



TEACHING GENDER IN THE MILITARY

A Handbook

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Optimizing the learning environment: Addressing gender dynamics in the classroom

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1. Introduction²

Part I of this handbook identified how introducing a gender perspective in the military can improve operational capacity and the implementation of many national and international legal obligations. It highlighted the importance of gaining an understanding of the gender dynamics in both the civilian population and, especially when it comes to necessary improvements in recruitment, retention and promotion of women, within the armed forces. Having established both the gender-related content that is required in military education and good practices in its delivery, the next logical step for those undertaking educational roles in the military is to examine the gender dynamics of their own working environments.

This chapter therefore seeks to show how instructors can lead by example in applying a gender perspective in their daily work in order to highlight the demonstrable benefits this has in creating learning environments where women, men and people from gender minorities can all thrive. Furthermore, considering gender dynamics in the classroom is fundamental to implementing the “transaction” models of teaching that bring about transformative learning (Chapter 5). Instructors, like their learners, have a responsibility to improve gender relations within their

institution, but they also have an opportunity to shape how their learners think about gender for the rest of their careers. While training is not the specific focus of this chapter (or of this handbook overall), it often provides *ad hoc* educational opportunities for instructors, and hence parts of the chapter will also be relevant to training environments.

The chapter's objectives are to equip instructors with practical tools to assess and improve the gender dynamics within their classrooms by:

- highlighting ways in which gender dynamics affect classroom environments;
- explaining how these dynamics advantage and disadvantage different learners in the classroom according to their gender;
- presenting concrete strategies for providing all learners with equal opportunities to reach the learning objectives.

The chapter begins with a discussion on the importance and benefits of considering gender dynamics in the classroom. The following section then describes the gender dynamics in four aspects of the classroom environment, namely teaching content, learner participation, appraisal and access to faculty and educational resources. Good practices for promoting a gender-equal learning environment are outlined under each of these four aspects.

2. Why do we need to consider gender dynamics in the classroom?

Analysing the gender dynamics of a classroom involves studying how the learning experience differs for female and male learners based on how they interact with the content, the course design or methodology, their instructors and the other learners in the class. Dynamics are also influenced by the different levels of access that women and men have to resources and faculty outside the classroom. In addition, each individual's learning experience will be affected by his or her age, rank, service history, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity (i.e. the degree to which learners conform to male or female gender roles).

Instructors working in the field of military education need to consider the gender dynamics of their classroom because, to some extent, they are gatekeepers with a heavy influence on who reaches the different ranks and roles in the military. They are thus able to influence their institution's level of operational capacity, national ownership and proper functioning within the framework of human rights – for better or for worse. For this reason, instructors have an obligation to evaluate learners based on their ability to perform military functions and not in a way that is distorted by their personal gender biases. Broadly speaking, instructors have the power to improve the functioning of their institution in the following five ways.

1. Ensuring fair access to roles and ranks in the military that require specific qualifications³

An instructor's choice of educational content, teaching methods and learner appraisal modalities will go some way to determining who passes their course and with what grade. This will then have an impact on each learner's military career by determining where they are able to serve and at what rank. Thus to ensure that military roles are staffed by those who have the best command of the skills required, learner assessment needs to reflect ability and must not be influenced (consciously or unconsciously) by instructor bias based on gender or other social attributes.

2. Challenging gender-related perceptions of different roles in the military

The way in which an instructor portrays the women and men serving in a given role in the military will influence whether or not different learners can also see themselves performing that same role in the future. Simply put, an instructor can subconsciously influence what is seen as "men's work" and "women's work" within the institution. This can affect both the roles women and men apply for and also how well they are accepted by their peers in these roles.

3. Preventing the reproduction of social orders characterized by gender inequality⁴

The way in which women and men engage and are engaged in the classroom as well as the roles they are asked or allowed to perform will play a part in shaping the relationship between women and men in the institution as a whole. For example, if women never have leadership roles (over men) during group work activities, this can reinforce implicit assumptions in the institution that men make more natural leaders.

4. Facilitating learner self-reflection and building awareness of inequality⁵

By openly discussing gender and challenging gender inequality, instructors can help learners to recognize situations in which privilege based on their identity gives them more power than others. Instructors can highlight how, in different situations, specific groups of women and men are placed at a disadvantage. By showing their learners that they have the power to change this, and that this is a leadership skill (e.g. on the grounds of both non-discrimination and mission effectiveness), instructors can shape a learner's behaviour for the rest of his or her career. Conversely, reinforcing stereotypes that some women or men are biologically less able to perform certain tasks (when the reasons are, in fact, social) can have the opposite effect on the learners.



All of these men experience the pressure to be masculine, and all of them feel that, at least at times, they want to step outside of the role. One significant aspect of our work is to help them name the cultural pressure that is masculinity – to give them a language for symbolizing their experience. It is tremendously difficult to resist a pressure that one cannot name. When we give men the gift of gender-aware language, we change masculine conformity from the status of default option to that of informed choice.⁶

Dr Christopher Kilmartin

5. Encouraging openness to hearing the different perspectives of women, men, girls and boys⁷

Instructors can influence how the learners perceive the subjects they teach. For example, a class on addressing a civilian population's security needs could exclusively draw on the perspective of military commanders, and hence the learners would get the impression that the subject was only about keeping enemy troops out of urban areas. But if the views of women and men living as civilians through wartime sieges were also incorporated, the subject might be seen as including factors such as sexual violence, violent crime, food insecurity and health epidemics. In other words, instructors can ensure that both male and female voices are heard in the classroom – including those of their own learners – and can demonstrate to others why they should do the same.

