests for more training in these areas were fewer compared to training topics, such as Gender Equitable Teaching Methods. This training question
indicated to the researcher that the participants lacked awareness about gender equitable teaching methods because only three faculty members specifically asked for additional training on gender equitable teaching methods.

However, the researcher compared this low number of training requests to the actual number of instructors who indicated that they received training in gender equitable teaching methods. The results were interesting. With only 11 instructors receiving gender equitable teaching methods, the researcher anticipated a higher number of the instructors who would like to receive more training on gender equitable teaching. Unfortunately, a large number appeared the opposite way. Fifteen (51.72%) professors have not received training on gender fair approaches and did not indicate to receive any training on the teaching methods.

Responses of question number 7 provided interesting insight into the specific needs of the FYE faculty. Interestingly, one faculty member admitted that they knew that they need more training, because they have not had any formal teacher training.

- “My only qualification is having a Ph.D. experience adjunct teaching in chemistry. I have not had any formal training on teaching freshman” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., First time teaching FYE, Chemistry, University A).

Others responded with high regards for their employer and their access to quality training.

- “The workshops [University A] provides are very helpful. Collaborating with colleagues is also very beneficial” (F, M.A./M.S., 2 years of teaching FYE, English, University A).
“We have a very good program at [University A] that covers all the major topics. I can’t think of anything to add” (M, Ph.D./Ed.D., 8 years of teaching FYE, Business, University A).

Some faculty members discussed the need for insight into the first year student.

“Training on how to communicate and effectively teach millennial students” (F, M.A./M.S., 5 years of teaching FYE, University Studies, University A).

While other instructors expressed a need for more information on the environmental factors which impact the first year student.

“Budget, finances, debt; graduation requirements; academic advising; alcohol abuse; counseling; emotional stress” (F, M.A./M.S., 2 years of teaching FYE, English, University A).

“Any information regarding the expectations of both roles and the learning outcomes of the University 102 would be helpful when planning my syllabus” (M, B.A./B.S., First year teaching FYE, English, University A).

Limited responses included equitable teaching methods or gender issues specifically.

“Inspiring them to think deeply about the meaning of their lives, their values, social action and accountability” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 15 years teaching FYE, Psychology, University A).

“Handling and defining sexual assault and improper behavior” (M, M.A./M.S., 4 years teaching FYE, Music, University B).
One faculty member was unsure how to address an inequity in their discipline and wanted to learn more about how to solve the problem.

- “I am not sure what type of training is out there but I would like to discuss why women don’t go on to big research schools” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., First year teaching FYE, Chemistry, University A).

This researcher found that the sample began to admit more about not knowing about a particular topic when the question asked the instructors to reflect on the training needs of FYE instructors, in general. Compare this type of vulnerability and openness to the previous question (Question 2) about training desired for the individual professor and the researcher noticed tepidness from the instructors’ responses that did not complete the listed trainings.

**Awareness of Gender Equitable Teaching Strategies**

**Question 8: Are you aware of equitable teaching strategies used to promote a fair and inclusive class experience?** If yes, which teaching methods do you use currently? This sample revealed a lack of awareness of equitable teaching strategies overall because the response rate for this particular question was extremely low, with 18 out of 29 participants. Only seven of the instructors gave specific answers with significant details.

- “Whole class discussions, small group activities, presentations, quick write and then sharing” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 3 years teaching FYE, Mathematics/Education, University B).
“Vary group work with individual work; I make up groups – not by friends; ‘Getting to know you’ activities; name tags/calling” (F, M.A./M.S., 2 years teaching FYE, Education, University A).

“Using technology (blogs for discussion) and media; teaching across learning modalities; small group activity; one-on-one mentoring and counseling” (F, M.A./M.S., 2 years teaching FYE, English, University A).

“Use multimodal approaches for all units; respect all voice; establish comfortable classroom; 1-on-1 conferencing to establish rapport; use in-class and online to allow all voices to be heard” (F, M.A./M.S., 1 year teaching FYE, English/University Studies, University A).

“Pedagogy techniques; cultural relevant instruction” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., First year teaching FYE, Ethnic Studies, University B).

Some respondents read the question with racial diversity and equity in mind.

“Whiteness studies; diversity training” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., First year teaching FYE, English, University A).

“A wide array of materials and perspectives discussed to excite and motivate students while questioning and rooted cultural stereotypes” (M, B.A./B.S., First year teaching FYE, English, University A).

One participant answered with a question mark, while others who marked “no” wrote “n/a” to the second part of the question. Another participant simply stated that an equitable teaching method is “not relying on journals.” The researcher anticipated a
lack of awareness about equitable teaching methods; however, some responses clearly support the research on this topic and indicate that this sample could benefit from further training and teacher education.

**Question 9: What is your opinion on how equitable teaching methods impact first year (freshman) student success in your institution?** The final question asked participants to explore their own opinions about how equitable teaching methods influence the first year students’ experience and the success of the students. The sample’s responses varied greatly and gave the researcher significant insight into the instructor’s perspective on equitable teaching methods. Themes from these responses included discussion of fairness and equity among all people and students.

- “Fairness is paramount” (M, Ph.D./Ed.D., First year teaching FYE, discipline unknown, University B).
- “It [equitable teaching methods] imparts a sense of community and inclusiveness so each student feels comfortable and included as well as connected to the campus community” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 6 years of teaching FYE, Teacher Education, University B).

One theme among the responses stressed the importance of this teaching strategy and its impact on the classroom environment and college campus as a whole, especially in the first year of college.

- “Establishes a sense of comfort” (F, M.A./M.S., 1 year of teaching FYE, English/University Studies, University A).
“Enhances student success; builds student confidence” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., First year teaching FYE, English, University A).

