

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Marcos Andres Viveros Cespedes for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Adult Education presented on December 8, 2016

Title: The Experiences of Male Students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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Susan M. Shaw

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) is an interdisciplinary academic field that addresses gender, sexuality, and social justice issues. The research objective of this project was to examine the attitudes of self-identified male students in introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies for winter term 2016 at Oregon State University. This project used the research method from a similar study done in 2005 at Oregon State University to provide an analysis on male attitudes about gender and social justice. The purpose of this replication was to measure the attitudes of research participants in both studies about gender and social justice. A mix-methods approach was used to assess potential impacts that WGSS has on self-identified male students. The results of this research demonstrate that male students in 2016 gained new perspectives on gender and social equality. This research showed evidence of the conflict between privileged male students identities and how these identities impacted their engagement with WGSS. The results of the comparison between 2016 and 2005 indicated that self-identified male students perceived themselves to be more open about gender and social equality. Recommendations for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and for future research are also discussed.

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The Experiences of Male Students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

by  
Marcos Andres Viveros Cespedes

A THESIS

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APPROVED:

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Major Professor, representing Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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Director of Interdisciplinary Studies Program

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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Marcos Andres Viveros Cespedes, author

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## Chapter I - Introduction

The purpose of this research is to get insight into the attitudes of self-identified male students about pro gender equality perspectives in introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses at Oregon State University. The design of this research was replicated from a similar study done in 2005 at Oregon State University, “The consequences and effects for male students in Women Studies Classroom.” I decided to conduct a similar study to measure the attitudes and beliefs between the sample in the 2005 research and the sample in this present study. Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes, along with current social justice contexts may impact the attitudes of male self-identified students about pro gender equality, which can be defined as: “Social justice between women and men, in which both are valued equally in society and empowered to pursue their human rights and fundamental freedoms” (Aid, 2014).

The research questions of this study include:

- a) Does exposure to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classroom affect the attitudes of male students about social and gender inequality?
- b) Do male students indicate taking a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies course affect their attitudes about gender and social inequality? If so, in what ways?
- c) Do the attitudes of male students regarding feminism, and social and gender inequality in the 2005 study differ from the attitudes of the male students in the present research? If so, what are the most important changes between both samples?

## **Background**

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies' majors and minors at the undergraduate level are predominantly composed of female students. This program 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 there has been rising male participation in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies programs (Berger & Radloff, 2015).

The academic history of the inclusion of male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies' curriculum has been a little controversial, especially since the beginning of the development of the field. In many institutions, the development of this program has been a long and grueling process, and male involvement at a minimal level is considered a small price to pay for bringing the discipline into the curriculum (Hinds, Phoenix & Stacey, 1992). Current feminist perspectives are challenging concepts of gender in fresh, new ways. More men are getting involved in feminist movements led by women. Colleges and universities are increasingly shifting from Women's Studies to programs that study gender and sexuality more broadly. At the same time, more men are becoming interested in feminism (Tarrant, 2009).

Introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses utilized for this research are mostly focused on the study of women's lives, marginalized communities, and gender equality. The positionality and privileged identities of male students play an important role in how they perceive the dynamics of WGSS classrooms. Male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes can enter the course unaware of the privilege they hold in the hegemonic system of power that "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" blinds them to (hooks, 2002).

In all Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes there is discussion of why it is important to pay attention to the way social and institutional norms about gender and gender roles affect everyone's everyday experiences (Tarrant, 2009). By openly welcoming male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and do more research about their experiences in the feminist classroom, they can develop pro gender attitudes about social justice and feminist perspectives in general. Harper & Harris (2010) discuss what they call, "model gender majority myth." They offer four flawed assumptions about college men: (1) every male student benefits similarly from gender privilege, (2) gender initiatives need to include men unless they are focused on reducing violence and sexual assault against women, (3) undergraduate men do not encounter harmful stereotypes, social and academic challenges, (4) male students do not require gender-specific resources and support.

### **Statement of the Research & Significance of Study**

This research is based on feminist a pedagogy approach. Feminist pedagogy strives to help students and teachers to learn to think in new ways, especially ways that enhance the integrity and wholeness of the person and the person's connections with others (Shrewsbury, 1993). In Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, the feminist classroom approach is greatly applied because students are encouraged to integrate the skills of critical thinking with respect for an ability to work with others. Critical thinking, then, is not an abstracted analysis but a reflective process firmly grounded in the experiences of the everyday.

This approach also envisions the classroom as a liberatory environment in which students and teachers are valued as subjects not objects. This research perspective understands the teaching and learning process as a continuing reflective process in which students in Women,

Gender, and Sexuality Studies classrooms actively engage with the material and with their peers to analyze different systems of oppression, as well as, stereotyped ideas of gender and sexuality. The concept of a liberatory environment suggests a new way to be with one another in the classroom in which teachers build their teaching based on the experiences of the students. In this sense Shrewsbury, (1993) states, “feminist pedagogy does not assume that all classrooms are alike. Indeed, it suggests how classrooms might differ depending, for example, on the initial competence of students” (p. 13).

Finally, this research does not represent the diverse experiences in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies of all students who self-identify as male. However, it is the second study conducted at Oregon State University and its intent is to contribute to the gap in the literature and make students with a male gender identity feel and know that their voices are important. By exploring the research questions in this study, I could get insight into the experiences of male students in WGSS and how these experiences altered their views about gender equality and social justice.

### **Researcher Biases**

As the researcher, what encouraged me to conduct this study was my personal experience as a male student in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. My academic background in education also influenced in the decision to conduct this research. Since the beginning of my secondary education, I felt passionate about the learning environments that foster the learning of new knowledge and the exploration and analysis of social justice.

I am a queer graduate male student raised and born in Chile. I earned my Bachelor degree in education in a public and state university in Chile. Due to the study of social justice,

feminist movements, and sexuality has not been developed as academic discipline in Chile, I decided to move to the United States to pursue my graduate education in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in order to learn and explore new perspectives through feminist lens from within. Finally, my own personal experience in WGSS could have been influenced in the interpretation of the data, as well as, the fact that English is my second language.

## **Chapter II -Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of relevant literature regarding the experiences of male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. This section is organized into four key themes that are intended to help the reader understand the context of this research. The first section discusses the historical context of the development of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and how it has become one of the most multidisciplinary fields of study in higher education. The second section presents a brief overview of the insights, objectives, and goals of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. It discusses the foundations of the objectives through a feminist pedagogy approach to education and how students relate to the information and knowledge gained in these courses. The third theme of this chapter examines the relationship between men and feminism. By analyzing different stereotypical assumptions, this section presents insights about the ‘why/how/why-not’ men are involved in feminist arenas. The last section regards with men and masculinity. It discusses how distorted images or messages about masculinity impacts the perceptions of the relation between men and women, making the participation in WGSS courses a little controversial.

### **The evolution from Women’s Studies to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies as academic discipline**

Women’s Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning women, gender, and feminism as a body of knowledge. It examines women’s status in society and seeks to improve the condition of women lives, both in the United states and globally (Shaw & Lee, 2005). As a discipline in higher education, it has its roots and origins in the social movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s, specifically the civil rights and women’s rights movements

(Berger & Radeloff, 2015). Women's Studies courses and other interdisciplinary studies (e.g. American Studies, Ethnic Studies), were born largely due to student activism and demand (Berger & Radeloff, 2015).

Women's studies emerged as concerned women and men noticed the absence, misrepresentation, and trivialization in the higher education curriculum, as well as the ways were systematically excluded from many positions of power and authority as college and faculty administrators (Shaw & Lee, 2005). Ginsberg (2008) states, "for the first time, women were not only learning about themselves, but were actively creating and owning knowledge based on their own personal and political experiences" (p. 29). Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field devoted to topics concerning women, gender, and feminism. As a body of knowledge, it examines women's status in society and seeks to improve the condition of women lives, both in the United states and globally (Shaw & Lee, 2005).

During the early 1980s, Women's Studies courses and programs grew at a rapid space, with many colleges and universities offering interdisciplinary-based certificates and minors in the field, as well as the creation of many Women's Studies departments that offered full-fledged B.A.s (Ginsberg, 2008). The fast and successful development of the discipline allowed the academy, faculty, and students to re-think beyond the concept of 'women issues.' The concept of 'gender' started to be an important part in the field of Women's Studies as an academic discipline. From the perspective of this field, Shaw & Lee state, "gender concerns what it means to be a woman or a man in society and it involves the ways society creates, patterns, and rewards our understandings of femininity and masculinity" (p.4). Therefore, Women's studies explore our gendered existence: how we perform femininity and masculinity and how this interacts with

other aspects of our identities, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexuality (Shaw & Lee, 2005).

In the 1990s, Women's Studies programs have played around with alternate words such as "Female Studies," "Gender Studies," and "Sexuality Studies." Many programs have added Gender Studies to the name, or dropped Women's Studies altogether in favor of Gender Studies alone (Ginsberg, 2008). The incorporation of the term 'gender' allowed the discipline of Women's Studies to consider the study of the relationships between men and women as a way of understanding the origin, causes, and consequences of social justice issues in society.

In the last fifteen years, programs and departments within this field have been in an intense period of redefining Women's Studies. An important change since the 1990's has been the increasing use of the term 'Gender studies' rather than 'Women Studies,' which is reflected in the naming of research centers and academic degrees. Although this shift has caused much debate, without doubt, it can be argued that 'gender' has now fundamentally informed many disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, most prominently in the UK, USA, Australia and Western and Eastern Europe, as well as in other countries (Richardson & Robinson, 2015).

Commentators have been concerned that a primary effect of this renaming will be to open what historically has been a vibrant, safe, women-only environment to include men (Davis, Evans, & Lorber, 2006). This potential invasion is theorized in several ways: as related to literal bodies (men will feel more comfortable in something called Gender Studies); as facilitated by alliance between feminism and queer theory, which may privilege gay male experience and construction of womanhood, with its risk of an attendant consolidation of the heteronormative framing of gender as 'complementary' (Davis, Evans, & Lorber, 2006).

Gender Studies often incorporates feminist studies of men and sexuality studies as well. The strength of Gender Studies is that it recognizes the multiplicity of genders, sexes, and sexualities (Ginsberg, 2008). The re-definition of the objectives and values of the programs/departments made that several universities and colleges renamed their Women's Studies programs to 'Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.' The shift in the name of the field allowed departments and programs to think beyond women and gender issues transforming the nature of this discipline in one of the most inclusive and interdisciplinary areas of study in higher education.

The old debate about whether Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies should enter the 'malestream/mainstream' no longer existed and, in general, their establishment in higher-education systems has been a positive move, bringing feminist theoretical ideas and pedagogical practices to a wider audience, transforming the disciplines and the academy more generally from 'within' (Richardson & Robinson, 2015).

More recently, analyses of ability, age, masculinities, and religion identities have also become incorporated into the field. Because of this opening of the field to incorporate a wider range of experiences and objects of analysis, many Women's Studies departments are now re-naming themselves 'Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies' departments (Kang, 2012).

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies remains the primary site for feminist consciousness-raising among students and for feminist agitation in university life (Scott, 2008). More students than ever, both men and women, are taking courses with feminist content and social and gender issues. The reason is that over the last decade there has been a shift towards mainstreaming Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies as a core part of the teaching of traditional disciplines such as sociology, education, history and English. In this sense, Scott (2008) argues

that over the last 30 years Women's Studies programs have changed the established canon of the social sciences, arts, and humanities disciplines, as well as the teaching of research methods – doing so by becoming assimilated into the traditional disciplines, often as a compulsory element. Therefore, the important contribution that Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies has made is significantly important in the higher education arena because it has encouraged the incorporation of new approaches to teaching and learning.

Nowadays, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is the leading academic interdisciplinary field which focuses on the intersections of race, class, religion, and culture, to the study of gender and sexuality. Cultural Studies, Ethnic Studies, Disability Studies, Queer Studies, and a variety of other interdisciplinary paths emerged from the example of Women's Studies (Smith, 2013). Undoubtedly, the development of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in higher education has played a pioneering role in taking scholarly thought to higher levels of creativity and competence and in rethinking the ways in which that knowledge might be pursued.

### **The goals of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Education**

The development of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) in higher education has encouraged a big 'transformation of the classroom.' Because of WGSS can be taught from the point of view of many different disciplines. For the most part, however, WGSS is interdisciplinary; that is, it combines knowledge and methodologies from across many academic disciplines (Shaw & Lee, 2004).

In an introductory course, you can expect to learn about the impact of stringent beauty standards produced in media and advertising, why childrearing by women may not be as

natural as we think, the history of the gender division of labor and its continuing impact on the economic lives of men and women, how sexual double-standards harm us all, the historical context of feminist movements and where they are today, and much more (Kang, 2012). More than a series of topics, WGSS offers a way of seeing the world differently. Scholars in this field make connections across institutional contexts (work, family, media, law and the State), value the knowledge that comes from lived experiences, and attend to, rather than ignore marginalized identities and groups (Kang, 2012).

