

After school, you hid in the bathroom
examining the day's insults
stuck to your face. You punched
lockers. You slammed bedroom
doors. I tried books. I tried invisibility. We
lived our sadness through each other. We
lived our silence too. We straddled
emptiness. Spanish in whispers,
our parents' accents, their immigrant fears.
South Carolina 1986. There were
only two colors, only two histories
to choose. We were neither.

13. • Michele Tracy Berger and Cheryl Radeloff

CLAIMING AN EDUCATION: Your Inheritance as a Student of Women's and Gender Studies (2015)

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Cheryl Radeloff is a disease investigation and intervention specialist with the Southern Nevada Health District and an adjunct professor of women's studies at the College of Southern Nevada. Her work has focused on HIV testing laws and policies in Nevada's sex industry. For this piece, they surveyed over 900 women's and gender studies graduates (1995–2010) from around the globe regarding their career paths, and it remains the largest data set on the subject.

In one of your WGST classes you have probably read the well-known and anthologized essay by poet, essayist, and feminist Adrienne Rich that discusses

"claiming an education." In this inspiring essay, Rich highlights the importance of being an active participant in the process of becoming educated. This piece

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stirred an entire generation of students, both women and men, to apply themselves to their interests, to take ownership of their education, to question what they were taught and how it was relevant to them. . . . One way to do that is to understand Women's and Gender Studies' unique history and to be able locate yourself within it. Most students have some knowledge of the early history of Women's Studies, but this cursory understanding often eludes you when someone pointedly asks, "What is Women's Studies? Isn't Women's Studies just a response to oppression?" Questions about the goals and roots of Women's Studies can often be surprising to students. The foundation about WGST that we provide here will enhance your current understanding of the politics and debates surrounding the role of WGST in higher education and its public perception. . . .

. . . We look at how Women's Studies evolved into Women's and Gender Studies. We take you behind the scenes to help you understand that what happens in a Women's and Gender Studies classroom is an outgrowth of activism, debate, and rich intellectual tradition. We also provide a contemporary picture of Women's and Gender Studies—who your professors are, and who is likely to sit next to you in the classroom (or share a virtual classroom). You will also hear from graduates about what they have considered valuable in their training.

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QUIZ: HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES?

How much do you know about the birth of Women's and Gender Studies? See how many of the following questions you can answer.

1. What was the first Women's Studies program in the United States?
2. True or false: Most professors in the 1970s who taught Women's Studies did not get paid for their classes.
3. What is feminist pedagogy?

4. Why does Women's and Gender Studies value research, theory, and praxis?
5. What is the National Women's Studies Association?
6. Where were the first Women's Studies courses offered in the United States?
7. What is the relationship between the civil rights movement, the women's rights movement, and student activism for the discipline of Women's Studies in the US?
8. How many countries around the world offer WGST degrees?
9. True or false: Community colleges play a vital role in training students in WGST.
10. What topics might you have covered in one of the first Women's Studies classes on women's health?

You will discover the answers as you keep reading! But they are also at the end of the chapter.

"BACK IN THE DAY": THE BIRTH OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

Today you stand as some of the latest in a long line of students who paved the way for Women's and Gender Studies on campuses across the US and now the world. Women's Studies has its roots and origins in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, specifically the civil rights and women's rights movements. Women's Studies courses, and other interdisciplinary studies (e.g. American Studies), were born largely due to student activism and demand. This was a time when more women in the United States were attending colleges and universities than ever before!

While many students attending college during the late 1960s and early 1970s were "traditional" in age and pre-college education, many others were nontraditional (e.g. veterans, married or divorced women, those of different socio-economic strata, racial/ethnic backgrounds, and sexual orientations). This generation of new students (and new professors) creates a unique culture in higher education that challenged the status quo as we describe below. Feminist activism spilled onto college campuses, forcing new questions about academic study. The earliest integrated Women's Studies programs at major universities were founded around 1970, although

there were a few courses in Women's Studies (and/or courses on "women" or "feminism") that were offered at some colleges and universities before this time. While acknowledging the importance of individual and group-level change in the classroom, the first Women's Studies educators knew they had to change the very structure and curriculum of higher education. At many of the newly coeducational colleges and universities of the 1970s, Women's Studies developed as part of the process of incorporating and integrating women into their campus communities. Often the first Women's Studies professors taught new courses unpaid out of their absolute commitment to this academic endeavor!