“Equitable teaching methods are critical in any class. Without this, the classroom is not a safe environment and students don’t learn in an unhealthy environment” (F, M.A./M.S., 2 years of teaching FYE, English, University A).

“[Equitable teaching methods are] significant. There is a large majority of women on campus and faculty tend to teach to their style—me included” (F, M.A./M.S., 8 years of teaching FYE, Academic Affairs, University A).

“Must make them feel part of class/ [University A]; feel respected; inviting environment (safe)” (F, M.A./M.S., 2 years of teaching FYE, Education, University A).

“It [equitable teaching methods] is necessary and very important” (F, Ph.D./Ed.D., 3 years teaching FYE, Mathematics/Education, University B).

Few participants’ responses included “not sure” and inquiring answers to learn more about this teaching strategy.

“I do not know but I would like to learn more about this” (F, M.A./M.S., 5 years of teaching FYE, University Studies, University A).

Due to the smaller sample size of this study, and the high non-response rate of the open-ended questions, the researcher compared these responses to prior similar studies on gender equity awareness, such as Olivieri (2011) and Carinci (2002). The
responses were similar when referencing the importance of equitable teaching methods. Additionally, the responses of the previous studies indicated that a large number of faculty members are not aware of gender equitable teaching strategies and have not received enough training in this area.

First Year Experience programs benefit from highly trained faculty and the faculty surveyed for this study demonstrated their desire to become the best instructor. While some faculty may not invest fully into the philosophy and purpose of equitable teaching methods, the responses from the sample size of this study indicated to the researcher that the open-ended questions allowed the participants to explore their potential to build more awareness of equitable teaching strategies.

**Conclusion**

After reviewing the data from the two higher education institutions providing First Year Experience programs in Northern California, the responses revealed to the researcher that faculty members teaching FYE or any course desire training. A fair amount of participants indicated interest in gender equitable teaching methods, with 15%. Overall, the study’s data supports previous research regarding awareness of gender equitable teaching strategies (Carinci, 2002; Olivieri, 2011).

Additionally, the researcher found that the topics discussed in the First Year Experience courses are gravely homogenous and lack discussion of sexism compared to the counterpart topic of racism, with 86.21% discussing racism in the FYE courses and only 65.52% discussing sexism. Interestingly, some instructors indicated that if the issue of sexism presented in their FYE courses during discussion, then they
addressed the topic, “as it came up.” However, the same instructors had significant
detailed answers about the curriculum choices they made to discuss issues of racism.
Few participants indicated a specific curriculum response when asked about
discussing issues of sexism. The attitudes and beliefs about gender equitable teaching
strategies provided significant insight into how limited the sample’s exposure is to
equitable approaches.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study examined the awareness, beliefs and attitudes, and training experience in gender equitable teaching strategies of college faculty teaching First Year Experience (FYE) courses of two California State Universities in Northern California. Participating college institutions with varying demographics and teaching experience were investigated in this study. Limited research evaluates college educators’ training experience, since training is not a requirement or prerequisite to become a college faculty member. Additionally, the research of FYE college educators’ training experience lacks evaluation in gender equity and gender fair teaching strategies.

This study brought forth more information and research to the existing literature concerning faculty’s training in gender fair teaching methods; the history and purpose of First Year Experience programs and the curriculum used; and whether sexism is included in the discussion topics of the FYE courses. Given the proven benefits of FYE programs and highly trained FYE faculty made this study distinctive. Similar studies conducted recently include inquiries about all types of college educators’ training experience and awareness of gender equitable teaching strategies included Olivieri (2011) and Carinci (2002). This study was modeled from these pioneer investigations into college faculty and teacher education research.
Discussion

Quantitative Data

Teaching status. The sample of First Year Experience professors overall were new to teaching FYE courses, with 79.31% reporting only five years or less of teaching experience (see Figure 1). Research indicates that the new instructors tend to teach more conservatively due to fear from negative student evaluations (Boice, 1991; as cited in van der Bogert, 1991). Findings from van der Bogert (1991) also indicated that new teachers are more malleable and open to learning new teaching strategies to provide quality teaching. This sample definitely reflected openness to learning about gender equitable teaching strategies, which to this researcher is refreshing to read.

Training received. The majority of the sample had a great deal of training in classroom management, averaging 14.17 hours and completing more hours in instructional communication, with an average of 15.21 hours (see Figure 2). Not surprisingly, the least number of respondents were trained in gender equitable teaching methods, with only 1.10 average hours completed. The expectation of professors to be ‘experts’ in a particular discipline without giving them the proper tools to perform and provide quality service to their students is an outdated model (Carinci, 2012, personal communication). Professors may not have direct training experience on gender fair teaching methods, but most instructors show high interest in learning more about the teaching strategy (Brownell & Tanner, 2012). According to the literature, “many faculty have indicated they feel ill-equipped to change the way they teach and thus would like access to structured, formal training” (Brownell & Tanner, 2012, p. 339).
Unfortunately, the culture of the university system supports the old adage, ‘if it’s not broke, don’t fix it,’ meaning that most university administration expect and/or require training only when negative remarks consistently appear on student evaluations (Valdez, 2012, personal communication).

The opposite expectation is present for teachers for grades Kindergarten through 12, with state requirements from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). The pre-service credentialing program provides intensive training to become quality teachers. The on-going or in-service trainings for K-12 teachers also provide new and updated information on topics in pedagogy. The primary school students deserve well-trained teachers, just as the college students deserve knowledgeable educators.

