

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Melanie S. Love for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies in Women Studies, Women Studies, and Philosophy presented on August 29, 2005.

Title: The Consequences and Effects for Male Students in the Women Studies Classroom.

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This research explores the consequences and effects for men enrolled in introductory Women Studies courses at Oregon State University. Men are enrolling in the feminist classroom in larger numbers due to institutional changes allowing Women Studies to provide credit for baccalaureate core curriculum. The intention of this study is to examine how men react to the feminist classroom, to understand how, and if, they are affected by the material, and to find out if the experience facilitates personal and political changes for men.

Results from this research project are mixed concerning the consequences of feminist education on men. While some men are resistant, many are benefiting from feminist education and are finding the material pertinent to their own lives. Overall, men in

this study were relatively accepting of feminist knowledge however, no major changes among individuals were evident

Potential for future research includes a more in-depth exploration of men's attitudes toward feminist scholarship through interviewing men enrolled in upper level Women Studies and feminist classes, gaining information from male resisters in the feminist classroom, accessing the limitations of this research and minimizing them in a replica study, and through the use of a more diverse male sample.

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The Consequences and Effects for Male Students in the Women
Studies Classroom

by
Melanie S. Love

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Melanie S. Love, Author

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother. Without her encouragement and words of wisdom I would not be the woman I am today.

THE EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES FOR MEN IN THE WOMEN STUDIES CLASSROOM

INTRODUCTION

The topic

Women Studies programs and departments have developed across the country within public universities and private institutions since their initiation into academia in the early 1970s. Women Studies is among the few academic disciplines that “emerged from a political and social movement outside the walls of the university” (Rutenberg, 75). With origins in the women’s movement, Women Studies is often named its “academic wing” (Shaw & Lee, 2). In the same way feminism was a reaction to the unequal status and conditions of women on a societal level, Women Studies responded to the androcentrism evident in traditional education. Women Studies acknowledged that women were trivialized, misrepresented, and absent within higher education and excluded from positions of power and authority within the university setting.

Since Women Studies was founded, there have been changes within the university and the discipline that have drastically altered feminist teaching and learning. Originally, Women Studies classes were small in number and consisted of mainly women. Lecture

courses were discouraged and, instead, small discussion-groups utilized. Women Studies worked to integrate the personal experiences of students into the classroom, determined student progress through papers and reflection assignments, and employed experiential learning to facilitate instruction. However, the increased institutionalization and departmentalization of Women Studies has encouraged a move to accept the norms of current academic life and tests have been implemented once again, lecture style courses are now offered, and class size has increased drastically as a result of Women Studies providing baccalaureate credit for core curriculum at many universities. Therefore, male students are entering the feminist classroom more than ever before.

The questions

The inspiration for this research materialized from my personal experiences as a graduate teaching assistant in the Women Studies Program at Oregon State University. In my second year as a graduate student, I had the opportunity to teach my own classes. Prior to entering the classroom as an instructor, I had heard stories from other faculty and staff regarding men's resistance to feminist knowledge and Women Studies course materials. While preparing for my own classes, I found myself thinking of ways to reach *all* students that would be enrolled in my

courses and how to employ feminist knowledge in a way that would intrigue students. I wanted them to connect with the material and understand how it related to their own lives.

While my goals were unattainable (and I knew this from the beginning), I was dedicated to creating an atmosphere where both women and men felt safe to share experiences and where personal connections with course material could happen. From this mindset, questions began to arise for me around men's acceptance to feminist knowledge. Were men *really* resistant? Did they ever find the material pertinent to their own lives? Did men leave Women Studies feeling that they had learned new knowledge and insight? Did material learned in the feminist classroom translate into their everyday lives? Did men hate Women Studies? Do men ever leave Women Studies identifying with feminism as a result of a class? What do men think/feel about being in a classroom of mainly women talking about social inequality?

As I became more engaged with these questions I began to consider how a male's race, social class, sexual identification, family life, religious views, and other variables could facilitate his acceptance of or resistance to feminist education. As I taught my own classes, I found myself interested in male responses to class activities, small group discussions, class assignments, and to myself as the instructor. While I in no way catered to the men in

those courses, I did take note of men's experiences in the Women Studies classroom. However, this did not give me a clear understanding of how feminist scholarship was truly affecting them. Therefore, I organized this research project in order to answer my questions. I chose to survey and interview men so that I could hear, from the male students themselves, their perceptions and thoughts about the effects and consequences of Women Studies knowledge and classes.

The researcher

My interest in pursuing this line of study flows from my love of teaching and dedication to feminism. As a feminist, I believe that women are subjugated on a variety of levels by the structure of patriarchy and that there are many ways to eradicate oppression. Women Studies has provided me with a forum in which to discuss social inequality and to critically examine how oppression works. I believe that one way to ensue social equity is to both recognize and analyze the existence of structures that facilitate domination and subordination. As an instructor, I became aware of the powerful impact feminist knowledge could have on students and was dedicated to empowering students to critically think about the society in which we live.

I came to Oregon State University a year and a half after finishing a Bachelor's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Women Studies from Appalachian State University in North Carolina. At this institution, the Women Studies Program was not well developed despite its initiation in 1976. Unlike Oregon State University, there was only one introductory course offered each semester, and, since it did not provide credit for baccalaureate core curriculum, few students enrolled. My classes consisted mainly of women and they implemented many of the teaching practices Women Studies introduced initially. Therefore, when I began my graduate career, I was astonished to see the number of introductory sections offered each term and the size of enrollment.

While I began this research with the belief that my personal biases would not negate the value of my research, I must acknowledge that in fact, all research is somewhat biased and reflects the values, interests, and politics of the researcher. My belief that knowledge is power influenced me to believe that every student in Women Studies could learn something that was pertinent to her/his own life and these lives could be changed as a result of feminist knowledge. In this research, it was important to not only listen to men's experiences but to *hear* their stories and accurately recount their words.

The purpose of this study

As a feminist, why would I ask men about what they thought of Women Studies? Doesn't society always focus on men? Does it really matter whether or not men are benefiting from feminist knowledge? These are questions that I am sure many people are asking concerning my research (including myself). Therefore, it is important to explain why I feel this research project is of utmost importance.

We have reached a point where more students are exposed to feminist knowledge than ever before in the history of the discipline. Women Studies has transformed into Gender Studies at many universities and some institutions are involved in the current debate as to whether or not they should do the same. The University of Washington has just hired a male Chair for their Women Studies Department and it is becoming evident that there are more changes yet to come.

Feminist knowledge in Women Studies has worked to center women in response to the peripheral space to which they have been delegated throughout history. But as feminist scholarship has developed, the recognition of classism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, and looksism as oppressive structures has made these systems more central to feminist teaching and learning in addition to sexism. The reality is that there are some men (for example a

gay working class man of color) who may experience more oppression than a privileged white heterosexual woman of upper class status. While the existence of the gender hierarchy should not be forgotten or overlooked, we must recognize that we are individually affected by the overlapping oppressions in various ways and that no one group shares a common experience.

In addition, we (feminists) are working toward the goal of social equality. Peggy McIntosh has brought to our attention that a major component of eradicating racism is for white people to recognize their power and join the fight. It is not just about people of color working towards equal rights, we all must work together. If we are to eliminate sexism, we must also work together. And if men are willing to join women as allies in the struggle for equal rights, then why not work together for a paradigm shift that would result in equality? Men can be and have been beneficial to the feminist movement and if men can relate to Women Studies, I believe it will be beneficial for the movement.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Origins of Women Studies education

Founders of the National Women's Studies Association once defined Women Studies as an "educational strategy" for change, not because of some abstract principle that change in itself is good, but because of the recognition that we live in a sexist world where women are devalued, subordinated, and oppressed (Westkott, 210). This sexism is apparent in higher education where traditional education theorizes about women's lives without the input of women, placing them in a subordinate position to men (Gnann et al., 59& 62). In its neglect of an in-depth study of women, traditional education neither challenges stereotypes nor analyzes the contradictions between these stereotypes and our own lives. In addition, knowledge derived from students' personal or emotional experiences is not incorporated into the methodology or material of traditional disciplines (Rutenberg, 74). Rather, as McLaren (72) emphasizes, knowledge has been socially constructed and is "deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations." Knowledge is never neutral or subjective but instead is arranged and distributed in a particular way: "its emphases and exclusions partake of a silent

logic” (McLaren, 72). Women Studies was developed in order to address and counter this androcentrism in traditional education.

When studies are centered on women’s everyday lives, women are given active agency, challenging male domination and other systems of privilege and inequality. Women’s experiences and voices can then inform analysis of women’s lives and can become central in understanding human society (Shaw & Lee, 2). Women Studies is not simply the study of women, instead it explores and represents women’s lives by placing them in the center of the process: “it examines the world and the human beings who inhabit it with question, analyses, and theories built directly on women’s experiences” (Buhle, xix). Women Studies takes what other people assume about women and poses those assumptions as questions. It “involves constant critical evaluation of our own and other people’s understanding of and reactions to women” (Sapiro, 9).

Scholars consider the traditional knowledge of the academy as hegemonic education. Hegemony can be defined as “the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family”(McLaren, 76). It was the goal of Women Studies to challenge the status quo upheld by traditional education and to

provide counter-hegemonic education. In this way, Women Studies is a “self-conscious determination to show that both the content and form of existing knowledge is related to the unequal distribution of social power between men and women” (Westcott, 220).

As Rutenberg (75) states, “the most significant difference between Women Studies and the traditional disciplines is that Women Studies emerged from a political and social movement outside the walls of the university” (Rutenberg, 75). However, Women Studies is not the only discipline that has developed from political and social movements; Queer studies and Ethnic studies evolved in a similar manner. Boxer (3) explains, “the term women studies is used to cover a wide range of activities, from scholarship and teaching that are traditional in all but their focus on women to innovative attempts to revise methods of inquiry, develop new categories of analysis, reconceptualize pedagogies, and restructure institutional relationships.”

In this way, Women Studies developed as a result of the absence, misrepresentation, and trivialization of women in higher education curriculum as well as the systematic exclusion of women from positions of power and authority within the university setting. Demands to include women as subjects of study within higher education was facilitated by a broad societal women’s movement in

the late 1960s and early 1970s in which individuals and organizations focused on issues of work and employment, family and parenting, sexuality, reproductive rights, and violence against women. The women's movement also transpired at a time of widespread social turmoil as other social movements such as the civil rights movement, the gay and lesbian rights movement, the disability rights movement, and the battered women's movement questioned racism, social and sexual values, poverty, U. S. militarism, and other inequities (Shaw & Lee, 1-3). It was during this time that "women's movement activists realized they needed to know more about the social forces that shaped their lives" (Sapiro, 9). The university became a site in which to create such knowledge.