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CREATING CHANGE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH, THEORY, AND PRAXIS

Early Women's Studies faculty were innovative pioneers in creating this new academic endeavor. They wrote their own textbooks, compiled and shared reading lists, developed new curricula, organized conferences, and established academic journals. Their courses provided the first opportunity for women's lives and experiences to be studied seriously in higher education from a gender-inclusive perspective. Previously most scholarship was male dominated. The advances made by these innovators were in concert with the skills and knowledge they had gained as members of civil rights, liberal, and radical women's groups and organizations. The early twin goals of Women's Studies as an academic enterprise were: (1) to document and redress the exclusion of women's experiences from the traditional male-defined curriculum; and (2) to pose interdisciplinary questions and analyses across the social sciences, arts, humanities, and sciences. Early on, scholars realized that no single discipline could answer or address women's experiences. Therefore, a commitment to multiple approaches and perspectives from a variety of disciplinary communities in addressing women's lives

took root. Faculty emphasized acknowledging and studying women's lives through women's own diverse experiences. Early founders believed that Women's Studies needed to stay connected and relevant to the everyday issues that women faced, and to work on challenging the myriad of persisting inequalities.

From the beginning of the institutionalization of Women's Studies in the academy, the concept of integrating research, theory, and praxis became central. This "triad" (the concept of research, theory, and praxis as being equally valued) is a unique feature of Women's Studies in higher education, and you will hear it mentioned as you progress through coursework. . . .

RESEARCH

In the academy, one of the primary ways that knowledge is advanced and legitimated is through the publication of scholarly articles and books based on original research. In the early phases of the movement Women's Studies faculty contributed to the academic knowledge base that had been primarily androcentric, or male-centered, in nature. Scholars during 1970s and 1980s spent much of their time documenting the ways women's experiences were left out of various types of research projects and priorities, and one aspect of this inquiry was to question the stereotypes about women that were pervasive in research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007). These stereotypes were prevalent in science and other seemingly "neutral" forms of empirical research. Hesse-Biber and Leavy discuss a well-known example by anthropologist Emily Martin, who pioneered a critique of gendered bias in the sciences:

[. . .]

Martin shows that so-called truthful and objective medical textbooks were infused with nonobjective stereotypes, shaping both the medical and cultural understanding of natural events. . . . She argues that medical textbooks were depicting gender stereotypes through scientific language that had little basis in reality.

Researchers began to ask new questions when women were included in the center of analysis. This

meant rejecting the idea that women could simply be "stirred" into disciplines without a serious rethinking of research and theoretical approaches. Scholars looked everywhere for answers in the social sciences and humanities. They examined culture, systems of representation, the analysis of literary texts, creative expression, and the ways in which institutions are shaped by and reflect ideas about gender and society.

Researchers also used multiple methods to explore new questions about women and gender, including: experiments, oral histories, historical analysis, surveys, textual analysis, ethnographies, and other qualitative data gathering.

THEORY

Theory, the second piece to the conceptual triad, is an important component in Women's Studies. It is grounded in experience, critical reflection, and interaction with the larger world. In many disciplines, ideas, concepts, frameworks, and perspectives that had been defined as normal, universal, and centrally important were revealed to focus on a small number of people—usually upper middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied white men. The development of theory as a vital tool with which to challenge oppression and domination has become central in Women's Studies. Early Women's Studies scholars sought new theoretical concepts to explore the features of women's lives that had yet to be fully understood (e.g. sexual violence, prostitution, motherhood). Scholars in Philosophy and Political Science took up central concepts of citizenship, political participation, and democratic rights, and rethought them by looking at women's experiences. Scholars in Theology began questioning the interpretation of foundational works of organized religion, and questioned the very language that is used in religion and faith-based communities to marginalize women (see Christ 1992; Daly 1993).

We think it is important to stress that many Women's Studies scholars were also making changes in their own disciplines, and creating groups within their professional organizations that would make scholarship on women a priority. For example, in Sociology, the foremothers of Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS, an organization within Sociology

dedicated to supporting and promoting gender scholars and research through conferences and their own publication) were making changes within Sociology, as well as in Women's Studies. Thus, Women's Studies emerged in concert with changes happening in established disciplines by the very women (and men) who were also shaping it.

PRAXIS

Finally, we turn to the concept of praxis. Praxis is about the integration of learning with social justice. As a term, it means that seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake will not change structures of domination and oppression in women's lives.¹ Praxis is about applying one's knowledge to challenge oppressive systems and unequal traditions. It is related to the well-known phrase "the personal is political" espoused by many advocates of the second-wave women's movement. Over time, for those in Women's Studies, it has meant training students to think and learn about inequalities beyond the borders of the classroom. This integrated triad of concepts helps to distinguish Women's Studies' intellectual goals from other disciplines. Women's Studies as an academic endeavor seeks to weigh all three of these concepts equally in teaching, research, and engagement outside of the academy. This emphasis speaks to the way in which the field is informed by and engaged in activism and advocacy that in turn shape the creation of new knowledge.