Carinci’s (2002) study found similar results that over half of the teacher credential graduates participating in the California Teacher Preparation programs reported no gender equity training provided during their education. This study’s findings run parallel to Olivieri’s (2011) study, the results indicated that “only 34 % of educators [out of 250 surveyed]…had obtained training in equitable teaching approaches, and only 24.6% felt they were effectively trained” (p. vi). Of the findings listed in Chapter 4 on the amount of training on equitable teaching strategies, 31% of instructors had gender equitable training, only 3% less than Olivieri’s (2011).

Thus, consistent data stemming from the previous studies and current study proves that a small number of college instructors receive gender equitable training. Other training topics included classroom management, instructional communication,
diversity, and technology. Carinci (2007) indicated that overwhelmingly educators receive training on “classroom management techniques, developing teaching strategies, and understanding the pedagogical style” (p. 7). The topic consistently missing from teacher education is gender equitable teaching approaches (Carinci, 2002).

**Number of hours in training per university.** University B instructors reported 28 total training hours on gender equitable teaching methods, with a mean of 2.54 hours compared to University A, totaling 4 and a mean of only 0.22 hours (see Figure 3). Without any training requirement for college faculty from their employer, the instructor must seek out their own professional development. Research indicates that particular institutions certainly value specific types of andragogical topics (Stoner, 2012, personal communication). For example, University B offers an abundance of technology training through the Center for Teaching and Learning.

While technology training is important, knowing how to be an equitable and fair instructor should be priority. When this researcher reviewed the current workshops offered by the University B’s Center for Teaching and Learning, none of the workshops specifically state equitable teaching methods, or discussing gender or race in the classroom. University A provides faculty with professional development workshops through their Faculty Center. However, the workshops offered currently only concentrate on a technology source used on campus. Not surprisingly, this Center for Teaching and Learning does not offer any consistent workshops on teaching methods.
Questionnaire

The data from the questionnaire collecting information about the sample’s attitudes and beliefs on gender fair teaching strategies definitely reflected positivity for the topic (see Table 1). However, awareness about gender equitable teaching methods (Q1) received the most spread across the scale, with 11 out of the 28 marking neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree (see Table 1). The sample values cultural diversity, with overwhelmingly high marks. Question 5 addressed the question of discussion on issues of sexism in their classroom, and received the highest number of neutral responses, with 9 out of 28 (see Table 1). Again, neutrality indicates lack of information about the topic (Pella, 2011).

Compellingly, this sample’s attitudes and beliefs about gender equitable teaching strategies gives this researcher hope in the First Year Experience programs. The first step toward equality is self-discovery, just as the first step to becoming a great counselor is analyzing personal history. The sample obviously understands the importance of gender equitable teaching methods, however access to the proper training resources appear limited. Compared to other professors surveyed on gender fair teaching methods, this sample appeared more enlightened than most. Other researchers have experienced instructors who trivialize gender (Olivieri, 2011; Sadker, 1999).

Administrative and economic pressure forces most professors to focus on content only, or simply not receiving negative remarks from students (Hanson 1997). Until educators see the institutionalized bias against females in the education system,
the instructors will not notice the need for change in the classroom (Sanders, 1996). Inquiry trumps ignorance. If professors show high interest as this sample did, then this researcher believes change is possible for the First Year Experience programs.

**Topics discussed in first year experience courses.** Overwhelmingly, first year students are learning about school success, with both institutions indicating 100% (see Figure 4). The top topics discussed in the FYE courses reached phenomenally high percentages (see Figure 4). Given the prescriptive curriculum for FYE instructors, this researcher understands the importance of consistency. However, what this author does not comprehend is the extremely low number of instructors discussing issues of sexism, with only 67.86% (19 out of 28). Compared to issues of race discussions in FYE courses, sexism discourse in the college classroom is barely present (see Figure 4).

First year students from University A discuss issues of sexism much more than University B students (see Figure 5). Topics that University B is including more often in their FYE courses are loneliness, with 90.91% and managing student debt, with 81.81% (see Figure 5). However, University B falls behind on topics including harassment, with only 54.55% compared to University A, with 83.33% (see Figure 5). One main reason for this large discrepancy between institutions is that University A provides an optional common reader, and the individual instructors can choose their own textbooks, based on their program. Conversely, University B instructors use a common textbook across all disciplines. This reader includes sections discussing issues facing first year students, such as managing student debt and loneliness.
Given the nature of First Year Experience courses and the intention to cover multiple topics in short time for some institutions, a fundamental shift of values must occur inside the committees who determine the FYE content. Instructors have much more influence on students than given credit. If the student consistently listens to lectures or participates in activities, which are void of issues facing women and men, then the instructor is permeating a cycle of ignorance behind the classroom.

The teacher’s behaviors indicate to the male students that females are below them academically (Kaminski & Sheridan, 1984; Powlishta, 1995; Yee & Brown, 1994; as cited in Sadker & Silber, 2007). When children see this gender biased behavior repeatedly, the teacher has normalized the bias (Cassidy, 2007). The literature on teacher bias described the results of the negative stereotypes as “improving or impairing the children’s academic performance” (Cassidy, 2007; as cited in Sadker & Silber, 2007, p. 56). Research on the stereotype threat describes limitations to young children based on their gender, race and class (Steele, 1997). The role of education, especially in higher education, should be to discredit these limitations. Education should reveal to all opportunities to both genders. Inclusiveness and non-assumptive behavior modeled by the teachers and instructors improve students’ chances for academic success, especially once the students are in college.

Qualitative Data

**Discussion of issues of racism and sexism.** A number of participants responded with enthusiasm and detail when asked about the curriculum for issues of racism in their First Year Experience courses (see Appendix A). Then, the next
question asked the same only for issues of sexism, and the same participants simply responded with “as it comes up” in either discussions or assignments. This passive behavior was true across both genders, which indicated significance around the political and sensitive nature of this topic for the professionals.