Due to this intimate relationship with the women's movement, principles of the latter are evident in the content and method of teaching Women Studies. In particular, Women Studies is grounded by the same feminist principles that guide the women's movement. Feminism is dedicated to social equality for women and men across all socio-economic statuses, sexual identities, races, ethnicities, ages, looks, and abilities. Feminist scholarship works to represent the varied experiences of women and has focused on creating interdisciplinary knowledge and spaces to discuss these experiences. Feminist educators use feminism as a "primary lens

through which the world is interpreted and acted upon” (Kenway and Modra, 138). Therefore, topics such as health care and reproductive rights, law and social policy, popular culture, religion, the family, and employment, are explored with an emphasis on how gender, race, class, sexual identity, and looks can influence privilege and inequality within these institutions. Feminist scholars incorporate the experiences, successes, and attributions women have made both historically and presently.

By the mid 1970s feminist process, politicizing the personal and interactive cooperation became central aspects of the feminist classroom. The term the “personal is political” represents how “personal” problems that seem idiosyncratic are actually part of a much larger domain of male domination and female subordination along with the systems of privilege and inequality. This concept encouraged students to recognize how their own experiences were not isolated events. This term “challenged the opposition between the personal and the political aspects of daily life by making women’s own experiences the ground for feminism” (Buhle, xix).

Goals of Women Studies education

Manifestos of early Women Studies programs revealed several disciplinary goals. First was the need to raise the consciousness of students and faculty regarding the need to study women, the

absence of women from traditional scholarship and texts, as well as the subordinate position of women, past and present, in our patriarchal society (Howe, 101). Another focus was compensating for the absence of women and the unsatisfactory way women were represented in traditional education (Howe, 101). This goal was completed through the implementation of courses focused specifically on women's perspectives and experiences, and through the integration of women in existing curricula. However, this integration involved a series of strategies.

Charlotte Bunch has called one approach the "add women and stir" method of curriculum revision (Howe, 107). In practice, this could be one lecture on women out of forty; or one week on suffrage out of a whole class on American history; or assigning one book by a woman in a literature course. This strategy shifted the focus from men and men's lives and gave some attention to women's voices and experiences. The second approach involved transforming existing curriculum through "questioning the nature of knowledge, how knowledge is produced, and the applications and consequences of knowledge in wider society" (Shaw and Lee, 2). This perspective questioned how traditional knowledge reflected women's lives and concerns, how such knowledge affects women, and how knowledge maintains male power and privilege. Final goals included the need to build a body of research about women

and to reenvision the lost culture and history of women through this new body of research about women (Howe, 101).

Current goals of Women Studies programs and departments encompass the original however they have evolved over the past thirty the years. A list of goals or objectives today might resemble the following:

- To understand the social construction of gender and the intersection of gender with other systems of inequality in women's lives
- The empowerment of women and other oppressed groups
- To learn about the status of women in society and ways to improve that status through individual and collective action for social change
- To experience how institutions in society affect individual lives and to be able to think critically about the role patterns of privilege and discrimination work in women's lives
- To improve writing and speaking skills, gain new insights, and empower self and others (Shaw & Lee, 8).

Autonomy versus integration

When Women Studies first entered the academic community, the question of how to employ feminist scholarship came into question. A debate arose over whether or not Women Studies should be integrated into existing disciplines or if an autonomous discipline should be developed. Integrationists focused on the idea that interdisciplinarity could be achieved through feminist scholarship by coordinating courses and faculty within various established disciplines versus building an autonomous discipline where feminist scholarship could be explored through courses within a newly established department. Integration meant more than “adding” women to existing curricula. The goal of many integrationist projects was to balance existing curriculum as well as to challenge and question the generation and distribution of knowledge; this meant changing the whole shape of a course or the discipline through integrating information about women and teaching from a feminist perspective (Bowles and Klein, 3). In 1982 a Princeton administrator wrote, “Women’s Studies does not constitute a new discipline but a new subject with a special perspective that can help to change the old disciplines” (Bowles and Klein, 4).

Those in favor of autonomy found the integrationist methods to be problematic and responded with questions such as: Who is

the primary audience of integrated Women's Studies? What happens to a body of feminist knowledge that is distributed by non-feminists because they have to incorporate it into their course? And what happens to the student who gets her or his feminist education from such a teacher? Another topic of conversation was centered on what precisely was being integrated. Did integrationism incorporate a range of experiences from women of varying sexual identities, social classes, ethnicities, races and abilities, or was there a focus on white, heterosexual, middle-class women?

Supporters of an autonomous Women Studies argued the "potential to alter fundamentally the nature of knowledge by shifting the focus from androcentricity to a frame reference in which women's different and differing ideas, experiences, needs and interests are valid in their own right and form the basis" for teaching and learning (Bowles and Klein, 3). Autonomy meant that every issue would be a Women Studies issue and women would no longer be subordinated to the power and control of male-dominated and male-defined knowledge (Bowles and Klein, 3). Advocates of autonomy maintained, "the structure of knowledge can be changed only by radical, innovative feminist scholarship that is given a chance to grow in a setting where there is vibrant exchange and debate among autonomous feminist scholars who have control over

their knowledge making" (Bowles & Klein, 2). Autonomous departments would provide a place where feminist scholars would have the freedom to continue feminist work in a feminist setting without the interference of patriarchal beliefs within the department itself. Those involved in the classes would be there by choice based on an interest in women's issues and experiences. And feminist scholars would be writing to a feminist audience as well as working in a feminist environment.

The integrationist critique of an autonomous Women Studies argued that this type of feminist existence represented an enclave for "special interests" and did not represent a move away from dominant oppressive culture. It was argued that this was not a move "towards a more inclusive structure of knowledge validating and reflecting the differing experiences and interests of a wide range of people" (Bowles and Klein, 5). Classes specifically on women were commonly viewed to serve as corrective courses for students with special interests.

Institutional changes in Women Studies over the past 30 years have resulted in a combination of both strategies. Women Studies programs developed across the country that were successful in integrating knowledge into the general curriculum while simultaneously many autonomous departments were established. Autonomous departments offered their own courses,

created their own curriculum, and classes from other disciplines taught from a feminist perspective and focusing on women's issues became available for Women Studies credit. In this way, interdisciplinarity was maintained and Women Studies executed.

Since this initial debate, there have been changes within the university setting and within the discipline of Women Studies that have drastically altered feminist teaching and learning. When Women Studies originated, the goal was to limit lecture courses and instead utilize small discussion-group formats. Women Studies valued the personal experiences of students and integrated them into the classroom. The "personal is political" was imperative for understanding women's lives and diverse experiences. This format was "designed to empower students who would have every opportunity to express themselves, allowed scope for linking students' contributions to the larger issues of feminist theory" (Kessler-Harris, 804). It was also a place of non-hierarchical order where instructors and professors shared power with students rather than having power over them. There was an effort to "undermine competition among students by creating a non-authoritarian and cooperative atmosphere in their classes" (Allen, 338). Students often sat in a circle in order to see everyone and the teacher would sit with students and facilitate. Experiential learning was utilized to introduce class materials and get students involved.

Women Studies was political and there was a strong belief that “knowledge is a basis for action” (Laslett & Brenner, 1). In this way, practical experience in the form of community work, volunteering, and internships were incorporated into course requirements. Teachers also introduced alternative methods to gauge student learning and progress. Rather than tests and quizzes, students were asked to do response papers, keep journals, and complete activism projects.

Since its initiation, there has been a struggle for Women Studies to maintain itself within the boundaries of an academic institution while still holding on to the core values of feminist scholarship. “As Women’s Studies represents the interests of the women’s movement, the university represents the interests of segments of a more traditional society” (Rutenberg, 76). There has been, and still often exists, a resistance from the university to consider it a “legitimate” study. As Robinson (209) emphasizes, “[l]egitimacy has yet to be conferred on the Women’s Studies project. Budgets and faculty lines are not secure; majors and postgraduate programs are still questioned; scholars of sex and gender continue to struggle over whether to be affiliated with such risky endeavor before tenure.”

The institutionalization and professionalization of Women’s Studies is connected to the earlier debate of how to employ feminist

knowledge because it both promotes integration and at the same time creates power and autonomy. The increased institutionalization and departmentalization of Women Studies has encouraged a move to accept the norms of current academic life: "It has adapted to the forms with which we are all familiar: powerful chairs, junior faculty anxious about tenure, research questions chosen because they can get published" (Robinson, 2009). Departmentalization and professionalization of Women Studies departments and programs has led to criticism from those involved in the original struggle to establish feminist scholarship and has opened a new forum for discussing the future of Women Studies and its curriculum.

The many challenges faced by Women Studies resulting from its institutionalization include heavier teaching loads for faculty and staff, increased class size, and the inclusion of Women Studies introductory courses into the baccalaureate core curriculum at many universities. Therefore, students with varying levels of interest are being introduced to Women Studies and a larger number of men are now in the feminist classroom. As a result of these changes, discussions have become more difficult to facilitate, the material is harder to cover, there has been a shift back to lecture format, and standardized exams have been integrated as a way to measure knowledge. Student participation may take the

form of attending class, activist projects often become less central to the curriculum, and student empowerment tends to be more difficult to attain. The professionalization of Women Studies has contributed to the erosion of the cultural themes of participation and community, which were the foundations of earlier departments and feminist education (Robinson, 2008). At the same time, however, Women Studies knowledge is being taught to more students and, in particular, more men are now exposed to feminist knowledge.

Men in the feminist classroom

Although when Women Studies classes emerged in universities during the early 1970s, classes were open to both women and men, the majority of students were female. Gnann et al. (65) provided two reasons for this: “men simply did not see it in their self-interest to register for women’s studies courses, and women were beginning to realize the importance of autonomy” (65). Feminist educators appreciated and encouraged all women classes arguing that power dynamics within larger society were replicated within the classroom reinforcing social privileges and destructive stereotypes. A myth within education is that knowledge is given and received in the classroom with all students having equal chance to do well. In classes with both men and women,

differences among women were said to be minimized and gender differences predominated. It was further argued that women were inhibited by male presence, social competitiveness between women was provoked in order to gain male approval, and a hierarchy between men and women produced. There was also the recognition that studying women's lives and experiences was painful and many believed, "that women's studies classrooms should provide an environment in which women can support one another through this pain" (Davis, 92). The presence of men inhibited this process. "Teachers often find that even a minority of men in a mainly-women class tend to be more dominating in discussion and less supportive of the group (Philips & Westland, 37).