NWSA—PROFESSIONAL OUTCOME OF AN ACADEMIC MOVEMENT

Every academic discipline has its own professional organization, and the field of WGST is no different. The National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) was formed in 1977, and signaled an important moment for Women's Studies. NWSA's emergence as a key player in the academic landscape, with the members to prove it, suggested to the larger academic community that there was enough interest in teaching and research among people who considered themselves committed to

Women's Studies to form an official association. NWSA continues to be the premier organization for scholars and students of Women's Studies. It holds an annual conference with over 1,600 attendees, in past years including K-12 teachers, college professors, undergraduate students, graduate students, higher education administrators (such as deans, etc.), and women's center directors.

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TRANSFORMATION OF THE CLASSROOM

Another part of your inheritance is the Women's and Gender Studies classroom.

You have probably heard of, or read about, the social unrest of the late twentieth century. During the 1960s and 1970s, student activists in the US protested not only the war and government policy, but also the very knowledge that was being taught and produced in establishments of higher learning or post-secondary educational institutions. Students and faculty alike were experimenting with the structure and style of teaching, ranging from consciousness-raising sessions in the classroom, changing the physical structure of the classroom itself (such as seating, moving the classroom from inside to outdoors), and emphasizing student participation rather than the passive learning model of the "banking concept of education" (see Friere 2001). People experimented with class design to provide a better format for engaging students. This time of transition had a profound effect on the development of the Women's Studies classroom and teaching practices. You might have noticed that you are often seated in a circle that creates a space where everyone faces everyone. It might seem strange to you that a simple change such as this—seating students in a circle where they can see and hear one another—was unique and transformative. But it was! This new arrangement allowed for a greater accountability for each student, the possibility for rapport to form more deeply between

students and faculty, and a more level playing field in which the distance between professor "knowers" and student "learners" was decreased. This arrangement also served as a type of "container" when strong emotions were expressed.

Faculty members in the 1960s and 1970s drew upon a new teaching style that was more participatory and personal, which later became known as "feminist pedagogy."² They helped to develop the concept of "student-centered learning." The new courses offered faculty and students the opportunity to conduct in-depth scholarly work on subjects that had previously not been a part of the college curriculum, or were at the margins of more traditional disciplines, such as domestic violence, women's roles in historical periods, and women's literature. By listening to and valuing the experiences of students, topics that may have been largely ignored rose to prominence, as they reflected the everyday concerns and interests of students. Rather than being the objects of study (such as wife and mother in nuclear family structures, as challenged by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, deviant career woman, and/or over-sexualized prostitute or woman of color), Women's Studies was able to do more than just "add women" superficially to traditional curricula. Women's Studies courses allowed students to choose what subjects to study, to question how subjects would be studied, to challenge ideas of objectivity and power within research, and to create knowledge that would support the changes occurring on local, state, and national levels due to feminist organizing (including rape laws, domestic violence, women's health advocacy, women entering nontraditional occupations, wages for housework).

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UNDERSTANDING THE LEGACY

Activist and political roots are part of Women's Studies history, which it shares with Chicano Studies, American Studies, Peace and Justice Studies,

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Native American Studies, Environmental Studies, and African and African American Studies. Not surprisingly, these interdisciplinary fields are sometimes attacked as less scholarly because of their political origins. Traditional disciplines, without seemingly overt activist beginnings, by comparison, look neutral and unbiased. . . . One hundred years ago, a person studying the field of Politics was just as likely to read literature and study languages as he (or she) was to learn statistics. Political Science, as a discipline, went through major shifts post-World War II, and then again in the early 1980s. The truth is that the boundaries of what a discipline encompasses are ones of constant change and development. Knowledge, and what is perceived as important in the make-up of a discipline, shifts and changes. In 100 years, we can assume that Women's Studies will be configured very differently than it is now. . . .

. . . As you can see, Women's Studies, as a distinct academic interdisciplinary field, would not have been possible without the social movements that preceded its founding. Moreover, given its origins in social movements, Women's Studies was, from its beginnings, activist in orientation. Professors and students saw Women's Studies as committed to transforming women's roles in the world, and not simply understanding such stratified roles. Its goal was not "disinterested" academic inquiry, rather, Women's Studies focused on ending gender oppression and challenging traditional paradigms. Indeed, the relationship of Women's Studies to the women's movement was crucial in establishing and developing the field. The women's movement, in particular, helped pressure colleges and universities to establish Women's Studies programs and helped establish the study of women and gender as a worthy endeavor.

Practitioners of Women's and Gender Studies have also worked as allies in supporting the growth of student services on college campuses and universities, including centers of diversity and multicultural affairs, LGBTQ offices, and women's centers, thus affecting the overall quality of contemporary student life.

FOR YOUR LIBRARY

We encourage you to do further reading about the history, debates, and development of Women's and Gender Studies. You will feel more informed when you talk to your professors (always a plus!) and various publics, and it will help you understand the larger patterns that have shaped the knowledge that you are learning.