Most WGSS scholars see the world through the lens of intersectionality. The term intersectionality was articulated by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) and identifies a mode of analysis integral to women, gender, sexuality studies within intersectional frameworks such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other identities (Kang, 2012).

WGSS education relies on feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy is a theory about the teaching/learning process that guides our choice of classroom practices by providing criteria to evaluate specific educational strategies and techniques in terms of the desired course goals or outcomes (Shrewsbury, 1993). Feminist pedagogy has a vision of the classroom as a liberatory environment in which teachers and students are valued as subjects not objects. This approach is reached by the application of critical thinking to help teachers and students to understand and get beyond the concepts of, sexism, racism, classism and homophobia, among other destructive hatreds in order to generate social change.

The advantage of feminist classrooms is that they allow us to work with the insights about education and society that consciousness-raising has provided and that they help

empower students of all genders, races, classes, sexualities, and bodily types (Smith 2013, p. 148). That is, because it strives for equality and a voice for the voiceless, a feminist classroom is more capable of empowering and broadening student's minds than one that harks back to traditional norms of discrimination and privilege.

A Feminist classroom embodies the rational, scientific, and democratic values to which most humans aspire (Smith, 2013). Practitioners of WGSS have 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 equality of contemporary student life (Berger & Radeloff, 2015).

From the beginning of the institutionalization of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in higher education, the concept of integrating research, theory, and praxis became central. This "triad" is a unique feature of the development of WGSS. This integrated triad of concepts helps to distinguish Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies intellectual goals from other disciplines (Berger & Radeloff, 2015). WGSS then, as an academic endeavor seeks to weight all these concepts equally. 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.

The university has changed intellectually and in terms of gender representation of the faculty and in the student body. The combined influence of feminist activism and WGSS lobbying brought more women onto both the permanent and part-time faculties and boosted the percentage of women among students. Gradually, some women scholars involved in WGSS moved up the ranks to become high-level administrators such as university deans, chancellors, vice-presidents, and even presidents (Smith, 2013).

Current Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies programs embrace and share similar values and goals. Below, I provide examples of the descriptions of current WGSS programs of three higher education institutions in the United States:

*“Our program relies on multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of gender and sexuality, particularly as they intersect with race, ethnicity, class, culture, religion, nation, and ability. Our program emphasizes academic excellence, the use of feminist and anti-racist pedagogies, and scholarship that contributes to social change and justice. We are committed to challenging all forms of oppression, and we center queer, transnational, and women of color feminisms in our curriculum. We encourage creative, innovative, and collaborative frameworks of study, and we work to meet the needs of a wide range of students, developing curriculum that is meaningful for students who wish to pursue careers in academia, as well as those who may be interested in community organizing, feminist nonprofit work, and/or other professional areas.”* -Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department, Oregon State University, USA.

*“The Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program at Yale offers a variety of courses and an undergraduate major (BA). The Program establishes gender and sexuality as fundamental categories of social and cultural analysis. Drawing on history, literature, cultural studies, social science, and science, it offers interdisciplinary perspectives from which to study the diversity of human experience. Gender—the social meaning of the distinction between the sexes—and sexuality—sexual identities, discourses, and institutions—are studied as they intersect with class, race, ethnicity, nationality, and transnational movements.”* -Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department, Yale University, USA.

*“The Women’s Gender, and Sexuality Studies program at Miami University is a dynamic, interdisciplinary program that investigates how our lives are affected by gender, race, class, age, sexuality, religion, (dis)ability, gender identity and nationality. WGSS emphasizes the importance of understanding gender as a part of wider social and political structures of power, knowledge, experience, culture, embodiedness, and labor.”*

-Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department, Miami University, USA.

Based on the description of the insights of a feminist classroom discussed in this section and the description of some WGSS programs presented above, the goals or objectives of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies might look like this:

- Analyze and understand the ways in which systems of power, privilege, and oppression shape our experiences as individuals and members of different communities.
- Analyze how gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality construct the social, cultural, and biological experience of men and women in the current society.
- Identify and analyze the intersections of gender, sexuality, class, and race in national, international and institutional contexts.
- Explore the different feminist movements and how these have shaped the perceptions of gender and minority groups in the world.
- Be able to demonstrate critical thinking through different ways such in writing, oral presentations, and other class activities.

Finally, given the continued demand around the world for material on feminism and gender, (despite the variations in different countries) WGSS, either as separate field or integrated into the disciplines, continues to be a vibrant, dynamic, innovative and influential area of study at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Richardson & Robinson, 2015).

Overall, the curriculum of this field of study not only provides the intellectual tools to succeed in life, but also offers an area of study that fosters an environment of community, leadership, and empowerment.

### **The Inclusion and Involvement of Men in Feminism**

Feminism is a social movement that seeks equality of opportunities for all people regardless gender identities. Feminism also questions rigid binary categories of masculinity and femininity, looks at the political consequences of assumptions about gender, and helps us search for better models and greater freedom (Tarrant, 2009). In other words, feminism is a political way of thinking and it requires a certain consciousness from which we can reflect on our own experiences. Feminism also fosters the study of diversity and social justice matters in order to challenge stereotyped perceptions of gender and hegemonic ideas of masculinity.

Feminist men argue that men should support feminism because most are harmed by idealizing the characteristics of socially powerful men and by defining the masculine in opposition to women and subordinate men, especially homosexuals and men of color (Gardiner, 2002). In this sense, Hughes (1999) articulates: “I have tried to emphasize that the trick to getting men to engage in feminism productively is to make the members of the class by forming coalition out of something that everyone can participate in the critique and dismantling of privilege” (p. 84). Therefore, according to this criterion, a feminist space is a process effected by modeling vulnerability and a shift away from oppression studies as an end in itself toward pragmatic studies of privilege that take their cues from compassionate listening to stories of oppression.

Feminist discourse might even have more pertinent impact on men than on women. Many women know they are oppressed by patriarchy. They have the life experiences of belonging to an oppressed group and have most likely shared personal stories that reveal their wounds from patriarchy. Men, on the other hand, are less likely to recognize their gender privilege and probably have not share stories of wounding women through their own oppressive behavior (Gardiner, 2002).

Thereby, since men cannot experience women's oppression, and it is men exercising their often-tyrannical authority who are largely responsible for this hegemonic reality, many women and men categorically reject the present possibility of men becoming feminists. Some reject this, because of personal experiences with so-called feminist men who have turned out to be just the opposite –phallogocentric misogynists- (Schacht & Ewing, 2004). The idea that only women can be feminists is based on essentialism –the assumption that men and women possess inherent behavioral traits based on biological sex (Tarrant, 2009).

Sometimes men don't get involved with feminist politics because they don't feel welcome. Even walking into a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classroom for the first time can be a challenging experience. Tarrant (2009) states, "men frequently don't engage with feminism because they think the issues don't involve them, they just can't relate" (p. 20). Some feminist groups that are made up largely of women may intentionally or inadvertently exclude men. Men might sometimes feel intimidated by feminism. Or they can believe, or presume that they are unwelcome to join activist groups. And sometimes, stereotypes about feminism act as barriers that impede men's (and women's) participation (Tarrant, 2009).

Shaw and Lee (2005) have discussed the myth that feminism dislike men and they state, “the man-hating myth works to prevent many women to be in relationships with men from claiming feminism. They are encouraged to avoid a political stance that suggests antagonism towards men. People opposed to feminism often confuse sameness and equality and say that women will never be equal to men because they are different (less physically strong, more emotional, etc.) or they say that equality is dangerous because women will star being like men” (p.18). Feminism of course affirms and works to maintain difference; it merely asks that these differences are valued equally.

The stereotypes about feminism and its counterparts can take the form of accusatory or dismissive generalization. Sadly, these stereotypes can limit our sense of self and our belief in what we are capable of doing and achieving. But stereotypes about feminists are also powerful ways of diminishing the strength of a political movement. If we are silenced by stereotypes or jokes, then we are not standing up to violence and the abuse of power (Tarrant, 2009).

The only way feminism will be able to bring out the widespread changes in society, envisions methods to find fruitful ways to enter into partnership with men in the pursuit of an oppression-free future (Schacht & Ewing, 2004). If men’s subjective experiences are left unexplored, they could be seen as being naturally inclined towards domination. So, it is important to research their experiences as ‘oppressors’ to understand how patterns of internalized domination become part of men’s subjectivity (Pease, 2000).

Tarrant (2009), in her work “Men and Feminism” interviewed random male individuals to know their perceptions and opinions about feminism. In response to the questions; “What does feminism mean to you?” some participants answered:

*“To be feminist is about balance and equality. I think men feel threatened by feminism, yet they should embrace that balance. The feminist movement is the first stone that will make ripples in the water. I call myself a feminist because I grew up surrounded by my sisters and my mom.”*

-Randy Hoang, twenty-six-year-old computer technician.

*“To me, feminist is the attempt to end subjugation of others based solely on an aspect of their identity, such as culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, or class. Although I agree with these goals, I do not call myself a feminist because I believe that, unfortunately, this term is very polarizing and often creates an oppositional atmosphere.”* –Jason Giffard, 27-year-old grad student.

*“I don’t call myself a feminist, but I support people who dedicate themselves to feminism, and I try to treat all people equally”.* –Christopher Schivley, 29-year-old police officer.

Men have responded in various ways to feminist movements, engaging in forms of gender politics from Profeminist support to reassertion of male power through ‘men’s rights’ movements (Baily, 2015). Feminism benefits from men’s participation. When men are involved in gender justice efforts, it maximizes the potential for deep, sustained social change. Australian scholar Michael Flood points out a few examples:

- A group in India used film to convince men to reflect on their relations with women.  
“Guerrilla theatre” performed in South African bars sparked discussion about gender.
- In Cambodia pamphlets on masculinities issues were distributed to men in community markets.
- In the United States, there are some activist groups that have targeted issues of sexual consent and nonviolence among young men.

Like the prior examples, there are plenty of ways we can educate ourselves and take intentional action to begin shifting sexist social norms. Once men recognize that feminism has not discriminated against them, they should be able to see that they face a stark choice: Either endorse the feminist ideal of equality or abandon that same morality that they endorse in so many other areas of their lives (Farrell & Sterba, 2008, p. 203). In this sense, hooks' words reflect the inclusive feature of feminism in relation to the participation and involvement of men: "*Those feminist activists who refuse to accept men as comrades in struggle –who harbor irrational fears that if men benefit in any way from feminist politics women lose –have misguidedly helped the public view feminism with suspicion and disdain*" (hooks, 1984).

### **The Presence and Participation of Male Students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies**

Higher education is one arena in which students can learn about inequality and explore new ways of thinking about gender and other majority/minority relations (Spoor & Lehmiller, 2014). For a long time, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) departments have given women a haven where they can speak their mind about the constructed barriers of society and know that there are people who support their academic endeavors on these subjects. Having men in the room can also stifle discussions about sexuality, complaints about a male-dominated world or descriptions of unpleasant interactions between men and women (Liner, 2008).

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classrooms are full of controversy, and how we manage our controversies productively demands all of our skills and concerns for community values. These controversies are merely related to the contents studied in class. Some students, especially men, can feel slightly uncomfortable or awkward with topics such as patriarchy, sexuality, and gender inequality, among others.

Within the context of WGGS courses, some students may perceive that a class focused on women and women's issues is irrelevant and outdated. Research on perceptions of gender inequality has shown that many people believe that gender inequality and discrimination have decreased over time (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2010). Some men may avoid WGGS courses that are perceived to have feminist content because men are more likely than women to have negative implicit associations with feminism. Thus, male students may be more attracted to a WGGS course that emphasizes gender than one that emphasizes women (Spoor & Lehmler, 2014).

The experiences of students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses, regardless their gender identity, can vary depending on social class, age, religion, race, among other identities. For some students, this type of classes can be very useful and informative, while for others these classes do not represent their interests and basically got enrolled because of baccalaureate requirements. Nevertheless, Many students learn how the construction of gender cannot be seen in isolation, and therefore the study is important for men, as well as for women to understand the construction of gender for their own lives, and those of their peers (Berger & Radeloff, 2015).

Both heterosexual and queer men who take Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies courses and decide to major or minor in this area can face unique and particular challenges when they have to communicate their peers about their academic commitment to WGSS. For example, heterosexual men may face homophobic remarks from some peers who question their sexual identity. Heterosexual men may also encounter skepticism from their female colleagues who question their motives about majoring in WGSS (Berger & Radeloff, 2015).

When men participate as students in this type of courses, they undergo feminist change. They adopt more progressive understandings of gender, show greater support for feminism, and increase their involvement in antisexist activism. Male students in WGSS classrooms benefit to the same degree as female students, showing similar levels of change, although they start with poorer attitudes and thus the gap between them and their female peers persists. At the same time, male students' presence highlights critical challenges to feminist pedagogy: gendered patterns of interaction, resistance to feminist teaching, and limitations on women's critical reflections on personal experience (Flood, 2011).