Nineteen instructors answered positively about discussing issues of racism and sexism in their FYE courses. A large number of instructors teach their first year students about issues of race, with twenty-five instructors. Conversely, 19 faculty members are discussing issues of sexism. The curriculum choices told a story as well. A large number relied solely on the examples given in the questionnaire for their response, which allowed the researcher to tally and analyze the data quantitatively. The majority of the faculty wrote that they request guest speakers for their curriculum on issues of racism, with 55.17%. The second highest curriculum choice was film, with 37.93%. Other responses included media, readings, discussions, lecture and assignments.

The faculty discussing sexism in their FYE courses employ similar curriculum. The main difference affecting the data was the higher number of non-responses, and higher number of faculty simply not teaching about issues of sexism in the First Year Experience classroom. Research indicates that the less information about a particular topic, the less inclined the teacher or faculty will speak to that topic (Lang, 2012). However, most professors find themselves having to teach about content they are unfamiliar with or reviewed recently (Huston, 2012). Due to budget cuts, most
institutions expect faculty to stretch out their expertise to fit into other disciplines or concepts, or multidisciplinary content such as the First Year Experience courses.

Therefore, the faculty must acquire specific information about topics in short time or sometimes right before the class starts (Huston, 2012). The problem with this model of depleting resources is that the instructors who feel less confident about a topic, such as sexism or racism, will skim over content quickly, bring in an expert or show a film. The results of this survey of FYE faculty support this notion and expectation from institutions of the faculty to continue their “content expert” status through research and publications, and become a “content novice” in order to complete the course objectives (Huston, 2012; Lang, 2012, para. 23). Issues of sexism and gender continue to fall through the cracks in the FYE courses due to the lack of content awareness, time and energy. Discussion of gender and issues of sexism continue to take a backseat compared discussion of race and diversity. If FYE instructors were given the proper tools through training to discuss gender and sexism, the topic may receive more attention.

Curriculum discussing issues of race and sexism. Next, the researcher reviewed the results from question number five, which determined the curriculum used for the faculty’s First Year Experience discussion of issues of racism. Then, the questionnaire asked about the curriculum for the discussion of issues of sexism. Interesting responses came from both men and women faculty from various disciplines and teaching experience. The sample provided specific examples of films. One response included the 2004 movie, Crash, demonstrating racial conflicts through a
fictional plot (Deming, 2012). Within the same response, answering the question about curriculum used for discussing race, the professor mentioned a movie title that discusses gender and abortion. The 1996 fictional film, *If these Walls Could Talk*, examining abortion issues across three eras. Another film mentioned to facilitate discussion on issues of race was the 1995 film, *Skin Deep*. The documentary connects the viewer with the realities of race relations on college campuses and the continued racial conflicts between students (Reid, 1996).

In addition, instructors responded with curriculum choices including guest speakers from the community and/or campus to present on the issue of race. The instructors utilized student services, such as the Multicultural Centers on campus. One response included a well-known Chinese American filmmaker, Lee Mun Wah, who discusses both issues of racism and sexism through training seminars and presentations on “cross-cultural communication and awareness” (Stir-fry Seminars & Consulting, 2013, n.p).

Teaching about issues of racism did not occur as frequently, if at all, in college courses twenty years ago, especially in First Year Experience classes. Holladay (2000) explains the teaching of issues of racism or racial diversity in curriculum should not be viewed as a separate occasion. For example, Black History Month events in schools happen in February and then, the remainder of the eight months covers white history. Bringing diversity into every conversation within every discipline does not devalue the subjects. Infusing diversity into the curriculum enriches the students’ experience and creates an equitable learning environment (Bryson, 1999).
The model responses included unique image analysis and readings. Curriculum choices were similar to the curriculum for the issues of racism in FYE courses, which included film and guest speakers. Only one instructor indicated specific detail about the curriculum used, citing theories, and book titles. The curriculum for issues of sexism brings exploratory self-awareness components, which allow the student to discover the amount of accepted gender bias and sexist behavior in the Western culture. The majority of the respondents from this study indicated that they use some form of this type of curriculum through image analysis, discussion or film.

Just as racism continues to be an issue in the United States, sexism continues to be a barrier for women to succeed and for equity to prevail. However, the dismissive or passive attitude about issues of sexism across higher education prevailed in this study. The research continues to support the trends recognized by other researchers (Carinci, 2002; Olivieri, 2011). The political implications of discussing issues of sexism hinder the conversation (Carinci, 2012, personal communication). “We must remove the politics behind gender inequities and discuss sexism alongside issues of racism” (Carinci, 2012, personal communication).

According to research, issues of gender equity no longer represents only women’s issues, but also includes issues for the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender communities (Fassinger, 1991). This advocacy should not diverge from the feminist movement or be fought separately. However, the ramifications of this merge could scare some professors away from the discussion about gender or sexism. Enter the political components, which make some faculty avoid expressing their thoughts for
fear of offending students. Sexism and gender inequities deserve the spotlight. Using critical thinking activities, students will learn how to alleviate these social injustices. Students need exposure to the commonalities found in issues of sexism and issues of racism and racial inequities.

The reluctant professor sets the tone and creates the classroom culture. This culture plays out with reluctant students afraid to speak out honestly. The students in the discussion do not want to appear racist or sexist among their peers with a homogenous curriculum and classroom culture (Broido, 2000). These teaching principles produce more confusion among the students, and permeate the discriminatory practices into the students’ academic experience, especially in the first year (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Young, Mountford, & Skrla, 2006).