Being aware of classroom gender dynamics can therefore act as a tool for instructors to realize the power they have in shaping gender norms in the institution for the better. If instructors make small changes to promote gender equality in their immediate classroom environment, this can potentially have an amplifying effect on the rest of the institution. With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter highlights four aspects of gender dynamics in the classroom and presents some concrete suggestions for how instructors can make their classrooms more “democratic” or inclusive and provide a level playing field and a positive classroom environment for all learners.



For Afghan men “safety” usually means “no more fighting”; for Afghan women it often means more Freedom of Movement (FoM), no harassment, no rape and more personal protection. In addition to this, “safety” for women, often left with responsibilities for homemaking and childcare, means better access to water resources, to the fields, to the market place and to health clinics but also the opportunity for their children to go to school.⁸

Captain Steffie Groothedde, Dutch gender adviser for the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan

3. What aspects of the classroom environment have gender dynamics and what can educators do to account for them?

3.1 Gender dimensions of educational content

The content of any course has a gender dimension because it presents the subject matter from the standpoint of the instructor and those who shaped the curriculum, design/methodology and teaching resources. As it is inevitably grounded in the instructor's prior knowledge and assumptions, he or she should reflect on this and consider how the course content may be perceived by the different learners in the class in order to provide them with an equal opportunity to succeed.

A shared culture and collective memory of formative events in its history is what makes each armed force an *institution* as opposed to just a collection of people.⁹ This culture plays an important role by providing an institutional logic for why the institution functions in the way that it does, as well as giving each individual member an understanding of how his or her role fits within the larger context.

In practice, however, this shared culture is usually based on the perspectives of the more influential members of the military. For example, front-line combat operations tend to feature more prominently in the collective memory of conflicts than the experience of those performing supporting roles; similarly, the experience of men tends to feature more strongly than that of women. This carries the danger of excluding the experience of certain members from the collective memory, thus devaluing their contribution. It is therefore important that instructors actively seek to present a variety of perspectives from diverse groups of women and men in their course content, especially those to which their learners may not have previously been exposed.

In addition to providing a one-sided perspective on a given topic, a failure to include diverse narratives in educational content can have several negative consequences. Firstly, it gives an unfair advantage during assessments to those learners whose experiences (and that of their peers and families) are closest to the dominant narrative. Secondly, those who cannot identify with historical figures, experts or characters mentioned in case study examples presented in a course may not see a future for themselves in the armed forces. Thirdly, there is a risk of reinforcing the generalizations and stereotypes leading to ignorance, which undermines operational capacity, and discrimination, which contributes negatively to the working environment.

Box 6.1 Women in the Canadian military¹⁰



Portraying women in combat roles (see modern poster, right) can plant the idea of serving in this function in the minds of recruits, and also normalize the notion of female armed combatants for men in the army in general. Previously (see poster from 1940s–1960s, left), the armed forces sought to promote the acceptance of women in the military for a different logic, and hence few women or men would have imagined a combat role for women at the time.



Aside from written text, pictures and video clips can also leave a strong impression on learners, either by reinforcing what they see as “normal” or by challenging assumptions (see Box 6.1). For example, it is often the case that pictures of military personnel portray predominantly or exclusively men, and the civilians depicted are all women or children. This can hide the long history women have as combatants in conflict settings,¹⁰ and that many civilian men in conflict zones who are unable or choose not to take on a military role are wrongly assumed to be combatants.

Box 6.2 Women in the engineering classroom¹²

A study on female engineering learners found that most male learners had come to the subject through a love of playing with equipment as a child, whereas most female learners had chosen it because of their good grades in mathematics and science. In this extract, a female learner describes the challenges she faced in a practical session due to not having been taught the necessary vocabulary.

“It says ‘Open the valve’ and I thought ‘What does a valve look like?’ I thought a valve was inside the pipe so how do you open the valve? They said ‘there’s a little handle here’. And they could have just said that! Some of them are like those taps that doctors have so you don’t have to touch them, and some of them are like big wheels – it does help if you know what a valve looks like so you can go looking for the right thing.”

Another way in which educational content can exclude learners based on their gender is in the kinds of assumed knowledge learners are supposed to have (see, for example, Box 6.2). Instructors will exclude some of their learners from engaging in the subject matter if they build on knowledge outside that of prerequisite courses. Gender dynamics in society mean that, for example, a man is much more likely to have been shown how to repair a car whereas a woman is more likely to have had experience in food hygiene and preparation. In addition, the local geographical knowledge of women and men will vary because they do not necessarily spend time in the same places.¹³ When it comes to courses on gender, women tend to be more aware of discrimination and are more likely to have read up on the topic. This is a reason why men are sometimes quiet in gender courses, and it should not be taken as a lack of interest. Instructors should therefore only assume their participants know what is in prerequisite courses. Transactional learning approaches (see Chapter 5) and formative evaluation techniques (see Chapter 8) can be used to ensure that the whole class has reached a required level of understanding before introducing new content.