Nevertheless, male participation does highlight three issues: gendered patterns of interaction, resistance to feminist teaching, and women's consciousness-raising (Flood, 2011). When male students enter WGSS introductory classrooms, teachers are challenged with the task of pursuing feminist goals through objectives other than gender exclusivity-though some teachers respond to the challenge by ignoring the men as much as possible (Hughes, 1999). The very presence of men in the Introductory Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies classrooms makes the preservation of "women's safe space" almost impossible. Consciousness-raising groups – methodologically grounded in women's space – have been the generative sites for the foundations of much of what we value as feminist theory and practice (Hughes, 1999).

Flood (2011) argues that men's absence from WGGSS classrooms does not resolve patterns of gendered interaction and resistance, for three reasons. First, resistance is evident too among female teachers. Second, women's socialized inclination to act as caretakers of men operates whether men are in the classroom or not. Third, there is more power than gender. Power relations also operate along other axes of difference such as class, race, sexuality, personality, and indeed teacher/student, and classrooms are embedded in wider relations of dominance.

Therefore, the questions of who speaks, how they speak, and who is silenced are pertinent ones for WGGS classrooms regardless of the sex of their participants (Flood, 2011).

Male and female students, compared to non-WGGS students, show an increased intention to participate in feminist activism and an increased involvement in activist behaviors, and these activist intentions and behaviors persist long after the courses have ended (Stake & Malkin 2003). Men in WGGS who might identify with feminism can deepen their commitments to feminist work by committing over a period of time to projects in which they are interested in. This can support their interests and help build friendship and ally networks with both women and men (Berger & Radloff, 2015).

Flood (2011) states that when he asked men enrolled in WGSS courses what they have learned during the term and they responded they have emphasized they now see their male peers more critically, they had gained new perspectives and greater ability to relate to women and their brief experience of minority status has given them new understanding of minorities' experience. Despite evidence that some students are resistant toward WGGS courses, very little research has examined the source(s) of this negativity (Stake & Malkin, 2003).

Finally, more research is needed to understand the factors that shape students' attitudes and interests in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies courses, particularly male students. More importantly, studies about how these factors are used by the students to related the content studied in the course to their personal lives in order to challenge and reflect their stereotyped ideas of gender and sexuality.

## **Men and Masculinity**

Men and masculinities are analyzed as socially constructed, with the interweaving of men's gender status and other social statuses (Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006). According to Webster's American Dictionary College Edition, masculinity is defined as: "pertaining to or characteristic of a man or men, such as strength or boldness." Nevertheless, there are different versions of masculinity –not just the dominant mainstream model of hyper aggressive manhood. What it means to be masculine can look very different depending on a person's sexual orientation, class, religion, ethnicity, or race (Tarrant, 2009).

Men are not simply or only men. Men and masculinities are shaped by differences of, for example; age, class, race, religion, among other identities. Men's gender status intersects with racial, ethnic, class, occupational, national, global, and other socially constructed and defined statuses. The gendering of men exists in the intersections with these other social divisions and social differences (Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006). In academy, some take the term "gender" to mean that the social facts of men's roles as "men" are important to an understanding of the social facts of human organization generally (Smith, 2013). Research in gender and WGSS has made the dynamics of gender explicit and also made masculinity visible as gendered ideology, named men as gendered, and problematized the position of men (Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006).

The object of study –men and masculinities – needs to be distinguished from the producers of studies on men and masculinities, women, men, or women and men together. This distinction sometimes appears to be an area of confusion, especially for non-pro-feminist men, who may assume, erroneously, that they have or should have privileged status over women when it comes to studying men (Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006). Because men's roles in society have

involved so much power, their activities naturally influence the roles of women and their overall status. In this interpretation, the charge is to dig down into the operations of men as men in their overall attitudes towards themselves and the privileges they exercise over women and children (Smith, 2013).

However, “men’s studies” is not an accurate corollary to women’s studies, since women’s studies made both, women, and gender visible. Nor is it a corrective to the perceived defects of women’s studies made by anti-feminist scholars, who seem to say, ‘Well, you have your women’s studies, but what about us, men? In short, the phrase ‘men’s studies’ often suggests a defensive reaction to women’s studies rather than a building on its original insights about gender (Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006). Consequently, masculinity and patriarchy are sometimes fused together, or their semantic fields tend to overlap, because the dominant mode of masculinity is patriarchal and the enactment of this mode reproduces patriarchal structures (Pease, 2000).

Men, ironically, remained unexamined for much longer, precisely because *man* and *person* were often interchangeable concepts, but in the last decade the whole issue of men and masculinity has come into focus. There has been a shift in men’s view of themselves – a shift from seeing themselves as unmarked representatives of the human race to focusing on themselves as men (Coates, 1986).

There is a certain plausibility about the idea of a ‘crisis in masculinity’. The focus on young men rather than men in general suggests that there is something about this specific point in time which brings about a particular dislocation between expectations and reality. What we appear to be witnessing is an over-determined phenomenon whereby a variety of trends and processes

converge to produce a crisis or, at the very least, a sense of crisis. To slightly reformulate the argument, the points of converge include:

- a) Structural changes in work and employment which bear especially upon young men and their expectations.
- b) A series of responses and practices on the part of men, especially young men, which, seem less and less in tune with modern times. These would include peer groups and group solidarities most obviously manifested in the cultures of ‘the lads’
- c) Features associated with men and masculinity for some generations which seem to inhibit more positive responses of the part of men to the difficulties of late modernity. These would include an unwillingness to share or to articulate personal or emotional problems.

-(Davis, Evans & Lorber, 2006)

Finally, the concepts of male and masculinity can have great impact in the study of feminism. Men and women need to get informed about the implications of wrong ideas about “what to be a man really means.” Stereotyped and distorted social images of masculinity can negatively impact our perception about gender. In this sense, Pease (2009) articulates, “men have to change their vantage point if they want to see the world from a different position, and this entails more than just a theoretical shift. It also requires men to actively engage in pro-feminist struggles in both the private and public arenas, translating the possibility of a change towards more equal gender positioning” (p.8).

### **Chapter III-Methodology**

The aim of this chapter is to contextualize the research questions stated in the introduction chapter and describe in detail the research methods utilized in this study. In this research, I analyze how the involvement of male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies may impact their attitudes about pro gender equality. Additionally, I present a comparative analysis between a section of the results of this study and a section of the findings of a similar research study conducted in 2005, “The consequences and effects for male students in the Women Studies classroom.”

This study relies on a feminist research perspective. Feminist research positions gender as the categorical center of inquiry and the research process. By using a variety of research methods – quantitative, qualitative, mixed – feminist researchers use gender as a lens through which they focus on social justice issues. One of the main goals of feminist research projects is to support social justice and social transformation; these projects seek to study and redress the many inequalities and social injustices that continue to undermine and even destroy the lives of women and marginalized communities (Hesse-biber, 2013). Feminist research values the experiences, voices, and thoughts of those who are playing the role of research participants. By applying this perspective to my research, I was able to get insight about the attitudes of the research participants in a more holistic way.

#### **Researcher Positionality**

Currently, I am a second-year graduate student pursuing a Master’s degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus on Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Adult Education. My academic and professional interests rely on the study of the experiences of

students in higher education settings, particularly in the field of social science. I earned my Bachelor Degree in Education in my home country, Chile. Since my early years in college, I developed great interest in the dynamics of higher education systems and how students respond to them. After my sophomore year in college, I worked as a teaching assistant in two different undergraduate courses in the college of education.

These experiences greatly influenced my decision to pursue my graduate education in a foreign country. I opted to major in Interdisciplinary Studies, particularly with a focus on Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies for two reasons. First, this discipline is not part of the curriculum of the educational system in Chile. Second, because I identify as feminist, I wanted to have the opportunity to explore new areas of study that helped me to gain new knowledge and different perspectives regarding gender and social justice, as well as, to study and analyze feminist insights from within.

Since the beginning of my graduate education in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, I was able to reflect on my personal perspectives about gender and social justice and I could analyze and challenge my own stereotyped perceptions about them through a feminist lens. The decision to study the experiences of male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes emerged when I began to notice that the number of students enrolled in these classes was very low compared to women. Therefore, I became very interested in looking for literature that discussed the experiences of men in WGSS classrooms but unfortunately, the literature available on this topic was quite limited. In my search about this topic, I found a thesis work that was conducted in 2005 at Oregon State University, called “The consequences and effects for male students in Women Studies classroom.” After reading this research, I decided to replicate it to

measure the attitudes and beliefs about gender and social inequality of the research participants in 2005 and research participants in this present study.

### **Research Design & Data Collection**

The design of this study is based on mixed methods research. This is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing and integrating quantitative and qualitative research. This approach to research is used when this integration provides a better understanding of the research questions than either method alone (“mixed method research,” n.d.).

Since I am replicating the research design utilized in the study conducted in 2005, I administered the same surveys (see appendix A) and interview questions (see appendix B). The surveys in this research were applied to twenty-one participants from six different sections of introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses at Oregon State University (see figure 1) during winter term 2016.

The courses utilized for this research were taught by a full professor (WGSS 223 and WGSS 340), one associate professor (WGSS 224), and two graduate teaching assistants (WGSS 223 and WGSS 224). These courses are offered every academic term. The total class size of the courses fluctuated between 25 to 40 students.

*Figure 1. Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses descriptions*

<b>Course</b>	<b>Description</b>
WGSS 223, Women: Self and Society [2 sections]	This course offers a multidisciplinary introduction to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. It focuses on the lives and status of women in society and explores ways in which institutions such as family, work, media, law, and religion affect different groups of women. 3 participants enrolled in this class
WGSS 224, Women: Personal and Social Change [2 section]	This course examines the way the questioning of traditional gender roles and their accompanying power structures can lead to change in women's personal and public lives. It also Explores women's heritage and contributions and focuses on issues of self-growth and social movements for change.
WGSS 230, Women in the movies [1 section]	This course explores ways women are depicted in the movies and how those depictions are created by and create larger social constructions of women. Special attention is given to the intersections of race, class, sexual identity, and age with gender.
WGSS 340, Gender and Science [1 section]	This course analyzes the relationship between society and science by explaining technology and science as gendered practices and bodies of knowledge. It focuses on the ways the making of women and men affect the making of science and explores the roles of women in scientific pursuits.

*Source: Course catalog, Oregon State University. <http://catalog.oregonstate.edu/>*

What follows is the number of participants per course that completed both surveys (see figure 2). For the interviews, the participants were not asked the course in which they were enrolled due to confidentiality purposes.

*Figure 2. Number of participants per course*

<b>Course</b>	<b>N</b>
WGSS 223, section I	4
WGSS 223, section II	2
WGSS 224, section I	3
WGSS 224, section II	2
WGSS 230	7
WGSS 340	3
<b>Total survey participants</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Total interview participants</b>	<b>4</b>

**Criteria for participation.** For both, surveys and interviews, the population of this research was limited to the following characteristics: (a) be enrolled in any of the courses presented above during winter term 2016, (b) complete the survey distributed during my visit to the class, (c) indicate willingness to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher and (d) self-identify as male/man.

**Recruitment for participation.** The methods for data collection were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Oregon State University in December 2015. Participant recruitment began in January 2016 during the first week of the term. The first step after the approval of the IRB was to contact the instructors of the WGSS introductory courses. A copy of the collective e-mail sent to the instructors can be found in Appendix C.

The second step was to attend the classes at the beginning of winter term 2016 to distribute the surveys to the entire class. Before distributing the surveys, I provided the students a copy of the explanation of research approved by the IRB. In this document, I detailed the purpose of the research and why students were being invited to participate. A copy of the explanation of research can be found in Appendix D. Only those surveys completed by students who self-identified as male were considered for data analysis. The participation in the completion of the surveys was completely voluntary and anonymous. Those students who did not want to participate were given a voluntary reading. A copy of the reading can be found in Appendix E.

**Participant population.** This study enrolled twenty-one self-identified male students who completed both, the initial and the final surveys. The following demographics reflect information of male students that only answered the surveys. The breakdown of year in school is as follows: Seniors 1, Juniors 9, Sophomores 10, and Freshmen 1. From the total population 15 participants

identified as Whites, two identified as Asians, three as Hispanics, and one as Middle-eastern. From the sample, twenty indicated that it was their first Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies class and twelve self-identified as feminists in the pre-survey.

The four participants in the interviews identified themselves as White and heterosexual. In relation to the school year of the participants two identified as senior, one as sophomore and one as junior. Only one participant indicated that he had previous experience in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Finally, only two participants self-identified as feminists. In the interviews section of this chapter, I explain how the male students were asked to participate in the interviews after completing the surveys.