Training desired. The instructors were asked to indicate which training topics would benefit them the most. Question number two and seven were combined to discuss the instructors’ training experience (Question 2: What training topics are desired for the faculty professional development in general? Question 7: Which topics are needed to effectively train first year students?). The overall results of these questions indicated to the researcher that the trainings completed by the instructors align with common andragogical topics, such as Classroom Management and Instructional Communication. Stress Management training came out of the data frequently, with five instructors out of 29. The sample also felt they needed more training on the subject of Teaching First Year Students, with three of the 29 instructors.
Additionally, four of the instructors desired trainings in all areas and expressed this desire for more training enthusiastically. Therefore, the requests for more training in these areas were fewer compared to training topics, such as Gender Equitable Teaching Methods. The findings illustrated here align with the current literature about training for college faculty. When instructors are asked about desiring more training on teaching methods, most instructors indicate that they feel training would be beneficial (Carinci, 2002; Marouchou, 2011; Olivieri, 2011). As with any job or career, employees need training on how to operate systems, manage databases or make particular products. Higher education institutions should not be exempt from this general rule.

**Awareness of gender equitable teaching strategies.** According to Lang (2012), consistent attitude and beliefs of surveyed faculty demonstrates a hesitation of learning a new way to teach or “conceptualizing the work of teaching” (para. 23).

As much as they [faculty] would like to experiment with [new] teaching [methods], they just can’t do it because they have so much course material to cover. They cannot sacrifice their course content for strategies that allow students to engage more actively with the material and with each other. (Lang, 2012, para. 23)

Consistent with the current literature, this study’s results indicated to the researcher that the sample’s desire to learn more about this teaching method, however investing the time and energy to complete the goal appears unattainable. Similar to the questions about curriculum on issues of racism and sexism, the non-response rate of
the participants was incredibly high, with 31.0%. Of the participants who answered this question, 65% of the sample answered ‘yes,’ they had an awareness of gender equitable teaching strategies, leaving 35% with a lack of knowledge. The open-ended question asked which methods they currently use, if they had awareness. The responses were interesting.

Similar to the other questions mentioned above, the second to last open-ended question’s response rate also saw a large non-response rate, with 58.62% (see Appendix A). The researcher noted a few responses placed a question mark as a response, indicating that the participant did not either understand the question or is not aware of these teaching methods. This pattern also occurred in the final question asking the faculty their opinion on the impact of gender equitable teaching methods on first year students (see Appendix A). The non-response rate for this question was 51.72%. The question mark response occurred several times.

Overall, as the researcher reviewed the data, the story unfolded. Instructors are unaware of gender equitable teaching methods; institutions continue to suffer from lack of effective professors, and the first year students continue to dropout. There is no doubt in this researcher’s mind that education changes minds and lives. If the instructors had received adequate training before they began to teach, and believed in a long-term investment in furthering their own education for the sake of their students’ success, and their own, then the First Year Experience program would benefit greatly. When the FYE program is victorious and the first year students graduate, everyone wins. The enduring implications of equitable teaching strategies and equitable
curriculum in the First Year Experience classroom supersede the four walls of that room.

The final two questions (Question 8 and 9) determined the knowledge and use about gender equitable teaching methods and its impact on the first year student experience in the classroom. The responses to this question gave the impression to this researcher that training and education on equitable teaching methods in both institutions are greatly needed. A few participants had model responses, which included employing multiple teaching strategies, hearing all voices in the classroom and offering advising with students.

The lack of awareness of equitable teaching methods was apparent, since several participants simply did not respond to this question. This form of silence and passiveness shows up in the work of Ladson-Billings (1996). She discusses effective teaching strategies to ensure equitable learning environments (Ladson-Billings, 1996). Several of the teaching techniques, which assisted this instructor, included asking the students to write down questions anonymously on a note card, versus self-disclosure discussions. The note cards can be used as lead questions for classroom discussions. This type of teaching method, according to Ladson-Billings (1996), prevents silence among students who may not feel completely comfortable discussing issues of sexism or racism. Other methods included small group discussions. The group activities curriculum was popular among this sample.

Global efforts on teaching educators about the importance of gender equality are occurring currently (Allana, Asad, & Sherali, 2010). In southern Malawi, some of
the current teachers participate in a “Teacher Empowerment Program” (Allana et al., 2010, p. 344). Activities inside the TEP include storytelling and dancing to provide male and female teachers with an opportunity to “dispel misconceptions and encourage men and women to treat each other more as partners” (Allena et al., 2010, p. 344). Many male teachers reported a positive change in their attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes about women, understanding their role to “accept and respect women as equals” (Allena et al., 2010, p. 344).

Teachers from Korea participate in a training called “A Programme Development for Enhancing Gender-Sensitive Teaching Abilities of Teachers,” which helps to build gender awareness among teachers. Gender equity education was taught to the educators through five main goals: observe gender bias in the classroom; examine and reflect on gender sensitivity; “nurture abilities in forming a gender-equal family culture”; develop new teaching strategies promoting gender equality; and “form a gender-equal school organizational culture” (Jung & Chung, 2006, pp. 2-3). This gender equity teacher education program was formed by the Korean Women’s Development Institute, in response to the insufficient teacher training provided by the Republic of Korea (Jung & Chung, 2006).

With most teachers reporting only one-two hour lessons on gender equality issues and the subject being lumped in with other cultural topics, the gender inequity and bias remains an issue in Korean schools (Jung & Chung, 2006). Additional activities that the teachers experienced in this gender equality program were role-playing, observations in the classroom, and self-reflection activities about real-life,
practical strategies the teachers can implement to “become more gender equal” (Jung & Chung, 2006, p. 40).

