A QUALITATIVE ETHNOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT OF WOMEN’S STUDIES

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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MUNCIE, INDIANA
JULY 2013
ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies

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DEGREE: Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

COLLEGE: Teachers College

DATE: July 2013

PAGES: 160

In this research study, I sought to understand and describe the Women’s and Gender Studies (WGS) Program at Berea College by exploring it through the experiences of students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae. I designed and implemented a feminist organizational ethnography. Organizational ethnography is a naturalistic, qualitative research tool for understanding organizational communication and culture in organizations. I used qualitative research methods to create a portrait of the WGS Program at Berea College by observing and interviewing students, administrators, faculty, and alumnae, and interpreting their stories using constant comparative analysis. Standpoint theory is the theoretical framework that guided how I collected data because it requires the researcher to begin with the lives of marginalized peoples. It also requires inclusion of multiple perspectives. The overarching research questions of this study are:

1) How is the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College perceived or experienced by its stakeholders (students, administrators, faculty, and alumnae)?
2) How is its reality constructed through the overlapping lenses of each?

3) How does the WGS Program approach, prepare for, and respond to political and economic challenges?

I concluded that the WGS Program at Berea College is a model program because the leadership uses student-centered feminist pedagogy and they celebrate diversity, succeed with low resources, and clearly value the experiences and voices of the students. The leadership in the WGS Program at Berea College creates a home on campus where students go to learn about things they can’t find anywhere else on campus.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While writing is ultimately a solitary experience, it “thrives best when supported by a spirited community” (Rhoades, 1996). I am thankful for my Creator for being divinely loving and inspiring, and for my “spirited community” of family, friends, teachers, and classmates who have supported me in this journey. I am especially thankful for Riley Rosser-Dickerson, my daughter, who inspires me to do my best and to live life to the fullest. You shine with spirit and possibilities, and I am grateful to be your mother.

Thank you, Lenen Nicola, my husband, for your love and support and for having faith in me that, at times, surpassed my own. I am very thankful for my mother and father, Peggy and Henry Rosser who have valued and supported my educational endeavors in so many ways, and for my sister, Kathy VanOsdl, who has always looked out for me and believed in me.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Dr. Michelle Glowacki-Dudka, for being a motivational mentor and a powerful editor. I am glad you agreed to be the Chair of my committee, and I am grateful for your guidance and for your gentle reminder to put my voice into it. I would like to thank the other members of my committee, Dave Concepción, Angie Day, and Roy Weaver, for your guidance along the way.

I am grateful to Dr. Peggy Rivage-Seul, Dr. Stephanie Troutman, and all the students and alumnae from Berea College who allowed me to write about their experiences with the Women’s and Gender Studies at Berea College. I want to share a special note of appreciation to Peggy and
her husband, Mike, for their hospitality and for sharing their home and many amazing delicious vegetarian meals with me when I was in Berea.

Thank you, Diann Maurer, for your countless acts of kindness that include surprising me with the music of Ruthie Foster and Patty Griffin in my mailbox and for being my sister-friend-writer-comrade by allowing me to share in your writing endeavors as well.

I am grateful to Courtney Jarrett, who encouraged me to move forward in deciding to work on my doctorate by leading the way. I am grateful to Leticia and Larry Hines for being so supportive throughout all my educational experiences and to Mary Moore for always asking about my research and for sharing insightful thoughts and perspectives about which way to take it. I am grateful to Alysha Nemore for sharing your wisdom with me through the years, to Cecilia Peralta for helping me replace coffee with chamomile tea, to Maude Jennings and Elaine Cotner for your inspiration, and to Uschi Nicola for being curious and asking questions about my research. I am exceptionally grateful for my sister-friends who have supported me in this endeavor. You know who you are!

I would also like to thank the Downtown Farm Stand that made yummy organic vegetarian food available when I was in the writing zone and needed nourishment. Thank you for Peggy Cappy, for making the video, *Yoga for the Rest of Us*, that helped me move after being at the computer for hours at a time. I have never met you, but I am eternally grateful for your influence.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to a very special teacher, mentor, and friend, Dr. Kim Jones-Owen, for introducing me to women’s studies so many years ago, for allowing me the opportunity to teach women’s studies, and for believing in me.

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmothers, Aleene Patterson and Jewel Rosser, for paving the path for me with love and prayers.

I dedicate this dissertation to all the activists and academics who work to bring women’s studies experiences into students’ lives and for all the students who make it all worth it.
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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

The academic area of women’s studies was established within higher education institutions following a decade of activism for equal human rights in the 1960s in the United States. Pioneers in women’s studies united in their belief that education was the key in the struggle for gender equality. The movement spread and people went on to develop women’s studies classes, which developed into formal degree programs where students could earn undergraduate minors and majors. They also designed curriculum to offer graduate degrees. In 1977, there were 276 women’s studies programs, and in 2007, there were approximately 650 programs in the United States (Reynolds, Shagle, & Venkataraman, 2007, p. 3). Along with the growth of women's studies, there has been “an explosion of research and scholarship on women and gender issues” (Reynolds, et. al., 2007, p. 3). This active research and formalization of the field has given women’s studies more legitimacy in the eyes of many academics in higher education.

Women’s studies is an interdisciplinary area of study that provides valuable services to institutions of higher education and unique opportunities for students. By creating space for feminism, women’s studies programs create a space largely missing from other classrooms. Women’s studies programs also provide opportunities for civic engagement in higher education. Many programs also offer networking spaces through internships inside women’s studies offices and outside the university at community organizations, non-profit organizations, and businesses,
as well as conference experiences. Women’s studies programs also provide programming of educational and entertaining events that tend to be made available for free to the campus and community. They also offer students the ability to connect with women’s studies scholars through the National Women’s Studies Association. These opportunities provide the experience and the professional relationships needed to pursue gainful employment and further their education.

Women’s studies students are able to learn about women’s experiences, feminist theories, and how to evaluate ways in which gender, sex, nationality, age, sexuality, race, class, ability, ethnicity, and religion overlap in people’s lives. An education in women’s studies teaches people to apply global understanding and cross-cultural awareness to questions about how these categories affect people’s lives. A women’s studies education enables people to think critically about social and political issues and to consider a subject from many standpoints. More specifically, an education in women’s studies provides the opportunity to link experience with wisdom and activism with theory to apply to social transformation (Levin, 2007, p. 17).

Students in women’s studies become equipped to recognize multiple standpoints, to identify sexist, racist, and classist writing and thinking, and to build arguments with proof acquired from investigation (Levin, 2007). By using these perspectives as categories for analysis, women’s studies students are able to engage in intersectionality, which “has brought the distinctive knowledge and perspectives of previously ignored groups of women into general discussion and awareness, and has shown how the experience of gender differs by race, class and other dimensions of inequality” (Dill, 2009, p. 1).

Women’s studies programs, as a formally identified academic discipline has some specific and unique problems that they face. This dissertation identifies and examines how one
program creates a unique space for its students, and also how it works within the academic home. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and support the purpose for my research. I provide the overarching research questions and explain my interest in the contributions of women’s studies in higher education. I also offer brief definitions of feminism and standpoint theory that are discussed more fully in Chapter 2. I conclude this chapter with my assumptions and the limitations of this research.

**Problem Statement**

Women’s studies programs within higher education institutions are often overlooked or misunderstood, as they blend into other programs and are often interdisciplinary without their own departmental structure, full time faculty, or large number of students. These administrative constraints force women’s studies to live in the margins of higher education.

In many instances, the contributions of women’s studies programs, go unnoticed or recognized by higher education administrators who are in positions to make decisions about the position, status, and funding of women’s studies’ programs at their institutions. The marginal position and continued patriarchal policies within universities contribute to the stereotypes about women’s studies programs and all this contributes to the corporatization of women’s studies. While each women’s studies program has its own mission statement, the general purpose of women’s studies is to educate students about women’s experiences and women’s contributions to society.

This dissertation and study demonstrates that formal programs in higher education can value, support, and recognize women’s experiences and contributions to society, as a core component to a university mission of equity, lifelong learning, and social justice.
Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to highlight a strong women’s studies program that is nationally known and recognized. Through qualitative interviews and observations with a variety of stakeholders, I document the program through multiple standpoints. I want to showcase how this program serves women and makes the college more accepting of female students, faculty, and leaders. More specifically, I want to understand and describe the perceptions and experiences of students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae members involved in a women’s studies program.

Other outcomes of this research may include: helping those involved in the program to reflect on their own experiences with the WGS Program; documenting the WGS program at Berea College; recruiting more students for the program; and supporting internal marketing about the WGS Program to administration, funders, alumni, and others.

I used organizational ethnography among other qualitative data collection techniques to gather information to create a portrait the WGS Program. Standpoint theory (Collins, 2000, Hartsock, 1998, Harding, 1995, 2004) is my theoretical guide for data collection. I analyzed the transcripts and developed inductive codes through a constant comparative data analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Through a close examination of Berea College and the WGS Program, other higher education institutions may see it as a model to use for their own programs in the future. The findings of this study help fill the gap of missing research about women’s studies programs and their contributions to academia and society. I hope to help reveal the very real contributions women’s studies makes to academia and the world at large.
Research Questions

The research questions pursued through this study sought to understand the culture of women’s studies at Berea College by exploring the experiences of students from multiple perspectives. The overarching research questions are:

1) How is the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College perceived or experienced by its stakeholders (students, administrators, faculty, and alumnae)?
2) How is its reality constructed through the overlapping lenses of each?
3) How does the WGS Program approach, prepare for, and respond to political and economic challenges?

Subjectivity Statement

I have been teaching women’s and gender studies classes at Ball State University since 1999, but my initial experiences in women’s studies began in 1995, when I was an undergraduate social work student at Ball State University. I was very interested in my social work classes and I focused on the experiences of women and girls in almost all my papers. It was a time of personal growth for me, as an academic and an activist. I heard about some of the classes offered by the Women’s and Gender Studies (WGS) Program from friends and I walked by the tiny WGS Program office in North Quad all the time to get to my classes.

It was during this time that I unexpectedly began growing as a mother as well. This experience propelled me into wanting to be involved in women’s studies like a rocket launcher. I was having a girl and I embraced feminism as a change agent to making the world better for her. I also experience a personal connection with mothers everywhere. Women’s studies offered a safe space to explore feminism through study and discussion. So, I became a WGS minor; this was all that was offered at that time. I would have double majored if it were possible.
The director of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at that time, Dr. Kim Jones-Owen, taught me to understand oppression and empowerment better and, in essence, the politics behind privilege and prejudice. She became a feminist mentor to me as I was learning to navigate my feminist consciousness and my new role as a mother. It was such a transformative learning experience that changed my life by setting in on a course for advocating for women and children and for social change that benefits women and men, girls and boys.

After I graduated, I was frightened at the thought of living on a social worker’s salary as a single parent, so I immediately and almost accidentally went on to earn my Masters degree in Communication, more specifically Organizational and Professional Communication Development. As a feminist scholar, I felt deeply connected to the benefits of feminist organizational communication because it tied in so closely to my women’s studies background.

I went to work as the Sexual Assault Counselor at A Better Way Services of Delaware County for over two years. In this position, I talked with countless women and children and a few men about the abuse they experienced and tried to advocate for their needs and encourage their empowerment. However, the secondary victimization I started to experience was overwhelming at times. Toward the end of my time, I knew I had to get on the other side of this violence to be more proactive. I contacted Dr. Jones-Owen to talk to her about what I should do next.

