



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Social Science Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ssresearch

Gendered styles of student-faculty interaction among college students

Emma D. Cohen

Indiana University, Department of Sociology, Ballantine Hall 744, 1020 E. Kirkwood Ave, Bloomington, IN, 47405, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Higher education

Gender

Student-faculty interaction

College experiences

ABSTRACT

Scholars have examined gender differences in many areas of college life, but we know little about how men and women may interact differently with faculty—an activity with strong links to student outcomes. Using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, I investigate whether men and women demonstrate different styles of interaction with faculty. I find that women are more likely than men to engage frequently in *instrumental* interactions, such as emailing and discussing course logistics with faculty. In contrast, men are more likely than women to have frequent *higher order* interactions, such as discussing ideas and participating in research. These findings introduce a new typology of student-faculty interaction and contribute to our understanding of gendered pathways through higher education.

1. Introduction

The gender gap in college encompasses disparities in college entrance and completion as well as differences in men's and women's experiences on college campuses. Research suggests that, although there is much variation in men's and women's experiences, on average men and women enter different fields of study (Alon and Gelbgiser, 2011), participate differently in the classroom (Crombie et al., 2003), and have different experiences regarding dating and hooking up (Armstrong et al., 2010). Scholarship also demonstrates average differences in the outcomes of experiences with faculty for men and women (Sax, 2008), but we know less about how student gender may pattern the ways that students and faculty interact. Considering the many academic and psychosocial benefits of such interaction for students (Mayhew et al., 2016), it is important to understand how men's and women's interactions with faculty may differ. Moreover, it is increasingly apparent that men and women are likely to take gendered “pathways” through college (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Quadlin, 2016). Examination of gendered student-faculty interaction can shed further light on the role of academic experiences in defining these pathways.

In this article, I examine whether men's and women's styles of interacting with faculty differ. Student-faculty interactions are only one component of students' experiences, but research demonstrates that they are highly influential for college outcomes, including gains in general education, intellectual ability, and cognitive skills (Astin, 1993; Kim and Sax, 2011, 2009; Kuh and Hu, 2001; Nelson Laird and Cruce, 2009; Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005), academic self-concept and psychological well-being (Cole, 2007; Sax, 2008), educational attainment (Astin, 1993), and formation of civic, political, and other social values (Sax, 2008). Scholars find that different types of interaction have different associations with college outcomes (Mayhew et al., 2016; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005) and, in general, matter differently for men and women (Sax, 2008). Using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, I investigate gender differences in six types of interaction, from emailing instructors to working on a faculty member's research project. Separating types of interactions allows me to discover whether there are gendered styles of student-faculty interaction—that is, whether men and women tend to engage with faculty in different ways—rather than simply whether there are gender differences in

E-mail address: emdcohen@iu.edu.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.06.004>

Received 18 October 2017; Received in revised form 12 April 2018; Accepted 20 June 2018

0049-089X/ © 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

interaction frequency.

My findings demonstrate that women engage more frequently in *instrumental* interactions with faculty, such as communicating about course logistics. In contrast, men are more likely to frequently engage in *higher-order* interaction, such as discussing ideas or working on a research project with faculty. Although the instrumental help they receive may position women for greater success in coursework, more frequent higher-order interactions may position men for other rewards, such as closer relationships with faculty and better preparation for graduate school. These findings contribute to the scholarship of student engagement by answering a call for scholars to develop a better understanding of how the content of men's and women's interactions with faculty differ (Sax, 2008). Results also have implications for scholarship dedicated to understanding gendered pathways through education, showing that men and women have generally different styles of engagement with faculty.