Practical tips for making content more gender-equal

- ✓ Instructors consult a diverse group of individuals when designing the course to enhance the inclusion of a variety of perspectives and learning methodology and better reach all learners in the course.
- ✓ Men and women from diverse backgrounds are portrayed in course materials in non-stereotypical roles.
- ✓ Gender bias in materials is highlighted and balanced by supplementary information.
- ✓ Instructors use diagnostic assessments to determine prior knowledge instead of making assumptions.
- ✓ Transformative learning approaches encourage the presentation of different perspectives – including those of the learners themselves – during the class.
- ✓ Instructors actively highlight historically excluded viewpoints during their classes, including the contribution of different women and men from diverse backgrounds to academic disciplines.
- ✓ Instructors show examples of women and men from different backgrounds working in the military roles towards which the class is geared.¹⁴
- ✓ Instructors educate themselves about their learners’ different cultural backgrounds.
- ✓ Transactional learning approaches and formative assessments encourage knowledge sharing between the learners and ensure that the whole class has reached the learning outcomes.

3.2 Gender dimensions of language used in course delivery

Box 6.3 provides some concrete examples of the gender dynamics of language. Broadly speaking, the language used in course delivery can exclude some learners from the learning environment based on their gender in two ways: it can antagonize them or it can be unnecessarily incomprehensible.

Box 6.3 The gender dimensions of language

The following three sentences could be used to describe the same situation but can bring very different images to the mind of the reader.

	Gender-biased	Gender-neutral/blind	Gender-inclusive
Example	<i>When a soldier goes into battle, his primary concern is to protect women and children.</i>	<i>When soldiers go into battle, their primary concern is to protect civilians.</i>	<i>When a soldier goes into battle, his or her primary concern is to protect civilian women, men, girls and boys.</i>
Observations	<i>Generalizations:</i> Even if most soldiers are men and most civilians are women and children in this context, the sentence excludes exceptions to the rule. In addition, it is almost certainly based on unverified assumptions.	<i>Reinforcing learner stereotypes:</i> Some instructors attempt to use neutral wording in an attempt to be gender-equal. However, most learners will probably assume that the soldiers are men and the civilians are women.	<i>Challenging stereotypes:</i> This wording can challenge the assumptions of the learners and present a fuller picture of the situation. All learners should be able to see themselves in this more accurate description.

Antagonistic language

Intentionally discriminatory language should clearly be avoided, but instructors also need to take care to avoid using sexist language unintentionally. Common examples include the generic use of masculine words such as “he” as the third-person pronoun, or “policemen” to refer to all police officers. Studies suggest that men rarely detect such gender-biased language, but tend to be strongly opposed to using female language as a generic form.¹⁵ Similar dynamics occur when groups of learners are referred to using terms like “men” (when both men and women are represented) or groups of women are referred to as “girls” (female children). More ambiguous terms like “guys” warrant discussion to determine whether women in the particular context feel included.

Stereotypes are another way in which language excludes learners based on their gender. Not only are they factually inaccurate, but they can also make learners who do not conform to social norms feel excluded and reinforce biased notions about which roles and professions are appropriate for men or for women. Statements made by influential individuals that carrying heavy equipment is “men’s work” cause women performing these roles to feel less accepted; indeed, men may even feel social pressure to prevent women from undertaking such tasks under the guise of “gentlemanly conduct” – a form of “benevolent” sexism (see Box 6.4). Furthermore, such stereotypes can be seen as valuing servicemen’s contribution to the armed forces in relation to their physical attributes while overlooking the diverse range of different skills that men bring to the institution. Box 6.4 explores the more nuanced dangers of seemingly positive stereotypes.

Box 6.4 “Benevolent” sexism¹⁶

“Benevolent” sexism, or the “women-are-wonderful effect” refers to a culture where those at the top of a gendered hierarchy reward others who conform to their inferior status. An example would be giving female personnel the day before a national holiday off so that they can prepare food for their families. Levels of “benevolent” sexism in a given society correlate with those of hostile sexism; in other words it forms part of a carrot-and-stick system. In our example, a woman who prioritizes her career over her family and refuses to take the day off (or a man who requests leave to cook for his family, for that matter) is likely to be confronted with a hostile reaction. This also explains why high levels of violence against women can be found in societies where men see themselves as protectors. Benevolent sexism should therefore be avoided, despite objections from those who benefit from it at times.

Incomprehensible language

A more subtle way in which learners are excluded is through the instructor’s use of analogies and metaphors which often have nothing to do with the subject matter. For example, an instructor might use the expression “it was bottom of the ninth and the bases were loaded”¹⁷ when recounting a story to explain that it was the last opportunity in a high-stress situation. This baseball analogy will not be understood by learners unfamiliar with the sport, which is both male-dominated and also followed more closely by groups of men from particular racial, class and geographical backgrounds. These learners will not feel included in the class itself nor understand the point being made.