She invited me to teach a class for the WGS Program. I was so incredibly happy with this opportunity and I have been teaching women’s studies ever since. In addition to teaching for the WGS Program, I also have held the roles of Administrative Coordinator, Assistant Director, and Interim Director of the WGS Program as well. I enjoyed seeing the students come in who
benefited from the WGS classes and internships like I did when I was a student. In 2009, my administrative responsibilities to the WGS Program ended and now I am simply a teacher.

I also am a doctoral candidate in the Adult, Higher, and Community Education Program. My major is Adult and Community Education and my cognate is Communication. I am pursuing this degree because I feel strongly connected with community activism and education as tools for overcoming oppression, something I learned in my women’s studies classes.

I have strong beliefs about feminism and how a women’s studies program ought to be run. Feminism isn’t a man-hating creation, as some may believe it to be. It really is the radical notion that women and girls are equal to men and boys. It is the reality that women’s subjugation and suppression result from a system that is out of balance and heavily weighted toward male privilege. It also is the recognition that other systems of oppression create more complicated “matrix of domination” (Collins, 1986). Therefore, the work of feminism requires investigation into where these systems of oppression intersect and overlap with the ultimate goal of creating a more equal, just, and peaceful society.

The students are the heart of women’s studies programs, and it is important for students to have the opportunities like I had in the WGS Program at Ball State University many years ago. They need a safe space to be able to explore feminism and a way to get actively engaged in the program’s activities. Internships are essential, so students can participate in organizing events that celebrate Women’s History Month, or the Clothesline Project. They also need to have opportunities to showcase their scholarly work at the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) annual conference to show that programs in women’s studies value the intersections that exist “between scholarship, theory and activism” to create students and teachers who are
“civically engaged, globally competent, self reflective and dexterous in many disciplines” (Berger & Guidroz, 2009, p. 40).

I found my intellectual and activist home where women’s studies, adult education, community education, social work, communication, and higher education intersect. I personally felt the empowering learning environment in women’s studies classes, as a student, and have observed this academic field of inquiry in classes, in the field, and at NWSA conferences for 14 years.

Assumptions and Limitations

Everyone has bias and all researchers begin studies with assumptions. As a qualitative researcher, I am the instrument through which all the information is filtered to the reader. I am distinctly aware of the responsibility that this role places on me. As a qualitative researcher, I strive for transparency with my reader about why I am doing the research, my conclusions about the data, and my assumptions about the topic. Through transparency, I make my work trustworthy and credible.

I assume that this research contributes to the larger body of knowledge about women’s studies. This research could help administrators within institutions of higher education to make more informed decisions about women’s studies programs. While the data gathered from this study will not be generalizable to all women’s studies programs, it provides a portrait of the program at Berea College. With a great deal of diversity among women’s studies programs, I assume that Berea has unique characteristics, but also that the values and approach to serving students and community and adding to the larger body of knowledge about women’s studies.
Definitions of Terms

**Feminism.** In most recognized societies, social structures that give men higher status and value than women, limit women’s access to valuable resources and gives women less opportunity and autonomy to make choices about their lives (Sapiro, 2003). Feminism is the movement toward equality between women and men. It arose as a way to attend to “the concerns and life experiences of women and girls, who, due to widespread androcentric bias, had long been excluded from knowledge construction both as researchers and research subjects” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 25). It looks at gender as one of the most significant foundational pieces of social organization and structure (Sapiro, 2003).

Gender is not the only classification that structures social life. Feminism also recognizes the importance of perspectives that come from race, class, age, ability, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity. In fact, we cannot observe or understand the importance of gender in people’s lives without taking into account how these additional standpoints intersect. This is one reason why it is useful to strive to understand feminism by using standpoint theory because it is in the intersections of these classifications that women’s studies is able to help us understand social realities.

**Standpoint Theory.** Standpoint theory argues for the “starting off thought” (Harding, 2004). In essence, the idea is to start off the research thought process “from the lives of marginalized peoples” (p. 128). This is opposite from the concept of the beginning the research from the point of view of those with the most power in the situation. “Beginning in those determinate, objective locations in any social order will generate illuminating critical questions that do not arise in thought that begins from dominant group lives” (Harding, 2004, p. 128).
Standpoint theory is not just “about how to get a less limited understanding of marginal lives - women's lives, for example” (Harding, 1995, p. 342). Standpoint theory research starts from these locations “in order to explain not only those lives but also the rest of the micro and macro social order, including human interactions with nature and the philosophies that have been developed to explain sciences” (Harding, 1995, p. 342).

I chose to use standpoint theory “as a map or method for maximizing a strong objectivity that can function more effectively for knowledge projects faced with the problem of sciences that have been constituted by the values and interests of the most powerful social groups” (Harding, 1995, p. 341). It is the most appropriate theoretical guide for this research study. I “start off” from the perspectives of students and include faculty, administrators, and alumnae. This helps me create a portrait of the program.

**Description of Outline for the Paper**

The following description of the outline for this paper serves to help the reader to anticipate what to expect in the upcoming chapters. In Chapter 1, I described my research initiative through the problem statement that introduced the marginalization of women’s studies in higher education. I also presented the purpose statement that described how I plan to bring awareness to the contributions of women’s studies. I also shared with you my experiences with women’s studies and why I think this research is important.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature examining information about and further defining feminism and feminist theory, and standpoint theory. I focus primarily on the work of Patricia Hill Collins, Nancy Hartsock, Alison Jaggar, Sandra Harding, and bell hooks. I explain why standpoint theory is the right choice for this research. Then I move to review literature about research on women’s studies programs and explain why research on women’s studies programs
is important, and about why we need to understand women’s studies in the first place. Then highlight Berea College as a model educational institution and the WGS Program, residing there, as a model program and as one of the strongest programs in the country.

In Chapter 3, I describe how I used a feminist framework to complete a constant comparative analysis of the data that I collected at Berea College. First, I provide an overview of qualitative research methods in general, before focusing on ethnography. Next, I explain organizational ethnography as a tool that exists within organizational communication studies and highlight how feminism has been influential to organizational communication studies. Then, I discuss how I used ethnographic observations and qualitative interviewing, and describe my own specific qualitative methods using organizational ethnography. I also provide a description of my informants and describe how I chose them. I also share the data collection design and analysis method used for understanding and interpreting the interviews and observations that were conducted.

In Chapter 4, I give an overall organizational description of the WGS Program within the context of Berea College. Then, I share the mission statement, the curriculum, and the internal and external programming of the WGS Program. I illustrate a constructed reality of the overlapping lenses of experiences from the stakeholders of the WGS Program at Berea College by describing the environment and culture of the WGS Program. I describe the participants’ classroom experiences from one of the core WGS courses. I also include my observations and experiences with Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons. Lastly, I report some of the challenges related to being in and running a WGS Program, and plans for growth in the future.

In Chapter 5, I offer the conclusions about the WGS Program at Berea College by with answers to the research questions. I give multi-level recommendations for the WGS Program,
for Berea College higher administrators, for women’s studies programs in general, for higher education administrators in general who have administrative power over women’s studies programs, and for society in general. Then, I share some ideas for further research.
CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the literature review includes information about feminism, feminist theory, standpoint theory, why research on women’s studies is incredibly important, and about why we need to understand women’s studies in the first place. The literature is reviewed through sharing information from dissertations, articles, and books emphasizing the importance of women’s studies. This chapter also discusses why I chose Berea College’s Women’s and Gender Studies Program to showcase.

Feminist Theory

In her article, Philosophies: Feminist, Twentieth-Century, Nancy Tuana (2005) defines feminism and feminist theory:

The term *feminism* is used both in reference to social movements, such as the late-Nineteenth century women's rights movement or the mid-Twentieth century women's movement in Europe and the United States, and to theories that identify and critique injustices against women, such as *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) or *The Book of the City of Ladies* by Christine de Pisan (c. 1364–1430). Although there are various uses of the term, a core connotation of *feminism* is the commitment to revealing and eliminating sexist oppression. (p. 1766)

Standpoint theory grew out of feminist theory, which was derived from feminism. It has been adapted over time since feminist theory encompasses a very diverse community of
philosophers and researchers. In the following passage from Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, bell hooks (2000) describes the difference between feminism and feminist theory:

Unlike the feminist scholarship that was focusing on recovering past history, forgotten heroines, writers, etc., or the work that was about documenting from a social science perspective the current realities of women’s lives, initially feminist theory was the site for the critical interrogation and re-imagining of sexist gender roles. It was to provide a revolutionary blueprint for the movement – one that when followed would lead us in the direction of transforming patriarchal culture. By the late ‘70s feminist thinkers were already engaging in dialectical critique of the feminist thinking that had emerged from late ‘60s radicalism. That critique formed the basis of revisionist feminist theory. (p. xi)

Feminist theory examines and critiques the works of feminist thinkers and writers of the past, while growing with the current diversified field of feminism, and it postulates on the possibilities of the future. Some theoretical disputes center on the conceptualization of identity in feminist theory. This has ultimately led us to use standpoint theory in order to examine multiple perspectives of contexts and issues.

**Standpoint Theory**

In this section, I discuss different aspects of standpoint theory and highlight the work of some standpoint theorists.

According to Collins (2000), standpoint theory is “a social theory arguing that group location in hierarchical power relations produces common challenges for individuals in those groups… Shared experiences can foster similar angles of vision leading to group knowledge or standpoint deemed essential for informed political action” (p. 300). Therefore standpoint theory
is concerned with exploring experience, knowledge, and identity of a certain context or issue (O'Leary, 1998).

Feminist standpoint theory argues that persons in privileged social positions are those that define “truth claims.” In feminist standpoint theory, two key assumptions include: 1) “knowledge is grounded in historical sociopolitical locations” and 2) “women occupy a social location that affords them multifaceted access to social phenomena.”

In making these assertions, feminist standpoint theory challenges the “masculinist” definition of truth and method embodied in modern Western science and epistemology, thereby creating an alternative method grounded in the “truth claims” of women's lives (however diverse those lives are). (Mamo, 2005, p. 359)

Standpoint theory has grown and changed over the years, especially in relation to the ideas of objectivity, neutrality, and universalism. Ryan (2005) explains that, standpoint theorists tend to “rally around the idea of social justice and support protesting, organizing, and testifying to one's unique social location as a means of raising awareness of, and giving validity to, all lived social experiences” (p. 789). However, Ryan (2005) notes that, “standpoint theories recognize their own limitations by virtue of their unique historical, social, and cultural locations and seek to open the social stage to all members of society” (p. 789).

Numerous theorists have used standpoint theory as they completed feminist research. Patricia Hill Collins, Nancy Hartstock, Alison Jaggar, Sandra Harding, bell hooks, and Dorothy Smith are standpoint theorists that I highlight here. Yet, there are many more because “[f]eminist knowledge has started off from women’s lives, but it has started off from many different women’s lives; there is not typical or essential woman’s life from which feminisms start
their thought” (Harding, 2004, p. 134). Each researcher takes a slightly different approach to his or her research. In the next section, I describe their work in more detail.

**Patricia Hill Collins.** In her article, *Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought* (1986), Collins describes how Black women’s “outsider within” status generates a distinctly unique standpoint. The outsider-within locations are “social locations or border spaces marking the boundaries between groups of unequal power …and their placement in these social locations” (Collins, 2000, p. 300).