When women work alone in the classroom, they can be released from the dominant male view of reality and begin to form their own social analysis. Many feminists still argued through the 1990s that, "any male presence invalidates the essential project of Women's Studies, which aims to give women opportunities to talk openly about personal experiences and patriarchal attitudes *among themselves*" (Philips & Westland, emphasis in original, 37).

Indeed, Gnann (et al, 65) go so far as to suggest that men have "little to contribute to the exploration of women's realities since they haven't experienced them" making the case that it is less beneficial to have men try to participate in material where they are

unable to reflect on their lives in the same way as women. They also argued that “men participate better in courses based on more objective material, where there is a common, already developed subject, rather than in courses where subjective appraisal is an integral part of the learning” (Gnann et al., 65).

Mary Daly, a professor of Theology at Boston College, was forced into retirement in 1999 for refusing to allow men into her feminist classes. Daly had been banning men from her classes for 25 years arguing that, “the presence of male students together with women in such classes slows down and in fact blunts the learning process for women” (Daly, 327). She believes this is an effect of learned responses by females to the presence of males, even one male, in the class. While she has denied men access to her classes, she has always offered men access to the material through holding separate individual sessions for men. Men who have met with Daly individually have had the same reading list and course requirements as her women-only classes. She states that she enjoys “teaching young men as well as women students, and course evaluations have indicated general appreciation of this intellectually challenging experience” (Daly, 328). However, she does believe it is necessary to have women-only spaces within the patriarchal university.

Alternatively, some educators believe it is in women's interest to help men develop these skills in subjective appraisals. Indeed, not all educators shared the view that men had/have little to contribute to Women Studies and that it is just for/about women. Michael Kimmel argues, "women's studies is also about men because the discipline clears an intellectual space for talking about gender" (153). According to Kimmel, Women Studies made men visible where before they were invisible—especially to themselves. "By making women visible, women's studies decentered men as the unexamined, disembodied authorial voice of the academic canon and showed that men, as well as women, are utterly embodied, their identities as socially constructed as those of women" (Kimmel, 154). Women's Studies identified gender as one of the axes around which our social lives are organized and as one of the crucial building blocks of our identities. Kimmel feels that because of the examination of gender in Women's Studies, men actually do have a place in the discipline and even further that Women's Studies can be transformative for men.

Kimmel reflects back to his own experience in the Women Studies classroom and states that it was in that class that he "*became* a middle-class white man" (emphasis in original, 155). He began to understand how race, class, and gender not only refer to other people, specifically marginalized people, but that they were

also terms to describe himself. Before, he had enjoyed the privilege of invisibility but after this class he could no longer view himself as genderless, without race and lacking a social class. As a sociologist, Kimmel examines gender and claims that “[w]omen’s studies made it possible for me to do the work I do” (156).

Kimmel (157) notes that by making gender, hence men, visible, the following questions must be asked: “Where are men? Where have men been in women’s struggle for equality?” He goes on to state that, “Men *have* been there supporting women’s equality every step of the way. And if men have been there, it means that men *can* be there and that they *will* be there” (emphasis in original, 159). Therefore, men can both individually and collectively provide support and join this struggle. bell hooks also believes that men have a “primary role” to play (83). She claims that men who “actively struggle against sexism have a place in feminist movement. They are our comrades” (82). Indeed, “when men show a willingness to assume equal responsibility in feminist struggle, performing whatever tasks are necessary, women should affirm their revolutionary work by acknowledging them as comrades in struggle” (83).

hooks maintains that all men do not equally benefit from sexism (69). While she does not deny that all men are involved in some form or another with the perpetuation of sexism and sexist

oppression she argues, “[l]ike women, men have been socialized to passively accept sexist ideology. While they need not blame themselves for accepting sexism, they must assume responsibility for eliminating it” (73). She recognizes that men are not exploited or oppressed by sexism yet she does believe there are ways they suffer from it. And she feels that it is beneficial for men to examine sexism as it relates to their own lives. hooks believes it is time to give up the past “investment in depicting the male as enemy and the female as victim” (78). Instead, she feels that individuals committed to a feminist revolution must recognize and address the ways men can unlearn sexism (77).

Another critique of all women classes is that women have diverse experiences and are not a homogenized group. Therefore, all women may not benefit equally from all women classes. In fact, diversity among women may result in some actually benefiting from having mixed classes and this class setting may better facilitate an understanding of feminism when exposed to both male and female views regarding certain topics.

Men and feminism

The feminist movement has focused on the existing hierarchy between men and women, which places women in a subordinate position. Feminism has facilitated the examination of femininity in

our culture and also the shifting representations of masculinity. As a result “modern man is under some pressure to change his attitudes and practices towards women” (Whitehead, 64). Although sociologist Michael Messner (2) believes men are changing as a result of the feminist movement and the issues it has encouraged society to explore, this change is not necessarily “in the directions that feminists would like.” Some of the changes and responses support feminism, some express a backlash against the movement, and others avoid feminist issues all together. Regardless of the varied responses to feminism, “men today must deal, on some level, with gender as a problematic construct rather than as a natural taken-for-granted reality” (Messner, 2). Men, in some form or another, must consider their relationship to the questions, criticisms, and demands of feminists at some point in their lives (Whitehead, 64).

In this way, men’s responses to feminist knowledge must/can be contextualized by understanding their responses to feminism and the feminist social movement. Where responses have been varied and coincide with cultural shifts and understandings, themes of resistance and acceptance arise when exploring men’s responses to feminism and social equality. These themes are reflected in men’s social movements discussed below.

Among resisters, the process of cultural and personal adjustment to feminist demands is not readily or easily undertaken and this unease about women's rights encourages some men "to retreat to extreme antifeminism" (Whitehead, 64). Antifeminist groups are overwhelmingly concerned with maintaining traditional masculinity rather than reconciling gender inequality, and advocate the "strengths and values to society of traditional men's roles" (Fox, 105). These antifeminist groups view feminism as "the enemy" and believe that it is women who are the oppressors of men.

Among antifeminist groups are the Christian Promise Keepers who believe that "men have not kept their promises to protect and provide for their families and that men have abdicated their responsibility for leadership in the family and the church" (Clatterbaugh, 889). This antifeminist perspective draws both on biological and fundamentalist biblical interpretation to argue that traditional gender roles should not be changed and are natural. Messner (27) believes that, "this categorical essentialism underlies Promise Keepers' rejection of feminist critiques of men's institutional power, and encourages a blurring or ignoring of differences among men." Promise Keepers are aware of and concerned with a number of problems contemporary men share, and argue that men's problems are primarily a result of men departing from their natural roles. Therefore, they are attempting

to reassert the “traditional family” based on a God-given division of labor between women and men that they feel has been compromised by various social movements such as feminism and the gay and lesbian liberation movement (Messner, 31). In order to reassert this traditional family, the Promise Keepers urge men to take leadership back within their families and to provide for them in order to successfully be a good father and husband.

Another branch of resistance to feminism is the so-called men’s rights groups who believe that “women’s gains as a result of feminism created new injustices and sexism against men” (Whitehead, 64). Men’s rights advocates claim that men are the true victims of “prostitution, pornography, dating rituals, sexist media conventions, divorce settlements, false rape accusations, sexual harassment, and even domestic violence” (Messner, 42). These groups work to bring about legislative changes to benefit men in these areas.

While some men have both rejected and resisted feminism, there are many who have accepted the claims of feminism and have formed coalitions in order to work towards social equality. In the late 1960s, feminist ideas found support among some men who formed consciousness-raising groups. These groups reflected various different feminist viewpoints and varying political perspectives. Men involved in the feminist movement during the

1960s and 1970s began to use the term “profeminist” and identify themselves as allies in their political relationship to feminism. Men have continued to be involved with feminism and feminist issues and in response have formed organizations and groups such as “Men for Change,” “National Organization for Men Against Sexism” (NOMAS), “Real Men,” and “National Organization for Changing Men” in order to address the sexism women experience as a result of male privilege. Despite antifeminist agendas, Stephen Whitehead (67) argues that men “appear prepared to critically reflect on themselves as masculine subjects in the postmodern, postindustrial age,[and] in so doing, engaging in ways of being that are closely aligned with feminist agendas, if not seeking a (political) solidarity with women.”

These men seek to develop a critique of men’s practices that is informed by feminism. They recognize and acknowledge that men have power and privilege in a male-dominated society. Profeminist men have sided with feminists on many topics and have worked on issues such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, reproductive choice, unequal pay, pornography, gay and lesbian rights, and women in the media. Male feminist activists have played important roles in improving the lives of women through advocating, supporting, designing, and maintaining changes in social policies and practices. Men have worked to advance women’s

control over their lives in local, national, and international government agencies, labor halls, educational institutions and publishing houses. They have been instrumental for the advancement of women and women's issues in all contexts where social policies and practices can limit or expand women's resources (Harding, 177). Given the potential for male support of women's rights in society, the Women Studies classroom emerges as an important site for men's education.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was conducted in order to understand the effects Women Studies courses have on male students. In particular, I examined if and how Women's Studies changed or altered men's perspectives and opinions towards feminism and feminist issues. Questions included: Do men relate to the material covered in Women Studies? Do men find the material relevant? Do they recognize social inequality and the part that they play within the systems of oppression? How does this knowledge have relevance for or translate into their everyday lives? Did Women Studies alter their views on varying social issues? Were men more invested in feminism and/or social equality after taking Women Studies? What are men's reactions to feminist knowledge in Women Studies classes? Although researchers have examined the effects of men on the feminist classroom for women and the classroom itself, very little data are available on the reactions of men to feminist knowledge within academia and the consequences for men of their involvement in the feminist classroom.

My primary theoretical perspective in this research relied on a feminist framework. Feminist researchers “utilize diverse methods, drawing from a great number of well established methods in the natural and social sciences” (Hesse-Biber and Leckenby, 2009). Feminist research relies on a method of obtaining knowledge that both empowers the subject and facilitates praxis or social action. Feminist research aims to create change and to be useful to society. It is my hope that this research project will help Women Studies instructors to understand men’s reactions to feminist knowledge. If men’s reactions are better understood, instructors may be able to reach more women and men within the classroom resulting in more students benefiting from feminist knowledge and becoming dedicated to social equality.