Practical tips for inclusive and non-discriminatory course delivery

- ✓ Instructors avoid sexist and other discriminatory language.
- ✓ Instructors use gender-inclusive language during instruction (e.g. ideally both male/female pronouns, but “they” is better than only “he” or only “she”).
- ✓ Instructors use equivalent wording when referring to men and women, e.g. servicewomen and servicemen, ladies and gentlemen, female and male *but not* men and girls (male adult, female child).
- ✓ Instructors are wary of benevolent sexism and, if it occurs, use it as a teaching/learning moment.
- ✓ Instructors avoid generalizations and stereotypes, and discourage learners from using them.
- ✓ Instructors and other learners use analogies and examples to which everyone can relate.

3.3 Gender dynamics of class participation

If left unchecked, the classroom environment will reflect the social relations of its learners in wider society. Those who dominate in society based on factors such as gender, class, educational level, ethnic origin, physical ability and age will also tend to dominate in the classroom; those from less privileged backgrounds will be silenced.¹⁸ Where gender is concerned, this tends to turn male learners into “knowers” and their female counterparts into “listeners” irrespective of their relative level of knowledge or academic performance.¹⁹ Instructors, however, have the power to disrupt this and set the tone in the classroom. Studies suggest that this is most successfully done from the outset.²⁰ Women have cited competitive, hierarchical and isolating learning environments as a major reason for avoiding STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), while young men who dropped out of education to enter the workforce mentioned feeling out of place in the classroom.²¹ In the military context, it is vitally important to promote diversity and facilitate gender equality in the classroom in order to open up those roles with particular educational requirements to traditionally underrepresented groups.

Group work

In large class discussions, studies repeatedly show that male learners tend to dominate by calling out answers, raising their hands more often and making lengthier interventions than women. Instructors play a role in this by calling on male learners more frequently (who they are more likely to know by name), asking them more abstract questions and then referring more to points made by men than by women later on in the lecture. Male learners are also more likely to be asked follow-up questions and given more specific feedback in the form of praise, criticism or correction.²² Women, on the other hand, tend to be asked questions that require short answers and receive non-verbal or one-word feedback, e.g. a nod or a “good”. Similarly, when they ask questions they are often told the answer directly, whereas instructors more frequently guide men through a problem-solving process.²³ Moreover, female learners tend to make shorter statements that are often prefaced in a more hesitant way (e.g. by using words like “perhaps”, phrases like “I may be wrong, but...” or using rising intonation to turn their statement into a question). They also tend to be interrupted more frequently, and both other learners and the instructor are less likely to refer back to their comments later in the class.²⁴

When divided into small groups and given a set task, female learners take on more leadership roles (as long as the group is relatively gender-balanced or a majority are female). While such learning environments can be positive for both genders, it was found that in female-dominated groups the male minority often demand attention and additional support from the rest of the group in order to complete their individual contributions to the group task. Where males are in the majority, female learners are often ignored, although some instructors seem to place academically stronger female learners in groups to “tutor” weaker male learners.²⁵ Small groups can therefore be seen as an opportunity to promote more gender-equal classroom dynamics as long as female learners are not burdened by these additional support roles.

Gendered allocation of tasks

A final aspect to consider is the division of classroom tasks. In both full-class and group work settings, more male learners end up doing demonstrations that involve equipment while the female learners are pushed into more “secretarial” roles.²⁶ The result is a self-fulfilling prophecy where male and female learners become more competent at performing stereotypical tasks associated with their gender because they rarely have the opportunity to switch roles. As this division of roles becomes institutionalized, performing a task not typically associated with one’s gender might provoke a negative reaction from the learner’s peers.

Practical tips: What methods facilitate the participation of often excluded/non-participative learners?

- ✓ Ground rules are established with learner input during the first class, and shape the response etiquette.²⁷
- ✓ The ground rules are reviewed periodically, discussed by the class and modified if necessary.²⁸
- ✓ Instructors explicitly acknowledge that sexism and other forms of discrimination exist in the classroom, and that this makes it easier for some learners to participate compared to others. No one is blamed for the misinformation they have been told about other groups (e.g. “women cannot lead”), but everyone endeavours not to repeat untruths.²⁹
- ✓ Instructors are aware that their own identity (gender, age, rank, combat experience, ethnicity, level of education, etc.) will make certain learners feel more able to participate than others. They take active steps to overcome the obstacles to participation experienced by some learners.
- ✓ Instructors are clear that class discussion is not purely a debate but rather an opportunity to gather all the information that the class has on a given topic. Learners are therefore encouraged to listen to others in the class, build on their comments and ask them further questions.³⁰
- ✓ Learners represent their own opinions; one woman is not permitted/expected to represent the views of all women.
- ✓ Instructors keep track of which learners they call upon. One way to do this is to divide the room mentally into quadrants and ensure that women and men in each quadrant participate.³¹ Another way is to record the names of the learners who were called on, or who spoke, during or after each session.