Collins (1986) articulated three key themes in Black feminist thought that has clarified a Black women’s standpoint. They include: “the meaning of self-definition and self-valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of redefining culture” (p. S24). Carrying this theory further, she wrote *Black Feminist Thought* in 1990, where she used an intersectional paradigm to further discuss U.S. Black feminist standpoints. Intersectionality is the “analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization” (Collins, 2000, p. 299). These intersections shape Black women’s experiences provide the core content for Collins, as she developed a model “matrix of domination”, which organizes “the overall organization of hierarchical power relations for any society” (p. 299).

Any specific matrix of domination has (1) a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression, e.g., race, social class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, ethnicity and age; and (2) a particular organization of its domains of power, e.g., structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal. (p. 299)

Collins (2000) describes how intersectional paradigms make an important “contribution to untangling the relationships between knowledge and empowerment” by shedding “new light
on how domination is organized” (p. 227). In her work, she describes multiple aspects of the US
where this can be found through institutional racism and segregation, among others.

Nancy Hartsock is a well-known feminist theorist who originally developed standpoint
theory in her article, *The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically
Feminist Historical Materialism* (1983). In it, she explains describes how Marxist Theory
should be used with feminist theory to develop a materialist feminist standpoint theory. “The
power of the Marxian critique of class domination stands as an implicit suggestion that feminists
should consider the advantages of adopting a historical materialist approach to understanding
phallocratic domination” (Hartsock, 1983a, p. 283).

When she discusses the nature of a standpoint epistemology, she explains the argument
that, a standpoint “carries with it the contention that there are some perspectives on society from
which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and
with the natural world are not visible” (p. 285). Therefore the notion of a feminist standpoint is
one that comes from “a collective subject, or group that is marked as different or inferior in
society” (Mamo, 2005, p. 357). Along with other early standpoint theorists like Dorothy Smith
and Sandra Harding, Hartsock argued, “that women, as a marginalized group, possess a unique
perspective from which to see the world” (Mamo, 2005, p. 357).

Hartsock “explores some of the epistemological consequences of claiming that women’s lives
differ systematically and structurally from those of men” (p. 231). Hartsock used Marxist theory
to create formulate the following five contentions of standpoint epistemology:

1) Material life (class position in Marxist theory) not only structures but sets limits on the
understandings of social relations.
2) If material life is structured in fundamentally opposing ways for two groups, one can expect that the vision of each represents an inversion of the other, and in systems of domination, the vision available to the rulers is both partial and perverse.

3) The vision of the ruling class (or gender) structures the material relations in which all parties are forced to participate and therefore cannot be dismissed as simply false.

4) In consequence, the vision available to the oppressed group must be struggled for and represents an achievement, which requires both science to see beneath the surface of the social relations in which all are forced to participate, and the education, which can only grow from struggle to change those relations.

5) As an engaged vision, the understanding of the oppressed, the adoption of a standpoint exposes the real relations among human beings as inhuman, points beyond the present, and carries a historically liberatory role. (1983b, p. 232)

Over the past three decades, standpoint theory has been reviewed, reevaluated, assessed critically, and reformulated by many scholars. Some critiques “argue that standpoint theories assume embodied knowledge, construct an essentialist view of identity and identity politics, and obscure multiplicity and difference by constructing a universal women's experience, and are unable to see standpoint as constructed and fluid” (Mamo, 2005, p. 358).

Hartsock (1998) responds to the changes and continues to contribute to developing standpoint theory in her book, *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays*. In is, she sees the “proliferation of interpretations as an indication that standpoint theories provoke a fertile terrain for feminist debates about power, politics, and epistemology” (p. 230). At first, she argued for a universal experience of womanhood, but when she “revisits standpoint theory in light of these reformulations and other postmodern critiques” (p. 358), Hartsock accounts for
many various subjects and “reasserts her idea of standpoint as a group-based, collective position, not an individual one” (Mamo, 2005, p. 358).

Alison Jaggar and Nancy Hartsock’s versions of standpoint theory are similar in regard to their initial ideas about universalism. In Jaggar’s (1983) book, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, she extends standpoint theory beyond a Marxist interpretation and provides four primary frameworks to understand “the various political theories feminists employed in efforts to argue for women's liberation” (Tuana, 2005, p. 1767). These frameworks include liberal, Marxist, radical, and socialist frameworks.

[L]iberal feminism, which focuses on rights and equal access, and argues that the primary cause of women's oppression is laws and rules that limit women's equal access to educational, economic, and political institutions; Marxist feminism, which argues that at the root of sexist oppression is class oppression; radical feminism, which identifies patriarchy and male control over women's bodies, including sexuality and reproduction, as the cause of sexual subordination; and socialist feminism, which views economic and social institutions as interdependent and thus attempts to incorporate the insights of the class analysis of Marxism with the radical feminist critique of patriarchal social organizations. (Tuana, 2005, p. 1767)

When Alison Jaggar (1983) describes four forms of feminism, she locates “the most complete articulation of women’s standpoint theory in socialist feminism” (O'Leary, 1998, p. 51). O’Leary (1998) agreed that “Jaggar’s analytic approach helps to clarify the centrality of a standpoint logic in this diverse range of theories and, there by, helps to lay the conceptual groundwork for the analysis of feminist standpoint theory” (p. 51).
Sandra Harding (2004), another feminist theorist explains, “There is no single, ideal woman’s life from which standpoint theories recommend that thought start” (p. 131). She claims that instead, we “must turn to all the lives that are marginalized in different ways by the operative systems of social stratification” because “the different feminisms inform each other: we can learn from all of them and change our patterns of belief” (Harding, 2004, p. 131).


Harding (2004) shares examples of the kind of work people do who use standpoint theory. For instance, she writes about Dorothy Smith and certain social situations from the perspective of Native Canadian women. Harding (2004) goes on to identify Bettina Aptheker who argued that starting thought from the everyday lives of women who are holocaust survivors, Chicana cannery workers, older lesbians, African-American women in slavery, Japanese-American concentration camp survivors, and others who have had lives different from hers, increases our ability to understand a great deal about the distorted way the dominant groups conceptualize politics, resistance, community, and other key history and social science notions. (p. 120)

Harding (2004) reminds us that, beginning to explore lives from a contradictory social position often generates feminist knowledge. Therefore, “the logic of the directive to ‘start thought from women’s lives’ requires that one start one’s thought from multiple lives that are in many ways in conflict with each other, each of which itself has multiple and contradictory commitments” (Harding, 2004, p. 134).
bell hooks (2000), a prominent African-American feminist writer and professor, explains that “feminist thought and practice were fundamentally altered when radical women of color and white women allies began to rigorously challenge the notion that ‘gender’ was the primary factor determining a women’s fate” (p. xi). During this time, the perspective of the “interlocking nature of gender, race, and class” challenged feminist theory and this “changed the direction of feminist thought” (hooks, 2000, p. xii). Feminism’s ability to grow and change with the times is considered to be an incredible area of strength within the movement.

**Standpoint Theory Controversy: Universalist Dimension.**

In Catherine M. O'Leary’s (1998) article, *Counteridentification or Counterhegemony Transforming Feminist Standpoint Theory*, she argues for a “critical responses to the universalist dimension of such standpoint theory” and highlights “versions of standpoint theory which propose to refigure the treatment of difference and identity” (p. 48). The universalist dimension originated from the beginnings of standpoint theory as a way to join women in a universal experience of being women.

In this next passage, O'Leary (1998) explains the universal dimension:

Feminist standpoint theories generally hold that because knowledge is socially constructed, one’s position in society informs one’s understanding of that society. As structures of domination and exploitation are central to the dynamics of any society, those who experience forms of oppression best understand those structures of domination and, thus, certain central dynamics of their society. This interpretation of knowledge has taken various and contested forms within feminist theory. (O’Leary, 1998, p. 48)

O’Leary (1998) is concerned that “the universalist version of standpoint theory is problematic in its conception of gender and difference at an epistemological level” (p. 48). She
reminds us that a universalist view may “deny differences among and power between women” (p. 48).

O’Leary (1998) seeks “to bring issues of power, the forms of power which produce differences of race, class, gender, nation, and sex, to the center of an analysis of standpoint knowledge” (p. 48). She argues that standpoint theorists, such as Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks, “represent alternatives which transform feminist standpoint theory in promising and empowering ways. (p. 49). She especially highlights Patricia Hill Collins, Chela Sandoval, and Donna Haraway, as they use the respective concepts of “the matrix of domination,” “situated knowledges,” and “oppositional consciousness” to better define each context (Mamo, 2005, p. 359).

**Why Standpoint Theory is the Right Choice for this Research**

Standpoint theory serves as the theoretical framework within this research study. It moves me to gather as many perspectives as possible to create a clear portrait of the WGS Program at Berea College. Standpoint theory is appropriate as I am examining a feminist niche of higher education that is modeling the methods taught within women’s studies.

Using standpoint theory, we can explore these “determinate, objective locations in any social order to generate illuminating critical questions that do not arise in thought that begins from dominant group lives” (Harding, 2004, p. 128). It is not only about understanding the lives of marginalized peoples, but it begins from “such locations in order to explain not only those lives but also the rest of the micro and macro social order, including human interactions with nature and the philosophies that have been developed to explain sciences” (Harding, 1995, p. 342).
I chose to use standpoint theory “as a map or method for maximizing a strong objectivity that can function more effectively for knowledge projects faced with the problem of sciences that have been constituted by the values and interests of the most powerful social groups” (Harding, 1995, p. 341). It is the most appropriate theoretical guide for this research study. I “start off” from the perspectives of students and include faculty, administrators, and alumnae. This helps me create a portrait of the program.

**Research about Women’s Studies**

Women’s studies programs often times, present themselves as having a unique culture in higher education. For instance, Tomoka Toraiwa’s (2009) dissertation, *Enabling Empowerment: Students, Instructors, and the Circulation of Caring in a Women's Studies Program at a University in the United States* describes a culture of caring and empowerment at the Women’s Studies Program at Grate Lakes University. Toraiwa (2009) conducted a qualitative research study on how students in women’s studies experience empowerment. She looked specifically at how feminist pedagogy and the ethics of caring affect women’s studies students’ experiences of empowerment. Toraiwa uses the results from Hoffman and Stake’s (1998) survey of women’s studies teachers to describe feminist pedagogy as: “the creation of participatory classroom communities, the validation of personal experience, the encouragement of social understanding and activism, and the development of critical thinking skills/open-mindedness” (p. 20).

Toraiwa (2009) claims that women studies programs tend to create more collaborative and empowering learning environments and academic culture. She (2009) conducted interviews with former students and included their own narrative accounts “of their learning experiences in a women's studies program” and “their sense of having become empowered” (p. 1). She also interviewed “present and former instructors from the program to help contextualize the
experiences of students and provide a background from which to understand the relations between instructors and students” (p. 1). Toraiwa’s study was focused on the experiences of students, as my study also has a component that provides a voice for the experience of students.

Another research study examining Women’s Studies Programs resulted from the collaboration of the National Women’s Studies Association and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) with funding from the Ford Foundation. The findings are compiled in the report, *A National Census of Women’s and Gender Studies Programs in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education*, authored by Reynolds, Shagle, and Venkataraman (2007). They describe recent trends in women’s studies programs.