## **SURVEYS**

As it was mentioned earlier, the surveys utilized in this research were designed by the researcher who conducted the study in 2005, “The Consequences and Effects for Male Students in the Women Studies Classroom” at Oregon State University. The surveys utilized in 2005 were distributed in five sections of two introductory courses in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, which included: WGSS 223 and WGSS 224. Initially, the population of my research included these two courses only, nevertheless, after finding out that the number of male students enrolled in these courses was not going to be considerable, I opted for recruiting more participants from other introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses – prior approval of the IRB. Therefore, I incorporated WGSS 230 and WGSS 340.

The statements in the surveys addressed multiple topics regarding feminist insights in terms of gender and social equality. The surveys were designed into two sections. The first section asked questions regarding student demographics. The second section of the survey

included 14 statements that asked about personal and political topics about gender and social justice. This sections utilized a 5-point Likert scale to assess students' responses where; 1 =strongly agree, 2 =agree, 3 =neutral, 4 =disagree, and 5 =strongly disagree. A Likert scale is an ordered scale from which respondents choose one option that best aligns with their view. It is often used to measure respondent's attitudes by asking the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular question or statement (Losby & Wetmore, 2012).

Due to the statements implied negative and positive connotations, I reversed the coding of the negative statements to accurately represent the responses that implied pro gender equality viewpoints and those that represented the contrary. See figure 3.

*Figure 3. Categories of the 5-point scale*

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Very high Pro gender attitude</b>	<b>High Pro gender attitude</b>	<b>Neutral Pro gender attitude</b>	<b>Low Pro gender attitude</b>	<b>Very low Pro gender attitude</b>

I decided to utilize the term 'pro gender' to measure students' attitudes about social justice and gender equality perspectives. Pro gender justice is defined as: social justice between women and men, in which both are valued equally in society and empowered to pursue their human rights and fundamental freedoms (Aid, 2014). Initially, I had considered measuring students' attitudes under the term 'pro feminist,' which describes a person who supports the causes of feminism without being a member of the movement. Feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men ("Feminism," n.d.). Therefore, after reviewing the statements multiple times, I concluded they were not

necessarily embracing ‘pro feminist’ perspectives and that research participants might easily agree with the statements without self-identifying as pro feminists.

The participants in this research were asked to respond to each statement by indicating the number of the Likert scale that best represented their personal perspectives between one and five. The completion of the surveys took approximately ten minutes and these were distributed during class time. The surveys were confidential; therefore, students were asked not to put their names on the surveys. In the last page of the survey, there was an invitation for students that self-identified as male to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher.

In order to obtain insight into the perceptions and personal views of the participants about pro gender equality attitudes and whether these attitudes presented any change after taking the course, the distribution of the surveys was conducted in two phases. For the first phase, one set of surveys were distributed during the first week of the term and the same surveys were distributed again at the end of the same term. For the second distribution, the criteria for participation was the same as the one applied at the beginning of the term. Due to the need to match the pre and post surveys to analyze the responses, I organized the collected initial surveys in folders with the name of the course in which they were distributed. The final surveys were incorporated to these folders which made the matching easier. Then, I compared demographic information and handwriting to match the pre and post surveys. From this matching process, I obtained twenty-one matching surveys which represent 21 students from the six sections of introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses utilized for this research.

**Data analysis.** The analysis of the information obtained from the surveys was conducted in two parts. The first part regards the demographic information of the participants. The

responses of the twenty-one matching surveys were coded in an excel worksheet. The demographic information that was utilized for analysis purposes was: (1) gender identity, (2) class standing, (3) self-identified as feminist, and (4) race. Each match represents one student and due to the confidentiality of the surveys they were classified by letters and the name of the course. Individual responses that presented major changes were analyzed and interpreted according to the demographic of the participants.

A mean score was calculated for each answer of the students within the range of one through five. The mean scores were utilized to estimate the average score of the statements and of the total sample. These numbers were reversed in the statements that implied negative connotations to best represent the scores in the scale. A mean score was calculated for each statement. These scores were compared to observe the variations on these responses that may indicate whether the participants presented pro gender equality attitudes by the end of the term or not. The 14 statements in the survey were classified in three themes: (1) politics and social justice issues, (2) relationships between men and women in society, and (3) men's perspectives on feminism.

Since the aggregated mean scores showed little change, I decided to discuss the answers of the individuals who presented considerable changes in the surveys. I only chose those individuals who had a difference on their scores of two points or higher. I only chose eight statements, which presented more variation in the means. These statements were organized within the themes they belonged to and were organized in tables that presented the answers that went from high to low and vice versa.

For the measurement study between the attitudes and beliefs about pro gender equality of both samples (2005 and 2016), I compared the mean scores of five statements only. Because of, I did not have full access to the rest of the mean scores, I decided to measure the attitudes of both samples based on the responses to these five statements. These statements address important aspects about gender equality and by comparing the mean scores of both samples, I could measure each group's beliefs and attitudes about this topic. The statements include, (1) "I would vote for a woman as a president," (2) "I believe women should not hold positions of power within the church," (3) "I believe that if a woman is raped, it is probably because of what she was wearing of how she was acting," (4) "I believe that feminists dislike men," and (5) "Feminism is about equality for all people." To compare the mean scores of both samples, I utilized the 5-point scale presented in page 32 (figure 3).

## **INTERVIEWS**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this research. I applied the same interview questions utilized in the study conducted in 2005 – prior authorization of the author. After collecting the surveys, I identified the students that indicated willingness to participate in the interviews and I contacted them via e-mail. Only five students indicated willingness to participate in the interviews but only four completed the process. The interviews were conducted by the end of the winter term 2016 and they took place in public spaces chosen by the participants. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the interviews, students were asked to provide a pseudonym. The interviews were audio-recorded and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The set of questions were organized in; (1) demographics and (2) WGSS classroom dynamics.

Data analysis involved transcribing the interviews to identify common themes. I identified patterns within these themes by highlighting key words and sentences that shared similar perspectives. Once these patterns were highlighted in different colors – according to the meanings and patterns, I re-read the responses multiple times to best contextualize and categorize the meanings.

For the measurement study between my research and the research conducted in 2005, I utilized the themes that emerged from the responses of the participants. Within these themes, I identified and highlighted key words and ideas that best contextualized their attitudes about pro-gender justice insights. Then, I identified key words and ideas within the themes that emerged in the interviews in my research to observe parallel patterns that allowed me to compare between both samples.

### **Study Limitations**

The study population represented only 21 students enrolled in introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies introductory courses during winter term 2016. Due to the reduced number of male students enrolled in WGSS, it was not possible to recruit more participants for this research. Another limitation was the limited literature concerning the experiences of male students in WGSS, as well as, how, why/why not, etc., men are involved in feminism. There is not statistical information available that discusses the presence of male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes.

The data collection methods also presented limitations. The surveys were distributed during the beginning of the term and then the same surveys were distributed by the end of the course. Since this was a voluntary writing questionnaire, students did not have any responsibility

or obligation in completing the surveys. Some of them were not present on the day that the post surveys were distributed, or simply they chose not to participate. Because of this, 12 pre-surveys remained unmatched.

The statements in the surveys also presented some limitations. They were very easy to agree with and they did not necessarily represent a 'pro feminist attitude.' Because of this, I decided to change this category to 'pro gender equality.' Also, the scale utilized to classify the mean scores (very high/high/neutral/low/very low) about the social justice attitudes of the participants could not actually assess the values of the participants.

The interviews also presented some limitations. From the five students who indicated willingness to participate in the semi-structured interview with me, I only could execute four. Additionally, the testimonies of the four participants do not represent the experiences and attitudes of all male students enrolled in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

## Chapter IV- Results & Discussions

The central objective of this research is to get insight into the attitudes about pro gender equality attitudes of male students enrolled in introductory Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses at Oregon State University during winter term 2016.

First, I examine the responses of male students obtained from the matched surveys which were distributed during the first and the last week of winter term 2016. The first set of questions in the survey was intended to obtain demographic information from the participants while the second part of the survey was intended to obtain information regarding statements that asked about personal and political pro gender equality perspectives which asserted various understandings of relationships between women and men's place in society. The statements on the surveys were classified according to the following themes, which include: (1) social and gender equality, (2) relationship between men and women in society, and (3) men and feminism.

The second part of this chapter presents a measurement study between part of the data obtained in the research conducted in 2005 and part of the data obtained in the present research. These findings are based on the responses to five statements which asked about feminism and gender inequality. The purpose of this section is to measure each sample's beliefs and attitudes at one particular moment in time; spring term 2005 and winter term 2016.

The third part of this chapter analyzes the responses of male students in the interviews. This section is organized into two themes and its objective is to identify in what ways Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies affect the attitude of the participants about pro gender equality. The themes include: (1) 'new perspectives and points of views' and (2) 'feminist classroom: a challenging but informative experience.' Finally, I discuss the most important points in the

analysis of the interviews in both research studies, in order to measure the attitudes and beliefs of both samples about their experiences in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Within Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies courses, male students may experience certain changes in the way they see and perceive the world. Particularly, the courses utilized for this research are centered on women's lives and marginalized communities and might make male students feel off-centered. Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is for all students but its politics are basically centered on women, LGBTQ, and people of color.

Therefore, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classroom is a political environment that is different from regular disciplines, not only about class content, but different settings that are essentially based on feminist pedagogy approaches to teaching – which were already discussed in the introduction chapter. So, in the next sections of this chapter, I try to get insight into how male students perceive these differences and how their privilege as male and (mostly) white individuals influence in their perception of a class in which they may feel off-centered.

Also, since this program is centered in women's lives, and its class discussions are focused on topics such as gender based violence, multiple forms of discrimination, and gender inequality, WGSS may positively change the mentality of the students during the course regarding these topics. These possible changes can be categorized under what Cohen, Gammel & Rutstein (2016) call "perspective transformation." For the authors, "perspective transformation" (p.30) implies that learners recognize the limitations of their current perspectives and rather than adding new information or skills onto existing views, they shift their whole way of thinking.

## Social & Gender Inequality

This theme is intended to answer the following research question: Does exposure to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classroom affect the attitudes of male students about social and gender inequality? As it was mentioned in the methodology chapter, the analysis of the responses utilized a 5-point Likert scale to assess students' responses. Due to the statements implied negative and positive connotations, I reversed the coding in the negative statements to accurately represent the responses that imply pro gender equality attitudes and those that represent the contrary.

### *Categories of the 5-point scale*

1	2	3	4	5
Very high pro gender attitude	High pro gender attitude	Neutral pro gender attitude	Low pro gender attitude	Very low pro gender attitude

*Table 1. Social and gender inequality.*

Statements	Pre-mean score [N=21]	Post-mean score [N=21]
(1) There is social inequality in our country	1.6	1.5
(2) I believe that racism is still a problem in the United States	1.8	1.5
(3) The war in Iraq is necessary for peace and democracy in the world	1	1.8
(4) I believe that women should not hold positions of power within the church	1.4	1.2
(5) I would vote for a woman as a president	1.2	1.2
(6) Marriage should be reserved for the union between men and women	1.6	1.8
<b>Total mean scores</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>

*Table 2. Range of individual scores in the statements that changed considerably from low to high in the 5-point scale*

Statement	Range of individual responses from low to high
<b>(3) The war in Iraq is necessary for peace and democracy in the world [N=4]</b>	1-5
	1-3
	1-3
	1-3
<b>(6) Marriage should be reserved for the union between men and women [N=2]</b>	2-5
	1-3

*Table 3. Range of individual scores in the statements that changed considerably from high to low in the 5-point scale*

Statement	Range of individual responses from highest to lowest
<b>(2) I believe that racism is still a problem in the United States [N=2]</b>	4-1
	5-1
<b>(4) I believe that women should not hold positions of power within the church [N=1]</b>	4-1
<b>(6) Marriage should be reserved for the union between men and women [N=1]</b>	3-1

Students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies are exposed to the understanding of the dynamics of gender inequality through a feminist lens and how these dynamics may negatively affect the lives of other people. The statements discussed in this theme tried to measure the pro gender equality attitudes in the research participants. Since there was not much change in the overall mean scores, besides discussing the scores of the statements in a general way, I also discuss the individuals who showed considerable change in certain statements.

The pre-mean score obtained in statement number one was 1.6, which may indicate that the participants entered the class with a very good pro gender attitude. This score moved to 1.5 at the end of the term, which shows that there was no change in the attitude of the students about

this topic. Discussions of gender and social equality are very common within Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classroom. The fact that the participants got a score below 2 in the 5-point scale may suggest that the participants already possessed very good pro gender attitudes before entering the course and the reason why the pre-mean score did not change by the end of the term can be due to the personal assumptions of gender, which might have been reinforced during the course. Edwards (2015) states, “realizing gender inequality is difficult, because the fundamental characteristics exhibited by traditional masculinity defend against change. For global gender equality to progress, men must recognize themselves as fundamental actors and actively work to change the patriarchal structures, which benefit them to the exclusion of all others (p.7).” The mean scores obtained in this theme suggests the male students are conscious about this topic. Developing male attitudes towards open acknowledgement of the gender profiles they operate within is an important step in reaching gender equality (Edwards, 2015).