A teacher training program in Pakistan establishes similar goals in the building of gender equality education training called “Building Capacity to Initiate Change: Training Program for Secondary School Teachers on Prevailing Gender Issues” (Allena et al., 2010). The training topics gave the teacher participants an opportunity to learn more about creating a gender equitable classroom; teaching strategies; on-going resources and the “use of gender neutral language” (Allena et al., 2010, p. 345). Activities in this gender sensitivity training included discussions, individual and group activities; and analyzing case studies (Allena et al., 2010).

According to the Canadian International Development Agency, all training programs for teachers should cover, at a minimum, the following material:

- General awareness-raising for teachers of the inequalities between men and women in society, as well as the existing national commitments and legislative frameworks in place to promote equality;
- Clearly articulated expectations for teachers with regard to the values, attitudes and behaviours [sic] they should transmit at school;
- Guidance on how to deliver curriculum and use educational materials with a view to promoting gender equality;
- Analysis of teaching practices which tend to reinforce gender inequalities and corrective strategies to promote greater equality between girl and boy students. (Canadian International Development Agency, 2010, p. 20)
The agency also proposes assessment on all school policies and procedures to ensure gender equality permeates throughout the culture of the school system (Canadian International Development Agency, 2010). This special report gives clear examples of how to train educators to survey current curriculum for any gender bias and to raise gender equity awareness among policy makers and school districts to make change from the top of the educational system downward to the teachers in the classroom.

Although, the training programs mentioned above are both international models and geared toward primary grade school teachers, this researcher believes the training content remains applicable to the higher education system in the United States. The college students who see themselves inside the curriculum and experience equitable teaching methods feel connected to the college community, which will increase the likelihood of persisting through their education to graduation (Barefoot, 2000; Tinto, 1975). Equitable teaching can become less petrifying the more professors learn how to employ these methods.

**Notable Findings**

**Misunderstandings**

The researcher modeled this specific study from the research of Olivieri (2011) and Carinci (2002). The sample from these former studies displayed a great deal of animosity and uncomfortable reactions, about answering questions about the topic of gender equity. Some participants from the previous studies truly reacted with deep passion and went out of their way to tell the researcher their feelings about the subject of the survey. This researcher did not experience dramatic responses however, the
questionnaires’ content, grammatical structures, and overall appearance of the tool was criticized openly.

One participant took the time to give specific details criticizing the questionnaire. This person pulled the researcher aside, prefaced the comments with “As an educator, I have a critical eye for errors, so please know that I noticed these things wrong with your questionnaire.” The faculty member proceeded to comment on particular sections of the tool and gave suggestions as an instructor would to their student. The most notable suggestion came from the demographic section of the questionnaire (see Appendix A). The researcher gave ethnic background choices that included the term, “Caucasian” and this term offended this professor deeply. The term was crossed out and underneath a new term, “white” had been written in its place. Now, this person self-disclosed that they identify as white, but that the term, “Caucasian” was incorrect and should no longer be used due to its racist nature and superiority. “I still plan on filling it out, but I just wanted you to know” was the final statement. In the end, this person’s questionnaire was not completed and the researcher removed it from the sample.

Another notable misunderstanding among the participants was in the distribution of the questionnaire. Distribution occurred in a convocation meeting with multiple agenda items. The researcher felt rushed to distribute the questionnaires to make sure the participants had enough time to complete them. The meeting’s agenda did not allow for much time for the faculty to fill out the questionnaires and the researcher felt there was not a lot of time to explain the purpose of the tool and the
importance of completing the entire document. Because of this lack of time, the researcher noticed a large number of respondents did not complete all of the questions, especially the open-ended questions.

**Lack of Responses**

One reason for this high non-response rate could have stemmed from a lack of knowledge about equitable teaching strategies or simply misunderstanding the questions. Additionally, the participants did not fill out the questionnaire correctly. Several faculty members answered the number of training hours spent in the areas of andragogy using words such as “many,” “career (40+ years)” or “years.” These responses made analyzing data quantitatively very difficult for the researcher. Consequently, this data was not included in the total number of training hours. For example, the gender equitable teaching methods training hours reflected a low number of 32 hours. Questions created by the researcher for the participants were in no way intimidating or aggressive in nature. However, the participants’ non-response rate about curriculum choice for the discussion of sexism indicated to the researcher that the questions did not sit well with them. Six instructors did not respond to the question about curriculum choices for the issues of racism, compared to twelve instructors who disregarded the question for the issue of sexism.

**First-Time FYE Professors**

A large majority of professors reported that at the time of the survey, the upcoming semester was their first time teaching First Year Experience courses, with 14 out of the 29 instructors (45%) stating one year and under teaching experience.
Therefore, the questions related to current discussion topics in their FYE classes produced less definitive answers. Some of the professors asked questions of the researcher during the distribution about what they should write if they have not yet decided what they will teach during the semester. Another area of the questionnaire that the new FYE professors had difficulty answering was how the gender equitable teaching strategies affected the first year students, given that they had not yet taught the first year student. However, the participants who did answer the final question broadened their scope and responded with what they knew of teaching students in general. The impact of the new faculty participating in this study creates a small margin of error, because the faculty simply does not complete as much training or understand fully what their role is inside the FYE program compared to the more seasoned faculty.