- Some women’s studies programs serve as umbrellas or are included as part of larger programs in gender studies: men’s studies, queer studies, and sexuality programs, as well as women's studies.
- Some women’s studies programs offer undergraduate majors and graduate degrees, while others offer minors or certificates rather than degrees.
- Women’s studies faculty members often hold joint appointments in Women’s Studies department or committees in more traditional fields, such as history, English, art history, sociology, and psychology. (p. 4)

Other conclusions from the report discuss that the benefits and contributions of women’s studies programs, like the opportunities to connect the intersections of theory, experience, knowledge, activism, civic engagement, and citizenship, think critically, consider issues from multiple perspectives, and apply global awareness about women and gender to cross-cultural research, go unnoticed or recognized by higher education administrators.
In the report by The Teagle Working Group on Women’s Studies and Civic Engagement and the National Women’s Studies Association, it is not uncommon for women’s studies programs to “lack adequate resources at both the institutional and national levels” (Orr, 2011, p. 18). The lack of resources affect decisions about the position, status, and funding of women’s studies programs at their institutions. The Teagle Group collected national survey data from both students and faculty and found that “[f]aculty made a near universal mention of the need for more support that recognizes the crucial role that courses like these play in forwarding the mission of their respective institutions” (Orr, 2011, p. 18).

So What? Why is it Important to Study Women’s Studies?

Women’s human rights are in the news every day. On November 22, 2012, the soldiers of the Congolese Army were ordered, by their superior officers, to rape women in the town of Minova. Rape and war have been issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for a long time. Unfortunately, sexual violence is a pandemic problem. It is an issue of international proportions and its important for college students to learn about it.

Any discussion about rape that does not include women is not sufficient to solve this problem. In her book, *Inessential Woman* (1988), Elizabeth V. Spelman explains that the exclusion of women creates a gap in knowledge and enables women to be marginalized. In women’s studies classes, we discuss sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict times. We talk about the different types of war rape that include genocidal rape, opportunistic rape, political rape, and forced concubinage (Burn, 2005). We include different perspectives on the international policy issues that come from the United Nations, GATT, and the G8. But we also study the important topics and stories of women’s lives, including the voices of women who are survivors, activists, and academics.
Rape is not the only subject women’s studies students learn about. However, I use this example to show how women’s studies provides an important learning environment for issues that are often ignored or misunderstood. Women’s studies programs also provide an important space to include multiple perspectives on an issue to give students a broader understanding. It prepares students to be active global citizens and to understand what it might mean to work on issues they feel most passionate about.

The women’s right to be free from rape has been an issue that is constantly being battled. As I mentioned earlier, it is not the only one. Women’s ability to access birth control, safe abortions, and overall health care is on the line as well. The War on Women refers to the increasing activity of political conservatives to undermine women’s abilities to achieve economic and social parity with men. It does not exist in the United States alone or only in this time period. It has been going on since the time of recorded history. We need to understand women’s experiences in order to move into a world where women have the rights to our own bodies.

Minimizing women’s concerns like women’s sexuality, reproductive health, physical safety, and equal pay is a tactic that has been used to treat women’s experiences as if they are ridiculous and unimportant. For example, when asked what he thought about the War on Women, Reince Priebus, Republican National Committee Chairman responded by saying, “if the Democrats said we had a war on caterpillars, and mainstream media outlet talked about the fact that Republicans have a war on caterpillars, then we have problems with caterpillars” (Political Capital with Al Hunt, 2012). In this interview, he used a tactic that has been used by many before him. He introduced a ridiculous hypothetical scenario to dismiss and trivialize a very real problem.
Education should be used when responding to war rape in conflict zones around the world and to the recent trend of attacks on women’s rights in the United States. Investigating the intersections of the roles and experiences of women and girls affected by the larger War on Women provides a richer understanding of the problems and more effective approaches to the solutions.

Women’s studies provides the education needed to respond to these attacks. Education in women’s studies investigates women’s experiences in detail and across many intersections of racial, class, ability, and sexuality lines. Without the development of an appreciation and respect for women’s experiences, women’s roles and women’s experiences tend to be marginalized and then controlled by people in positions of political power.

Berea College defines women’s studies as “an important field of inquiry that arose from the effort to understand gender roles and women's historic struggle for justice throughout the world” (Berea, 2009, p. 1). Therefore, a women’s studies perspective comes from feminist activism in academia. Activists should ask new questions about academic study on such topics as domestic violence, the feminization of poverty, and women’s health (Berger & Guidroz, 2009). Levin (2007) explains that an education in women’s studies enables people to apply “cross-cultural and global awareness to ‘big questions’ about women and gender”, consider “an issue from multiple perspectives”, think critically, recognize “sexist / racist writing and thinking, and construct “arguments with evidence obtained from research” (p. 17).

In addition to using gender, race, class, ability, ethnicity, and nationality as a categories for analysis, “an education in women’s studies enables people to locate, evaluate, and interpret “diverse sources” of information “including statistics” (Levin, 2007, p. 17). An education in women’s studies provides the opportunity “to connect knowledge and experience” and “theory
and activism,” and apply “knowledge for social transformation” and “citizenship” (Levin, 2007, p. 17). More than any other discipline, women’s studies “values the interplay between scholarship, theory and activism, creating a new type of college student – and teacher – who is civically engaged, globally competent, self reflective and dexterous in many disciplines” (Berger & Guidroz, 2009, p. 40).

The overall War on Women includes attacks on women’s sexuality, reproductive health, physical safety, and equal pay. In this section, I reported on how women’s studies offers the education to effectively offer resistance by investigating the intersections of the roles and experiences of women and girls affected by the War on Women. Women’s studies education empowers students and educators to reject misogynist political messages and end the War on Women and become leaders in international and local changes to create a more equal and just world.

**Berea College**

In their 2012 rankings of liberal arts colleges, the Washington Monthly ranked Berea College third in the nation, “because it enrolls a predominantly low-income student population and charges no tuition” (Introduction, 2012, p. 28). In the article, *Introduction: A Different Kind of College Ranking* (2012), the Washington Monthly editors explain the rankings produced by Washington Monthly are based on social mobility, research production, and service. The social mobility measure gives “colleges credit for enrolling many low-income students and helping them earn degrees” and “rewards colleges with better-than-expected graduation rates” and (p. 27). The research production measure gives colleges credit for undergraduates who go on to earn doctorate degrees. The service measure concerns the commitment to encourage students to “give something back to their country” (p. 27).
The Washington Monthly College Guide (2012), shows 90% of the students at Berea College receive the Pell Grant and the net price is 0. The predicted graduation rate is 50%, but the actual graduation rate is 64%; which makes it first in the nation for social mobility. “Most colleges with 90 percent of students eligible for Pell Grants struggle to graduate even half of their students; at Berea nearly two-thirds finish in a reasonable amount of time” (Introduction, 2012, p. 28).

Part of Berea’s mission today is to provide educational opportunity to students primarily from Appalachia who have great promise and limited economic resources. As a result, more than half of Berea students are first-generation college students, and the average family income for an incoming student is $29,273. All students receive a four-year scholarship worth up to $96,400, and every student works approximately ten to fifteen hours a week to earn money to cover the cost of books and food. (Fishman & Kelchen, 2012, p. 32)

Berea College has a distinctive commitment to equality through the full-tuition scholarships for all students, the student work program, and the student’s involvement in community service projects. This commitment and continued tradition is a logical consequence to its foundation. Berea College was founded the same year the Civil War ended and the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was adopted, abolishing slavery in the United States. It was a time of incredible upheaval because the country had been at war for four long years. It was also a time when the “nation was awash in excitement” as reformers were “denouncing the evils of liquor and secret societies” and “women’s rights advocates such as Lucy Stone, Abbie Kelly Foster, and Antoinette Brown Blackwell” were gaining “a national hearing” (Wilson, 2006, p. 9).

It was during this time, Reverend John G. Fee, official founder of Berea College, was preaching for freedom and equality. Rev. Fee was the son of a Kentucky slaveholder who “became convinced that slavery was a tremendous moral and spiritual evil” (Wilson, 2006, p. 1). He grew to be a revolutionary Christian preacher who “believed in a school that would be an advocate of equality and excellence in education for men and women of all races” (History: The Berea Story, 2009, para. 4). “Fee was eventually disowned and disinherited by his slaveholding father for his abolitionist stance” (Wilson, 2006, p. 12).

In the same year Frederick Douglass published *My Bondage, My Freedom*, Rev. Fee, Matilda Fee, and some others “opened a school in Kentucky that attracted local attention for good teaching, lively preaching, and abolitionism” (Wilson, 2006, p. 9). In 1855, Berea College became the first interracial and co-ed college in the south (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013, p. 1).

When discussing Berea College, it is important to know about Berea College’s Great Commitments because they apply to the purpose of the College:

1) To provide an educational opportunity primarily for students from Appalachia, black and white, who have great promise and limited economic resources.

2) To provide an education of high quality with a liberal arts foundation and outlook.

3) To stimulate understanding of the Christian faith and its many expressions and to emphasize the Christian ethic and the motive of service to others.

4) To provide for all students through the labor program experiences for learning and serving in community, and to demonstrate that labor, mental and manual, has dignity as well as utility.
5) To assert the kinship of all people and to provide interracial education with a particular emphasis on understanding and equality among blacks and whites.

6) To create a democratic community dedicated to education and equality for women and men.

7) To maintain a residential campus and to encourage in all members of the community a way of life characterized by plain living, pride in labor well done, zest for learning, high personal standards, and concern for the welfare of others.

8) To serve the Appalachian region primarily through education but also by other appropriate services.

The complete history of Berea College is out of the scope of this paper, however, it is important for the reader to understand the unique foundation of Berea College to better know the Women’s & Gender Studies Program that resides there. I chose Berea College to do this case study on because of its commitment to equality and social mobility for its students.

**Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College**

The scriptural foundation of Berea College is “God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth” (Wilson, 2006, p. 16). This foundation has had an incredible influence on the culture and programs at Berea College. When Berea College “opened the doors of educational opportunity,” both women and men where invited to be students. However, “in spite of its prophetic commitment to abolition and interracial education, the College retained strong patriarchal values” (Self Study for Berea College Women’s Studies Program, 2008, p. 3).

Until 1875, the curriculum for women was “separate, reflecting their social role as mothers and homemakers” (Self Study, 2008, p. 3). In a letter to Berea College, written by Susan B. Anthony in 1903, she inquired “about the ‘woman question’ at Berea College. If Berea
is so enlightened, she implied, why were Berea’s women no better off than in the rest of the culture” (Self-Study, 2008, p. 3)?

The first response to her question did not come until the early 1970’s when the general studies curriculum mandated the study of women in a two-semester course entitled “Issues and Values.” In 1988, President John Stephenson attempted a more direct response to Anthony’s question. He commissioned the Gender Issues Task Force, chaired by Keila Thomas. (Self-Study, 2008, p. 3)

This Gender Issues Task Force formalized the women’s studies curriculum and “women's studies was officially added to the academic curriculum at Berea College in 1991, through a vote of college faculty to establish both a Women's Studies Program and an interdisciplinary minor in women's studies (Proposal for Women's Studies Major, 2001, p. 2). The major in women’s studies was added in May of 2001 (Self-study, 2008).