In the statement number two, “I believe that racism is still a problem in the United States,” the responses in the initial survey presented a general mean score of 1.8 which might indicate that the participants entered the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with good pro gender equality perspectives as well. This score remained under this category by the end of the term. This slight change may suggest that Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies may have had a positive influence in the ideas and attitudes of male students regarding this topic. Racism is the belief that characteristics and abilities can be attributed to people simply based on their race and that some racial groups are superior to others (Shah, 2010). In a nationwide poll conducted by CNN and the Kaiser Family Foundation, roughly half of Americans (49%) say racism is a big problem in society today (Shoichet, 2015). Although the overall mean score of this statement did not change considerably in the second surveys, two students passed from very low pro gender

equality attitude to a very good pro gender equality attitude. Most of the students maintained their answers from the first surveys and I did not observe changes from positive to negative attitudes in the individual scores. There were two participants that scored three points higher in the second survey, this indicates they moved from low to very high gender equality attitude in the scale. These two students were enrolled in the same course WGSS 223, one identified as white and the other as student of color, both were sophomores and neither of them identified as feminists. The important change observed in the responses of these students can be associated to the fact that WGSS 223 focuses on the lives and status of women in society as well as the lives of marginalized communities. Therefore, we could say that during the course, both students could understand that racism is still present in the United States, regardless their self-identification as non-feminists.

The statement number three, “The war in Iraq is necessary for peace and democracy in the world,” presented a pre-mean score of one which indicates that 100% of the sample had a very good pro gender equality attitude on this topic before a full exposure to the course. Nevertheless, there was a variation on the mean score of almost one point by the end of the term indicating that some participants changed their attitudes about the war in Iraq in a negative direction. In Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, students get knowledge about non-violence and non-militarism, which may reflect pro gender equality insights and potentially pro feminist features. Perhaps, the negative inclination of the post-mean score suggests that the male students are not very informed about the consequences of militarism in Middle-Eastern societies. Enloe (2016) articulates, “This is a time in world history that seems hyper-militarized, with civilians in allegedly peaceful countries fearing not just acts of terror, but whole categories of people whom they imagine to be threats. It is a time when armed conflicts are raging on the ground and from

the skies in myriad regions, forcing hundreds of thousands of women, children, and men to embark on dangerous journeys to escape that violence in leaky boats and on blistered feet (p. ix).” Then, we could suggest that in such gendered context with traditional forms of masculinity challenged, they more strongly embraced a form of masculinity as a way to reassert their own identities as men.

This statement presented the most negative changes in the post-surveys. Four students scored between two and three points higher in the second survey, which indicates that they passed from having a very good gender equality attitude to a neutral attitude by the end of the course. From the four participants, three were enrolled in the same course, WGSS 223 and one was enrolled in WGSS 230. Two participants identified as feminist in the first survey and one changed this response in the second. There was one participant that did not identify as feminist in both surveys and one participant identified as feminist in the first and second survey. In terms of race, all of them identified as white. I think that regardless their demographics, probably these students had not thought about war/terrorism before and by exposing them to this knowledge in WGSS raised their willingness to engage the “war on terror” because they probably think that the appropriate response to terrorism is militarized violence.

On statement number four, “I believe women should not hold positions of power within the church,” almost all the participants indicated that women should hold positions of power within the church. The Catholic Church has historically stated that, “women cannot have equal power in the church because it would go against the nature” (Manson, 2016). This traditional idea about women occupying positions of power in religion can be sustained on the belief that God created men to be leaders, authorities, and decision-makers. The answers of the students in the first survey remained almost under the same category in the 5-point scale in the second

survey. However, there was one student who presented a considerable change, from a low pro gender equality attitude to a very good attitude. This participant did not self-identified as feminist in the first survey but he did in the second. We could say that the course in which he was enrolled, WGSS 224, altered his personal beliefs about religion and gender by accepting new perspectives.

Statement number five, “I would vote for a woman as a president,” obtained a pre and post mean score of 1.2. We can say, then, that the participants had a progressive and affirmative inclination in their attitudes towards women in leadership before entering the course. This score also may indicate that participants understand that women should not be disadvantaged in their careers because of their gender. Also, this very good pro gender equality attitude of male students about women in leadership could have been influenced by the rise of women to the highest positions in politics, medicine, and business, as well as the rise of women as leaders in developing countries. This contrasts and challenges the myth that women are unfit for leadership. Over the last three decades women have entered many traditionally male domains of leadership, including politics and business, in increasing numbers (Kenkle, 2004). Another reason could be the fact that a woman was running for president of the United States when the both surveys were distributed.

The last statement of this theme, “Marriage should be reserved for the union between men and women,” presented a change in the pre and post scores of 0.2 towards a negative direction. This statement obtained a pre-mean score of 1.6 which can indicate that most male students expressed a very high pro gender equality attitude about this topic. By the end of the term, this mean score changed in opposing direction, resulting in 1.8. In the United States, marriage is both a religious experience and a legal, civil contract. Many churches in recent years

have blessed the unions of same sex couples (Andryszewski, 2011). This fact has contributed to the openness, acceptance, and respect for same-sex couples. In addition, the historical fact that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage nationwide in June 2015, positively contributed to the social acceptance of the diversity in marriage.

The difference in the scoring of this statement does not indicate any change in the perceptions of the participants as it was explained at the beginning of this chapter, scores below two can be considered very good indicators of a pro gender equality attitude. Nevertheless, there were two participants that considerably changed their scores in the second survey, going from low to high in the 5-point scale. These participants were enrolled in different courses, and one identified as White and the other as Asian. Both considered themselves as religious persons, which could be why they scored higher in the second survey. I think that same-sex marriage is still an issue within some religions, and perhaps the reason these two participants scored higher in the post-surveys is that they were exposed to a more profound understanding about gay marriage during the course, which could have been affected their religious views about this topic.

There was one participant who changed his attitude considerably in a positive way, going from three to one in the 5-point scale. This participant was enrolled in WGSS 230 and he identified as White. He did not identify as feminist in the pre-survey but he did in the second. Perhaps, we can assume that WGSS 230 somehow altered his view about gay marriage, making him to become more open to accept new perspectives about this topic.

### **Relationships between Women & Men in society**

This theme discusses the attitudes of the research participants regarding topics about the relationships between women and men in society as well as some stereotypical and sexist

assumptions on gender. In Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, students are exposed to the study of gender and social stratification through feminist theory. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality, and examines women's social roles, experiences, and interests (Boundless, 2016).

*Table 4. Relationship between women & men in Society.*

Statements	Pre-mean score N=21	Post-mean score [N=21]
(1) Women have equal rights with men	2.7	2.6
(2) Women and men have equal intellectual abilities	1.1	1.1
(3) Women should dress like women and men should dress like men	1.8	1.9
(4) I feel that women should have access to abortion only in the case of rape	2.3	1.7
(5) I believe that if a woman is raped, it is probable because of what she was wearing or how she was acting	1.6	1.5
Total mean scores	1.9	1.8

*Table 5. Range of individual scores in the statements that changed considerably from high to low in the 5-point scale*

Questions	Range of individual responses from highest to lowest
(1) Women have equal rights with men [N=2]	4-2
	4-1
(4) I feel that women should have access to abortion only in the case of rape [N=3]	4-2
	5-1
	5-1

In statement number one, “Women have equal rights with men,” the pre-mean score was 2.7, which by the end of the term changed to 2.6. These scores do not present any change; however, it is important to analyze why the participants scored higher on this statement than in

any other in this research. Only two participants changed their scores at the end of the term in a positive direction and the rest kept their answers in both surveys. By considering the overall pre-mean score, we can say that the research participants entered the course with almost a neutral pro gender equality attitude. Although there have been huge changes for women in terms of employment in the past decades, they are often still paid less than men and the top of industry and government faces remain majorly male (Van der Gaag, 2014). This statement asked about equal rights between women and men in a global context, not in a U.S. context. Perhaps, students centered their responses on what they see in the social media only, which I would consider a very U.S. contextualized reality which can be very different from the social realities in other countries. Another reason could be that participants responded to this statement focusing on what it literally indicates, women and men “*have*” equal rights rather than “*should have*.”

There were two students who changed their attitudes about this topic in a considerable way, going from a low pro gender equality attitude to a good attitude. Both students identified as feminists in the pre and in the post surveys. Although these students self-identified as feminists at the beginning of the course, perhaps, they were not very informed about the unevenness in the rights between women and men. Probably, class content and class discussions, helped these students to raise their consciousness and become more aware of the fact that gender inequality that is still present in society.

Statement number two, “Women and men have equal intellectual abilities,” was the one that presented the most pro gender equality attitude, with an pre and post mean score of 1.1. We can say then, that the research participants entered the course with a strong understanding that men and women possess the same intellectual capacities. This outcome can be associated with the attitudes of the students about women in leadership in which they also presented a very high

pro gender attitude. We can also suggest that their participation in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies reinforced these attitudes (or at least did not affect them negatively,) since the scores did not present any negative change by the end of the term.

The third statement, “Women should dress like women and men should dress like men,” got a pre-mean score of 1.8. This statement asked about gendered-stereotypes about clothing. Cross-dressing is the act of wearing items of clothing and other accoutrements commonly associated with the opposite gender. The term cross-dressing denotes an action or a behavior without attributing or implying any specific rules about gender and clothing. Culture has very mixed views about cross-dressing. A woman who wears her husband’s shirt to bed is considered attractive, while a man who wears his wife’s nightgown to bed may be considered transgressive (“Cross-dressing,” n.d.). Perhaps, the anti-gender justice responses are due to masculine assumptions of the research participants who understand clothing as something that is strictly based on gender. Maybe the male students are not very tolerant of gender diversity and were stuck with stereotyped assumptions of how a man and a man should dress. Perhaps, the increasing visibility of transgender people and WGSS’s inclusion of transgender issues in course topics affected students’ reflections on clothing as an aspect of gendered identity.

Statement number four, “I feel that women should have access to abortion only in the case of rape,” got a pre-mean score of 2.3, which suggests that the research participants entered the course with good pro gender equality perspectives about abortion. In fact, the post-mean score of this statement changed positively to 1.7. This variation may indicate that by the end of the term, students somehow changed their attitudes about abortion is justifiable only in the case of rape. Within Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, class discussions about sexuality are part of the course content. From a feminist point of view, abortion is necessary for millions of women

worldwide, for their health, for their wellbeing, for their dreams of a better tomorrow. It is a matter of survival (“Feminist majority,” n.d.). Thus, we can suggest the shift on the mean score by the end of the term is due to the class discussions about this topic which made the students change their attitudes toward a potential pro-feminist view. There were three participants that moved considerably from low pro gender equality attitude to a very high attitude. From these participants, two were enrolled in WGSS 224 and one in WGSS 230. One identified as White, one as Asian, and the other as Hispanic. This may indicate that regardless the demographics of the participants, their participation in WGSS somehow could have raised their awareness about rape by helping them to understand the causes and consequences of sexual assault.

The last statement, “I believe that if a woman is raped, it is probably because of what she was wearing or how she was acting,” did not present much variation. The pre-mean score was 1.6, which changed to 1.5 by the end of the course. Class discussions about rape are part of the course content in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Rape is any act of non-consensual sexual penetration. It does not matter if the victim was raped by force or only under duress, the crime is still rape (“Rape,” n.d.). Women on college campuses are at more risk than other women, about one in five college women are the victim of rape during their college career (Dryden-Edwards, 2015). The scores obtained in this statement suggest that the research participants showed a very good pro-social justice attitude about this issue. Certainly, this has been an increasingly visible topic on college campuses, and rape prevention efforts may have affected students’ recognition of this statement as a rape myth.

### **Men and feminism**

In Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies the content of the classes can result challenging for male students. Since WGSS is centered in women’s lives and marginalized

communities, some male can feel off-centered, which can affect their engagement with the course and therefore, their understanding of classroom dynamics. To engage with feminism on its own terms, men must learn to be for others; they must enter a discourse that exists primarily to advance the interests and hear the voices of a group to which they do not belong (Crowe, 2008). Another challenge that men face in relating to feminism, concerns the notion of being blame. Many men feel defensive in response to feminism. This problem of guilt has been widely noted in discussions of men and feminism (Connell, 1993).

This section is intended to answer the following research question: Do men's attitudes towards feminist perspectives and the relationship between men and feminism change after being exposed to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies?