Jane Aaron and Sylvia Walby (Eds.) (1991). *Out of the Margins: Women's Studies in the Nineties*. Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Marilyn Jacoby Boxer and Catherine R. Stimpson (2001). *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ann Braithwaite, Susan Heald, Susanne Luhmann, and Sharon Rosenberg (Eds.) (2005). *Troubling Women's Studies: Pasts, Presents, and Possibilities*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

Florence Howe (Ed.) (2000). *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from the Thirty Founding Mothers*. New York: The Feminist Press.

Ellen Messer-Davidow (2002). *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Joan Wallach Scott (Ed.) (2008). *Women's Studies on the Edge*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Robyn Weigman (Ed.) (2002). *Women's Studies on its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

YOUR WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES PROFESSOR

If we were to rely solely on media images of a category called "Women's and Gender Studies professors," it would be slim pickings. In the past 50 years, it was unusual to even see a woman portrayed as a college professor. Typically, stereotyped images of college professors included rumped, white, older befuddled men (i.e. the absent-minded professor) who pontificated to a classroom (often of other men), or lecherous, leather-patch-and-tweed white men who used their position and influence to seduce naive coeds (have you ever seen *Animal House*?). If female students of Women's Studies were represented at all

in the movies, they were portrayed as ethnic print-wearing, Birkenstock-shoed, vegetarian, cheerless, angry, man-hating women in films such as *PCU* (1994). These characters were one-dimensional misrepresentations of women who often "only needed a man" in order to become happy.

Recently, however, media representations have begun to challenge these stereotypes of students and professors. In films such as *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps* (2000) and *Something's Gotta Give* (2003), Janet Jackson and Frances McDormand are portrayed as smart, witty women who challenge the main male character's ideas about love and life. In fact, at the end of the previous decade, HBO (a major cable network in the US) made news by initiating conversations about developing a comedy series entitled *Women's Studies*, which would follow the day-to-day life issues experienced by a Women's Studies professor (Andreeva 2009).

Witty, complicated, and even problematic depictions of feminism and Women's Studies now populate airwaves, including the horror film *Women's Studies* (2010), the satire *The Dictator* (2012), the comedy *Girls* (2011), and the online series *Vag Magazine* (2010–) and *Portlandia* (2011–). With the rise of increasing numbers of female filmmakers working across various digital media, we believe that we will continue to see more diverse and complicated depictions of both second- and third-wave feminism(s) and Women's and Gender Studies students and professors.

Women's and Gender Studies professors come from a diversity of intellectual backgrounds and training. Historically, people who were known as Women's Studies professors were activists and academics from other fields who were interested in women's lives. Many of the faculty members we trained with in college, for example, might have claimed the title of feminist or Women's Studies academic, but were not formally trained in Women's Studies. They typically advocated and fought to have Women's Studies on their campuses, supported the advancement of female faculty, and took on equity issues. But their main intellectual work continued to be in their home discipline and department. In their disciplines, they put questions about gender

front and center and published research in discipline-specific journals. Many women and men who pioneered Women's and Gender Studies are considered baby boomers (i.e. people who were born between 1945 and 1964). Soon, this group will be retiring from the discipline, and those of us who will inherit their legacy are women and men who have advanced degrees (such as MAs and PhDs) or graduate certificates in Women's and Gender Studies.

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Women's and Gender Studies, as an interdisciplinary field, has paid attention to issues of underrepresentation of groups, and is committed to promoting a diverse faculty, particularly promoting the visibility and advancement of women of color. So how are we doing in the US? A recent National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) report, "Mapping Women's and Gender Studies," which partnered with the Ford Foundation and the National Opinion Research Center, found that 30.4 percent of Women's Studies faculty are faculty of color, compared with 19 percent of faculty nationally in other disciplines (National Women's Studies Association 2007).³ This is a good trend for Women's and Gender Studies, but it still requires institutional commitment and effort to maintain and/or improve these numbers. There are, however, fewer data available to critically assess how Women's and Gender Studies, as a field, is faring in hiring individuals from other marginalized groups, including lesbians and other members from the LGBT community, physically challenged individuals, or men.

WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES STUDENTS—WHO ARE THEY?

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. . . There are lots of reasons why students come to Women's and Gender Studies. Think, for example, about your own learning path. What made you switch from, say, a Business major to Women's and Gender Studies? What identities do you have as a Women's

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and Gender Studies student and why? Although there is no existing comprehensive international database about Women's and Gender Studies students, we wanted to touch on who might be in the classroom with you (or who has been in the classroom with you). You may have been exposed to some of the ideas discussed in your Women's Studies class through one of your parent's involvement in women's and gender equality movements, your own experience with activism, or from classes in middle or high school. We are seeing more and more students who have had some positive contact with Women's and Gender Studies prior to taking our courses. Some students enter Women's Studies already familiar with the key perspectives of the field. We think this trend is the fruition of the hard work of activists, educators, and many in the nonprofit sector who are committed to gender equity and the promotion of Women's Studies. Still, for many students, finding Women's Studies is an unanticipated discovery and an area of study with which they had not previously been familiar (unlike English, History, Education, Business, Communication, etc.).