The Self Study for Berea College Women’s Studies Program (2008), explains:

Women’s studies fulfills the mission and curriculum of Berea College by offering students the opportunity both to critically examine issues of gender across many fields of knowledge, and to study the varied contributions and experiences of women in a range of historical periods and in diverse cultures. The questions and insights that women’s studies scholars have brought to their fields of inquiry have expanded the traditional boundaries of intellectual investigation and generated new areas of research and teaching. In keeping with this tradition of scholarship and teaching, Berea College Women’s Studies Program offers an interdisciplinary academic course emphasizing critical thinking and inquiry. (Self-study, 2008, p. 1).
The Women’s Studies Program at Berea changed their name in 2011 to be the Women’s and Gender Studies Program. There are times throughout this dissertation where it is referred to both ways.

**Conclusion for Chapter 2**

This chapter has served as the literature review about feminism, feminist theory, standpoint theory, why research on women’s studies is incredibly important and about why we need to understand women’s studies in the first place because of recent attacks on women’s sexuality, reproductive health, physical safety, and equal pay. Women’s studies offers the education needed to effectively offer resistance to the War on Women by investigating experiences of women and girls. In this chapter, I also highlighted why I chose Berea College’s Women’s and Gender Studies Program to showcase.

**Preview Chapter 3**

In the next chapter, I explain how I used a feminist framework to complete a constant comparative analysis of the data that I collected at Berea College. I discuss how I used ethnographic observations and qualitative interviewing and describe how I used qualitative research using organizational ethnography. I also share the data collection design and analysis method used for understanding and interpreting the interviews and observations that were conducted.
CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCH METHODS

The research questions pursued through this study helped me to understand the culture of the Women’s & Gender Studies Program at Berea College by exploring the experiences of students from multiple perspectives. The overarching research questions are:

1) How is the WGS Program at Berea College perceived or experienced by its stakeholders (students, administrators, faculty, and alumnae)?

2) How is its reality constructed through the overlapping lenses of each?

3) How does the WGS Program approach, prepare for, and respond to political and economic challenges?

I used a feminist framework to complete a constant comparative analysis of the data that I collected at Berea College through an organizational ethnography. Since qualitative research is descriptive, I used it to describe the WGS Program at Berea College. I used ethnographic observations and qualitative interviewing. In this chapter, I describe how qualitative research using organizational ethnography was the best choice for this research study. I also share the data collection design and analysis method used for understanding and interpreting the interviews and observations that were conducted.

Qualitative Research Methods

In the qualitative approach, the written word is incredibly important, “both in recording data and disseminating the findings” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 5). The data collected from
qualitative research is descriptive and takes the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative research studies include data from interview transcripts, fieldnotes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos, and other official records (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, “the written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation” (p. 5).

As a qualitative researcher, I conducted interviews for the primary source of data. I then transcribed them and strived to analyze the transcripts of my data. I described them inductively with all of the richness I could. I sought to use a narrative form that most closely represented the experiences of the participants.

Rather than seeking data to prove or disprove hypotheses, qualitative researchers observe the particulars and group them together (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The theory develops “by emerging from the bottom up (rather than from the top down), from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected. The theory is grounded in the data” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6). In other words, “Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. Researchers who use this approach are interested in how different people make sense of their lives”, so we are “concerned with what are called participant perspectives” (p. 7). In my study, I especially focused on the participant perspectives and experiences.

Qualitative research approaches use many different methods. The method I selected, for this study, is an organizational ethnography. Before I explain organizational ethnography, I give a small discussion about the basics of ethnography and organizational communication studies.
Ethnography

In *Tales of the Field*, Van Maanen (1988) explains that fieldwork and culture are both “vital notions, of course, because when married in an ethnography they form something of a conceptual union” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 1). In this section I describe types of ethnographic techniques and describe which one I used in this study. “Ethnographers provide detailed accounts of the everyday practices and customs of a culture, subculture, or group, often collecting artifacts and other cultural materials” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 230).

Ethnography was an appropriate method for this study because I sought to understand the culture of the WGS Program at Berea College. “Ethnographic research aims to get an in-depth understanding of how individuals in different cultures and subcultures make sense of their lived reality” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 230). Academic programs can be considered subcultures of the university with their own unique cultures.

Merriam and Simpson (2000) offer five procedures that are commonly used in ethnographic investigations. These include “participant observation, in-depth interviewing, life history, documentary analysis, and investigator diaries (records of the researcher’s experiences and impressions)” (p. 104). I used observation and in-depth interviewing, along with my investigator field notes.

The strength of ethnography “has always been to position individuals in a specific social setting, placing them in a context where action takes place” (Van Maanen, 1998, p. 162). Using “any one of these procedures involves going into the field” and “fieldwork involves entering the chosen setting, maintaining some type of relationship with the subjects, and, finally, leaving the setting” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 105). The research field that I entered was the Berea
College Women’s and Gender Studies Program. I used organizational ethnography and standpoint theory to guide my fieldwork.

**Organizational Ethnography**

Ethnography of communication is listed in Lindlof and Taylor’s (2002) book, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, as one of six key traditions that have “been adapted to qualitative communication research” (p. 31). They explain, “Ethnography of communication (EOC) conceptualizes communication as a continuous flow of information, rather than as a segmented exchange of messages” (p. 44).

Organizational communication and ethnography combined in the early 1980s to make organizational ethnography. Communication researchers use organizational ethnography as a naturalistic, qualitative research tool for understanding organizational communication and culture in organizations. In this section, I describe how ethnography transformed organizational communication studies.

**Organizational communication.** Organizational communication is a subfield of communication studies.

The first six subfields are identified by the context of communication studied (interpersonal communication, language and social interaction, group communication, organizational communication, intercultural communication, and media and cultural studies) and the last three subfields are identified by topic and genre (performance studies, applied communication, and health communication). (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 20)

Organizational communication is “the process of creating collective, coordinated structures of meaning through symbolic practices oriented toward the achievement of
organizational goals” (Mumby, 2001, p. 587). All organizations have cultures and subcultures. Understanding the system of communication and power that permeates the culture is valuable to navigate and work within the system.

Organizational communication studies began “in the late 1960s and early 1970s (when) systems theory had captured the attention of the scholarly world” (Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1983, p. 126). At that time, organizational communication scholars were focused on understanding organizational systems using systems theory. The buzzwords were “input, output, feedback, and environment” (Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1983, p. 126). Allen (2000) adds, “Studies on these information systems… date back to the 1950s when researchers studied ways to transform a new employee into a responsible organizational citizen” (p. 177). “Most of these works reflect a strong managerial as well as patriarchal bias because they sought to predict and control employees’ behaviors for the sake of the organization” (p. 177).

As time went on, “calls for a systems approach became less frequent (and later were) replaced by calls for altogether new ways of doing organizational communication research” (Pacanowsky & Trujillo, 1983, p. 127). In 1975, James Carey, a communication historian and theorist, “outlined a vision for qualitative research” that was “influenced by the tradition of American cultural studies” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 7).

To seize upon the interpretations people place on existence and to systematize them so they are more readily available to us. This is a process of making large claims from small matters: studying particular rituals, poems, plays, conversations, songs, dances, theories, and myths and gingerly reaching out to the full relations within a culture or a total way of life. (Carey, 1975, p. 190)
Carey’s idea diverged from a lengthy history in communication research that was dominated by positivist research methods (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 8). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), what resulted was a shift where “many communication researchers affiliated with a post-positivist paradigm” that was based off these following premises (p. 9):

- The physical and social worlds are composed of complex phenomena that exist independently of individual perception (a “realist” ontology). Human beliefs about these phenomena, however, are inevitably multiple, partial, approximate, and imperfect.

- Humans interact in patterned ways. Those patterns “reify” beliefs about phenomena, and infuse them with consequence.

- Knowledge is best created by a search for causal explanations for observed patterns of phenomena. Causes are assumed to be multiple, interactive, and evolving.

- While absolute truth and value-free inquiry are unattainable, the reduction of bias in research (e.g., through peer review) is both attainable and desirable.

- Discovery and verification are equally valued as logics of research.

- The “emic” intentionality and experience of social actors should be preserved in explanations.

- Research conducted in natural settings is useful for documenting contextual influences on social action.

- Both quantitative and qualitative methods are legitimate resources for conducting research.

- The use of multiple methods enhances explanations of complex phenomena (e.g., by “triangulating” – comparing and contrasting – their outcomes).
Qualitative methods are valued for their contribution to highly structured (and potentially quantitative) analysis. The use of statistics by qualitative researchers, however, is more likely to be basic and descriptive (e.g., frequency counts) than complex and inferential (e.g., regression analysis). (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Miller, 2002, pp. 32-45)

In 1983, when Pacanowsky and Trujillo wrote, Organizational Communication as Cultural Performance, they established the connections of cultures and subcultures that live within organizations. Then, in 1988, John Van Maanen wrote, Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography. According to H. L. (Bud) Goodall (2000), a well-known qualitative, communication studies researcher, these two pieces of literature intersected and transformed organizational communication studies.

Goodall (2000) states that Pacanowsky and Trujillo’s (1983) article became his “personal organizational communication Book of Genesis” (p. 65) because:

These authors told me that all of my anxieties could be dispelled and my dreams of finding a way to tell the human story of organizational communication could be accomplished by refocusing my attention on ceremonies, rituals, rites, artifacts, uses of humor – what they called “cultural performances.” The basis of studying and writing about these “cultural performances” was something called “ethnography.” They included a set of references unique to me in our literature, places for me to go to find the narrative roots of this alternative storyline. (Goodall, 2000, p. 64)

In the 1980s, ethnography and organizational communication came together as organizational ethnography, since researchers shifted their focus away from systems theory to understanding organizational communication. Organizational ethnography is a naturalistic,
qualitative research tool for understanding organizational communication and culture in organizations.

In their article, Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1983) wrote: “We believe that the particular potential of the organizational culture metaphor lies in its ability to liberate our thinking about both organizations and communication” (p. 127). They also wrote, “Anthropologically considered, communication is not an information transfer, but language use. Organizations are not to be seen as computer-like machines, but rather more like tribes” (p. 127). This is an important point to remember, for this study, because not all women’s studies programs are the same. Each one has its own set of stories, ceremonies, artifacts, and foundation. In this study, I looked at the stakeholders of the WGS Program at Berea College like a tribe and in Chapter Four I discuss some of their rituals, rites, and other cultural performances.

In this section, I described what organizational communication is and how it was transformed when it intersected with ethnography. Now, I discuss feminisms impact on communication studies and then highlight some organizational communication studies that use feminist organizational communication and organizational ethnography.

**Feminist organizational communication studies.** Feminism has been influential to organizational communication studies. “In comparison with other disciplines the field of organizational communication has been slow to take up feminist perspectives, but the past decade has seen a distinct upsurge in feminist-oriented theory and research” (Mumby, 2001, p. 609). “From my vantage point, the virtual explosion of feminist organizational communication studies over the last decade appears remarkable” (Ashcraft, 2005, p. 142).

Feminism influences the subject matter feminist qualitative researchers study (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). It also influences the way the researcher chooses participants and research
As a feminist qualitative researcher, I used in-depth interviewing and observation to take seriously the “actors and categories of behavior that had previously received little, if any, attention” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 20). The combination of feminist theory and qualitative research design brought out rich data for this case study.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) describe four ways “feminist theory and methods influence qualitative communication research” (p. 57).

1) They reinforce the interpretivist commitment to collaborative and inductive research that preserves situated accounts of human experience.

2) They direct that commitment to serving the real needs of women.

3) Feminist theory and methods expose taken-for-granted research practices so that gender differences may be considered at every opportunity.