2. Background

2.1. Gendered pathways through college

Scholarship documents many patterns of difference in men's and women's daily academic experiences. On average, women earn higher grades than men (Alon and Gelbgiser, 2011), although many studies suggest that men tend to participate in class discussion more frequently and confidently (Caspi et al., 2008; Crawford and MacLeod, 1990; Crombie et al., 2003; Fassinger, 1995; but see Rocca, 2010; Tatum et al., 2013). However, women generally receive greater academic support from their friendship networks (McCabe, 2016) and spend more time studying than men (Babcock and Marks, 2011). Moreover, women tend to start college with a greater orientation toward academic activities than do men, though men ultimately shift some of their social time to academic time by the end of college (Quadlin, 2016). Quadlin (2016) refers to these patterns of time use as “gendered pathways.” Although men and women tend to have different college experiences, we do not yet have a good sense of whether and how their experiences with faculty play a role in defining gendered pathways through higher education.

Gender also permeates undergraduate life in that college campuses are important locations for the production of gendered meanings associated with men's and women's behavior. For example, scholars argue that institutions inadvertently encourage students to choose majors based on gender essentialist ideology (Charles and Bradley, 2009). According to this research, students arrive on campus with preferences oriented toward majors they perceive to be gender-appropriate. Institutions allow students to “indulge” gendered preferences by providing an abundance of major choices and permitting students to choose based on personal preference (Charles and Bradley, 2009). Additionally, single-sex college contexts such as dormitories and Greek life reproduce and reinforce dominant expectations for gendered behavior. In these environments, women earn status through their personal appearance and relationships with men (Armstrong and Hamilton, 2013; Hamilton, 2014; Holland and Eisenhart, 1990), while men are encouraged to be sexually dominant (DeSantis, 2007). Although scholars have considered how gendered expectations for behavior shape college experiences across these and other domains of college life, researchers have yet to consider how gendered expectations may shape student-faculty interaction.

2.2. Gender and student-faculty interaction

Student-faculty contact is a consequential part of students' college experiences (Mayhew et al., 2016; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). Scholars contend that relationships with faculty are key to producing the student buy-in necessary for meaningful participation in college life (Astin, 1993; Kuh and Hu, 2001; Tinto, 1993). Faculty are influential in students' career choices, leading students on paths of discovery to new fields of study and career opportunities (Chambliss and Takacs, 2014). Strong faculty-student relationships help students feel as if they belong in college and increase student satisfaction (Chambliss and Takacs, 2014). Additionally, student-faculty interactions are associated with educational gains and cognitive and intellectual development (Astin, 1993; Kim and Sax, 2011, 2009; Kuh and Hu, 2001; Nelson Laird and Cruce, 2009; Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005), political and social attitudes (Sax, 2008), gains in psychosocial wellbeing and academic self-concept (Cole, 2007; Sax, 2008), and educational attainment (Astin, 1993).

Considering the patterns of difference in men's and women's daily academic experiences already documented by scholars, we might expect to find differences in men's and women's interactions with faculty. Indeed, although there have been thorough investigations of gender differences in the *outcomes* of student-faculty interaction (Sax, 2008; Sax et al., 2005), detailed analysis of gender differences in *types* of interaction is lacking. Typically, scholars focus primarily on bivariate relationships between gender and specific types of interaction (Drew and Work, 1998; Kim and Sax, 2009; Sax et al., 2005) or include gender as a control in multivariate models predicting general frequency of interaction (Arum and Roksa, 2011; Nelson Laird and Cruce, 2009; Pike et al., 2012; Umbach and Wawrzynski, 2005). Two exceptions have included gender as a control when predicting several categories of interaction, but the gender results are not central to the authors' research questions or analysis. Cole (2007) examines whether interracial interaction among students is related to different types of student-faculty interaction and does not interpret the coefficient for gender. Kuh and Hu (2001) also include gender as a control but focus on how student-faculty interaction is related to students' self-perceived effort, educational gains, and college satisfaction.

Evidence from these studies about gender differences in interaction is mixed. Women generally report more frequent and more positive interactions with faculty, although some studies find that men talk with faculty outside of class more often than women (Drew and Work, 1998; Kim and Sax, 2009; Sax et al., 2005). On the other hand, several studies find that gender is not significantly associated with frequency or type of interaction (Arum and Roksa, 2011; Kuh and Hu, 2001; Pike et al., 2012), though one study finds

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7338414>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7338414>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)