In order to gain an understanding of how men view and respond to the feminist classroom, I opted to distribute surveys and conduct interviews with men enrolled in five sections of two introductory Women Studies courses at Oregon State University. Choosing to utilize both surveys and interviews within this project is consistent with feminist research practices. Feminist researchers often pursue the broadest collection of possible perspectives and tools for their research endeavors and as Hesse-Biber and Leckenby (2009) explain, “feminist researchers may use

multiple tools to gain access and understanding into the world around them and may in fact use multiple methods within the same study.”

Participants

Research for this project involved a two-stage process. First, surveys were distributed to all students in the introductory classes during the first week of class and then again in the last week of the term. I conducted interviews with men recruited at the time of the initial survey and held the interviews midway through the term. Students voluntarily chose to respond to the surveys and to participate in the interviews. They also had the opportunity not to answer any questions with which they were uncomfortable. While surveys were given to all students within the introductory sections as a part of a larger research project, this research used a subset completed by men. Seventy-four male students completed the initial survey and 50 the final. For this research a subset of 33 matching surveys was utilized for comparison of aggregate and individual change.

The introductory courses from which I drew my participants are part of the core curriculum for the Women’s Studies Program at Oregon State University. They attract a large number of male

students because they fulfill baccalaureate core curriculum credits required for all students. I chose to examine male students enrolled in these courses for my project because these are introductory level where men enrolling are most likely to have had no prior exposure to Women Studies. Of the males who completed the surveys, only one had taken a prior Women Studies course. The classes are titled *WS 223 Women: Self, and Society* and *WS 224 Women: Personal and Social Change*. WS 223 is a multidisciplinary introduction to women studies that focuses on the lives and status of women in society and explores ways institutions such as family, work, media, law and religion affect different groups of women. This course also explores issues of gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation, size and ability. WS 224 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. In this class, women's heritage and contributions are explored and there is a focus on issues of self-growth and social movements for change.

These classes were taught by one full professor, one associate professor, one instructor, and one graduate teaching assistant all from the Women Studies program. The content for was similar however, sections of each course did not necessarily share a

common syllabus. Therefore, it is expected that each student's experience was different from her/his classmates based on varying course content and professors/instructors. These courses are offered every term and there are typically a minimum of two sections of each offered. Each term lasts for 10 weeks and this research took place during the spring term of 2005. The class size usually varies between 50 and 80 students.

The 33 completed surveys represented 33 male participants with 20 from WS 223 and 13 from WS 224 with the following demographics. Among the 33 men who completed the surveys their class standings included 12 first year students, 10 sophomores, seven juniors and four seniors. Eighty-five percent of the sample were white, with 15% men of color (9% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 3% African-American/White). Family income varied with 9% reporting an income of less than \$20,000, 6% between \$20,000-40,000, 18% ranging from 40,000-60,000, and 67% reported an income of over \$60,000. Fifty-eight percent of the male students grew up in families where there was no stay-at-home parent while 42% did have a stay at home parent with the majority being a stay-at-home mother. Seventy-six percent of the men stated that they had signed up for Women Studies to fulfill baccalaureate core requirements, 12% reported an interest in women's issues and in gaining a

different perspective, another 12% reported reasons such as availability of course and recommendations from friends. There was no response from 3% of the participants to this question of motivation for taking the course.

There were six male subjects who participated in interviews for the second stage of this research project, although, one interview was excluded due to the poor quality of the tape recording. With the five resulting interviews, one male was a first year student, three were juniors, and there was one male who was in his senior year. Ages of the men ranged from 18 to 28 with one 18 year old man, two 21 year olds, and two males aged 28 years. Three of the men were white, one male student was Native American, and one Asian international man who had immigrated to the U.S. at the age of seven years. All of the male students were heterosexual, and, with the exception of one participant, all had grown up in middle to upper-middle class families. All had siblings, three had both parents present, and two men were raised primarily by their mothers.

Surveys

During the second class meeting in the first week of the term an in-class survey (see appendix A) was distributed to students

enrolled in all sections of Women Studies 223 and 224. I developed the survey by coining statements from literature in Women Studies; statements that asserted various understandings of relationships between women and men and women's place in society. This survey was pre-tested with male colleagues prior to its distribution to classes. This survey took approximately seven-ten minutes to complete. The same survey was given again during the last class in the final week of the term. Participation was voluntary and students had the option to skip any questions they did not wish to answer. The surveys asked questions regarding student demographics such as family income, race, whether a stay-at-home parent was present during childhood, religious affiliation, etc. and included an open-ended question about their reason for enrolling, whether they had volunteered or worked with an organization focusing on women's issues and if they had interest in doing so in the future. I also asked if they identified as a feminist or not.

The survey utilized a Likert scale with statements designed to assess students' responses on personal and political issues. There were initially 17 statements although two were not used to calculate scores due to the poor structure of the statements. Participants were asked to respond to each statement by marking a number on the Likert scale that best represented their personal

views between one and five, where “one” was agree and “five” disagree. From these responses, a total score was calculated for each individual participant with the lowest possible score being fifteen and the highest seventy-five.

A mean scale score was computed for each individual with a range of one through five. While I recognize there are limitations to using mean scores since this is the average and overlooks outliers however, it is a statistical technique useful when presenting a broad range of data. Lower scores represented views closely aligned with feminism while higher scores represented views of non- and antifeminists. Comparison of individual scores for the initial and final surveys showed individual change. Matching was achieved through comparing demographic information and handwriting among the initial and final surveys within each class section. From these individual scores, an aggregate mean score was determined for the group. Using these mean scores, change between the initial and final survey was estimated. Using this information, I was able to compare aggregate and individual totals to reveal changes in thinking patterns regarding issues of social equality.

Interviews

In order to more accurately access men's reactions to the feminist classroom, I also chose to conduct open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Interviews provide the opportunity for both clarification and discussion regarding questions asked of interviewees and their responses. Interviews are beneficial when conducting social research because, "interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher" (Reinharz, 19). Interviews also allow respondents to be actively involved where they are constructing data about their own lives. These interviews allowed the researcher to generate knowledge about the meanings male students make of Women Studies and feminist knowledge.

Open-ended interview research is beneficial for feminists because it "explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory" (Reinharz, 18). Interviewing is conducive to the grounded theory perspective of data analysis and is also consistent with feminist methodology. Reinharz (18) points out that "open-ended interview research produces non-standardized information that allows researchers to make full use of difference among people." Feminism is concerned with and acknowledges the way differences among individuals prevent a

homogenized response to any experience, and, interviews provide the opportunity to document individual responses respective of differences.

Interviews with male participants followed the initial survey and were conducted in the middle of the term. Recruitment for interviews was accomplished through a handout given with the first survey providing men the space to fill out contact information if they were interested in further participation for the research and a short description of the interview process (see Appendix B). Male students with an interest in continuing their participation in the project were contacted following the initial survey to set up a time for the in-person interviews.

I arrived at each interview with a set of questions and topics I knew I wanted to cover, but allowed enough room for participants to speak freely (see Appendix C). Each participant signed an informed consent document when they arrived for the interview and chose a pseudonym to use in the interviews in order to maintain anonymity (see Appendix D). Participants also had the option to decline a response to any of the questions asked of them during the interview. The interviews were conducted in a way that Lofland & Lofland (1995) more accurately describe as “guided conversation” (85). I asked questions that were intended to explore the

participants' experiences as men in the Women Studies classroom and their responses to feminist knowledge. It was important to understand why the student had chosen to take Women Studies and what their expectations were prior to enrolling. I then posed questions regarding the relevance of the material to their own lives and their reactions to feminist knowledge. I inquired as to how the men felt in a class where women were the more represented population and I was interested to find out if, and how, the class affected their lives. Each interview was tape-recorded, lasted approximately 45 minutes, and took place in my office in the Women Studies Program suite. The interviews were then transcribed.

Once transcription for the interviews was completed, the identification of themes from this data was done within a grounded theoretical framework where open coding is utilized in several stages. The first stage involves looking for emerging patterns (Berg, 281). Once this initial coding was complete, the data was broken down into subgroups and categories. Then after sorting and organizing the data, the emerging themes were placed into a narrative that portrays research findings.

Limitations

This research, as with most, has limitations that must be examined and understood in order to make sense of my findings. To begin with, the men from whom I gathered my data from are not representative of *all* men. A majority of the male students who completed surveys and participated in interviews for this study were white, heterosexual, middle to upper class men who have the privilege of going to university. A sample of men of color, men from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and men whose sexual identification was other than heterosexual might have resulted in different findings. As a result, the bias in my findings cannot be ignored.

Another limitation I faced was the number of completed matching surveys I was able to utilize for individual and aggregate comparisons. Out of the 74 initial and 50 final surveys collected throughout the term, only 33 matching sets resulted. Therefore, I must speculate as to why the other surveys collected did not have a matching corresponding component. For example, did men who were more resistant to feminist knowledge drop the class or fail to attend class regularly preventing them from completing the final survey? If so, how might my results have varied had I had that information available? In addition, of course, men who were not

gaining insight and personal growth from Women Studies would most likely be less willing to participate in the interviews. This was the case in this research. All the men were relatively supportive of feminism and interviewees helped me to understand how men who were sympathetic towards women's equality responded to the class. I must speculate as to how my research results would have been different had I had a more varied experience represented by the interview subjects. In particular, it would have been very interesting to have been able to interview men who considered themselves antifeminist and did not like the class.

I must also wonder what type of bias I, the researcher, as a woman, bring to the research. Would there have been a difference in responses if the interviewer had been male? Not only am I female but, I am young, and, in some cases, I was younger than some of the male subjects. I am also an instructor in the Women Studies Program at Oregon State University. None of the participants involved in the interviews were in my class and students were ensured that participation in this project would not affect their individual grades. However, I must wonder if these factors influenced student responses.

Since my research focused on men in introductory courses offered by the Women's Studies Program at Oregon State

University, it may be possible to find men in upper-division courses or in cross-listed classes who might have responses to feminist knowledge. Men who have chosen to take Women Studies courses beyond the introductory classes from which I drew my sample may have different or additional contributions to make to the effects feminist knowledge has on male students. However, this type of research was beyond the scope of this master's thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

SURVEYS

The surveys used in this research were able to measure if men's personal and political attitudes, views or beliefs, and knowledge regarding feminist issues were altered as a result of Women Studies, as well as their feminist consciousness prior to and after the course. This research utilized Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl's knowledge dimension in order to discuss the types of knowledge being altered in the feminist classroom.