[. . .]

YOUR WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES CLASSROOM: DATA FROM GRADUATES

Women's and Gender Studies majors and minors at the undergraduate level are predominantly composed of female students,⁴ although not all students identify as either "women" or "men." As gender and transgender politics have become more visible on college campuses, the gendered composition of our students has reflected this. Ideally, biological determinism should not play a role in who can major in Women's Studies, but as evidenced in the works of feminist scholars such as Emi Koyama (2003), debates still erupt in feminist academic and activist communities about whether men can be feminists and the role of transmen and transwomen in "female-centered" spaces.

Yet, the preponderance of females in Women's Studies should not be surprising, given the history of the field. Women's and Gender Studies offers the opportunity to study issues of power and gender dynamics in a way that supports many young women's learning trajectories. However, in the past several years, the male participation has risen, and we think that several factors are responsible for this. Due to the women's movement, more men have been raised in egalitarian households over the past three decades, and are generally interested in women's lives. Some male students come to view classes in Women's Studies as an extension of their interests shaped by family dynamics. Women, men, and transgendered students take Women's and Gender Studies courses and enjoy them enormously, and see that they can study in this interdisciplinary field. Additionally, male, female, and intersex students often take an Introduction to Women's Studies course as part of fulfilling general educational requirements and decide that they wish to take more. They may also find classes on masculinity and gender that are of interest. Many learn how the construction of gender cannot be seen in isolation, and therefore the study of masculinity is important for men, as well as for women, to understand the construction of gender for their own lives, and those of their peers.

According to our study, the overwhelming majority of Women's and Gender Studies students identify as biologically "female" (95 percent) followed by "male" (4 percent), with the rest identifying as "intersex" or "other." Even though many of our respondents did identify with traditional classifications of sex in the survey, the nature and placement of the question was raised as an issue by several participants:

I'm a trans man, and I know you want me to say "female," but really, this question is worded awfully. And it sucks that the sex I was assigned at birth is regarded as more important than how I identify (which I assume you consider it to be, based on this being the second question in the survey).

Contemporary Women's and Gender Studies scholars have sought to question and challenge binary sex classifications; therefore, it is not surprising that

some respondents do not identify with ascribed or traditional sex or gender categories.

The majority of the graduates who answered our survey were born in the United States (82 percent), with about 9 percent born in Canada. Other graduates hail from a variety of countries, including Germany, South Korea, Brazil, Australia, Kenya, Russia, Scandinavia, Japan, and China. After graduating with their degree in Women's and Gender Studies, the majority of those surveyed now live in the United States (83 percent), with about 2 percent residing in either the UK or Canada. Other places your fellow classmates may reside after graduation include Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, South Korea, Spain, Italy, Trinidad and Tobago, or Ghana.

As for race and ethnic identities, the majority of Women's and Gender Studies graduates marked "white" (82 percent). About 5 percent of the graduates marked "black/African American," 3 percent identified as Hispanic/Latino, 4 percent claimed an Asian or Pacific Islander heritage, 1.5 percent claimed a Native American or Alaska Native ancestry, and less than 1 percent claimed a Middle Eastern identity. About 6 percent of those surveyed claimed a multiracial/multiethnic heritage, along with a few respondents who identified as Roma and Jewish. Survey respondents were given the opportunity to claim as many ethnic identities as they felt appropriate, as well as describing their racial/ethnic heritage in the "other" category. However, the classification system used also reflects the traditional "big five" categories commonly used in the United States by survey researchers and government entities. As the majority of Women's and Gender Studies graduates either were born or raised in the United States, these racial/ethnic categories may be familiar; yet, as recent debates over the census—and as raised in Women's and Gender Studies classrooms—have shown, these classifications do not capture the complex heritage of our graduates in the United States or Canada, nor in the world.

In addition to the mix of students in the Women's and Gender Studies classroom in terms of biological sex, racial/ethnic classifications, and countries of origin, the age of graduates varies as well. The

majority of those in our survey (who all graduated between 1995 and 2010) were 23–26 years of age (31 percent) at the time of their graduation. Another 29 percent were 27–31 years of age, with 18 percent being 32–36 years of age at graduation. By comparison, the most prevalent range in which our graduates started their Women's and Gender Studies degree program is 18–22 years of age (84 percent). Therefore, more "traditional" aged undergraduate students are actively choosing Women's and Gender Studies as part of their degree selection process.⁵

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As the number of Women's and Gender Studies departments and programs have increased since its inception, we found that the majority of graduates surveyed were majors (61 percent), with minors comprising almost one-quarter (24 percent) of the sample. About 7.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they had a concentration in Women's and Gender Studies. We also acknowledge that internationally, a major or minor may not have an equivalent.