4) The feminist emphasis on the relationship between representation and lived experience has encouraged qualitative researchers to experiment with the form and content of their research narratives. In so doing, it has fueled the critical interrogation of academic knowledge as a rhetorical discourse. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 57-58)

Robin Clair is a well-known feminist organizational communication scholar. Clair (1998) “combines the resources of feminism, modernist critical theory, and poststructuralism to examine the interrelated dialectics of speech and silence and oppression and resistance” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 30). In her book, Organizing Silence: A World of Possibilities, Clair (1998) explains how, “Exploring silence as a fundamental part of communication, culture, and conflict may illuminate the complex nature of social relations” (p. 4). In addition, she discusses how
“feminist theories provide uniquely promising advantages for exploring the origins, meanings, and functions of silence” (p. 4).

Nancy Plankey-Videla’s (2012) is a qualitative feminist organizational communication specialist who practices organizational ethnography. During Plankey-Videla’s (2012) fieldwork, she used organizational ethnography to understand the experiences of workers, primarily women, at a Mexican garment factory. With reflexivity and situated knowledges as her major feminist influences, Plankey-Videla (2012) describes ethnography as “a site in motion, where both the researcher and researched are agents, wield power, and relate based on multiple, shifting identities” (p. 3).

Bartle, Couchonnal, Canda, and Staker (2002) are also feminist organizational communication scholars. They created a seven-year organizational ethnography at Project EAGLE, “a Comprehensive Child Development Program in Kansas City” (p. 2). In their article, *Empowerment as a Dynamically Developing Concept for Practice: Lessons Learned from Organizational Ethnography*, they described how they used the empowerment approach to analyze the empowerment of disenfranchised families, in theory and practice, at Project EAGLE. Feminist organizational communication scholars analyze ways power and communication intersect with gender, race, class, ability, religion, age, and sexuality in organizations.

Marcy Meyer (2004) is also a feminist organizational communication scholar. She writes about the benefits of teaching with feminist pedagogy in her organizational communication class. She states:

Feminist pedagogy offers a number of compelling alternatives to teaching and learning in traditional classrooms. By embracing principles and practices that value community, personal involvement, critical and creative thinking, and nonhierarchical relationships,
participants in feminist learning communities create opportunities to transform power relationships inside and outside of the classroom. (Meyer, 2004, p. 198)

Organizations are “gendered” in the sense that “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (Acker, 1990, p. 46). Using feminist organizational communication research methods helps researchers identify these patterns

Feminist perspectives on organizational power examine and critique the ways in which binary thinking (male/female, culture/nature, rational/emotional, etc.) lies at the root of all attempts to make sense of and to construct institutional forms, social practices, and actors’ identities and experiences” (Mumby, 2001, p. 609).

In their book, *Reworking Gender: A Feminist Communicology of Organizations*, Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) propose a “feminist communicology of organizations” with the purpose of articulating “a heuristic framework that provides a point of convergence for critical and feminist studies of organization” (p. 112). They explain that they want to do this to “contribute to the growing body of literature that situates gendered organizing that brings the fore issues of communication, power, resistance, and identity” (p. 111). They ask, “Out of the many possibilities that feminism offers, which approaches best enable us to map the complexities of gendered organization? (p. xvii). In their answer, they create a conversation about power, gender, and organizational communication. They claim, “feminism provides a model or guide for radical organizational scholars” (p. 170).

In their discussion about gender, power, and organizing, they call for us to rethink the relationship between critical organizational and feminist scholarship.
Rather than adopting a position “for” postmodernism and “against” modernism, we wish
to articulate a feminist communicology that is positioned at the intersection of these
discourses. On the one hand, we wish to preserve the modernist insights . . . which
recognize the material character of oppression and enduring, gendered structures of
power and dominance . . . On the other hand, we draw on a postmodern conception of
relationships among discourse, identity, power, and organizing. (Ashcraft & Mumby,
2004, p. 112)

They developed the framework for using feminist communicology in organizations with
the use of the following six theoretical premises:

1) Subjectivity is unstable, fragmented, and constructed in an ongoing and dynamic
   manner through various communicative practices.

2) The relationship between power and resistance is dialectical and mutually defining.

3) Analysis of historical context is crucial to understanding the ongoing dynamics of
gendered organizing.

4) The relationship between discourse and the material world is dialectical – discourse is
   fundamentally material, while the material world is discursively constructed.

5) The analysis of masculine and feminine identities requires a focus on the dialectics of
gender relations and the co-construction of masculinities / femininities.

6) The examination of the relationships among gender, power, and organizing requires a
   normative, ethical moment that explores both the consequences of particular
   configurations of power for human identity and meaning formation and possibilities
   for praxis. (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, p. 112)
I used this framework to think about the intersections of power, gender, and organization at the WGS Program at Berea College.

In this section, I described what organizational communication is and how it was transformed when it intersected with ethnography. I highlighted organizational communication studies that used organizational ethnography and showcased the feminist dimension of organizational communication studies. In the next section, I discuss my data collection methods.

**Selection and Description of Informants**

The key stakeholders were selected through purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Students, program faculty members, administrators, and staff members were clear stakeholders. They suggested other stakeholders in the categories of students and alumni who were all integral to my data collection. The use of standpoint theory provided the theoretical basis for having a 360-degree perspective of the program and its relationship with the institution and surrounding community.

I engaged the sampling process by using a sampling strategy to guide my choices about who to interview and what to observe. I used Lindlof and Taylor’s (2002) discussion about the sampling units that are most common in qualitative inquiry to begin. These units include: “sites, settings, people, activities, events, and times that represent distinctive frameworks for sampling communicative performances” (p. 121).

Before traveling, I e-mailed selected stakeholders with an invitation to participate in the study. The participants for the study were selected from students in the classes, office workers, faculty members, administration, and alumni. I observed a variety of activities and events, such as different classes being taught by faculty members in the WGS Program and events like the Peanut Butter & Gender Luncheons, the End of the Year student recognition meal, senior send-
off, and Iota Iota Iota Women’s Studies Honor Society induction ceremony. The data collection period for this study began in December 2012 and ended May 2013.

Data Collection Methods

I used observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to collect data for this organizational ethnography to understand the multiple standpoints and perspectives that inform the culture of the WGS Program at Berea College. This is a feminist research design with the assumptions about power and structural oppression related to gender and also using constant comparative analysis to analyze the data I collected about the program.

Observation. According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), “Observation is the cornerstone technique of ethnography” (p. 105). I observed students and faculty members in the classes, and then administrators, students, faculty, alumni, and community members at events organized by the WGS Program. My role in this investigation was as an observer, and my role was publicly known. My participation was secondary to my observation.

Participant observation is a term often used in text of qualitative research. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) share insights into using observation and determining its level of validity. There are differing levels of participation that still fall under the category of participant observation. Participating and observing, “usually work in concert, even if not always seamlessly” (p. 135). For instance, “Fieldworkers often take up positions on the margins of a social setting, where they can have good vantage and some – but not overwhelming – involvement” (p. 136). In cases like these, “where they periodically arrive for brief sessions of fieldwork and then leave for home, class, or work, researchers usually operate as minor players in the scene” (p. 136). In other cases, they might “adopt a more central role,” but this “inevitably affects the unfolding of events in ways that must be carefully documented” (p. 136).
Within participant observation, it is important for the researcher to take notes on what you see, hear, and feel. But feminist researchers have critiqued this perspective as the “God trick” (Haraway, 1991). By only observing without interacting, it promotes the “gendered fantasy of a disembodied omniscient – and inherently voyeuristic – masculine subject” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 138). It has also been critiqued because of the “repugnant history of colonial oppression” and “the Western cultural practice of visually objectifying others” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 138).

The bias toward visual recordings by participant observers can “convince us that the act of gazing embodies the organization principle by which the environment is set up” and “we may mistakenly believe that it is our habits of seeing that determine how events are meaningful for their participants” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 139). In his book, The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology, Paul Stoller (1989) encourages participant observers to pay attention to all our senses and report them in our observations. He explains that our senses involve “more than describing the way things look or smell in the land of others” (p. 9). Stoller calls on us to consider all our senses including taste, smell, sound, sight, and textures of the cultures we study.

My own observations and data collection was an immersive experience in the culture. I immersed myself into the WGS Program community scene at Berea College by participating in the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheon preparation and clean up, helping prepare for the Take Back the Kitchen class, and wrapping the presents for the gifts to give senior students at the end of the year recognition reception. In Peggy’s Take Back the Kitchen class, I learned how to cook with basic foods like dried beans and legumes, greens, and corn bread, as well as how to make an incredible blueberry cobbler.
I stayed in the WGS Program office between classes and had tea with students. I sat in on the WGS Program labor meeting as well as the classes. During my time in Berea, I stayed with the Director of the WGS Program in her home. I walked to campus with her on sunny days and drove on cold and rainy days. It was an incredible time of relationship building and learning not only about the WGS Program community, but also about Berea. I spent time at Berea Coffee and Tea Company to type my field notes and to get a feel of the campus community.

**Interviews.** I used semi-structured, in-depth interviews to collect information from stakeholders in the WGS Program. “An interview is a conversation with a purpose. In ethnographic research, interviewing usually follows, or is integrated with, participant observation” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 106).

During my visits I conducted 12 interviews with selected students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae. I conducted 3 interviews using Skype technology – video conferencing using the computer program, Skype. Each participant understood and signed the informed consent form. Each interview lasted between 45-90 minutes. A list of semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix A. For purposes of accuracy, and with permission of the participants, the interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Next, I introduce the participants and informants from this study: including six students, two alumnae, the program director who is also a faculty member, a faculty member in a three-year position, the Office Manager, and an administrator in higher education.
Table 1: Demographic Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role in WGS Program</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Major / Minor</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race</th>
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<td>W</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Major</td>
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<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sadie</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tanya</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Participants

Evie. Evie is a WGS major and a student labor worker for the WGS Program office. Evie learned about the WGS program through Dr. Stephanie Troutman when she took the African American Women Writers class her first semester of college. When she talked about the African American Women Writers course, she said, “I really enjoyed the class, I loved all the in-class discussion and analysis we did and I loved the reading.” Since then, she decided to major in WGS and has been enjoying more WGS classes like the Introduction to WGS, Riding the
Waves of Feminism, African Diaspora Women Writers, Black and White Sexualities, and Classic Texts in Women's and Gender Studies.

As a labor worker for the WGS Program, Evie works as a teaching assistant for Dr. Stephanie Troutman. She also helps with program planning, creating online syllabi for the WGS classes on WordPress, prepping for Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons, and helping the office manager, the other student laborers, and the professors with what needs to be done for the WGS Program.

Sadie. Sadie is a Women’s and Gender Studies major and Appalachian Studies minor. She started college when she was 17 years old and ended up leaving college the last week before the year was over due to personal issues. Six years later, she returned to Berea College with a clearer understanding about where she wanted to go with her academic studies. During that time, she learned a lot about the women in her family and developed a greater appreciation for the women in her hometown and surrounding areas in rural Eastern Kentucky. One of her closest friends became pregnant and her husband left her, so Sadie moved in with her to help her through her pregnancy and then raise her daughter. Sadie explained, “By the time I was ready to come back to school I had the realization that women’s studies and Appalachian studies were really where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do with my life.”

Kendra. Kendra, a Women’s and Gender Studies major, Spanish minor with an emphasis in Pre-med. Kendra said she was drawn to WGS because she has always been interested in women’s health and women’s issues because of her experiences growing up. She said, “I grew up in a really small town and very small-minded culture and community and I felt there was something more out there.”
Kendra is also has a student labor position in the WGS office. She said she helps with office duties, preparing for, marking, and putting on the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons, helping with the Take Back the Kitchen class.