According to Anderson and Krathwohl there are four major types of knowledge: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive.

Factual knowledge "encompasses the basic elements that experts use in communicating about their academic discipline, understanding it, and organizing it systematically" (45). It also "contains the basic elements students must know if they are to be acquainted with the discipline or to solve any of the problems of it" (45). Conceptual knowledge refers to the "interrelationships among basic elements within a larger structure that enable them to function together" (46). Procedural knowledge is the "knowledge of how" to do something and includes methods of inquiry and criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques, and methods (46). Finally,

metacognitive knowledge is the “knowledge of cognition in general as well as awareness and knowledge of one’s own cognition” (46).

Using these major types of knowledge I was able to identify the type of knowledge that was changing as a result of Women Studies.

Overall, an aggregate mean score of 2.4 was calculated for all men who completed the initial survey. This score slightly decreased by the end of the term resulting in a 2.3 mean score for the final survey. After calculating an aggregate mean score, individual scores for the subset of 33 surveys primarily utilized in this research was determined and from that an aggregate mean of 2.3 on the five point scale was determined for participants. The final survey was used to compare computed scores with the initial to demonstrate change. The mean score for the final survey was 2.2 revealing negligible change toward a feminist consciousness. Men enrolled in the class showed no meaningful change in personal and political attitudes toward feminism after a taking Women Studies course.

Despite the lack of aggregate change, 17 of the 33 male participants had a lower mean scale score on the second survey than on the first. Mean scores were 2.4 on the initial and 1.9 on the final. This suggests some male students did have a slight change in thought toward feminist views once they were enrolled in Women Studies. One participant’s score remained the same and

we can assume there was no detectable change for him. Fifteen of the 33 men actually had scores that were higher on the second survey than on the initial where the mean scores were 2.2 and 3.1 respectfully. This change is representative of an increase in men's beliefs becoming closer to those aligned with non- and antifeminists. The fact that over half of the sample showed a positive change toward feminism and almost half of the sample showed a negative change explains the averaged aggregate mean result of no change. However, the amount change for both subsets is negligible and does not amount to significant change in thought.

Perhaps an increased mean score for the final surveys demonstrated responses to feminist knowledge where personal views were not confronted but rather resistance to feminism was validated. Men's resistance to feminism and to Women Studies is a topic that Michael Kimmel discusses in detail in "Men and Women's Studies" (1996). The initial point Kimmel makes is that gender is about power. Despite the fact that masculinity and femininity are socially constructed, it must not be forgotten that there are dynamics of power and privilege within operation and they are not equivalent. Issues of gender and power are frequently invisible to men who resist understanding power when it means changing behavior and recognizing and/or giving up this power.

In this way, Kimmel writes “[m]en are often confused about the question of power because some feminist insights do not resonate for men as they do for women” (161). He suggests feminism offers women a social analogue for women’s individual experiences, “women were not *in* power and women did not *feel* in power” (161). A similar analogy is not automatically applicable for men. Even though on the political and institutional level men are indeed *in* power, many do not *feel* in power within their individual lives. Therefore, many men “resist the insights of women’s studies because they do not understand how it relates to their experiences of not feeling powerful. They are told they are in power and must be aware of holding that power; yet they do not feel powerful” (164). This is what Kimmel refers to as a “critical blind spot” for men (161). Therefore, men who experienced an increase in their mean scores may have been resistant to the material due to the lack of personal connection.

From examining mean survey scores, I further discovered participants were more likely to demonstrate change for some statements than others. The statement that had the most change in response was “I would vote for a woman as president.” Prior to Women’s Studies the mean score for this question was 2.6 and at the end of the class it was 2.2. This change implies that Women Studies influenced men’s ideas and attitudes regarding women in

leadership. Feminist education centered on women's status, the inequality faced, and women's abilities seemed to have an impact on men's overall impression of women's leadership.

The next significant change in responses was regarding the statement: "Feminism is about equality for all people." This statement had an original mean of 2.4 which dropped to 2.0 on the final. From this change, it is evident that many men entering Women Studies either had misconceptions about feminism or lacked an understanding of the women's movement. These misconceptions are representative of the lack of factual knowledge men had about Women Studies prior to enrollment.

Misconceptions and lack of factual knowledge regarding feminism are very common and are addressed in the introductory classes. Myths regarding feminism and feminists that are typically discussed in introductory Women Studies classes include: feminists are man-hating and just want power over men; there is no longer a need for feminism; feminists are whiney and exaggerate discrimination; feminists are all lesbians; feminists are not feminine; and feminists reject motherhood and consider children a burden. Students often do not understand that feminism is a movement to end the oppression that systems of privilege and inequality such as classism, racism, looksism, ableism, and heterosexism create. These overlapping oppressions people

experience is stressed within these courses and students are encourage to reflect upon their own lives in order to see how they may be affected by these systems. The change in response to this statement suggests that male students leave Women Studies with a more accurate understanding and definition of feminism, and develop factual knowledge of Women Studies.

The third statement yielding a notable response was “Women’s sexualization and objectification in popular culture is not harmful to women.” The mean for this statement was initially 2.5 and dropped to 2.2 on the final survey, suggesting men began to understand the harmful ways in which women can be presented within varying forms of popular culture. Men were given the opportunity to think and critique the ways women are portrayed within our culture and how that may translate into women’s everyday lives. These courses introduce issues including eating disorders, body image and body distortion, the beauty ideal, and violence against women to students and encourage students consider possible connections within the social world. It is clear that male students involved in this survey found that the sexualization and objectification was both real and harmful to women following involvement in the Women Studies classroom. This suggests that men were developing conceptual knowledge of Women Studies in their individual courses.

The fourth statement manifesting a response towards a feminist view was "Feminists dislike men." The initial survey imparted a mean score of 2.4 with a change to 2.1 on the final, revealing men's new understanding of feminism that men may develop within the class. It seems that men who enter the feminist classroom often see themselves as the "enemy," however, throughout the course male students learn that feminists, in fact, do not dislike men and that men can even be feminists. This change represents how men's factual knowledge of feminism was affected in the Women Studies classroom.

In addition to change in the profeminist direction, there were also specific statements that produced a higher mean on the second survey than on the first from male participants suggesting a movement away from a feminist stance. The statement representative of the most negative change was: "I believe that women should not hold positions of power within the church." This statement yielded an initial mean of 2.1 however, this increased to 2.4 on the final. This change is interesting considering that the statement with the most significant change towards the feminist end of the Likert scale revolved around women's leadership and was "I would vote for a woman as president." Despite the fact that men felt more positive about women's leadership on a societal level, this did not translate equally within religious institutions. On this

statement either the number of men who agreed with this statement increased post Women Studies or men who agreed with this statement initially increased their number choice on the Likert scale on the second scale representing further validation of their beliefs.

The next statement initiating a negative response was “Women have a responsibility to not provoke sexual attention through dress and actions in order to avoid being raped” with a score of 2.2 on the original survey and 2.3 on the final. While this is not a drastic change, it does seem that men may have begun to think that women have a responsibility to prevent sexual violence through their actions and dress. Therefore, their personal views regarding sexual abuse were altered.

This reaction may be explainable by looking back to Michael Kimmel and his thoughts on men’s resistance. Kimmel believes that men often have a hard time relating to feminist views because feminist knowledge does not necessarily represent men’s personal experiences. He notes, “[w]e have come to acknowledge that a singular construction of women’s experiences is inadequate (163).” Kimmel then argues that the same is true for men and that there is no hegemonic masculinity but rather many masculinities. When discussing violence against women, resistance is understandable for male students who have not engaged in violent behaviors or

have not witnessed incidents of violence among friends. Their reaction is to argue that not all men are “like that” or would “do that” and it seems necessary for them to believe that women have some role to play in preventing sexual violence.

Feminist Futures

Survey results revealed that many participants’ attitudes were changing in both positive and negative directions in relation to feminism. I was further interested in how would this translate into their everyday lives. In order to discover whether or not students would change personal actions within their daily lives as a result of Women Studies, they were asked questions regarding involvement with organizations that focused on women’s issues and whether they identified as a feminist or profeminist both before and after feminist scholarship.

Prior to taking Women Studies, 29 men had not volunteered or worked for an organization focused on women’s issues. Three had worked with the American Cancer Society and a “Right to Life” campaign, and one participant did not answer the question. The final survey revealed little change with two extra men reporting work with organizations focusing on women’s issues. It is unclear as to whether their involvement was during their Women Studies

classes or if these men simply failed to report their prior involvement initially but decided to fill in this question on the second survey.

In addition to men's previous involvement, it was of interest to know whether Women Studies would facilitate activist involvement. Therefore, I asked: "If possible, would you volunteer or work for an organization focused on women's issues?" Men who answered yes were asked to specify what issue they would be most interested in working on. Before taking Women's Studies, 24 men said they would not be interested in doing activist work, eight said yes they would be interested, and one male did not report. However, the final survey revealed that the number of men willing to work on women's issues had doubled from eight to 16 and the number who were not interested fell from 24 to 16. One male answered maybe. Men mentioned violence against women, gender discrimination, reproductive rights and alternative birthing, beauty ideals, education, and women in engineering as issues of particular interest. The drastic change in men who expressed a willingness to volunteer or work on women's issues indicates that if men are engaged in feminist scholarship, they may develop an interest in becoming active.

Preceding Women Studies involvement, two of the men identified as feminist or profeminist, three were not sure, and 23

did not identify as feminist or profeminist. Five men failed to respond to this question. However, after taking Women Studies the number of men who identified as feminist or profeminist had grown from two to 14, two were unsure, and the number of men who did not consider themselves feminist or profeminist dropped from 23 to 14. Three men again failed to report to the question. In this way, the percentage of men reporting to be feminist or profeminist increased by 38% after taking Women Studies suggesting that men were more likely to identify themselves as feminist or profeminist after exposure to feminist knowledge.

This is a significant increase in the number of men who identify as feminist after taking Women Studies however, what this really means must be considered. What is the significance of men identifying as feminists? Is there any significance in men identifying with the women's movement? What does this mean? It is obvious that identifying as a feminist has become something positive for these men however do men's behaviors, attitudes, views, and thoughts change in correlation with this new identity? It may be that men are identifying as feminists yet they may be resisting personal changes and active involvement in women's issues. Whether or not the students are really identifying is another consideration. The increase represented above relies on the belief that the students. Therefore, it can be asked: "Are these

men *really* identifying as feminists?” Therefore, while there is an increase in men leaving Women Studies identifying as feminists, what this means for their individual lives and the collective movement is unclear.