Many Women's and Gender Studies programs emphasize a global or multicultural perspective, and this is reflected in the fact that one-third of our respondents participated in an international studies or study-abroad experience. Of those who participated in undergraduate study abroad, 36.7 percent had some Women's and Gender Studies courses as part of their overseas curriculum.

While about one-third of Women's and Gender Studies graduates experienced an international studies program, 45 percent of graduates completed an internship during the course of the undergraduate experience. Of those who completed an internship, 58.5 percent received college credit for their internship.

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After completing an undergraduate degree in Women's and Gender Studies, a notably high 57 percent of those who responded to the survey completed some graduate or professional degree courses.

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During the past two decades, many Women's and Gender Studies departments and programs have been instrumental in supporting the development of Queer and Sexuality Studies (or allies of new interdisciplinary perspectives). Many biologically identified or transgendered men find Women's and Gender Studies to be compatible with their sexual identities and interests. For example, many men participate in campus organizations and events directed by LGBT centers and/or women's centers. On many campuses, these entities have long-standing cooperative working relationships in which students gain internship or volunteer experience while simultaneously receiving credit in their Women's Studies units.

Ultimately, the Women's and Gender Studies classroom is a global classroom. In our experience, we have seen that our classes have become increasingly diverse in terms of social class, nationality, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Over the course of your academic career, you are likely to be taking classes with students who have been shaped by a variety of experiences and social contexts.

A NEW KIND OF STUDENT

The work that you have committed to in Women's and Gender Studies has a rich intellectual and social history. For the past four decades, the university has been producing a new type of student in higher education. We believe Women's and Gender Studies students are emerging as a type of educational pioneer (Luebke and Reilly 1995; Boxer and Stimpson 2001). What do we mean by this? Women's Studies' early twin goals of reaching across the disciplines to answer questions about gender and challenging the status of women were innovative in higher education. Since that time, Women's and Gender Studies has developed classroom practices and pedagogical styles that have been adopted by many other disciplines. It has broadened the traditional liberal arts education to encompass a specific focus on inequality, power, and advocacy that continues to be distinctive. The student-professor relationship has also

been rethought—moving from an expert-student relationship to a relationship of co-collaborators. Women's and Gender Studies has pushed for curricula transformation, and that translates into students who have been trained to learn multiple perspectives and to demonstrate the application of knowledge in pursuit of a more equitable society. It encourages students to evaluate their goals and values, as well as synthesize knowledge. The emphasis on synthesizing knowledge and applying it in new contexts is exciting to students, and encourages them to become involved in issues they care deeply about. . . .

Our research and framing about the unique role of Women's and Gender Studies students in higher education is complemented by discussions of how Women's and Gender Studies students view themselves. Narratives and vignettes can be found in the scholarly articles, magazines, online discussions, and several introductory textbooks in Women's Studies that have emerged over the past two decades.⁶ One Women's Studies graduate, reflecting on applying her Women's Studies training now as an obstetrician and gynecologist, says that de-masking "unspoken assumptions" was an important lesson that she now uses in her work environment:

Being realistic and intelligent about power relationships and inequities is another lesson of Women's Studies. Being a student of Women's Studies did not influence my career choice, [but] it helped shape my values, how I see the world, and what I see as my role in it as an African American woman. I value women as full members of society in whatever roles they choose. However, I recognize the world as gendered and unequal. I feel that I have a responsibility to change that status quo wherever possible. . . . These values are neither objective nor neutral. But the fallacy of objectivity is another lesson of Women's Studies.

(Thompson 2002: 634)

Another Women's Studies graduate has found that the training to examine how assumptions about gender shape the world has been useful after college: "I left the Women's Studies program at SUNY [State

University of New York| New Paltz with energy and enthusiasm to go out into the world and make a difference in the lives of women." She joined the Peace Corps and discusses how her Women's Studies training led her to think critically about the challenges of working with women and children on health literacy, given many of the structural dimensions of their lives:

My Women's Studies education gave me an understanding of the problems that women living in the Third World face. It also gave me insights into how grassroots level initiatives work. It was with these things in mind that I was able to reach as well as be taught by the women of The Gambia. I learned in Women's Studies the importance of listening and learning from women of different cultures. I knew that what I needed to do was to join the women in their work.

(Rivera 2006: 634)

Her Women's Studies education allowed her to consider working in a participatory way with the women, to begin to understand the complexity of their lives as both distinctive and similar to her own. It also allowed her to re-evaluate what she thought about "women's work" and how underappreciated it was. Her training, she says, "enhanced my appreciation for the work women do and enabled me to bring to the world of women's work insights and ideas that will somewhat ease women's burdens" (Rivera 2006: 635).

[. . .]

