

Female silence in classroom deafening blow to education

By Shawn Marie Boyne
 ■ The Daily Trojan
 U. of Southern California

After four years in undergraduate classes listening to discussions participated in equally by men and women, I have been dismayed in my first year of law school to discover that a minority of women choose to participate in class.

My own participation has dropped precipitously. This experience is not unique to the U. of Southern California Law School, but is duplicated at other prestigious law schools throughout the country.

By choosing not to speak — because of fear of being criticized or ridiculed — we participate in our own disempowerment. As a result, classrooms often dissolve into a monopoly of a minority of white men.

Some of my closest and most supportive friends fall into this category, but their views do not reflect the reality of women's lives. Through our silence, we alienate ourselves from our own legal education and deny ourselves a forum to educate men about our experiences.

However, the goal of increased participation from women in the classroom is not meant to introduce a homogenous feminist voice. Women, like men, are a heterogenous group.

Just as the voices of men in the classroom cannot reflect the real-life experiences of women, the voices of a few women cannot accurately represent the diverse experience of American women today.

Faced with the stress of my first year of law school and pressure to conform, I

have felt increasingly compelled to express myself like a lawyer — that is, in a sterile, masculine, analytical voice. Hungry to mold myself into a professional, I find myself increasingly alienated from my personal views.

I find the image of being a lawyer enticing. Thus, when professors treat issues such as rape or battered women like abstract legal concepts, I feel pressured to amputate my emotions about these subjects. While I may be conforming to an image of a successful lawyer, I conform at a cost to my feminine soul.

My concerns about the disempowerment and sterilization of women extend beyond the law school classroom. By choosing not to speak out on political issues, we abdicate our ability to influence decisions that will have far-reaching consequences for women.

For example, the visible anti-abortion protests by Operation Rescue in Los Angeles were primarily orchestrated by men. Regardless of what one's personal views on abortion are, if we choose not to express them, the issue will be decided by that sector of the population that is biologically incapable of becoming pregnant.

I urge women to evaluate how they participate in their education. I hope, despite the fear the first year of law school creates, more women will refuse to participate in their own disempowerment and will choose to express their opinions in the classroom.

Our opinions are important, and if law is to serve the interests of men and women in society, more women must choose to use their voices to break the silence.

BEHIND THE SCENES...



AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON **STAR** REGISTRATION SYSTEM

LESLIE PATRICELLI, THE DAILY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, U. OF WASHINGTON

What, me worry about grades?

By Christine Pohan
 ■ Mustang Daily
 Cal Poly State U., San Luis Obispo

There I sat at my little wooden desk waiting for class to begin. I was nervous, my palms were sweating and my fingernails almost gone.

Today was the day we got back our first quiz.

The professor walked in and I could hear my pulse in my ears.

I had been coaching myself all morning on the virtues of learning and the importance of knowledge. It was the experience of taking the test that mattered, not the results.

I repeated "College is what you make of it" 10 times.

It was of no use. He pulled the quizzes out of his manila envelope and all of my philosophy went out the window. All that really mattered was the grade.

My knees were so weak I couldn't even walk. When my name was called, I answered a faint "here" and reached out to grab my verdict.

I got a B. Not an A, but a B.

I fought back tears. Failure. What kind of internship would I get now? I might as well have dropped out of college. I thought of running to the nearest campus phone and dropping my entire schedule.

Have all my idealistic values of life been crushed? Yes.

Will I take this vast amount of knowledge and talent and apply it to my own personal gain? Probably.

But I am no longer a personality here at Cal Poly, I am my grade (and social security number, of course).

So many times there has been a cause I have wanted to join, but I had to get my homework done first. "Just 600 more pages of reading and then I'll commit," I'd reason to myself.

I have a class in which attendance is taken. The other day the guy next to me was reading Sports Illustrated, and I was so jealous. How could he sit there reading that without feeling guilty?

Didn't he want to get an A? I wanted to take him outside and explain to him how college works. I wanted to tell him that the most important class meeting was the one in which the professor explains his or her grading scale and if a curve will be used.

Didn't he understand that if he didn't get an A, he would be a complete flop at on-campus interviews, no graduate schools would accept him and worst of all, he couldn't expect to make more than \$15,000 a year?

The nerve of some people thinking they can do what they enjoy.

At least I have my priorities straight.

Responses to October U. Poll

In October, we asked readers what should happen to students caught cheating? Most callers said cheaters should fail the assignment (52%) or fail the course (21%). Some callers said cheaters should be expelled (11%) or suspended (7%). Almost one of every 10 callers (9%) said cheaters should not be punished.

STUDENT OPINION POLL

1-800-662-5511

Should residence hall staff have the authority to search a student's dorm room if there is a reasonable suspicion that the resident possesses illegal drugs? Tell us what you think.

(See related story on page 3)

Federal confidentiality policy guards perpetrators

By Malissa Lambert
 ■ The Daily Mississippian
 U. of Mississippi

Once again, the U. of Mississippi is hiding behind a cloak of secrecy.

The university's refusal to release the names of students against whom disciplinary action was taken recently for a fraternity incident is just the latest in a long history of refusals to release names of students disciplined for university violations.

The names of the victims are public record. The names of the perpetrators are not. This allows everyone to know the names of the victims, but the university protects the perpetrators.

Ole Miss officials are citing a federal law to keep the names secret. The

Buckley Amendment says "no funds shall be made available under any applicable program to any educational agency or institution which has a policy or practice of permitting the release of educational records ... of students without ... written consent ..."

First, one must question whether the university has a policy or practice of releasing students' records. Old Miss certainly does not. Thus the university's reasoning for nondisclosure is weakened.

Second, Old Miss must not be aware that not one university has been denied federal funds under this law for the 15 years the law has existed. The Department of Education only looks into instances of "unauthorized disclosure" when a complaint is made. And when it

has investigated complaints, there have been no penalties because a "policy or practice" did not exist. So, it is the university who is protecting the students -- not the law.

A couple of years ago it was the University Police Department's policy that even students' criminal records were part of their "school records." A reporter would be told that a student was arrested on campus, but no name would be released. That policy has changed because the university now releases the names of students arrested on campus.

If a student is arrested by the city police, the names are part of the public record under state law. So, if criminal charges were filed against the students involved in the incident, we would know

who they were.

Sometimes the "violations" are not criminal, but are violations of university rules and regulations. The violations equate to violations of university "laws." But according to the university, students who violate these "laws" are accorded secrecy.

Institutions of higher education and legislators need to reassess what university records should be confidential. There should be no "right of privacy" restricting access to a person's name if he or she has been judged guilty of violating a university regulation and expelled from the university.

And in a situation like this one, a true benefit could come from publication of the names and punishments of those judged guilty -- future deterrence.