Demographics

It is interesting to consider whether such factors as income, class standing, religious affiliation, and the existence of a stay-at-home parent affect change after exposure to Women Studies knowledge. While the bias among the participant population prevented major conclusions regarding demographic variables and results, it is possible to give tentative results concerning whether these factors influenced acceptance or resistance to feminist education within the sample.

Socio-economic status

Eleven male participants in this study reported being from working class families with an income of less than \$60,000 per year. Twenty-two men declared an income exceeding \$60,000 per year placing them in middle to upper class families. Survey results revealed that men from working class families had an initial mean score of 2.2 and a final mean of 2.0. Men from middle to upper

class families had an average score of 2.4 for the initial and 2.3 for the final. Therefore, men from working class families had lower mean scores for both the initial and final survey along with a greater measurable change in the direction of feminist thought.

When considering why men of working class families would have lower mean scores and a greater change toward feminist views it is important point to some of the material covered in the introductory Women Studies courses experienced by these men. Systems of privilege and inequality are covered in depth and these not only include sexism but also classism, racism, heterosexism, looksism, and ableism. Therefore, I would speculate that men from working class families may have had an easier time accepting feminism based on possible experiences relating to their social class and lack of socio-economic privilege. Further, while men from middle to upper class homes may not have recognized their own privilege they might also have been able or unwilling to understand the inequalities experienced by less affluent classmates. Therefore, feminism may have resonated with participants from working class families more than males of middle to upper class families.

Race

Due to the sample size of men of color in this research, I am unable to draw any major conclusions regarding race and

acceptance or resistance to feminist knowledge. Eighty-five percent of participants for the surveys were white, with 15% men of color (9% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 3% African-American/White). Overall, men of color had significantly lower initial and final survey scores than white males. Men of color had a mean score of 1.8 on the initial and 1.7 on the final while white men had a 2.4 initial mean and 2.3 mean at the end of the class.

Men of color may have scored lower on the initial and final surveys due to their awareness of social inequality that has resulted from being a person of color in our white dominated society. These men have potentially experienced racial discrimination and therefore, may enter the feminist classroom with a base understanding of power and privilege. Even if an individual has not experienced violent remarks or actions directly, they most likely have felt the effects of the systematic discrimination experienced by people of color throughout American history. Men who have experienced racial discrimination could potentially acknowledge other forms of social inequality more easily than students who are privileged by their race. Male students who are white most likely have not faced racial discrimination therefore, they may not enter the feminist classroom with a strong understanding of the extent to which systems of privilege and

inequality can affect someone's life and may have a more difficult time believing inequality exists.

Stay-at-home parent

Male participants were asked to report whether or not a parent was present at home while growing up to see if this had an effect on their acceptance or resistance to feminist knowledge. Nineteen of the men lived in families with no stay-at-home parent. These men had almost no change in scores (2.1 on the initial survey and 2.0 on the final). Nine men, with stay-at-home mothers had a mean score of 2.6 initially and 2.3 on the final survey. One male had a stay at home father and had mean scores of 2.2 and 1.9 respectfully; another male had both parents at home and had a mean score of 2.6 on the first survey and 1.9 on the final; and 2 males did not specify which parent was at home and had scores of 2.1 on the initial survey and 2.0 on the final.

Although comparison is tentative since only one man had a stay at home father and only one male had both parents at home, it is still interesting to consider that male participants with a stay-at-home mother had significantly higher initial and final mean scores than any other subset of men. This may be because men with stay-at-home mothers are more accepting of traditional gender and familial roles than male participants without a stay-at-home mom.

Males with a stay-at-home mother may be in favor of the traditional gender division of labor within the home and may feel that it is beneficial for women, and their children, to remain at home rather than work an outside job. If these men do hold more traditional views regarding women's roles, it could be possible that they entered the feminist classroom resistant to the material and with views that were not closely aligned with feminist thought. While participants without a stay-at-home mother may be more open to feminist ideology and supportive of women in more non-traditional roles.

Class standing

Students enrolled in Women Studies introductory courses represent all undergraduate class standings. Of the male participants involved with this research project there were 12 first year students, 10 sophomores, 7 juniors and 4 seniors. First year students had a mean of 2.3 on the initial survey and 2.2 on the final; sophomores had an original mean of 2.3 and a concluding mean of 2.5; and juniors and seniors had initial scores of 2.4 and a final of 2.3. These changes were negligible.

Still, it is interesting to consider why sophomores are the only group to show less positive change vis-à-vis women's rights at the end of the class. Perhaps it has to do with attitude among second

year students. In my experience, it seems that first year students enter the university setting ready and eager to learn. They are often entering a world that is unknown to them and they may be slightly intimidated in their new college environment. After one year in college, students begin to become more confident with themselves and college life. Sophomores often display behaviors implying they feel they know everything, and can be resistant to new knowledge within the classroom. Juniors and seniors, on the other hand, do not display these attitude characteristics. As students who are in upper level classes are beginning to focus on chosen majors and specified areas of concentration, they seem to become more entrenched in a specific line of study and once again willing to accept new knowledge.

Religion and religious affiliation

In addition, male participants were asked to reveal whether or not they considered themselves religious and if they belonged to a religious denomination. Twelve men considered themselves religious and 15 identified with religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Catholicism, Judaism, Episcopalian, Baptist, and Open Christianity. Nineteen men declared they were not religious and 18 claimed no religious denomination. One man marked "kind of" in terms of religiosity and one man did not respond. Men

reporting to be religious had a mean score on the initial survey of 2.5 and 2.3 on the final survey; men with a religious affiliation scored 2.4 on the initial survey and 2.2 on the final. Men reporting they were not religious scored 2.3 initially and 2.1 on the final survey; men with no religious affiliation scored 2.3 and 2.2 respectively. Although the amount of change is relatively consistent among religious and non-religious men, the latter are slightly more accepting of a pro-woman stance and present lower overall scores.

Within religious denominations, women may not hold many of the primary roles that men do and they are often in a subservient position to men. Religions can be both empowering and oppressive to women in various ways. Most religions are patriarchal and prescribe social roles to women based on their understanding of God's intent. Men who consider themselves religious may have been restricted by their religious beliefs and may have found feminist perspectives to be in opposition to their religious views. Men who were not affiliated with a religion may have been more likely to change because they may not have had an outside structure in place governing personal beliefs. Despite this, religious men demonstrate as much change as non-religious men and appear to be impacted by feminist knowledge.

INTERVIEWS

Three themes emerged from the interviews with male students. These were: “It’s not just about girls, it’s about all people;” “Perspectives” in which students explained how the new insight and knowledge they were learning was not a perspective with which they were familiar; and “As a guy...” in which men discussed what it was like to be a male in the feminist classroom and why they felt it was beneficial to take Women Studies.

“It’s not just about girls, it’s about all people.” (Paul)

Male students participating in this research had little knowledge of feminism prior to Women Studies. Male students expected to find a class environment that was unwelcoming and where “it was going to be all women and man-hating” (Paul). Men typically believed that their teachers and classmates would hold beliefs far more radical than their own views. However, what they found was not always what they had anticipated. For example, Steve explained, “I find that a lot of people, most of the people, in the class don’t know feminism, what it is. They are in the same boat that I am and people aren’t man-hating at all.” James, a senior, expressed what he had anticipated when he talked about what he had heard prior to taking Women Studies: “you hear things

like there are going to be views pointed at you and you feel bad for being a guy. But I don't feel bad for being a guy."

Men's expectations were challenged as they began to understand and learn about feminism. All of the men interviewed claimed their views regarding feminism had been altered as a result of Women Studies and that they had gained new insight and knowledge from the course. Male responses included comments about learning the real definition of feminism and true meaning of the movement within Women Studies. Keith, a junior in engineering and education, specifically stated,

First of all, I didn't even know what, you know, it [feminism] meant; what the definition of the term was. Women Studies has given me the ability to see things more clearly and see the various misconceptions where before I wouldn't have been able to identify them.

Similarly Steve said, "I guess my opinion of feminism wasn't really on true feminism before the class. I think that now I understand feminism more for what it actually is instead of what I thought it was." When asked to clarify what his view was prior to this class he answered by stating that feminism seemed to be man-hating, unnecessary at times and sometimes overzealous. One of the most profound realizations was made by Johnny, a 28 year old junior, who expressed his newfound knowledge when he said, "Everyone can be a feminist, men can be feminists. I had no idea."

After taking Women Studies, men's attitudes toward feminism had also changed. Steve stated, "I think feminism is cool." He personally liked how feminists made the distinction to state that feminism was about equality for all people and not just women. Keith commented that, "feminism is part of fighting for equality for all humans. I view it as very positive and I would like to participate in that." James claimed, "Personally, I'm all for it and I definitely identify as being a male feminist."

Of the five men participating in interviews, four identified as feminists after taking Women Studies where none of them identified prior to participation in the feminist classroom. Two men noted that had they understood what feminism was prior to their class involvement they probably would have embraced this political ideology; however, they did not recognize that feminism was about all people, and, therefore, did not initially identify with it. Men also unanimously agreed that Women Studies knowledge was pertinent to their own lives. Paul stated that he felt the material he was learning in Women's Studies was pertinent to his life because, "it's about people that you are interacting with." Steve, a 21 year old junior, seemed surprised by this question and blankly answered, "I don't see how it couldn't be. Honestly, it's about our society and its problems. Problems that need to be addressed. I don't see how that could not be pertinent to our lives."

Two men felt that being in Women Studies directly related to their personal intimate relationships with women. James explained that within his relationship currently, and in previous relationships with women, body image or body distortion issues have been present. He explained, "My girlfriend now is beautiful and she always complains about this or that and how.....And there is nothing wrong." He went on to state that in class, discussing body image gave him a little more understanding of where these types of thoughts may have come from. He then said, "I'm not quite sure how to defeat it but it does help me to understand where it is coming from and hopefully, I'll be able to support her in the right way." Johnny replied in a similar way but without explanation, as if he felt his answer was self-explanatory, "Yes. I'm married...to a woman. I mean it affects the two of us. I mean her more than me but it's half the population [we are talking about]."

Two men discussed the ways that feminism was more than simply pertinent to their lives and explained personal connections they were able to make with the material. Keith remembers a positive moment in the feminist classroom the day he learned the meaning of androgyny:

Growing up I was probably more on the feminine side than anything else. As I grew up, I got made fun of and now I realize that I am an androgynous person and I like that. I am a person that can experience all things I want without feeling intimidated because when you are one or the other [masculine

or feminine] you are limited to what you can feel. It was so positive for me to find out about myself. When my professor said this [discussed androgyny] I was like "Oh- that makes sense".