. . . Women's Studies situates civic engagement in a unique curricular context. With the discipline's historical roots in activist movements, its social justice mandate, and its reflective approach to its own knowledge production, Women's Studies offers students a distinctive method for learning how to grapple with the tensions between theory and practice in civic engagement contexts. By encouraging critical reflection on, say, the values of "the community" or "the good citizen," a Women's Studies approach to

civic engagement demands that students *analyze the historical and cultural foundations that create the need for their service in the first place, as well as interrogate their own motivations* to "help others."

[. . .]

In addition to bringing analytical concepts to bear on what the student encounters in any community-based context, civic engagement in Women's Studies requires some amount of personal reflection, in which the student is asked to consider how his or her own historical and cultural location (e.g. gender expression, racialized identity, regional bias, class interests, sexual orientation, professional experience, level of education, age, etc.) has an impact on what he or she is able to learn from and do for others in any given context. Without such self-awareness on the part of students, differences of race, culture, class, etc. can too often disrupt their best efforts to "do good." In this way, Women's Studies teaches students entering communities that are not their own that: (1) they are products of historical and cultural forces; (2) these forces form both their sense of selves and differences among individuals but are neither neutral nor simply chosen; and (3) the students themselves are responsible for attempting to negotiate as best they can the impacts of these differences in that community-based context.

[. . .]

THE GLOBAL PRESENCE OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES

Women's and Gender Studies is flourishing in many places around the world. In the above section, we drew heavily on how majors, minors, etc. are organized in the U.S. system. When we look outside the US, we see some differences in how "undergraduates" are trained globally. In many parts of the world (such as the UK), undergraduate education is post-secondary education up to the level of a master's degree. Below,

we provide a snapshot of both established programs and programs that have emerged more recently.

- The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the Lebanese American University offers six courses that address the topic of Women's and Gender Studies: "Introduction to Gender Studies," "Representations of Women in the Arts and the Media," "Women and Economic Power," "Women in the Arab World: Sociological Perspectives," "Psychology of Women: A Feminist Perspective," and "Issues and Debates in Feminist Theory." They are in the process of preparing a graduate program (MA) in Gender Studies (see <http://iwsaw.lau.edu.lb>).

[. . .]

- The University of Auckland's Women's Studies program has been reorganized into a more streamlined Gender Studies program. It is run under the auspices of the Anthropology Department and consists mostly of Social Sciences courses with a few Literature courses available on a less-regular basis. It became available for a major, minor, BA honors (this is a graduate degree in New Zealand), MA, and Ph.D. in 2011. The undergraduate programmer consists of eight courses (see University of Auckland 2014).
- Women's and Gender Studies is offered through the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Unit. This is an autonomous multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary unit located in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor of the University. Currently, a minor in Gender Studies or a minor in Gender and Development are offered. Many of the students enroll in the graduate program and pursue a postgraduate diploma in Gender—or do a master's or a Ph.D., or go to law school. Others find work in the nonprofit sector, work in local and regional nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), work for international organizations such as the UN, UNDP, IDRC, UNIFEM, and UNICEF, or enter into public service, getting employment in

government ministries that deal with gender and gender affairs (see <http://sta.uwi.edu/igds>).

[. . .]

GRADUATES SPEAK TO YOU

. . . You are committed to Women's and Gender Studies but may be wondering, "How will this training help and support my interests overall?" You might feel daunted or overwhelmed at the possible ways to apply your interest in WGST. You may not be receiving positive support for your choice. We thought this might be a good time for you to hear how graduates from our survey reflect on their choices. If you ever face doubts or feel challenged, you are not alone! In our survey, we asked graduates: "What advice would (or do) you tell other students or friends considering a course of study or degree in Gender and/or Women's Studies?" While we received many emphatic responses that said "Do it!" and "Go for it!" below we highlight some of our longer and more detailed answers:

It's a fantastic interdisciplinary degree that gives you the communication skills employers need. You'll use these skills the rest of your life. Put it together with a foreign language, internships and study abroad and you can't be beat. Do what you love. Follow your bliss. . . . A Women's Studies degree is a fabulous, well-rounded liberal arts course of study, and I would do it again in a heartbeat.

(2003, WMST major, Hollins University)

[. . .]

I have talked to a few undergraduate students who worry about the employability of Women's Studies graduates (or whose parents worry about this). I tell people that from my own experience and perspective, employers (and grad school admissions committees) in many arenas are less interested in what someone's undergrad major was, and more interested in skills

like critical thinking, writing, communicating with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, etc. Women's Studies courses provide a lot of opportunities to develop these kinds of skills, and can prepare students for a range of future career paths.

(2003, Gender and WMST double major,
Oberlin College)

I found it personally interesting, but I also knew I was going to law school after I completed my undergraduate degree. Thus, for me, it was a good forum for learning critical analysis, researching, and writing, as well as developing an understanding of multiple perspectives of an issue or topic. No doubt there are more opportunities to do interesting work or further studies in this space now than there were 15 years ago.