*Table 6. Men and feminism.*

Statements	Pre-mean score [N=21]	Post-mean score [N=21]
(1) I believe that feminists dislike men	2.3	2.4
(2) Feminism is about equality for all people	1.4	2
<b>Total mean scores</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.2</b>

*Table 7. Range of individual scores in the statements that changed considerably from low to high in the 5-point scale*

Statements	Range of individual responses
(1) I believe that feminists dislike men [N=3]	1-3
	2-5
	2-4
(2) Feminism is about equality for all people [N=5]	1-3
	1-3
	2-4
	2-4
	1-4

Statement number one, “I believe that feminists dislike men,” presented a pre-mean score of 2.3, which indicates that the research participants partially disagreed with this affirmation. Although there were not changes in the pre and post overall mean scores, there were considerable changes in some individuals. Three students changed their initial answers about the myth that feminists dislike men in a negative direction and five students presented the same scores in the statement “feminism is about equality for all people.” If we consider the mean scores of these eight participants only, they might suggest the course had some impact on their initial attitude. This could be related to the politics of the classroom where men are not at the center of class content. Perhaps students felt off-centered for first time in their academic lives and these perceptions might have influenced in the negative change of their scores. Sometimes, the stereotypes about feminism and its counterparts can take the form of accusatory or dismissive generalization. Sadly, these stereotypes can limit our sense of self and our belief in what we are capable of doing and achieving. But stereotypes about feminists are also powerful ways of diminishing the strength of a political movement. If we are silenced by stereotypes or jokes, then we are not standing up to violence and abuse of power (Tarrant, 2009). The assumption that feminists dislike men is just a distorted idea that has been a persistent myth present in society. In fact, Anderson (2014) states, “systematic empirical studies do not find evidence that feminists dislike men. In contrast, there is some suggestions than non-feminists, those women who adhere to traditional gender stereotypes, dislike, or at least, resent, men” (p.14).

There were three research participants (see table 7) that considerably changed their attitudes from low to high in the 5-point scale. These students belonged to different sections in WGSS. Two of them, one Hispanic, and the other Asian, self-identified as feminists in the first survey, but they expressed the contrary in the second. The other student (White), did not identify

as feminist in any of the surveys. I think their demographics did not influence in their attitudes about feminism. Probably, these students perceived that feminism was a movement that only benefits women because women are the majority in WGSS and women are who generally lead feminist activism. Therefore, these research participants might have thought that feminist did not like men because male gender was not fully addressed in class discussions about feminism.

The last statement, “feminism is about equality for all people,” presented a negative variation by the end of the term. The understanding of male students about what ‘feminism’ really is could be the reason why the mean score of this statement changed negatively by the end of the term. Feminism is a political way of thinking and it requires a certain consciousness from which we can reflect on our experiences based on gendered stereotypes (Tarrant, 2009). A feminist is one who advocates for women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men. So why have some men developed a misunderstood definition of feminism? Do male students feel conflicted with their privileged identities in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classrooms? And, since the fact WGSS introductory courses are about women’s lives, did male students experience feminism as about equality for women only? In an effort to promote understanding, we must explore some of the different aspects of feminism: gender roles, sexist language, sexism in the media, as well as the general male perspective on feminism (Johnscot, 2014).

On this statement, I could observe significant individual changes towards a neutral and low pro gender equality attitude. From the five participants that considerably changed their attitudes, three did not identify as feminists in any of the surveys, and two participants identified as feminists in the pre-survey but they did not in the post-survey. Three participants identified as White, one as Asian, and one as Hispanic. I think that, regardless the demographics of these

research participants, the distorted conceptualization of feminism could have affected their perceptions and personal views about the real meaning of this movement and what to be a feminist really means.

### **Comparative Study**

The aim of this comparative study is to measure each sample's beliefs and attitudes about feminism and social and gender equality. Despite the different sample size on both studies, 2005 and 2016, I could identify significant changes on the overall mean scores as well as in the individual mean scores per statement. The statements in this theme, (see table 7) were put together in order to explore the political, gender and social justice attitudes of the participants.

*Table 7. Statements and post-mean scores per research*

	<b>2005 Research [N=33]</b>	<b>2016 Research [N=21]</b>
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Post-mean score</b>	<b>Post-mean score</b>
<b>(1) I would vote for a woman as a president</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>(2) I believe women should not hold positions of power within the church</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>(3) I believe that if a woman is raped, it is probably because of what she was wearing or how she was acting</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.5</b>
<b>(4) I believe that feminists dislike men</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>(5) Feminism is about equality for all people</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Total mean scores</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.7</b>

The statement number one, "I would vote for a woman as a president" presented a mean score of 2.2 in the research conducted in 2005, while in the present research the same statement presented a mean score of 1.3. We can say that this change may indicate that the sample in the present research presented more pro-gender attitudes about gender-based stereotypes and about women leaders than the sample in 2005. This variation could have been influenced by the significant increase of women in political leadership in the last decade. The fact that a woman

has been a presidential candidate for first time in the history in the United States, may have also affected the perceptions of male students in this research. Women are occupying leadership positions not only in politics, but in the private sector as well. In this sense, a large-scale study of 60,470 men and women conducted in 2011 found that, while slightly more than 54% of participants indicated no preference when it came to choosing the gender of their boss, the other 46% indicated a strong preference for a male superior (Hewlett, 2014).

Statement number two, “I believe women should not hold positions of power within the church,” presented a post-mean score of 2.4 in the first study whereas in the present study the mean score was 1.2. Therefore, we could say that the sample in the first research was slightly more resistant to the idea of women as religious leaders. Perhaps, the social changes that have occurred in the intervening years (2005-2016), such as the social movement in the catholic church for women’s ordination might have influenced the perception of the participants about the role of women in the church.

The third statement, “I believe that if a woman is raped it is probably because of what she was wearing or how she was acting,” obtained a post-mean score of 2.3 in the first research which indicates that men partially agreed that women should be aware of the way they dress and how they behave to avoid being raped. For the same statement, the current research obtained a post-mean score of 1.5. This might indicate that male students in this research have more pro gender equality attitudes about this topic. Then, we could infer that the participants are more conscious about the real causes of sexual assault and rape. Rape and sexual assault have become an alarming issue on college campuses and it is important to educate the students community about the difference between rape myths and rape facts. The students’ center of health at West Virginia University recently published an article about the most common myths and facts of rape

and sexual assault. I selected the myth and fact that represent the statement that is being discussed in this section. The article argues that the belief that when a woman dresses provocatively, she is asking for trouble, is a myth. Thinking that women provoke attacks against them by the way they dress transfers blame from the perpetrator to the victim. Research shows that this myth helps others feel better because they think that rape couldn't happen to them. It is interesting to observe how the responses of the participants in the 2005 study fit in the myth while the participants in the 2016 research are much closer to the fact in regard with this topic ("Rape myths and facts," n.d.).

In the intervening years (2005-2016), the different movements to prevent sexual assault, particularly on college campuses have increased greatly. Recently, United Educators, the higher education insurance company began offering insurance to cover sexual assault payouts. The federal government took one step in 2013, with an update to the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that requires colleges receiving federal aid to annually report to the government the number of assaults on their campuses, and to have programs on rape awareness and systems to assist victims (Geggel, 2016). So, perhaps, the historical context may have made as much difference as anything in changing the scores in both research studies.

Finally, the last two statements asked about the relationship between men and feminism and if feminism was about equality for all people presented slight negative variations in this research. To analyze this data, we could recall some points of the discussion about the male privilege that students bring to the classroom and how they react to the politics of the class. Although, the data might suggest that students entered the course already more committed to pro-gender equality attitudes, during the term male students might have felt a little conflicted since their gender identity was not at the center of the class content. Perhaps, they believed that

since WGSS is about women's lives, LGBTQ community, and people of color, those students who identified as white and heterosexual (75% of the same) perceived that feminism was only about the identities mentioned before and not about equality for all people because the content of the class was not focused on men. Tarrant (2009) states, "men frequently don't get engage with feminism because they think the issues don't involve them, they just can't relate" (p.20).

The next part of this chapter is intended to analyze and represent the attitudes of the four male students who participated in the interviews. It is important to highlight that the testimonies of the four participants do not represent the experiences of all male students enrolled in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Indeed, this fact was one of the limitations in this research because the analysis of their responses is limited to their own personal experiences and do not necessarily represent the experiences of all male students enrolled in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. All the students that participated in the interviews indicated that their sexual orientation was 'straight,' three indicated it was their first WGSS course, and two self-identified as feminists.

From the patterned responses in the interviews it was possible to detect two themes. The first, called, "*New perspectives and points of views*" was identified and constructed in relation to the reasons why the participants enrolled in the class. The second theme called, "*Feminist classroom: A challenging but an informative and useful experience*" was obtained from the responses in relation to their personal experiences as male students in a WGSS classroom, as well as the benefits and knowledge that men can gain, and whether they observe any change in their personal perspectives in society as a result of their participation in the course.

*New perspectives and points of views.* This theme allowed me to identify the enthusiasm and readiness of the participants about the course and whether what they had in mind aligned with the goals and values of the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program. Students were asked questions such as, “*Why are you taking this course?*” “*What were your expectations before the first class?*”? And they were also asked if their expectations had been met by the time the interviews took place.

Only one of the four participants had taken a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies class before and the difference on his responses compared to the rest is very positive, in terms of the understanding of classroom dynamics. The other three participants were less familiar with feminist insights and ideas about social justice, and one indicated that he primarily took the course for a baccalaureate core requirement. Nevertheless, all the participants presented a positive attitude towards their experience as male students in their first Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies course.

“Jo,” who self-identified as feminist, is a senior student with previous experience in WGSS, he expressed: “I feel it is very important because my goal in college is to be a well-rounded learner so I feel it is like kind of unfair if I would have taken my major classes or classes oriented to men only. By taking this class I can have different perspectives.” When male students register, and enter Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies they are aware that they are going to experience new knowledge and explore new perspectives. This could be inferred from the responses of all the participants. For example, “Atil” (no feminist), a 21-year-old junior student expressed, “primarily I enrolled in this class because of baccalaureate requirement but also to hear different ideas and just to try to learn from a broader sense.”

The participants anticipated that their participation in WGSS was going to give them the opportunity to gain new knowledge and understand some aspects of the society that they were not very familiar with. In this sense, “Fran,” who self-identified as feminist, is a 19-year-old sophomore student who expressed, “I took it to understand...I guess how women are viewed in society, I just wanted to know more about it.”

The expectations before starting the course focused on class content and the interaction with the instructor of the class. It is interesting to observe that the participants anticipated the material of the class was going to help them to understand social justice and feminist insights in a better way. “Atil” said: “My expectations were primarily going through the understanding of different media through feminism and interpreting readings and just culture in general through a feminist lens.” Similarly, “Jo” expressed: “I didn’t really have expectations. I only took this class because of the content matter and mostly because the material is about social stuff and I was very interested in that.”

Although three participants indicated that their expectations were met by the end of the term, there was one student who expressed a little resistance to the class content and the interaction with the instructor of the class. Fran indicated: “My expectations were having a professor that really understood the material, and was open-minded and I can...you know...have a debate with her and with the class as well.” By the time the interview took place seven weeks had passed since the first class started and he stated: “I didn’t like my teacher at all. I personally...didn’t do reading through the book, which I found also bias because there wasn’t male statistics which I understand, you know, I took a feminist class. I bring it up in class, you know...switch the situation around but the teacher didn’t debate with me about that so she immediately moved onto the next question. I couldn’t express my opinion on how I feel about

certain things because I did feel like I had to be breaking down in some sense so then I would not ask questions or just you know...kind of suck up to the teacher so I get an A and you know... move on with my life.” Although students indicated that WGSS was beneficial, I still could perceive some conflicted opinions, mostly about class content and classroom dynamics. These conflicted views could be reflected on the idea of being off-center of the class content. The testimony (“Fran”) discussed above presents some key words that I could use to interpret what he was trying to say, for instance, “I didn’t do reading through the book, which I found bias because there wasn’t male statistics...” This comment may suggest that this student expected to find a class in which men were at the center of the discussion, or at least in part of it. Perhaps, his privileged identities influenced in how he perceived the politics of WGSS that also could have been affected his engagement with the class.

In Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, the role of the teacher and the teacher-student relationship are perceived in a different way than the traditional disciplines. Clark et al., 2007 state, “although one of the goals of feminist courses is to enable students to join in the dialogue about feminism, feminist professors carry the burden of representing their courses as value-neutral when, in fact, one of the assumptions of feminist pedagogy is that the classroom is value-positive, and that the classroom is the place to negotiate a consensus of values about nonsexist and nonracist practices” (p.96). The students come to the classroom with a very understandable notion from their legacy of education about what constitutes authority and what sort of authority garners power outside the academy. But feminist teachers are invested in another sort of power: persuasive power, and exchange model of teaching allied with an ethics (Clark et al., 2007).

The fact that the participants signed up for a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies class, they already are more open to pro feminist insights, learning new perspectives, and

applying this new knowledge to their personal lives. Moreover, due to the fact the interviews took place during the second half of the term, the interviewees had some exposure to feminist knowledge so we can suggest their ideas about social justice issue and feminist perspectives were likely reinforced during their participation in WGSS.

***Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies: A challenging but an informative and useful experience.*** It is not unknown that the presence of men in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classrooms is uneven compared to women. Male students may have different perceptions of these types of courses and therefore they go through the material of the class and perceive their participation in a different way. Nevertheless, from the responses of the participants in this research, we can say that although the course was challenging, they acknowledged that it can be very informative and a very good experience for them as male students who had little knowledge regarding feminism and social justice.

The first question that students were asked in relation to this theme was: *“How do you feel as a male student in a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Study class?”* The responses obtained were slightly similar. Students expressed certain discomfort during class discussions that was mostly based on the uneven number of male students compared to the female peers, plus some topics and content of the class. For example, “Zac” who did not self-identified as feminist, is a 29-year-old senior student who expressed: “It is awkward. Sometimes I feel conflicted because I am being told that I am the problem or behind the problem and I don’t feel like I am.” It is interesting to observe how this student took the content matter of the class personally. Although the other participants did not address this issue directly, I could infer from their responses that they felt a little intimidated and preferred to keep in silence during class discussions.

“Atil”, the junior student responded in a similar way stating that he felt “very comfortable at the beginning of the course but then he started feeling the opposite.” He commented, “I felt uncomfortable presenting my ideas. Sometimes in the sense that maybe they will not be heard, I do understand that they are accepting and open about different ideas but I still do not feel one hundred percent comfortable.” By ‘they’ we can infer that he is talking about the instructor and the class as a whole and as a space to discuss feminist and social justice matters from which he had little understanding about it by the time the interview took place.

Another participant indicated he did not enjoy the class because of the way that the instructor responded to his inquiries and that he was not given the opportunity to debate about certain topics related to the class that involved men issues and male statistics in feminism. This participant, a sophomore student stated: “Through the experiences this term, I didn’t enjoy it. Nevertheless, I would sign up for another class. I think that men should take this class and even if they don’t like the teacher or the book or the class, it is a very informative course.”

These testimonies might suggest there was a sort of tension between the politics of the classroom and the personal and academic perspectives of the research participants. One student expressed, “I feel conflicted because I am being told that I am the problem...” another indicated, “I felt uncomfortable presenting my ideas...” Again, I think feeling off-center might have affected how male students perceived WGSS. Perhaps, besides feeling off-centered, they had to deal with class discussions about patriarchy and gender inequality. I could assume these students centered their perspectives on misandry assumptions (the equivalent to “men-hating”) because their gender identity was not part of the class in a way that they feel comfortable. Then, we could speculate they perceived certain rejection for being men and not being at the center of the class content.

As male individuals, being in a classroom where women are the majority and where discussions about patriarchy and social inequality predominate, male students can have different reactions. In this sense, Liner (2008) states, “having men in the classroom can stifle discussions about sexuality, complaints about a male-dominated society or descriptions of unpleasant interactions between men and women.” Recent pedagogic research has found that male students experience certain resistance to feminists in the classroom as well as resistance to discussing male privilege and social inequality (Clark et al., 2007).

Although all the participants expressed a certain level of discomfort during the course, they recognized that their participation in the class gave them the opportunity to gain new knowledge and to reflect in some aspects of their personal lives. For instance, “Zac” noted: “It has given me the opportunity to reflect on my marriage. I feel I can reflect about how to be a better husband and a better father. It has opened my eyes to new ideas about relationships and women. Three students indicated this was their first WGSS class, so perhaps they entered the course with a male-centered mentality and they expected that men were at the center of the discussion. I guess, they were not aware that although WGSS is for all students, it is centered on the study of women’s lives and oppressed identities. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, male students may experience WGSS differently and not only because of class content but because WGSS offers a political environment that is different from the rest of the courses. Probably, male students entered WGSS without a clear understanding of the politics of the classroom and the learning outcomes of the class, nevertheless, we could assume that during the course, male students are able to understand and the reflect about the new knowledge they are obtaining in WGSS.

From the responses of the interviewees, we can infer they were not active participants in the class, particularly during class discussions. Nevertheless, they could reflect and think about some aspects of their personal lives in which they could apply the knowledge they were acquiring during the course. “Fran” expressed: “It is a very informative class, you know... what was going on in the society, how women view things, how they were being viewed.” The same participant also said: “I see gay men or bisexual men or lesbian differently. So, now I can rethink about any prejudice and I can reflect on that to try to better understand.” When “Zac” was asked if the content of the class was pertinent to his own life he stated: “Definitely, as a husband and father I think about my daughter; she is going to grow up in a world where hopefully she has equal opportunities and no gender gap and the ability to fulfill what she wants in her life.” In a similar way Atil answered: “I’m gaining new knowledge in sense of some ideas that maybe I haven’t heard of.” Flood (2011), indicates that male participation in WGSS highlight three issues: gendered patterns of interaction, resistance to feminist teaching, and women’s consciousness-raising. Flood (2011) also states, “male students in WGSS classrooms benefit to the same degree as female students, showing similar levels of change, although they start with poorer attitudes and thus the gap between them and their female peers persists. Nevertheless, since the fact, male students in this research could reflect, and somehow, associate the knowledge they were learning with some aspects of their personal lives, we can say that WGSS positively impacted their perceptions about gender equality.

According to the responses regarding the question, “*Has this class altered the way you view society in relation to your own life?*” we can suggest that male students could experience considerable changes in their perceptions about society.

The responses of the participants regarding this question included:

- *“It altered my way in society not from a feminist lens but from more understanding of feminism as a whole and sort of just seeing where they are under sense of split some myths that I had before (“Atil”).”*
- *“It reinforced what I already learned about society and what aspects of society need more representation. I am a little more conscious of women’s issues in the news, but nothing drastic, I would say (“Jo”).”*
- *“Yes. When I see people now I reflect about why do I see them that way, you know...is that good or bad, is that stereotypical, you know... things like that. This class has opened my mind to how to be more communicative in relationships with women. I definitely approach my wife’s perspectives differently. I listen and value what she says (Fran).”*
- *“Yes, it has made me look at how to use class terminology (“Zac”).”*

We could say that the comments provided above, somehow, represent some changes in the male students in how they perceive some aspects of society, in terms of gender equality and social justice. Although men can self-identify as open-minded persons and be open to discussions about gender and sexuality, we can assume that having participated in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies made them re-think and reinforce previous personal pro-gender equality insights.

The participants were also asked during the interview if they thought that men can obtain any benefits from a Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies class and what their role was within this type of classes. I observed the interviewees expressed more reflective and thoughtful answers to this questions. All of them agreed that the class opened their minds to new ideas and insights allowing them to see the world differently and to reflect about their own lives. For instance, “Atil” noted: “I do think there are because like, with me...there are some men that are

misunderstanding issues that women go through and feminism as a whole and so I believe the class can be helpful.” Regarding the role of men in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes he responded: “It is very important that men understand feminist perspectives and why women do feel this way and then why there is, there are reasons why they feel this way and then what political actions or social actions can be taken.” “Zac” answered: “Yes, it allows us to see the world differently.” And similarly, “Fran” said: “Yes, I definitely think that is beneficial to men, it opens their eyes to see that they are doing.”

“Jo” and “Fran” expressed very similar answers. Both agreed that this type of courses that very important for men. Jo, the student with previous experience in the feminist classroom said: “It is very disappointing to see only four men in the class. I think for a more equal representation more men should be enrolled in these classes. Because a lot of issues on campus can be resolved by encouraging men to take WGSS classes.” “Fran” declared: “The men need to be more informed about this because we definitely push these concepts and facts underneath the rug making sure that we don’t want to address because we don’t want to believe that is true.”

In conclusion, the ways in which Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies affected the attitudes of the research participants about social and gender equality encompass some aspects of their personal lives, especially in their relationship with women and in the de-construction of some stereotyped ideas about gender and social justice. The responses obtained during the interviews revealed that the participants recognized that it is important for male students to be informed about current social contexts, especially, in relation to social justice issues, gender equality and feminist perspectives. Those students who self-identified as feminists, seemed to have a better understanding of the politics of the WGSS classroom, even, one of them acknowledged that the classroom was a safe space for women.

Lastly, since the research participants signed up for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and agreed to participate in the interviews, we could assume that they entered the course with good pro gender equality attitudes, which were reinforced by the end of the course.

Finally, the different responses obtained from both, surveys and interviews, presented different assumptions on the attitudes of male students. Perhaps, one limitation presented in the surveys, is that the statements could not assess student's values or obtain evidence of a profound impact in students' lives. Since the statements on the surveys were easy to agree with, without necessarily self-identifying as pro-feminist, we could assume that the students used their common sense to respond. On the other hand, the responses obtained from the interviews showed evidence of the considerable impact that Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies may have on male students. Also, since male students voluntarily participated in the interviews by the end of the term, we could assume they had more powerful or positive experiences than students who completed the surveys only, and perhaps somehow, WGSS motivated them to share their testimonies in this research about their experiences in the course.

The aim of the next and last section of this chapter is to determine whether the attitudes of male students in the 2005 study differ from the attitudes of the male students in my research.

In the research study conducted in 2005, the researcher interviewed five male students and from their patterned responses she could identify three themes, which include, (1) "It's not about girls, it's about all people," (2) "Perspectives," and (3) "As a guy..." In my research, the themes I identified were, (1) "New perspectives and points of view" and (2) "Feminist classroom: a challenging but an informative experience."

In the first research, four out of five participants identified as feminists, while in my research, two out of four participants identified as feminists. In both studies, male students

indicated that their personal perspectives and views regarding feminism had been altered as a result of the course and they unanimously agreed that men can obtain new knowledge that can be pertinent to their own lives. Also, they recognized that the feminist classroom differs from the traditional classrooms which can make the experience in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies a little challenging.

What differs from my data is that the participants in the first research expressed more ideas about what they expected to find in WGSS. The researcher indicated that male students expected to find a class environment that was unwelcoming and class content about misandry. However, what research participants in 2005 found out was contrary to their expectations. Their responses included comments about learning the real definition of feminism and true meaning of the movement within WGSS. Research participants in 2016 did not express these ideas and perhaps one of the reasons is that the students could have been enrolled in a different introductory WGSS course that was not part of the first research. Although most of introductory WGSS courses focus on the study of women's lives, LGBTQ, and people of color, they can have different approaches that can influence in the perceptions of the students.

In the first research, the theme number one discussed the expectations of the male students about the course. The researcher concluded that the participants claimed their personal ideas about feminism had been altered as a result of the class and that they had gained new knowledge and insight. In the second theme, "perspectives," the participants explained how the new knowledge they were learning was not very familiar to them and the class differed from the rest of their courses in terms of class content and course goals. The researcher concluded that the interviewed did not express drastic changes in their personal lives but they gained a new level or awareness about feminism and about Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies itself. In the third

statement, “as a guy,” the male students discussed their experiences about being a man in the feminist classroom and how they thought men could benefit from it.

The participants in the first and second research expressed certain level of discomfort within the course. In the comparison of their responses, the words awkward and uncomfortable predominated within their answers. These feelings mostly responded to two facts, (a) being the gender minority in the classroom and (b) the class discussions about gender inequality and androcentrism. Nevertheless, despite some slight negative reactions, the participants in both research studies expressed that men should take WGSS because it opens their eyes to new and important perspectives that can be applied to their own personal lives.

## Chapter -V Conclusion

The mixed-methods research approach applied in this study used surveys and interviews to capture the attitudes of male students about pro gender equality perspectives. Although the sample size of this study does not represent the experiences and attitudes of all male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, the results of this research demonstrated that some male students obtained new knowledge that led them to new perspectives.

Results in this study show that general mean scores for participants do not present considerable change in their attitudes about pro gender equality perspectives. This is likely because of the current social context which might have raised students' awareness on issues such as campus anti-rape efforts, social movements about racial discrimination, and a wider exposure to feminism via social media. Results also show that male students support the idea of women in powerful political and social positions. The recent political context in the United States, where a woman ran for President, may have greatly impacted the attitudes of study participants about pro-gender equality.

Results also demonstrate that although male students tend to be open to pro gender equality perspectives, they still feel relatively uncomfortable in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classes, probably because they realize they are off-centered as male individuals in a class that discusses issues about women's lives and marginalized communities. The positionality and privileged identities that male students bring to WGSS may play an important role in how they perceive the politics of the classroom. Since most of the participants in this research indicated that it was their first WGSS course, we could suggest that they expected men were at the center of the class content, or last least, that were part of it. However, the results of this research

postulate that WGSS courses may reinforce pro gender equality attitudes that men already bring to the classroom. Additionally, since the results don't show considerable changes, we could suggest that WGSS courses do not negatively impact on the pro gender equality perspectives that male students bring to the classroom. In fact, some research participants expressed that WGSS courses did have significant impact on their attitudes about particular topics and even they acknowledged that WGSS classes can be very useful and informative for men.

Individual scores on some statements do show significant change. This may indicate that some students entered Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with some fair pro gender equality perspectives which were reinforced, probably, as a result of the course. This might also mean that since the collection of data took place during the recent electoral campaigns, which were subject to many discussions about gender equality and social justice issues, students could associate or assimilate some class contents with current social contexts. Students who did not self-identify as feminists presented a lower pro gender equality attitude.