For Keith, learning about androgyny gave him a means of understanding himself. He was empowered by this realization and in knowing that what he had lived was a shared experience. He was able to directly connect with the material and see how the subject matter played into his own life.

James also described a positive moment for him when a real life situation directly connected with the class material. This situation revolved a decision to hire domestic help in the home he shared with his partner. James felt that the material covered on women and the workforce was relevant for the decision he was in the process of making, and he stayed after class to discuss what he and his partner had discussed regarding hiring a domestic worker.

We can afford domestic help, so why not? That is what we had talked [he and his partner] about. I guess the interesting question that my professor asked me was 'the help you are hiring is the help a woman?' I thought it was a fun question- and the answer was yes.

It is evident that James was able to take the material from class and use what he had learned in making a decision within his own life. James did not make it clear whether or not he and his partner eventually hired domestic help, however, it was clear that he took

seriously the information learned in class and that he considered it in his decision making.

"Perspectives"

Initially, there was a lack of information regarding the need for Women Studies classes among male participants. By the time interviews took place, men had begun to realize how traditional education focused on male experiences and perspectives and how it left out important and pertinent information about women. Steve, who considers himself educated on American history, was displeased with his prior knowledge of the subject when he learned of how women got the vote in the United States.

Yeah, I thought that Susan B. Anthony was the main person to deal with women getting the vote. But she died way before hand. I had never connected that before and when I did I was like "wait a second". Women got the vote in 1920 and she died way before that. But I just didn't connect the two. And Susan B. Anthony has her face on the coin! Yes, she helped start the thing [the suffrage movement] but most of the grunt work was done during the 1915s by other people such as Alice Paul. The point is that I had never heard of them [other women working for suffrage]. That's a big omission to the history book.

Steve characterized the day he learned about Alice Paul as a positive moment in the Women Studies classroom because he had never heard of her before and she was integral to women's suffrage. Steve was surprised that women's suffrage had not been covered more in depth in his previous history classes. He explained, "I'm

learning things that I did not know before, that were not taught because it was a man instructor or just because there was so much history to go over you have to brush over something.” However, not discussing the history of half the population was obviously problematic for this student. Another student, Johnny, pointed out that at the age of 28 he didn’t even know it was 1920 before women got the vote. He noted how surprised he was that he’d never really learned about women’s suffrage prior to this introductory course.

James brought up the fact that Women Studies had forced him to consider, “How history would look if it were written by women?” He goes on to explain,

History shapes so much of what we are and so much of how we view things and history was not only written by men but by victors of war actually. You don’t really hear much from the people who lost a war or who were conquered. All of these things, all of the history we know about has all been written from this perspective. And the idea that ‘truth’ could be changed because of the perspective that history was written from is a little scary. All of our views, at this point, could be so different if somebody else had written the book.

Upon this recognition, James explained how both his great grandmother and great grandfather had lived through World War Two. His great grandmother worked in an ammunitions factory and his great grandfather had been a soldier overseas. He now looks back and wishes he would have talked to his great grandmother about her experiences as a woman during the war.

He noted that he was familiar with the soldier perspective of the war but had no idea of how a woman in an ammunition factory would describe her experience. It was not a perspective with which he was familiar.

Male student's comprehension of the androcentrism represented within traditional education and throughout our society also became apparent in their answers to an interview question inquiring as to whether or not the participant would be interested and willing to take a class on masculinity and men's lives. Typical responses are as follows:

I don't think I'd be too interested. If you want to know about a guy's life you can go outside, watch TV, or read a magazine. You see a lot of their views just walking around. (Paul)

Don't we? Isn't that what most of our classes are on? I mean all the people you hear about in history class are men because it's a male dominated society. I mean everyone knows male history, everyone knows all the stuff that's usually taught. I'm interested in what is usually not taught. (Steve)

Yes, but I think that most of the classes offered now are about men. Just think of history- it's about white men. (Johnny)

While enrolled in Women Studies, men were realizing that within the feminist classroom they were gaining a new perspective around familiar topics, and learning new insights and information of which they had no prior knowledge. I was particularly interested if this feminist perspective would play out into their everyday lives, and for most of the men interviewed, it had already had an effect.

While none of the men felt that they had changed drastically, they all discussed smaller changes they could see within their lives.

Steve, the male student who felt he had a good understanding of American history prior to Women Studies stated, "I have to question, I have to question everything. If they are going to leave all this out about women, what else are they going to leave out that I don't know about?" Steve also noted that since Women Studies he has recognized that many local and national leaders are male. This has prompted him to consider whether we are getting a female perspective on important societal issues. Steve went on to discuss how he now notices his roommate's opinions that are antifeminist and these opinions have begun to bother him. Despite the absence of huge changes, Steve does now question traditional knowledge and the patriarchal structure our society is governed by.

Keith, an Asian international student, feels that the new perspective that he has gained in Women Studies has helped him to identify and name injustice. He states,

As a guy, it is more difficult to see discrimination if you are not a part of it, so the class has really opened my mind to seeing things from another point of view and actively changing my mind to where I can see things from this new perspective.

He also talked about how Women Studies has helped him to name and classify discrimination. Keith now is able to see how

oppression works and is now able to identify classism, sexism, heterosexism, racism, ableism, and looksism in his everyday life. Johnny stated that he would like to think that he was more open-minded and not as prejudiced since taking Women Studies and states that he is "at least more aware of it now." James noted a similar change to Johnny as he described how much easier it was for him to identify attitudes and behaviors leading to social inequality. He also believes that Women Studies gave him a "specific voice." He explained that he had a better understanding of terms and definitions related to social inequality.

Paul, a Hispanic man, explained that he now focuses more on vocabulary and the ways he, as well as others, treat people. "Sometimes people will say something, and I will notice what was just said and think 'that's wrong' but the person making the statement doesn't notice that what was said was wrong." In response to this, I asked Paul if he ever pointed out what was problematic about statements where he had the reaction that the comment was "wrong." He explained that if it was a friend he would but that he did not feel comfortable if he did not know the person.

All of the men, while lacking drastic changes, did gain a new level of awareness for the new perspective gained in the feminist classroom. Not only did men learn from this new perspective but

they began to notice and question the androcentric nature of traditional education and society.

“As a guy...”

Men’s experiences in the Women Studies classroom differ from their experiences within the traditional classroom. During interviews, male students were asked to describe their thoughts on being a male in the feminist classroom. Keith described his experience pointing out that, for him, being a male in the feminist classroom was very enlightening: “it gives me a different perspective and helps me to understand how women might feel in mostly male classes. In terms of they [women] are literally surrounded.” Keith was acknowledging that some traditional classes are predominately male and his answer implied that women may be uncomfortable in classes where they are outnumbered. However, he enjoyed the change.

James responded in a similar way stating that he felt “surprisingly comfortable.” He went on to comment, “I haven’t felt singled out or like there were specific views towards me or specific fingers pointed towards any other guys in the class.” James also discussed the difference in numbers for Women Studies versus his other classes. He noted,

On average maybe there are only three or four women in my computer science classes, in each of them. But as I've gone through them [computer science classes] they have been the same three to four women. I've been taking classes with the same group of people since I was a freshman. And so, I guess in terms of mix it is different but it doesn't feel strange.

However, not all men in the Women Studies classroom shared this level of comfort. Steve noted that there were times when he did feel awkward but was quick to state, "Not very often, not as often as I thought I would be at all. Because I think I can see that what they [feminists] are saying is true. And that makes it less awkward."

He went on to discuss a class activity where the instructor would read statements and students were asked to stand beneath a sign on the wall that corresponded with their response to the statement. Options included strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. He described that with one statement regarding women's ability to play sports and he was one of five students who stood on the disagree side of the room while the rest of the class went to agree. Steve explained that this incident was awkward for him and that he was uncomfortable making a public stance when the majority of the class held an alternate view.

Paul described his presence in the feminist classroom as an "uncomfortable feeling." He felt that there could have been a prejudice towards males and what men were assumed to think about feminism. He did not specify whether he felt the presence of

this prejudice was existent or just possible therefore, making him uncomfortable. He went on to explain,

Honestly, some [male students] may be against feminism and not very open to it and others, like myself, who have basically been around girls, like, their whole life kind of have a different view on it. It's important to speak up and say your thoughts around it [feminism]. You may not be a feminist but you may not be totally against it. And I think it's important for guys in the class to do that and think about what they're saying.

Paul believed that despite the uncomfortable feeling he sometimes felt, it was still important to participate in class and to think about the material. It seems that his discomfort stems from a belief that some women in the class, possibly both instructor and students, may have preconceived notions about men's reactions to feminist education.

Johnny shared in Paul's experience and described himself as feeling "overwhelmed or out of place." He discussed this feeling by sharing the way he felt after reading Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."

She talks about carrying around a magic or bag of all these privileges. I guess I would consider with the exception of the money, I have all of these. Just speaking of being a white male, no health problems. So having all of that stuff similar to that paper while being in the class, I'm the minority. So, for two to four hours a week- I'm a little more wary to speak up. My views are not or may not be what everyone wants to hear or be well accepted. I mean my whole life I've been a white male. I'm not saying I'm proud of it but it does make things easier whether or not you admit it.

Johnny felt “out of place” upon recognition that he was a part of the dominant majority within our society. He began to recognize the privilege he has as a white, heterosexual, male who is able bodied where before he had never thought of these variables as advantageous. They had been invisible to him and he went on to explain that just as Peggy McIntosh had written, he could go and do things and people would not attribute his actions to his race or sex. Johnny’s discomfort was a result of the recognition of the role that he played in the systems of oppression. He was realizing the ways in which he was privileged and this made him feel “out of place.”

While there were varying feelings regarding being a male in the feminist classroom, all the men in this research reported that they believed there were benefits for men taking Women Studies classes. Steve explained,

A lot of men out there don’t understand feminism. And they think it’s something it’s not. They think that feminists will hate them because they are a man. While feminists may hate something like the privilege they have as a man but not the person and what society allows to happen but not the person. So, I think it does good for men to take the class and realize what it is all about.

Steve went on to comment that the most important thing he learned in his Women Studies class was the true definition of feminism. That it was about equality for all people. That feminists are working to eradicate classism, racism, looksism, heterosexism,

and ableism as well as sexism. "I think it is important to know that feminists are not just working for themselves, but that they are working for equality of everyone" (Steve). Steve believes that the feminist classroom is a place for men to learn this and believes that it is beneficial for men to understand feminism.