From a more personal perspective, my mother was Chinese, and came from an arranged marriage in which my grandmother was an object and who could only speak when spoken to. My father was from a very traditional patriarchal Scandinavian household who favored sons over daughters. It was eye-opening for me to realize I could do and be so much more than what I had grown up to believe. I loved challenging traditional ideas, rules, and norms! The Women's Studies curriculum was great for me—it was in my undergraduate studies that I began what has been a lifelong journey of self-discovery, trying to understand who I am, what I have been told is me, what and who society expects me to be, and what and who I'd like to be going forward. I would probably have undergone a similar journey of exploration in any case, but a Women's Studies degree gave me the space and frame of reference in which to structure my thinking in more meaningful ways.

In addition to changing the way I view myself as a woman, it has changed the way I view other women in all walks of life. I do a lot of international travel for my work, with a focus on environmental and social issues in emerging markets. I am particularly sensitive to the role of women in their communities and thinking about how women are a vastly underserved

segment of the population in terms of access to capital and banking. . . .

I would further add that by challenging traditional notions of what it means to be a woman, and what we understand about sexuality, my Women's Studies courses opened my mind to alternative approaches to gender roles and sexuality. This has made me generally a more open and accepting person over the years. Coming from a small, very close-minded, conservative, provincial town in Michigan, this was an important step for me in recognizing, being more sympathetic to, and accepting "nontraditional" lifestyles. I am so much richer for opening my world to different people with different views, value systems, and lifestyles. I take this into my personal and professional life and, given the international nature of my work and extensive travel I have done on a personal level, I have found that I am intellectually interested in and curious about people everywhere and what makes them who they are—nature/nurture, cultural norms and influences, geography, race, creed, origins, sexuality, etc. This makes me a better person, a better professional, a better advocate.

(1995, WMST major, University of Michigan)

We think that the last respondent captures a frame of mind the Women's and Gender Studies education strives for—supporting students to live their lives fully, take on meaningful employment, and speak up on issues that they care about. The benefits of Women's Studies continuing to thrive in higher education include creating students who are ready for deep civic engagement and a vibrant community of scholars that contribute cutting-edge knowledge to the most pressing societal problems.

ANSWERS FOR QUIZ: HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S STUDIES?

1. San Diego State University.
2. True. Most professors in the 1970s who taught Women's Studies did not get paid for their classes.

3. Feminist pedagogies about how to encourage a person to how knowledge.
4. Women's and that research. . . .
5. The National the professional practitioners of Women's.
6. San Diego State University.
7. Many early involved in so

NOTES

1. Praxis has its writings of A nineteenth-century Lukács and F.
2. The term "p and learning ferred term
3. This figure tion Statistics post-second tions (see N 2007).
4. The use of

3. Feminist pedagogy is a set of theoretical assumptions about how to interact with students, and encourages a participatory and personal approach to how knowledge is produced in the classroom.
4. Women's and Gender Studies, as a field, believes that research, theory, and practice are interconnected and important for developing new knowledge, both inside and outside the academy.
5. The National Women's Studies Association is the professional organization of scholars and practitioners who teach and research in the field of Women's and Gender Studies.
6. San Diego State University.
7. Many early Women's Studies professors were involved in social protest movements of the 1960s

and 1970s. Also, more female students began attending colleges and universities during the 1970s and brought social justice questions to the classroom.

8. Over 50 countries have colleges and universities that offer Women's and Gender Studies degrees.
9. True. Community colleges play a vital role in training students in Women's and Gender Studies.
10. Topics in one of the first Women's Studies classes on women's health might have included: women's experience of discrimination in the medical system, the history of midwives in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the lack of female doctors.

NOTES

1. Praxis has its roots in ancient philosophy and the writings of Aristotle. Later it was associated with nineteenth-century Marxist thought, as well as with twentieth-century neo-Marxist writers such as Georg Lukács and Paulo Freire.
2. The term "pedagogy" refers to theories about teaching and learning; "feminist pedagogy" has been the preferred term in Women's Studies.
3. This figure is based on a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report published in 2003 on post-secondary faculty at degree-granting institutions (see National Women's Studies Association 2007).
4. The use of the word "female" is intentional here.

5. Unfortunately, we did not inquire on the survey as to whether students declared their major/minor/concentration prior to attending college or university, after their first Women's and Gender Studies course, or during their matriculation process.
6. See the work of Australian Women's Studies researcher MaryAnn Dever (2004), *Ms.* magazine's ongoing collecting of responses by Women's and Gender Studies graduates to the question "What has women's studies meant to your life? And what are you currently doing with your women's studies degree?" (available at www.ms-magazine.com), Luebke and Reilly (1995), and vignettes from various Women's Studies students presented in Kesselman, McNair, and Schniedewind (2008).