- ✓ Instructors wait three to five seconds before taking a response to a question, and do not necessarily ask those who raise their hands the fastest.³²
- ✓ Instructors refer back to (especially quieter) learners' written or spoken comments later on.³³
- ✓ Instructors give less confident learners encouragement and sufficient time to express their ideas. This includes giving the floor to learners who react to comments non-verbally, and drawing them out if necessary.³⁴
- ✓ Instructors offer a wide range of participation methods, including opinion polling, inviting non-hand-raisers to speak, small group activities, working in pairs, presentations and written work (e.g. journaling can be especially useful in gender courses).³⁵
- ✓ Instructors prevent learners from being interrupted when they are speaking; failing this, learners are given the opportunity to finish making their point.³⁶
- ✓ In group work activities, instructors require that roles – especially leadership ones – are rotated among learners, and that groups are mixed in terms of gender and other attributes.³⁷
- ✓ Both female and male learners learn how to use equipment in practical exercises as well as in everyday tasks such as classroom set-up and cleaning (e.g. computers, DVD players, vacuum cleaners).³⁸
- ✓ Gender-biased statements and/or behaviour are used as learning/teaching moments whenever possible. If it is too much of a distraction from the learning objectives for the session, the statement/behaviour is flagged for future discussion.

3.4 Gender dynamics of learner appraisal

The gender dynamics of learner appraisal appear to be somewhat paradoxical at first sight. On the one hand, female learners outperform male learners in most subjects in the vast majority of countries irrespective of levels of gender inequality (see Box 6.7).³⁹ On the other hand, research suggests that assessment is nonetheless biased in favour of male learners, who on average are able to win educational scholarships with lower grades than women.⁴⁰ Learner appraisal can therefore have profound effects on the gender balance of military institutions at the higher levels for years to come. These are factors that instructors in military educational facilities need to keep in mind when fulfilling their responsibility to ensure that assessment accurately reflects each learner's performance in their subject area.

Learner appraisal in the form of continuous formative assessment during the class (such as classroom discussions and questions posed by instructors to their learners) as well as in small written assignments can have a significant impact on learners' perception of how they are performing in the class and whether they persist with the subject. Several studies have documented gender bias in this kind of appraisal. For example, women tend to be complimented for the presentation of their written work, whereas men are assessed more on the intellectual quality of their assignments.⁴¹

There is also evidence of gender bias in formal assessment. If there is gender bias in the educational content (see Section 3.2), then there is a risk of examinations assessing untaught information, terminology and skills. An overreliance on assumed knowledge and skills related to pastimes typically dominated by men and boys (such as sports and cars) is one of the reasons many women and non-stereotypical men have given for dropping out of traditionally male-dominated STEM subjects.⁴² Interestingly, despite these challenges there are many incidents where men perceive a grading bias in favour of women, which is often attributed to the way they dress or some other feminine attribute such as working cooperatively rather than competing alone.⁴³ These excuses may in fact hide some commonly found challenges of the peer pressure experienced by male learners, namely their reluctance to ask for help from the instructor and also a tendency to present good academic performance as a consequence of innate ability rather than hard work, which can be seen as a sign of weakness and hence is either done covertly or not at all.⁴⁴

Gender dynamics of instructor appraisal

Studies examining instructor appraisal have noted that female and male instructors are often evaluated differently by their learners (see Box 6.5). Adult learners come to the classroom with particular ideas regarding who has the right to be an instructor and how an instructor should conduct herself or himself. This may involve gender bias. For example, learners may expect male instructors to demonstrate authority and technical expertise, whereas they expect female instructors to be more caring, nurturing and understanding of personal issues that affect learners' participation or attendance. Where instructors do not conform to these expectations, learners have been shown to criticize them on appraisal forms. In the same way that female learners are often evaluated disproportionately on the way they present themselves and their work, female instructors have reported receiving learner comments on their choice of clothing, with some even suggesting alternatives. Conversely, if male instructors dress untidily this can actually earn them respect, as it fits learner perceptions of what an intellectual looks like.⁴⁵

Box 6.5 The different appraisals received by male and female instructors⁴⁶

Michael Messner, then an entry-level assistant professor, describes his surprise at the difference between the learner evaluations he received for an introductory gender studies course and those of his female co-instructor, a much more established and well-respected academic.

"When the student evaluations for the course came back several weeks after the semester had ended, a curious asymmetry emerged. Although both of us were "graded" as good teachers in the numerical evaluations, several students took it upon themselves to criticize my co-teacher's attire in the classroom. Her clothing, she was told, lacked style. She could do better. Some of them recommended particular items to spiff up her look, like certain name-brand shoes, that she might consider wearing in future semesters. By contrast, not one student evaluation mentioned my clothing choices, which at the time consisted of corduroy pants, cheap button-down shirts from Sears, and K-Mart shoes."

Another factor is that learners may perceive women and people from minority backgrounds as lacking authority in the classroom, as their appearance is different to that of the standard model of an instructor. These instructors are put in a difficult position: should they take a more informal approach in order to build a rapport with their learners by, for example, referring to themselves by their first name, at the expense of undermining their authority? Or, on the other hand, should they maintain authority by demanding that learners address them formally and with respect, and risk antagonizing their learners? Unable to command equivalent levels of respect, instructors in this category are more likely to be told in learner evaluations that they are biased, rigid, politically correct and have an agenda, whereas men who conform to traditional notions of what an instructor looks like are credited for being objective, relaxed and good-humoured.