The research supporting the findings of this sample demonstrated the faculty members were “enthusiastic about their work” (van der Bogert, 1991, p. 64). But in general the new instructors felt concerned about “heavy workloads, lack of collegiality, low levels of scholarly productivity, incongruities between the demands of teaching and the reward structure, inequities in resource allocation, and the balancing of work and personal life” (van der Bogert, 1991, p. 64). Other areas of concern for new faculty from the research showed that the instructors tempered their teaching styles to ensure positive student evaluations (Boice, 1991; as cited in van der Bogert, 1991). These tempered teaching methods are typically more conservative (van der Bogert, 1991).
Conclusions

This study provided rich and interesting quantitative and qualitative data, which allowed this researcher to reach several conclusions. The questionnaire asked First Year Experience faculty from two Northern California universities about ten areas of andragogy and the amount of training spent in each area. The results indicated the least number of respondents were trained in gender equitable teaching methods, with 32.14 percent. FYE faculty spent a total of 32 hours, averaging 1.10 hours per participant. This data indicated to the researcher that this particular sample holds a high regard and respect for the equitable teaching methods, however uneducated they may be on the topics. Even among the data reflecting a positive attitude about equity, the sample lacked solid curriculum ideas on the discussion of issues of sexism, with 12 out of the 29 instructors providing no response for the question (see Appendix A).

A lack of awareness among the faculty showed up through the large number of non-responses overall and when the questions discussed equitable teaching strategies, with 18 out of the 29 faculty members simply not responding to the question. Of the respondents who were aware of the gender fair teaching methods, a small number understood the purpose of equitable teaching strategies. Examples of the participants who did not necessarily understand the equitable teaching strategies were “Not relying on journals,” and “whiteness studies [and] diversity training.” These responses, among other answers, gave the researcher ample information to conclude that gender equitable teaching strategies training must become a priority of higher education institutions. Continual equitable teaching strategies training for faculty should not only
occur inside the First Year Experience programs but across all disciplines and programs.

The extremely low number of faculty discussing issues of sexism versus racism in their FYE courses is another indication of the lack of awareness of gender equity. Nine instructors (31.03%) of the sample do not currently teach about issues of sexism in their FYE courses. This passive behavior from the faculty about issues of sexism runs parallel to the attitudes thirty years ago about discussing issues of racism. Just as racism is more than violent acts. Racism also includes stereotyping whole groups of minorities or prejudice (hooks, 2000). Sexism and racism both work to systematically keep minorities and women at “the bottom of the social and economic order” (Campbell, 2000, p. 69). When FYE faculty dismisses the issues of sexism, they send a signal to the first year students that the issues do not occur in college and society. Another signal sent to the students is that sexism is not important.

The college classroom culture and the material set the tone for the students to determine what this knowledge and content means and how they can apply these concepts to the real world. This researcher has personally conducted presentations for college courses on issues of sexism and gender inequities. Some students in the course reported that they felt sexism is old news and does not really happen anymore. The researcher heard the same response from instructors about their students in personal communication on various campuses. No matter the discipline, college students must learn how to accept different perspectives, respect all people and understand the injustices occurring in the world. Therefore, FYE instructors must create learning
environments, which initiate democratic discourse about issues of injustice, including sexism.

**Limitations**

Limitations are always a reality with studies. One limitation out of the several of this study was the small sample size. The amount of subjects in this study does not necessarily represent all First Year Experience instructors in California. One reason for this smaller sample included the perilous human subject application process due to difference of opinions on how to survey the participants. Another reason was due to the limited access to the entire group of FYE instructors during a busy orientation meeting. Additionally, the researcher experienced a chilly climate among some faculty during the distribution process. Several FYE instructors took a survey with a begrudged look upon their face from the researcher and never filled it out. Another faculty reviewed the questionnaire with specific details about how particular sections need to be re-written.

The non-response rate of this sample represents a lack of understanding either the questions, or the content itself made the professors uncomfortable. For example, six instructors (20.69%) of the faculty did not answer the question about which curriculum is used to discuss racism. The non-response rate for the curriculum used to discuss sexism was 12 instructors (41.38%). An overwhelmingly high number of respondents did not answer question 8 addressing gender equity teaching methods, with 14 out of the 29 instructors (33.33%). Recent research indicates that the survey non-response rate has been increasing over recent years and “a growing literature is
investigating the effects of low response rates on survey quality” (Keeter, Miller, Kohut, Groves, & Presser, 2000; as cited in Johnson & Owens, 2003, p. iv).

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The study’s results signaled to the researcher that First Year Experience college professors need additional support and training to provide a quality learning experience using equitable teaching methods. The research supporting the analyzed data from this study proved to the researcher that FYE faculty awareness of gender equitable teaching strategies is gradually increasing overall, compared to other similar studies. However, this researcher recommends examination of actual implementation and continuous use of these strategies. Additionally, the study needs to expand to all First Year Experience programs across California and the nation. The comparable study could compare and contrast professional equitable teaching trainings for faculty, and specific types of curriculum used to discuss issues of sexism. In addition, the researcher recommends comparing the first year student evaluations to the courses that offer curriculum on issues of sexism and the use of gender equitable teaching strategies versus the courses that do not use these strategies.

One example of change in the curriculum toward gender equity could include specific information about the way women deal with depression versus men or how society places more or less pressure on a student depending on their gender. This researcher saw a variety of suggested readings for the multicultural and diversity section from the institutions participating in the study, and an interesting observation worth noting is that all of the suggested readings list only male authors. Thereby
giving further evidence, institutions and instructors need further education on
overcoming gender inequality in the general curriculum of First Year Experience
courses.

Another specific example of effective curriculum and content for issues of
sexism is the video featuring feminist author, Jean Kilbourne – *Killing Us Softly 4.*
The video describes Kilbourne’s in-depth analysis of over 40 years of advertising
featuring women or ads marketed to women consumers (Media Education Foundation,
2013). Kilbourne presents a very strong correlation between how women are
objectified in the advertisements and the horrifically high counts of violence against
women in the United States (Media Education Foundation, 2013).