James believes that it is important and beneficial for men, the people they are interacting with,

To talk about these issues [women's issues] probably gives men a good opportunity to understand their relationships better and not just with their companions but with all people around them. [And to understand] how their interactions with social groups can affect people on very personal level. Even language or attitude or of course sometimes beliefs that we have or express without really realizing we have them can be pretty tough.

James has recognized the ways language, personal beliefs, and attitudes can reflect bias, prejudice, and stereotypes. He now understands that individuals must be aware of how their own actions can affect others even if it is accomplished inadvertently. Keith agreed with James and claimed, "It allows them to see a different aspect, literally, of society. It allows them [men] to be better people; allows them [men] to have better relationships with everyone and to see society clearer." Keith goes on to talk about his view on abortion prior to his class. He described a day in class when he thought of how he would feel to be pregnant without the option of terminating the pregnancy. He explained the fear that he felt and how this was an eye-opening experience. He was able to

imagine himself in a situation that many women face worldwide and he feels that confronting this possibility has made him a better person.

Male participants also discussed the role of men in Women Studies. Paul and Keith had similar responses and believe that men's primary role is to listen and participate. Paul articulates that men need to be,

Listeners and then share with our guy friends. I know that can be hard for a guy to do that. To talk to some guy about women's issues. I think it is important to listen and share. Share their views and in class include a little but really just listen. Guys don't listen nearly enough. They'd rather say their views and say that's right.

Keith responded by saying, "I think the role of men in Women Studies is to hear, to see what is going on and once you are made aware, actively counteract what is going on in society." Both men feel that men have something to learn from the feminist classroom and that men have an obligation to act on the knowledge they gain.

Steve views men as a bridge between feminism and social equality. He reiterates that feminists are often seen to be against men however, he claims that if you have a man who is a feminist or who agrees with feminist ideas then those men can work to dismantle common misconceptions. Johnny also believes that men have a role in working to eradicate social inequality. He believes that men should help but "must not take over it." He explains that

men must be careful not to take control but should help in anyway one feels good about. Johnny goes on to argue that if men are learning about the power and privilege then hopefully, they will begin to recognize the ways other people are oppressed. With this, men can work to end their involvement in the perpetuation of the systems of privilege and inequality.

CONCLUSION

Continuing the discussion

Results from this research project are mixed concerning the consequences of feminist education on men. While some men are resistant, many are benefiting from feminist education and are finding the material pertinent to their own lives. Men interviewed in this research seem to agree with Michael Kimmel's claim that men do have a place in the discipline and all believed that men have a role to play in feminism. Overall, men in this study were relatively accepting of feminist knowledge; however, no major changes among individuals were evident. The number of men identifying as feminists increased by 38% through the term studied in this research, however as discussed earlier what this actually means is unclear. Notable change came through a new awareness of the world in which we live and an awareness of the androcentric nature by which we exist. As a result of Women Studies some men could more easily identify discrimination, talk about the systems of oppression, and many were beginning to realize their own privilege. At the same time, some men's attitudes did not change and some became slightly more resistant to feminist knowledge.

While no major conclusions could be drawn from the surveys from the calculation and comparison of aggregate means,

more useful data was collected through examination of individual differences and item changes. Tentative results regarding socio-economic status, race, the presence of a stay-at-home mother, and class standing were drawn in order to explain why some men may have been more open and other men more resistance to feminist knowledge.

Survey and interview results illuminate the misunderstandings and misconceptions of feminism in our culture. One main theme that came from this research was that men entering the Women Studies classroom did not really know what feminism was or what Women Studies would be about. Male students did not see the space as welcoming and had many negative assumptions about what to expect. Women Studies was very successful in approaching these myths and in educating students as to what feminism was really about.

Knowing the effects of Women Studies for male students is pertinent as we, as feminists, attempt to illuminate the discrimination experienced worldwide by individuals based on their race, sex, sexual identification, social class, looks, religion, and ability. This is not a task for women alone, but one where all people, irrespective of differences, have a role to play. Women Studies serves as a space to introduce students to feminism and to social inequality. It is a place where misconceptions can be

confronted and true understanding formed. bell hooks believes that men have been constructed as the “all-powerful, misogynist, oppressor—the enemy” (68) for too long. hooks claims that such rhetoric reinforces “sexist ideology by an inverted form of the notion of a basic conflict between the sexes, the implication being that the empowerment of women would necessarily be at the expense of men” (68). Within the feminist classroom, men can begin to understand that they are not the enemy, that feminism isn’t just about women, and that there is a place for them in the movement towards social equality.

From a pedagogical perspective, it might be important to rethink the men’s experiences that were revealed within interviews from this research and utilize teaching practices that would help to engage men in feminist scholarship. Men enter the feminist classroom often feeling that the material is separate from their own lives. If we can illuminate the ways that men are also affected by feminist scholarship and facilitate personal connections with the material, the feminist classroom may be more beneficial for male students. For example, discuss how gender roles and expectations limit and restrict both men and women. Discuss how the gender hierarchy that values men over women is oppressive and disadvantageous for everyone. Men often do not feel that feminist ideas relate to their personal experiences however, within the

interviews it became apparent that men became more accepting of feminist scholarship when they were able to make personal connections with the material. This personal connection goes back to the “personal is political” from the women’s movement. Personal connections are possible for men as well. If we are going to talk about classism, looksism, racism, ableism, etc. then we must help *all* students (men and women) to understand how these systems connect to their own lives and affect them personally. As feminist educators, I believe it is in our best interest to help all students engage in feminist scholarship. We must try to facilitate growth and personal connections for all students. If we are truly going to make a difference, then we must try to reach all people and encourage them to get involved in the struggle to eradicate social injustice.

Recommendations for future research

The enrollment of men in Women Studies classes is inevitable at most universities and institutions. If men are going to be a part of the feminist classroom, the conditions and consequences of their participation is important to understand for everyone involved.

Many men have joined the feminist movement for equality as male feminists and profeminists. Since the Women Studies classroom might be the first exposure to feminism for many students, it can serve as a positive space to learn about inequality and to become active around women's issues. Therefore, if men can benefit from Women Studies classes the movement overall may benefit.

Future research may want to consider replicating a study such as this to gain a better understanding of the effects and consequences for men in the Women Studies classroom. It may be beneficial to examine men who are in upper level courses within Women Studies programs and departments, or to examine men involved in feminist education but within other departments.

It would also be useful to consider is how men are affected by feminist knowledge in comparison with women. Are men empowered in similar ways as women within the feminist classroom? And are the changes for men different for women? If they are different, why is this? Why do men enter the feminist

classroom with negative expectations and uninformed about the women's movement? Do women share in these anticipations? Do women enter the feminist classroom with a better understanding of feminism? Do antifeminist women have a similar experience with antifeminist men in the Women Studies classroom? It is also important to consider why the Women Studies classroom affects the changes it does? How is that different from any other discipline? Is it different?

Men interviewed in this study did not reveal any negative feelings they may have had regarding the feminist classroom and offered few critiques. Steve did note that sometimes he felt that there was just "too much work" to do before social equality could be reached and he also said that it "takes time," that feminists shouldn't expect things to change overnight. It would be especially useful to involve men in a similar research project who are resistant to Women Studies in order to understand their thoughts and feelings about the feminist classroom. Based on stories from professors and instructors of Women Studies resisters are common within the feminist classroom. During a previous term, one colleague of mine had a student ask, "Where did you get this information?" in regards to the course materials. This man was questioning the validity of her information and her authority within the classroom.

Another instructor in the Women Studies department told me of an experience from the feminist classroom where a student came into class late and walked directly in front of her while she was lecturing to an open seat versus taking an open seat next to the door. This student's actions purposefully interrupted what the instructor was saying and drew attention towards him. Other forms of men's resistance that are common among the circulating stories of Women Studies staff included the refusal to participate in class activities, questioning the validity of the course material, negative comments made aloud to the class, and lack of respect for the professor/instructor.

Male resisters would have most likely responded to the interview questions differently and would have probably offered their own stories where they felt conflict within their classes. Interviewing resisters may give insight to how men who do not agree with the material may feel within the feminist classroom and if and how the class affects or relates to their personal lives. It is safe to assume that there were negative experiences among male students enrolled in Women Studies and it would be helpful to hear about these in order to truly understand the effects and consequences for men within the feminist classroom.

Finally, it would be helpful to replicate this study with a more diverse population in order to successfully draw conclusions

regarding men's acceptance or resistance to feminist knowledge.

It would be useful to understand if and how a man's sexual identification, race, ethnicity, religion, abilities, social class, and looks affected his experience within the feminist classroom.

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- ◆ Please read the following list and check all incidents you have experienced:

Sexual assault (including attempted rape) ____; Rape____; Incest____;
 Child sexual abuse____; Child physical abuse____; Child neglect____;
 Emotional abuse____; Physical abuse____; Other incident (please describe) _____.

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 think pornography is okay.

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 men.

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

Appendix B

Recruitment for participation.

Please complete the following information if are interested in continued participation in this research project. If you complete this form, you will be contacted within 4 weeks to set up an hour long interview with the researcher. This will be your only obligation and you are free to withdrawal from the research at any point with no consequences.

Name (First, Middle Initial,
Last) _____

Contact Information:
(Please provide an email address or phone number)

Appendix C

Interview Questions: To be asked during the in-person interviews with male participants continuing with the research. There is no right or wrong answer. Your participation

Demographics:

- Wour 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?
- Have you ever experienced violence? If yes, can you tell me about it?

Questions related to course:

- 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?

- Did you consider yourself a feminist before taking Women Studies?
- 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 Women Studies altered the way you view society? If yes, how so?
Own position? "isms" in relation to own life and others?
women's lives?

- What kind of changes, if any, have you gone through since enrolling in Women Studies? Have relationships with women been affected?

- The "personal is political" is often referenced when understanding women's lives (explain, if necessary), do you feel the "personal is political" is also a relevant concept for men when understanding their lives?

- Would you consider taking another Women Studies course? Why or why not?

- Do you think there are benefits to men taking Women Studies classes?
- As a man, if you could name one thing that you learned from the class, what would it be?
- What do you think is the role of men in Women Studies? Why or why not?
- Women Studies focuses on women and their lives. Would you be willing to take a course on masculinity and men's lives?
- Is there anything else you want to share with me about your experiences taking Women Studies that you think would be useful for me to know?