The impact of gender bias in scoring of instructors can be negative not only for the individual instructor, but for the institution as a whole. If learner appraisals prevent instructors from underrepresented groups from advancing in their careers regardless of their teaching quality, the institution will miss out on the benefits a diverse team of staff can bring to educational content and learner participation.

The most effective strategies for addressing the challenge of gender (and other) bias in appraisals by learners begin with instructors raising this problem with their learners in classroom discussions. Arguably, this will have the biggest impact coming from instructors who best fit the standard model (i.e. older men from dominant ethnic groups), as this reduces the likelihood of the problem being seen as a "women's" or "minority" issue.⁴⁷ Also, more attention should be given to qualitative feedback (written commentary) than quantitative (numerical scoring), as the latter more often reflects "gut feeling" and does not require learners to justify their scores.

Practical tips: How can educators conduct appraisals in a way that measures the learner's ability to learn, understand and apply the content to the greatest extent possible?

- ✓ Instructors take steps to ensure that male and female learners are appraised according to the same criteria.
- ✓ Assessment criteria accurately reflect each learner's knowledge of the subject and his or her ability to apply it in military contexts.
- ✓ Instructors give all learners equally difficult tasks irrespective of their gender.
- ✓ Instructors have equal expectations of all the learners in the class.
- ✓ Instructors appraise both the intellectual quality and the presentation of all work.
- ✓ Instructors present learners with different opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge (e.g. in writing, speaking, group work, etc.).
- ✓ Instructors actively encourage all learners to seek additional support.
- ✓ Instructors grade learners only on information presented in the class and prerequisite classes, not on their level of general knowledge.
- ✓ Instructors base assessments on the ability of learners to apply their knowledge to the real-life situations of graduates of the course.⁴⁸
- ✓ Instructors consider how appraisals can be used to boost self-esteem and encourage positive learning behaviours among their learners by rewarding hard work and disproving notions that attainment is determined by innate ability (especially of men), luck or physical appearance (especially of women).⁴⁹



The process of critical thinking begins by recognizing that as the teacher in the classroom I am a key actor in the classroom dynamics that evolve. I must recognize who I am, where I teach, and whom I teach.⁵⁰

Professor Lynn Weber Cannon

3.5 Gender dynamics of access to faculty and educational resources

Unequal access to faculty

The access an individual learner has to teaching staff as well as to mentors will have an impact on his/her academic performance and also the subject areas, specialisms and careers that he or she ultimately pursues. Not only are the opinions of quieter learners ignored in class discussions, negatively affecting their self-esteem, but they also tend to receive less encouragement from faculty to pursue high-level careers and positions.⁵¹ One common way in which some instructors show a greater affinity to certain learners in the class is in the name they use to refer to them (or, indeed, the fact that they know the names of some learners and not others). While the instructor may refer to learners s/he knows less well by their surnames as a sign of respect, referring to learners s/he knows well by first names or nicknames can be an indicator of favouritism. Equal treatment in this area – whether by adopting a first-name or a last-name policy – will send a signal that the instructor is equally willing to help all learners.

Those learners who are more able to create a rapport with their instructors during class are also better placed to contact faculty outside the classroom for help in roles such as identifying subject-matter specialists in educational assignments, finding mentors and perhaps even facilitating access to certain professional jobs. Clearly the different personalities of the learners and instructors play a part in these situations, but it is inevitably the case that learners with more in common with the instructor are best placed to develop a closer relationship.⁵² The downside of this is that learners whose backgrounds are radically different to that of the instructor are less

likely to interact with the instructor either during the class and afterwards. This could be one reason why certain professions, such as aeroplane pilots or nursing, are still largely dominated by one gender despite significant advances being made in gender balance in other sectors.

Extracurricular activities involving both instructors and learners can provide valuable alternative settings for learners and faculty to interact. It is often the case, however, that learners from non-traditional backgrounds do not have equal access to faculty in these settings. This could be because the activities (e.g. sports) are gender-segregated or require skills more commonly taught to one gender (e.g. hunting), or because the learners feel socially out of place as a minority (e.g. not being able to contribute to any of the conversation topics). Alternatively, it could be that learners have caring roles that prevent them from spending time on social activities.

While extracurricular interaction is not inherently bad, attention needs to be paid to ensure that learners from non-traditional backgrounds are not put at a disadvantage educationally and professionally because they have a smaller network of staff supporting them. Extracurricular activities are often labelled as “non-essential”, yet in many cases they are of fundamental importance for educational achievement and subsequent career progression.⁵³

Unequal distribution of educational resources

The unequal access to faculty is similarly reflected in the unequal distribution of educational resources and facilities, which can also reinforce gender differences. One of the most prevalent and visible examples is where educational institutions spend more on sport for men than for women, be it by providing better facilities or by privileging men’s access to unisex facilities (see Box 6.6).⁵⁴ In some cases this may be formalized, but in many situations socialization means that dominant social groups (which tend to be male-dominated) feel a greater sense of entitlement to use shared facilities. Historically it was also the case that most military installations lacked bathrooms and residential facilities for women.