A great example of readings for issues of sexism and gender are books by
Susan J. Douglas (2010), author of *Enlightened Sexism: The Seductive Message that
Feminism’s Work is Done.* Additional readings could include books written by,
Pulitzer Prize winner, author of *Stiffed,* Susan Faludi, who made this statement about
feminism and equity in 1999 during a *Mother Jones* interview:

One of the gross misconceptions about feminism is that it's only about women.
But in order for women to live freely, men have to live freely, too. Feminism
has shown us that what we think of as feminine is actually defined by cultural
messages and political agendas. The same holds true for men and for what
constitutes masculinity. Being a feminist opens your eyes to the ways men, like
women, are imprisoned in cultural stereotypes. (Halpern, 1999, para. 6)
Therefore, issues of sexism should not be taboo in the college classroom. First year students must be presented with topics related to the realities of college life in the FYE courses, which includes how gender plays a role in these new students’ lives. No longer can ivory towers afford to ignore the gender differences as academia ignored racial differences for over forty decades. Curriculum that includes a celebration of genders with equitable representation is how we build well-rounded first year students. Well-rounded first year college students become graduates and advocates for social change in our communities.

Continued research could include a comparison between California State University system to the University of California system measuring the retention rates of students who experienced highly trained First Year Experience instructors and the success rates of the FYE programs overall. Another recommendation for further study is for a formalized, quality assessment of current gender equitable teaching methods training workshops for higher education professors. The training assessment process would include input from current college instructors about the practical tools needed to carry out equitable teaching strategies in the classrooms. Additional related research could dive deeper into the behavioral sciences of gender equitable teaching methods. For example, research could measure the instructors’ self-examination of their own gender biases and stereotypes through longitudinal studies. Research also could evaluate how the instructors’ self-discovery alleviates gender bias over time for the individual both personally and professionally.
Education and continued education are the keys to alleviating gender inequities in our college classrooms and society. First year students deserve the highest quality education taught by well-trained instructors who are passionate about providing an equitable learning environment. First Year Experience instructors who understand the impact of using gender fair teaching strategies change the lives of their students, which ultimately creates positive social change for the college campus’ culture and the entire community. Communities that foster the growth of gender equity advocates will ultimately change the world. Gender fairness education for college instructors is like a pebble thrown into the water, causing waves of change across society.
APPENDIX A

First Year Experience (Freshman Seminar) Faculty Questionnaire
### Background Information (Please circle your response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified gender:</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity:</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range:</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>35-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education:</td>
<td>BA/BS</td>
<td>MA/MS</td>
<td>Ph.D./Ed.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate discipline:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) **Teaching Status**

First year (freshman) seminar is a course designed to incorporate specific topics and give students the skills for college success (Barefoot, 2000).

Are you currently teaching First Year Experience or freshmen seminar? (Please circle)

| YES | NO |
--- | --- |
If yes, for how many years? | Months? |
List any special certifications or accreditations: |

Employed by: | Department:
## 2) Training Received

Please indicate which topics you have received training. Please circle your response. If yes, please indicate the estimated hour(s) of training received.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Hours of training</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Hours of training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional communication methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching first year students</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Hours of training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology in the classroom</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Hours of training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating diverse populations</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Hours of training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress management</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Hours of training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender equitable teaching methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management techniques</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment prevention</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student success in college</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please indicate which of the training topics listed above you would like to receive more training.
### 3) Questionnaire

Please check the answer which best represents your belief about each statement.

Strongly Agree ("For the most part, yes."); Agree ("Yes, but . . ."); Neutral (No opinion at this time); Disagree ("No, but . . ."); Strongly Disagree ("For the most part, no.")

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have received instruction on teaching strategies to prevent inequities in the classroom.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to teach first year students about cultural diversity.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my curriculum in the First Year Experience courses support fairness among all groups.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My First Year Experience courses prepare students to understand issues of racism in our society.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My First Year Experience courses prepare students to understand issues of sexism in our society.</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4) Questionnaire

In my First Year Experience courses, the following topics are addressed in the classroom. Please check YES or NO.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School success strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction with your professor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing student debt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Do you discuss issues of race in your First Year Experience courses?  
If yes, what curriculum do you incorporate in your First Year Experience courses?  
(examples include using film, guest speakers, group activities)

6) Do you discuss issues of sexism in your First Year Experience courses?  
If yes, what curriculum do you incorporate in your First Year Experience courses?  
(examples include using film, guest speakers, group activities)

7) Please list what type of training you would like to receive to assist with your mentoring and teaching of first year (freshman) students.
8) Are you aware of equitable teaching strategies used to promote a fair and inclusive class experience? YES or NO

If yes, what methods do you use currently?

9) What is your opinion on how equitable teaching methods impact first year (freshman) student success in your institution?
APPENDIX B

Consent Letter
Consent Letter

Hello! My name is Nicole Mehta. I am a current graduate student of the Master of Arts in Education at California State University, Sacramento. You are being asked to participate in a study, which will be analyzing First Year Experience programs (freshman seminar courses). Your participation involves filling out the attached questionnaire, which will require an estimated 15-20 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary. You may quit at any time without consequences. Although none of the questions were designed to cause you discomfort, you may leave any of the questions unanswered. For the purposes of this study, full and complete questionnaires will be useful to me. Your confidentiality is strictly protected and totally anonymous. The results of this research study will be available after April 2013. Thank you for your time. If you would like a copy of the results or have any questions, please contact: Nicole Mehta xxxxx@saclink.csus.edu
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