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## Single sex environment breeds confidence in students

By **LIA ARAPOGLOU '06**

*Staff Writer*

While sitting in a sports bar last Saturday watching the Ultimate Fighter Championship, I had a realization that hit me harder than a roundhouse kick to the head: Wellesley breeds a species of women with a self-confidence level higher than any elite co-ed institution in the nation. When I had this insightful moment, I was in a room with a male to female ratio of about 15:1; here, I was the minority. I was sitting next to my friend Charlene who graduated Summa Cum Laude from Amherst College and is currently pursuing a PhD in Neuroscience. I soon discovered that although she is a smart girl to say the least, she is without self-confidence.

While Charlene and I were watching men on four huge screens, beating the crap out of each other, drinking beer, and placing bets with muscular meat heads, Charlene turned to me, confessing that she believed herself to be an unattractive loser who none of these brainless, muscle-masses with eyes and a pair of legs, would want to date. After realizing that she was serious, I flooded her with compliments. "Not only are you super cute, but you are so incredibly intelligent. Dude, you're a freaking genius."

She replies, "Yea, but that doesn't matter, these men don't want me, they don't even notice me".

I was shocked.

The better question was why a smart and beautiful girl would want such a man. While incredibly skilled fighters, many of them had clearly been hit on the head one too many times.

A similar "punch of an idea" landed this summer while working on the trading floor. The male to female ratio this time was about 5:2, substantially better from that night at the bar. I was working with women who were either current students or graduates of Ivy League schools. The funny thing I noticed was that the women were the quiet ones on the trading floor and would readily take a back seat to one a male colleague. Some even asked me why I was not scared to ask questions, introduce myself to people I had never met before, and how I could muster the confidence to challenge the men. I was not scared because I am a Wellesley woman.

The common belief is that the lack of men in the classroom make Wellesley students shy and socially awkward around the opposite sex. However, classrooms are filled with intelligent, hard-working, dedicated women who are prepared to challenge and argue every opinion mentioned in the classroom. On this campus, it is not sufficient to simply say, "I am a Democrat" or "I am a Republican"; the Wellesley woman must be able to defend her view and support a clear, concise argument. If you are able to survive a classroom here, you can survive anything. Furthermore, we have the ability to personally develop confidence this without worrying about whether we look cute in the process. Several Wellesley classes later, it becomes habit, and the Wellesley woman realizes that the words that come out of her mouth are far more important than whether her hair looks frizzy; it is what will get her noticed.

Women in co-ed institutions still suffer from the high school mentality of "What if I say the wrong answer and he laughs at me?". Wellesley women, in contrast, are able to overcome this insecurity. Not only do they become used to speaking uninhibitedly, but exude an aura of confidence unbeknownst to women in a co-ed environment. Through numerous encounters with other women from co-ed institutions, especially those encounters where women are the minority, I am able to truly appreciate the confidence and fearlessness of the Wellesley woman.