Box 6.6 Gender inequality in educational sport spending: The case of higher education in the United States⁵⁵

Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments requires schools and colleges that receive federal funds to prohibit sex discrimination in all their educational programmes and activities. This should also apply to sporting activities. Despite significant improvements since then, by 2011 the number of participation opportunities available for women had still not reached the level men were at in 1972, and inequalities persist (figures from 2011):

- women make up 57 per cent of US college students, but only 43 per cent of sport participation opportunities are open to them;
- men received 55 per cent of athletic scholarship funds, leaving women with 45 per cent;
- women’s teams received 38 per cent on average of the sport operating budget and 33 per cent of the sport recruitment budget;
- head coaches for women’s teams in the highest level of competition (National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I-A) were paid approximately half of what head coaches for men’s teams received.

Another consideration is that some learners may have greater access to private resources (such as personal laptops and sufficient finances to pay for private tutoring or purchase books rather than borrowing from a library) than others, thus creating an unequal learning environment. Those learners (disproportionately men) without care responsibilities will also be able to devote more of their own time to study. If steps are not taken to mitigate these factors, educational assessments will be skewed, as it will be difficult to determine the degree to which they measure a learner’s command of the course content versus the same learner’s access to educational resources.

In addition to gender differences between women and men, an antagonistic relationship can develop between male instructors and male learners, especially learners who come from different social backgrounds to the vast majority of their teaching faculty. This appears to happen when male learners lack the necessary connections and educational resources to perform well academically and rise into respected roles within the institution. The effects of discrimination, such as racism, may also be at play. This antagonism has been given as one of the major reasons why young women outperform young men in academic achievement in many countries around the world⁵⁶ (see Box 6.7). In response, these young men develop an alternative value system whereby they are able to earn the respect of their peers through other means (such as acting up in the classroom or owning status symbols). While this provides a temporary solution in terms of self-esteem, they are no longer interested in academic achievement and hence lose future opportunities of career promotion.⁵⁷ Instructors can lose their moral authority in these situations, and institutions lose the possibility of having a more diverse workforce at the higher ranks.

The most effective way of addressing unequal access to faculty and educational resources, albeit not the easiest one, is to acquaint both learners and instructors with the concept of privilege as a system of overarching inequality. Privilege determines a learner's access to faculty and education resources, and hence plays a much greater role in determining educational attainment and subsequent career and financial benefits than innate intelligence. This, however, is difficult for privileged groups to accept because it is seen as downplaying the hard work they have put into their achievements and, in the words of Bethany Coston and Michael Kimmel, "privilege is invisible to those who have it".⁵⁸ For example, those with privilege tend to have "unmarked" identities ("pilot"), whereas those who lack it have marked identities ("black female pilot").⁵⁹ This is often misconstrued as presenting privilege as an all-or-nothing game; on the contrary, every individual will have different levels of privilege and will be more aware of those who have more privilege than those who have less. Introducing privilege as a topic requires tact, timing and dosage. It is usually better received by those who have received education on gender-related topics, and care needs to be taken not to let it distract from the learning outcomes.⁶⁰

Practical tips: How can educators take these gender dynamics into consideration and remove barriers to those learners who have less access to faculty and educational resources?

- ✓ Instructors address all learners in the same way, with the same tone of voice, and make eye contact with all of them.
- ✓ Instructors provide formal avenues to learners who require extra support, such as designated office hours.
- ✓ Formal and social barriers to different learners participating in extracurricular activities are removed in order to encourage underrepresented groups to participate.
- ✓ Instructors are careful about socializing with learners and excluding those who, e.g., do not drink, do not like sports or are introverted.
- ✓ Provisions are made to enable those with caring responsibilities to take part in extracurricular activities.
- ✓ Mentors are made available to all learners (either formally or informally), especially to those who may not have a pre-existing network of contacts in the particular field of study.
- ✓ Educational resources and the use of facilities are distributed fairly to learners from different genders and backgrounds (e.g. according to need, randomly or on a first-come, first-served basis).
- ✓ Course administrators take steps to ensure that every learner is able to obtain all the necessary course materials and equipment easily.
- ✓ Provisions are made to support those learners whose limited access to private resources may hinder the ability to achieve the learning outcomes.
- ✓ Instructors take the opportunity to examine notions of privilege when possible.

Box 6.7 Why do women and girls outperform men and boys academically?

More women have university degrees than men in 29 out of 32 member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and in 2009 59 per cent of all those who completed undergraduate degrees were women. Boys in secondary school still outperform girls in mathematics by the equivalent of around three months of education, but girls have a reading age about one year older than that of boys.⁶¹ While girls outperform boys overall, the gap is largest among lower-achieving children. Boys from poorer financial backgrounds and ethnic minorities are particularly well represented among low achievers. Of the highest-achieving learners (85th percentile and above), however, boys outperform girls.⁶²

At first sight this gap may be taken as a sign of increasing levels of gender equality or even of women dominating men, but this hypothesis is not supported by the research: there appears to be no correlation between the gender gap in academic achievement and levels of gender equality in a given society.⁶³

Alternative explanations have pointed to a historical legacy that men have traditionally had a workplace advantage in unskilled or vocational professions irrespective of their level of education, whereas the majority of new employment opportunities easily accessible to women require a bachelor's degree.⁶⁴ Others suggest that women and girls dedicate more time to studying than men and boys. This is partly because boys face peer pressure to demonstrate that they can rely on their innate intelligence without having to spend time on study, and also because boys are expected by their parents, instructors and peers to spend more time on physical activities.⁶⁵

If these hypotheses are true, it would have significant implications for military academies. The evolving nature of modern warfare requires defence staff to have increasingly large skill sets involving both physical skills and knowledge learnt in the classroom. Defence academies and security institutes therefore need to ensure they have created environments that give equal value to the time their male and female learners spend developing their skills, whether it be spent in the classroom or on the training ground.