The findings of the comparative study between my research and the research conducted in 2005, show considerable changes in some statements. Students in my research tended to have more pro gender equality views than the students in the first research. I believe that this changes were likely influenced by current social changes, especially where gender equality is being at the center of the discussion in multiple social contexts.

Male students in both research studies expressed that the content and the materials of the course were pertinent to their lives. Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies helped them to gain new perspectives and explore new ways to see the world around them, as well as it helped them

to question their own assumptions about gender and social justice and reflect on their own positions of privilege in society.

Future research should include more complex questions and statements that can assess students' values. The statements and questions in my research could not identify 'pro feminist attitudes.' This is the reason I decided to change this category to 'pro gender equality.' Perhaps, for future research, it would be interesting to assess the values of male students to identify pro-feminist perspectives and attitudes. Future research should also consider to conduct a two-term or longer research about the experiences of male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The fact that the number of male students in this program is very low compared to women, to conduct a one-term long research could not be enough time. Future research should conduct a multi-university research. This could collaborate to reduce the lack of the literature about men in feminist classrooms. Future research should also consider to conduct a research in graduate courses. The opinions and testimonies of graduate students who self-identify as male, can provide a more profound understanding of the effects of WGSS in men. It would be interesting to compare between undergraduate courses and graduate courses too. Future research should focus on the study about privileges identities in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and how these identities influence the engagement with the course.

A recommendation for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies programs is to, consider these findings to analyze how male-privileged students react to the politics of the classroom and theorize about how facilitate their engagement without centering their gender identity. I think some male students who entered introductory WGSS may bring their previous academic experiences as privileged individuals in which, probably, men are at the center. When male students find out that in WGSS men are not part of the class discussions, they possibly perceive

that the class is not important for them which may cause disengagement and impeding them to achieve course objectives and learning outcomes.

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## Appendices

Appendix A  
Survey

**Thank you very much for completing this short survey. Your answers will help our curriculum design in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program. All answers are anonymous; please do not put your name on this paper.**

- What is your class standing? Freshman -Sophomore- Junior- Senior Graduate
- What is your current gender identity? (Check all that apply)
  - Male
  - Female
  - Trans male/Trans man
  - Trans female/Trans woman
  - Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming
  - Different identity (please state):
- What is your race/ethnicity? (If applicable) .....
- What is your father's occupation? (If applicable).....
- What is your mother's occupation? (If applicable).....
- Did have a parent who was a stay-at-home parent during your childhood? If yes, which one? (If applicable) .....
- What is your father's education level? (If applicable).....
- What is your mother's education level? (If applicable).....

Please circle the option that best represents your annual family income.

Below 20,000- 20,000-40,000 40,000-60,000 60,000- 90,000 -90,000 or above

- Do you consider yourself religious? YES NO
- Do you identify with a religious denomination? YES NO If yes, which one?  
.....
- Why are you taking this Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies class?  
.....
- Is this your first WGSS studies class at OSU? YES NO
- Do you consider yourself a feminist or identify as profeminist?  
.....
- Have you ever volunteered or worked for an organization focused on women's issues?  
YES NO  
If yes, what was the focus? (If possible).....
- Would you volunteer or work for an organization focused on women's issues?
- YES NO If yes, what issues? .....
- Have you ever experienced violence? YES NO

**On the following continuum, please mark the place that best represents how you feel about the following statements.**

- There is social inequality in our country. Agree ----- Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- Women have equal rights with men. Agree ----- Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- I believe that racism is still a problem in the United States. Agree ----- Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- Institutions should have to accommodate persons with disabilities.  
Agree ----- Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- I feel that women should have access to an abortion only in the case of rape.  
Agree -----Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- I believe that if a woman is raped, it's probable because of what she was wearing or how she was acting. Agree -----Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- I believe that feminist dislike men. Agree ----- Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- Feminism is about equality for all people. Agree -----Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- I believe women should not hold positions of power within the church.  
Agree ----- Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- I would vote for a woman as president. Agree..... Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- Men should dress like men and women should dress like women.  
Agree .....Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- Men and women have equal intellectual abilities. Agree -----Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- Marriage should be reserved for a union between a man and a woman.  
Agree -----Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5
- The War in Iraq is necessary for peace and democracy in the world.  
Agree ----- Disagree  
1 2 3 4 5

**Recruitment for interview participation.**

Please complete the following information if you are a man and you are interested in continued participation in this research project. If you complete this form, you will be contacted before dead week of winter term 2016 4 to set up 15-20 minute interview with the student researcher. This will be your only obligation and you are free to withdraw from the research at any point with no consequences.

Name (First, Middle Initial, Last name)

.....

.

Contact Information:

(Please provide an email address or phone number)

.....

## Appendix B Interview Questions

### Demographics:

- What is your class standing?
- What is your race/ethnicity?
- How old are you?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- What is your political affiliation?
- Do you identify with a religious denomination? If yes, which one?
- What is your socio-economic status?
- Can you describe your family dynamics growing up? Siblings/order? Were parents at home?
- Does your mother identify as a feminist?
- Does anyone in your family identify as a feminist?

### Questions related to course content and materials:

- Is this your first Women Studies class? If not, what classes have you taken before?
- Why are you taking this Women Studies class?
- What were your expectations of Women Studies before your first class?
- Are expectations being met?
- What do you think about feminism?
- Would you consider yourself a feminist?
- How do you feel, as a male, about being in a Women Studies classroom? Class demographics?
- Describe your experience in the feminist classroom this term by reflecting on one positive moment, one negative moment, and one negative moment?
- Is the material you've been learning in Women Studies pertinent to your life? If yes, how?
- Do you feel like you are gaining new knowledge or insight from this class? What?
- Has this class altered the way you view society?
- Do you think there are benefits to men taking Women Studies classes?
- What do you think is the role of men in Women Studies?

Appendix C  
Collective email

Dear all,

I am writing to you to ask your permission to collect data in your WGSS 223-224-230-340 courses as part of a research called "The experiences of male students in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies classrooms." The collection of data will be done through the distribution of surveys for the entire classes during the first week of winter term 2016. Within these surveys there will be a section on a separate piece of paper in which male students will be asked to participate in a voluntary interview with the student researcher later in the term.

The participation in this study is voluntary and it might take about 20 min to be completed.

Those students who do not want to participate will be given a reading activity about the male participation in women studies classes. The collection of data of our research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB office.

Due to the characteristics of this research, the collection of data must be done during the first week of classes.

I hope I can get your permission, and please let me know if you have any questions.

-Marcos Viveros

## Appendix D Explanation of Research



**School of Language, Culture, and Society**

Oregon State University, 236 Waldo Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331

T 541-737-3847 | F 541-737-3650 | <http://oregonstate.edu/cla>

### EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

**Project Title:** Experiences of Men in Introductory WGSS Classes  
**Principal Investigator:** Susan M. Shaw 1/11/2016  
**Version Date:**

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#### **1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?**

This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this research study or not.

Please read the form carefully and ask the researcher questions about anything that is not clear.

#### **2. WHY IS THIS RESEARCH STUDY BEING DONE?**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the experiences of male students in the women, gender, and sexuality introductory courses at OSU (WGSS 223, 224 230, 262, 270, 280, 321, 240, and 360). This study replicates a 2005 study conducted by a graduate student in the then-Women Studies Program. This study will compare Love's findings about male students' experiences in introductory women's studies classes in 2005 with the experiences of current male students in these same classes in 2016. The goal is to examine whether changes to the program and the larger culture have had impact on current male students' experiences and perceptions. Up to 300 participants may be invited to take part in the surveys. Up to 60 male participants may be invited to participate in interviews.

#### **3. WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

You are invited to take part in this study because you are enrolled in either WGSS 223, 224 230, 262, 270, 280, 321, 240, or 360 at Oregon State University during Winter Term 2016. Only the data provided by the men in the study will be used for analysis. For women participating in the survey, this experience provides an opportunity to learn about research participation and to think about key issues in course content for this class.

#### **4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?**

This research follows up on the research conducted in 2005 and involves brief surveys and in-person semi-structured interviews. The study activities include two brief surveys for all participants, one at the beginning of the term and one at the end of the term. Male participants who choose to participate in interviews will also complete a brief demographic survey and a 15-20 minutes interview.

**Recordings:** Interviews will be audio recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, you should not take part in the study. Once interviews are transcribed, recordings will be kept until the thesis defense after which they will be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed from the

transcription. Transcriptions will only use a pseudonym you select to identify your words. No list will be kept linking your pseudonym to your name.

**Study Results:** The primary result of this study will be a master's thesis that will be held in the Valley Library.

#### **5. WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND POSSIBLE DISCOMFORTS OF THIS STUDY?**

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the being in the study include: Risks and discomforts are minimal, although, depending on your experience, you may describe events or feelings that are uncomfortable for you. You may always refuse to answer any question if it evokes distress. No publication or presentation will offer any identifying information that would allow anyone to identify an individual participant.

#### **6. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?**

This study provides benefit to WGSS Program by helping faculty understand the experiences of male students in women, gender, and sexuality studies courses in which commonly women are the majority and are at the center of the content. This study is not designed to benefit you directly.

#### **7. WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

#### **8. WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?**

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public. Only the PI and student researcher will have access to audio recordings and transcriptions. Audio recordings will be deleted after the thesis defense is completed. To help ensure confidentiality, we will use only a pseudonym to identify your words; we will keep audio files on a password protected computer.

#### **9. WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I DO NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to take part or not take part in this study will not affect your grades, your relationship with your professors, or your standing in the University. If you choose not to participate, you will be provided with an alternative activity. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

#### **10. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Susan M. Shaw at [sshaw@oregonstate.edu](mailto:sshaw@oregonstate.edu) or 541-737-3082.

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)

OSU IRB  
12/08/2020<sup>Shaw 1/11/16</sup>

Study # 7166

Expiration Date:

Appendix E  
Alternative Reading



Why Men Should Take Women's Studies  
August 9, 2012

By Dean Dad

Women's studies courses were some of the most useful courses I've ever taken.

I'm not kidding.

Moreover, I can imagine them being incredibly useful for other men in management roles.

That flies in the face of cultural stereotypes, I know. Courses like those are usually held up -- by those who like to make such arguments -- as among the most self-indulgent of the purely academic enterprises. They elicit snickers from some. I get that. But there's a tremendous value in them that rarely gets expressed, even by supporters of courses like those.

At their best, the women's studies courses I took -- yes, I used the plural -- helped with two incredibly important management skills. They helped me learn to navigate complex and emotionally charged issues, and they helped me learn to depersonalize categories.

These skills are useful every single day.

I was reminded of this a few days ago, when I was on the receiving end of an extended, vitriolic outburst. It would have been easy, if unhelpful, to respond in kind, or to try to respond point by point. Without betraying any confidences, it was based on different sets of assumptions crashing into each other.

Getting through that and coming out in a better place required the patience to first try to figure out where it was coming from. It required accepting that the reason I was being yelled at was my office, as opposed to me personally. And it required emotional self-control in a charged setting that was moving pretty quickly.

Looking back afterwards, I realized that women's studies classes were the first academic setting in which I honed those skills.

As a clueless -- if well-meaning -- straight young white guy from the suburbs, I went into those classes without malice, but with some pretty glaring blind spots. And back in the late 80's and

early 90's, some of the theoretical issues were, um, let's go with "at an early stage of refinement." Some discussions were conducted with appropriate academic distance, but some of them got pretty raw. And it was easy to fall into the demonization/defensiveness spiral that we all know so well.

But it was also where I was first blindsided by arguments about things I thought I already understood. I remember being struck dumb when someone made the point that the question of mothers working for pay registered differently in low-income communities, where the "choice" was never a choice. I hadn't thought of it from that angle. And I remember repeatedly getting flustered as statements that had seemed obviously correct were parsed for unintended, but real, effects on folks I wasn't thinking about.

If that isn't preparation for administration, I don't know what is. Everything here has ripple effects, and dealing with those ripple effects is a huge part of the job. For some of us, the patience to take those seriously is a learned skill. (There's always a temptation to just throw up your hands, say "screw it," and do what you wanted to do in the first place.) And learning to at least think about possible unintended effects is incredibly helpful.

I won't claim that all was sweetness and light. There was some groupthink, and heaven knows that the prose style of, say, Gayatri Spivak, can sap the will of even the most tenacious reader. Some of it was a bit much, and at least back then, the standards of proof weren't always what they could have been.

But that's not really the point. The point was to develop habits of mind that acknowledged that even things that seem obvious may have more to them, and to be able to separate, say, an attack on "patriarchy" from a personal attack as a guy. It wasn't always fun, but it was incredibly useful.

It wasn't marketed as vocational, but I use it on the job every single day. For any guys out there considering administration or management, I really can't recommend it highly enough.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/confessions-community-college-dean/why-men-should-take-women%E2%80%99s-studies>