**Tanya.** Tanya is a WGS Studies and Elementary Education double major. Tanya started taking WGS classes in August 2009 and said she knew halfway through that semester that she wanted to double major. She was already majoring in Elementary Education. When I asked her what she wants to do when she graduates, she said she is interested in two things. First, she wants to be an elementary school teacher and then later, she is interested in starting a women’s shelter in her hometown because the nearest one is 50 to 60 miles away.

**William.** William is a double major in Women’s and Gender Studies and African and African American Studies. William decided to add the WGS major after he had taken a course with Dr. Stephanie Troutman and realized the intersectionality between both majors.

William’s consciousness to women’s issues is related to his personal experiences that lead him to pursue both majors. He “grew up in Cincinnati with a Black mother who was a single parent and who was (his) main source for everything.” During that time, he saw his mother struggle with “being a single mother” and he witnessed his mother experience abusive relationships with men. One time, he witnessed a man attacking her in a parking garage. When he took, the Black and White Sexualities course, it helped him to contextualize his mother’s experiences. He explained, “just being in Women and Gender Studies and being in African and African American Studies made me really put that experience into context and made me really think about how that experience really shaped who I am today and how I can really mold and shape policies to prevent that from happening to another woman and son again and I think that is primarily why or how I came up with it.”
Alumnae Participants

Kadence. Kadence graduated in the spring of 2012 with a double major in Women’s and Gender Studies and African and African American Studies. She took the Introduction to WGS the fall of her sophomore year and decided to add the WGS major to her existing African and African American Studies major. Kadence said she double majored because it allowed her to study what she was really passionate about which she described as, “this weird double oppression in between race and gender”, how it works, and what it means.

She said WGS “filled a hole because when (she) was just studying African and African American Studies alone, a lot of the focus was on the Black man with the Black man being the center and its like, ok, where am I in this whole discussion”? She said “a lot of my male professors were very patriarchal and weren’t the most encouraging of my outspokenness and so, to be able to find a home in Women’s Studies, where I could be outspoken and loud and just say, this doesn’t make any sense, like and just be who I was, was great.” She also mentioned, “a lot of time women’s studies refers to a lot of White women especially when you talk about the early foremothers of the field. So to be able to blend the two was really great.”

Lucy. Lucy graduated in the spring of 2012 with a major in Women’s and Gender Studies. Lucy came to Berea College with the intention of being a Women’s and Gender Studies major. She started out with a strong interest in women’s health because her sister was a doula and a midwife’s assistant and she told Lucy about natural childbirth and talked to her about reclaiming childbirth as an experience of women’s empowerment.

She was also interested in women’s history because she originally became interested in WGS in high school when she read The Red Tent, a historical fiction book, because it was
“written entirely from the perspective of women who are historical figures but you never really learn anything about them.”

**Faculty and Administrator Participants**

**Dr. Marguerite Rivage-Seul.** Dr. Marguerite Rivage-Seul is a Professor of Women's Studies and the Coordinator of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Berea College. She normally goes by the name of Peggy, so I refer to her as Peggy for the rest of my report. Peggy has served as the Director of the WGS Program since 1995. Since then, she has developed the Women’s Studies Program, as it was called then, into a major from a minor in 2001, with an advanced curriculum, and with expanding global opportunities for students. Peggy was appointed as a line in women’s studies in 1998 and moved from a part time position in women’s studies to a full time position and was made Associate Professor.

Peggy’s influence on the WGS Program has been incredible. As the Director, Peggy has built a community of interest around the program through the growth of the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons, the International Women’s Day celebrations, the International Leadership Project, and the expanded curriculum. She is responsible for administering the WGS Program, which means keeping up with all the students who are majoring and minoring in WGS, keeping up with the budget, and developing internal and external programming.

Peggy earned her doctorate in the Philosophy of Education program at the University of Kentucky. She went to Brazil to work with Paulo Freire and wrote her dissertation, *Moral Imagination and Peace Education: Paulo Freire's Third World Perspective* (1985), based off this experience. She submitted her dissertation to the American Educational Research Association and won their Outstanding Dissertation Award that year for conceptual research.
Her passion for equal rights and peace education contributes to her course development. One course especially captures this combination. In her class, Take Back the Kitchen, she shared her thoughts on the responsibilities of the fourth wave of feminism:

As I look forward to a healthy planet, I see that reclaiming the kitchen, that is wresting control of the intimate act of eating from corporate fast food giants, asks more of us than making community meals. If we want to ride a fourth wave of feminism, we need to take the positive steps to change the structures that distort our food consumption.

Overall, Peggy has been the driving force in the WGS Program for 18 years. In my interviews with her, she showed sincere and clear dedication to the WGS Program’s success.

**Dr. Stephanie Troutman.** Dr. Stephanie Troutman holds the three-year teaching position. Dr. Stephanie Troutman is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Women & Gender Studies and African & African American Studies at Berea College, so many of her classes are cross-listed courses. Stephanie came to Berea on a one-year contract. It was extended to a three-year position and this is year two. She is hoping there is a conversion in the next year or two, to a tenure track position. She said with so much going on in the WGS Program right now, an additional permanent position is necessary.

For the rest of my report, I refer to her as Stephanie. Stephanie and Peggy teach the core WGS classes. Stephanie has brought some new classes to the WGS Program as well, like Hip Hop and Feminism and Black and White Sexualities. When Stephanie started teaching at Berea College, she taught the Introduction to Women’s & Gender Studies and “General Studies 210, a research and writing seminar. Later, she taught Black Women Writers, Black and White Sexualities, and African Diaspora Women Writers. One of Stephanie’s goals is to contribute one of her classes every year. The first year was Black & White Sexualities and this year, it is Hip
Hop Feminism, and next year it is the Introduction to Girlhood Studies. She would also like to teach Women and Film in the future. Here she explains how she teaches some core classes, while adding new ones when she can:

Right now, I’m teaching Hip Hop Feminisms and Classic Texts in Women’s Studies, which is a core curriculum class. Last semester, my core curriculum class was Riding the Waves of Feminism. This summer I developed a new class called Sex in the City and it is an intro to global sexualities so we are focusing on India, cities in India, South Africa, and Spain. Really trying to sort of bring in that global piece because I realized a lot of our students are interested in trafficking, sex work, prostitution, HIV, women’s health, like so trying to move in a direction that, you know, because I hear the conversation and I see the interest is there. And so I am definitely trying to both globalize and be able to touch on the issues that are important to them through the lens of feminism and women’s studies. So that was my thinking when I developed that class. So I will be teaching that in the four-week session. Then, in the fall, I’ll teach Intro to Women & Gender Studies, Feminist Methods & Methodology, and Intro to Girlhood Studies. That’s my baby. I’m very excited about that.

Stephanie and Peggy both offered to share their experiences and their time with me on multiple occasions in the classroom, in the interviews, and in many side conversations and e-mails that helped me to understand the WGS Program at Berea College.

**Office Manager Participant**

**Barbara Lakes.** I interviewed Barbara Lakes, the Office Manager for the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, before she retired in December 2012. Barbara had been the Office Manager for 17 years, from before it was officially a major. Her position was classified as a
part-time, 20-hour a week job. She said she was usually in the office four days a week, five hours a day. She was the student labor supervisor and she did general office work, “anything from telephone correspondence, general record keeping, budget, oversee our P-cards, which is purchasing cards, our Mastercard.” She also said, “Our Peanut Butter and Gender is a big part of what I do. Advertising and seeing that it is posted all over campus.”

Barbara described how she started working in the Women’s Studies Program office when Barbara Wade was the Coordinator of the Women’s Studies Program. She said Barbara Wade was housed in English and would come over and check in with her often, but there wasn’t a direct faculty member in there all the time.

At that time, there was an official minor, but not a major yet. If students were interested in majoring in women’s studies, they had to do an independent major. Barbara’s face lit up as she remembered the first major who graduated with Women’s Studies as an independent major. She said, “She was a phenomenal, excellent student who was just… she went to Harvard and got her Masters there and then her Ph.D. at UK.”

**Document Analysis**

“Records, documents, artifacts, and archives – what has traditionally been called ‘material culture’ in anthropology – constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programs” (Patton, 2002, p. 293). As part of the data collection process, I gathered some historical documents created by and about the WGS Program at Berea College. Information from these documents is included in my analysis in Chapter Four. I searched for program documents that would share the history of the WGS Program at Berea College. I also searched for newspaper articles to supplement the information about the WGS Program.
Data Analysis Method

I utilized constant comparative analysis as my method of data analysis to construct a reality from twelve interviews, one WGS Program labor meeting, ten classroom visits, two Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons, and some document analysis.

I used the following steps, described by Glaser (1978), as I examined the data through a constant comparative method:

1. Begin collecting data (through interviews, observations, and document collection).
2. Look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus.
3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus, with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories.
4. Write about the categories you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents.
5. Work with the data and emerging model to discover the basic social processes and relationships.
6. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories.

The series of steps, that has just been described, actually “goes on all at once” because “the analysis keeps doubling back to more data collection and coding” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 75).

I transcribed 315 pages from the interviews and almost 100 pages from field/observation notes, all double-spaced and using 11 point, Times New Roman font. I engaged in the coding process by reading the transcripts of the interviews, field notes, observation notes, and notes
from the document analysis to develop categories and codes. I discuss these more in Chapter Four. As I transcribed all the interviews, I developed some coding categories and then codes were further developed as I went through the analysis and interpretation processes. “Codes are the linkages between the data and the categories posited by the researcher” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 216). “Codes… serve as shorthand devices to label, separate, compile, and organize data. Codes range from simple, concrete, and topical categories to more general, abstract conceptual categories for an emerging theory” (Charmaz, 1983, p. 111). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explain the difference between a category and a code. “The purpose of coding is to mark the units of text as they relate meaningfully to categories (concepts, themes, constructs)” (p. 216).

By using this process, my initial codes from the first level of coding evolved into more detailed categories. The clusters of content initially surfaced around trust, activism, voice, diversity, academic achievement, grounding or foundation for understanding, and humble beginnings. Then, I started to see more specific categories that included: how the participants described the importance of the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons, internationalizing the program, and going to conferences. These became new categories, as well as the descriptions of the environment and the culture of the WGS Program. In the culture section, I kept the categories of trust, academic achievement and activism, and diversity, and then I added the feeling of family and home on campus, collaboration, and student-centeredness, and classes. Then I include categories that address the challenges related to the restructuring of Berea College, the marginalization of WGS, the question: What to do with a WGS major?, and the problems associated with the double major, the sad content, and the injured student. Finally, I address the content associated with future plans.
Confidentiality of Data

Some of the data gathered from this study is kept confidential. In the informed consent, I gave the interviewees an option to choose to be confidential or to allow me to use their names. I created pseudonyms for anyone who chose to be confidential. Later, I was advised to make all the students confidential by my academic advisor. When I transcribed their interviews, I use a pseudonym in the transcription. Through the data collection process, I used a digital recorder and then downloaded the interviews to my computer, which is password protected. The digital files will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office for 5 years and will then be erased.

Site of Research

The site of my study was Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. More specifically, most of my research occurred at the Phelps Stokes Building within Berea College and in the home of Peggy, the Coordinator of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College. I visited Berea College three times, for three to five days each visit.