4. Conclusion

One of the attractions of studying gender is that it can be applied to any situation where human activity is involved. By considering the gender dynamics of their classroom, instructors can actively demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of applying a gender perspective to any situation. In addition, by keeping these dynamics in mind, an instructor will be able to seize upon gender-related learning or teaching moments, even if they arise during classes that are not specifically on gender. This is an effective form of gender-mainstreaming and a highly transformative way to teach. If combined with transactional learning approaches (see chapter 5), learners can even contribute to furthering their instructors' own knowledge of gender. When it comes to creating a gender-equal learning environment, no instructor will get it right every time. A good instructor, however, will endeavour to learn from his or her mistakes and take these opportunities to contribute to a more gender-equal working environment in their institution, both now and in the future.

5. Annotated bibliography

5.1 Academic publications related to the gender dynamics of the classroom

Glick, Peter and Susan T. Fisk, "An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2001), pp. 109–118, www.sanchezlab.com/pdfs/GlickFiske1.pdf.

This paper examines the nature of sexism in its hostile and benevolent forms, and how these two forms are related in different national contexts. While not specific to the classroom context, it is still useful to understand the gendered classroom dynamics.

Jung, Kyungah and Haesook Chung, *Gender Equality in Classroom Instruction: Introducing Gender Training for Teachers in the Republic of Korea* (Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, 2006), <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001459/145992e.pdf>.

This study was conducted by the Korean Women's Development Institute and published by UNESCO. Although the research was all undertaken in elementary and junior high schools in the Republic of Korea, it constitutes one of the most comprehensive analyses of gender dynamics in the classroom currently available. The document includes both findings from the research and details on the methodology used for undertaking the gender analysis.

Kilmartin, Christopher and Andrew P. Smiler, *The Masculine Self*, 5th edn (Cornwall on Hudson, NY: Sloan Publishing, 2015).

This textbook provides an introduction to theories of men and masculinity as well as an overview of the scholarship in this area. While it does not look specifically at the gender dynamics in classroom settings, it provides a good background on men as gendered beings and discusses many social phenomena that men bring to the classroom, including how they relate to women and other men.

5.2 Checklists for improving the gender dynamics of the classroom

Columbia University, "Gender issues in the college classroom", www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/pdfs/gender.pdf.

This four-page document briefly details some of the major conclusions regarding gender inequalities and gender dynamics in the college classroom, as well as some basic principles of feminist pedagogical practices. It concludes with some suggestions on creating an inclusive classroom environment.

Equitable Classroom Practices Institute, "Best practices for achieving gender equity in the classroom", www.bioc.rice.edu/precollege/ei/best_practices.html.

This article published by Rice University was created by a summer institute where teachers in 11 Houston area schools came together to participate in activities to promote positive socialization of learners. It details good classroom practices for promoting gender equity through learner/instructor interaction, lesson planning/classroom management and curriculum content.

PfPC SSRWG, "Gender-responsive course evaluations: Reference sheet", in "Gender-responsive evaluation in military education – 4th workshop on teaching gender to the military, Geneva, 21–24 July 2014, after action report", www.dcaf.ch/Event/Gender-Responsive-Evaluation-in-Military-Education-4th-Workshop-on-Teaching-Gender-to-the-Military.

This two-page reference sheet was developed by DCAF and improved based on the comments of military, gender and education experts of the PfPC Security Sector Reform and Education Development Working Groups. It consists of a brief introduction followed by a checklist to the different aspects presented in Section 3 of this chapter.

Notes

1. The author would like to thank Miriam Fugfugosh and Christopher Kilmartin for providing written comments on this chapter.
2. This chapter draws upon "Gender-responsive course evaluations: Reference sheet", which was developed by the NATO PfPC Security Sector Reform Working Group at its "Gender-responsive evaluation in military education – 4th workshop on teaching gender to the military", Geneva, 21–24 July 2014. The reference sheet is contained in an annex of the after-action report, www.dcaf.ch/Event/Gender-Responsive-Evaluation-in-Military-Education-4th-Workshop-on-Teaching-Gender-to-the-Military.
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4. Gunilla Burrowes, "Gender dynamics in an engineering classroom: Engineering students' perspectives", MPhil thesis, University of Newcastle, NSW, 2001, p. 31.
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16. Peter Glick and Susan T. Fisk, "An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (2001), pp. 109–118.
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27. Henes, note 20 above, p. 2. Weber Cannon, note 5 above, p. 130.

28. Weber Cannon, *ibid.*
29. Weber Cannon, *ibid.*, p. 131.
30. Little, note 21 above, pp. 11–12.
31. Equitable Classroom Practices Institute, note 14 above.
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