Ethical and Political Considerations

Ethical considerations. The area of ethical concern that applies to this study is the reality that I, as the researcher, have an existing friendship with the Director of the WGS Program at Berea College. Therefore, I have a bias toward her. I tried to overcome my bias and respect our friendship at the same time. As I interviewed her formally and informally, I listened as a researcher. During the analysis of the data, I focused on her statements that supported the research study, rather than all of the personal stories that were shared.

Political considerations. The recent political attack on women’s rights is a political consideration to think about with research in women’s studies. Education in women’s studies
helps guide our response to the attacks on women’s access to birth control and abortion by examining these reproductive rights through the cultural construction of gender. An education in women’s studies also give a global understanding of rape in the time of conflict and women’s experiences in war, peace, development, and global leadership. In short, we strive to understand “issues of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and ability as a way to understand the complexity of women’s and men’s lives” as they relate to these issues and more (Berger & Guidroz, 2009, p. 40).

What are women’s multiple standpoints in global leadership, reproductive rights, and women’s rights as human rights? What are their experiences? Asking these questions can raise political issues and arguments. In recent years, the attention of the Tea Party and the conservative attacks on women’s rights can quickly be focused on women’s studies programs; doing research in this area can sometimes make the researcher and the programs researched targets in the War on Women.

**Time Line**

At the end of 2012, I visited Berea to attend core WGS classes and attend events organized by the WGS Program at the end of the week celebrating the writer and activist, Nikki Giovanni. I observed and recorded events throughout the week. I gathered information and used this time for relationship development. This visit was largely dedicated to observation and document collection. I also interviewed the WGS Program office manager, Barbara Lakes, who was retiring a week later. She was the only person I interview during that visit.

I transcribed and analyzed the data and then, in January, I went back for another visit to Berea. During this visit, I attended Peggy’s Take Back the Kitchen class and Introduction to WGS class and Stephanie’s Hip Hop and Feminism class and the Labor Meeting for students
working in the WGS Program office. I also conducted more interviews. I returned to Berea in April and attended the senior graduation party and the Triota ceremony at Peggy’s house. I also attended the PB&G Luncheon with Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner. I continued to conduct interviews and observe the events taking place in the WGS Program. I transcribed and analyzed the data and submitted my completed dissertation on June 26, 2013.

**Institutional Review Board**

I submitted an IRB proposal on November 8, 2012 and received approval and EXEMPT status the same day for the preliminary draft of the study. I have included all communication with IRB, the informed consent, the IRB application and narrative, and the interview questions in the appendix. When the committee formally approved the proposal, I made the change to the original IRB narrative to include an option of confidentiality.

**Chapter Conclusion**

Using qualitative research specifically allows for a deeper understanding of the experiences of the stakeholders of the WGS Program. I have described qualitative organizational ethnography and explained the three data collection tools I used: observation, interviews, and document analysis. I described how I handled the confidentiality of the data I collect and discussed the ethical and political considerations as well.

**Chapter Four Preview**

In the next chapter, I provide an overall description of the WGS Program within the context of Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. I report a constructed reality of the overlapping lenses of experiences from the stakeholders of the WGS Program at Berea College by describing activities within and supporting the WGS program. I define the environment and the categories of culture. I also share the participants’ classroom experiences from WGS courses. Lastly, I
report some of the challenges related to being in and running a WGS Program, and plans for
growth in the future.
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, this dissertation provides a qualitative organizational ethnography of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College, with standpoint theory as the theoretical guide. Within this dissertation, I strove to understand the culture of women’s studies at Berea College by exploring the experiences of students from multiple perspectives.

The WGS Program at Berea College is a strong program and the data collected and presented in this chapter demonstrates some its core features and how it is interpreted by its’ stakeholders. In this chapter, I share the mission statement of the WGS Program and describe where the WGS Program fits within the context of Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. Next, I present the constructed reality that I developed from the qualitative analysis of the overlapping lenses of experiences from the stakeholders of the WGS Program at Berea College. The data came from my ethnographic immersion at Berea, resulting from my constant comparative analysis of twelve interviews, one WGS Program labor meeting, ten classroom visits, two Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons, one end of the year recognition reception, and document analysis. The themes are listed below:

• The Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons

• Conference Experiences
• The Environment of the WGS Program

• The Culture of the WGS Program

  • Trust

  • Academic Achievement and Activism

  • Student-centered

• Engaging Classes

  • WGS 124, Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies

  • WGS 286, Hip Hop Feminisms and Urban Literature

  • WGS 286ST, Black and White Sexualities

  • WGS 315, Classic Texts

  • WGS 486, Take Back the Kitchen

• Challenges for the WGS Program

  • Marginalization of WGS Program

  • Marginalization of WGS Students

• Future plans for the WGS program

Structure of WGS Program at Berea College

Berea College has been through a recent organizational structure change. “In the 2010-2011 academic year, the College Faculty and Board of Trustees approved a plan to organize Berea’s 27 academic departments into six expanded interdisciplinary divisions” (Applegate, 2012, p. 1). The Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College resides in Division Six, along with African and African American Studies, Educational Studies, Appalachian Studies, Peace and Social Justice Programs.
The following administration organizational chart from the Berea College Office of the President shows the larger organizational picture of Berea College. The WGS Program resides within Academic Divisions. The full organizational chart can be found in Appendix D.

### Administrative Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VP Areas</th>
<th>VP for Alumni and College Relations</th>
<th>VP for Operations and Sustainability</th>
<th>VP for Finance</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Academic VP and Dean of Faculty</th>
<th>VP for Labor and Student Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>Alumni Relations Development</td>
<td>Oversight of College Business and Auxiliaries, Administrative Operations Property and Resource Management Local Governmental, Community, and Business Relations Chief Sustainability Officer</td>
<td>Oversight of Finance Office and Functions, Endowment and Investment Oversight, Annual Budget, Concessions and Vending, Insurance Liaison</td>
<td>Legal Affairs External Programs, Institutional Research and Assessment, Information Systems, ARTC Oversight, Appalachian Fund, &amp; Title VII and Title IX Oversight</td>
<td>Academic Divisions, Curriculum Oversight and Operational Support, Faculty Hiring and Review, Faculty Development, Hutchins Library, Seabury Center, Scientific Instrumentation, Admission, &amp; Financial Aid &amp; Student Learning, &amp; Academic Assessment</td>
<td>Labor Program, Health Service, Counseling and Disabilities Services, Wellness Programs, Student Life, Crossroads Complex Services, Campus Life, Public Safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Berea College Administrative Organizational Chart

As with other colleges, the academic programs are found within the duties of the Academic Vice President and Dean of the Faculty. The academic areas are organized within six different divisions. For the full academic organizational chart, found in 2012-2103 Fact Book for Berea College (see Appendix E). With this new structure, all of these program directors report first to the division chairs now, instead of straight to the Dean. The stakeholders of the WGS Program mentioned some of the challenges associated with this organizational change.
I asked Peggy about the restructuring of Berea College into divisions and asked her to talk about how that has affected her and the WGS Program. She said:

We are going through a huge transition. We have both new College leadership and a new academic structure that has collapsed departments into six divisions. I have lost half my release time, and like other program coordinators, I am doing the same amount work as before, and must negotiate an additional layer of administrative bureaucracy. It is hard for everyone. My guess is that we are all working harder, and this creates an unhealthy and unhappy environment. The real challenge for me is to balance my own hopes and dreams for women’s studies with the reality that I no longer have the release time to do the kind of work I know needs to be done.

The organizational structure of the WGS Program currently includes: a full-time Coordinator tenured in WGS, a tenured joint faculty position in General Studies and WGS, and a three-year non-tenured faculty position in WGS and African and African American Studies. In 2011, the person in the tenured faculty position in General Studies and WGS moved into an administration position, with the new title of Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs. She no longer teaches any classes. The organizational structure also includes the part-time Office Manager and the students who work in the WGS Program office as labor workers. Some of them are classified as Teachers’ Assistants and others as Office Assistants. The interdisciplinary faculty are also members of the team, but they change from semester to semester, so they are hard to capture as a constant part of the WGS Program.
Mission Statement

The following quote is the mission statement of the Women’s and Gender Studies program at Berea College. It is manifested in the classes and the programming they offer to the students and the community at Berea College.

The Women’s Studies Program is devoted to the study of the roles, contributions, and global conditions of women throughout history, as well as the exploration of human experience as viewed through the lens of gender. As women’s studies scholarship has evolved, it has become increasingly attentive to how race, class, and sexuality contribute to an understanding of how power works in society. Because gender cuts across many fields of knowledge, scholarship in women’s studies is interdisciplinary, drawing on and drawing together both methods of inquiry and material content from many different fields. Thus one important value of women’s studies courses is that they move beyond the confines of a single point of view to examine problems and questions from interdisciplinary perspectives. Moreover, since women’s studies addresses the complexity of women’s experience from a multicultural perspective, the program is not only interdisciplinary but also cross-cultural in focus. These perspectives, in turn, help female and male students gain a new understanding of their own unique roles in society.

(Self Study, 2008, p. 1)

This mission can also be seen in the pedagogy of the classroom instruction, the choices of assignments, and the opportunities made available to students.

Curriculum in WGS

The curriculum for the major in WGS includes ten classes in addition to the General Education and electives required for the degree. These ten classes include five core courses:
WGS 102, 124, 127, 315, and 350; one core Capstone course: WGS 450; and four courses of choice from the approved distribution courses. There are 18 WGS courses outside the core and most of these are cross-listed with other areas on campus. A student would need to earn a minimum of 32 total course credits to graduate from Berea College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in WGS Studies.

A minor in WGS, requires five courses in WGS. WGS 124 is required and then the students can choose one of the following courses: WGS 127, 315, 350, or 450. Lastly the student can choose three more electives in WGS.

Along with the formal coursework and required curriculum, the WGS program also provides learning experiences through the internal (special events and community activities) and external programming (internships and conference opportunities). Through my observations and the information reported to me, I hope to help the reader be able to experience the environment and culture of the WGS Program at Berea College.

**Internal Programming: Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons**

One of the most important things the WGS Program does on a continual basis is the Peanut Butter and Gender luncheon. During the 2012-2013 academic year, the WGS Program held seven Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons that drew approximately 50-70 people each, except for one that brought in 116 people. Students and community members are invited to these luncheons that feature scholars and prominent activists doing work within women and gender studies topics. The scholars and guests featured in 2012-2013 included: Dr. Vandana Shiva, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, Rabbi Chava Bahle, Dr. Mary Watkins, Dr. Rangita de Silva de Alwis, Nikki Giovanni, and Matthew Fox.
The semi-weekly luncheon series “Peanut Butter and Gender” is an important outreach activity that attracts Berea College faculty, staff and students, as well as members of the larger community, including surrounding colleges. “Peanut Butter and Gender” helps to develop awareness of gender themes across campus. This program helps to serve the larger mission of women’s studies across the United States to integrate the study of women into the college curriculum (Self Study, 2008). Two important themes that surfaced in the interviews about the Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons include: the ability for students to heal and thrive because they see themselves in the speakers and the appreciation to exposure to diverse ideas and philosophies in a space were it is small enough to be able to have discussions about them.

Stephanie, a WGS faculty member, commented about the Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons at Berea College:

It is really very much woven into the overall fabric of Berea but it is very much women’s studies at the same time. I’ve actually had students send me emails about PB&Gs after them. Like, Dorothy Allison, she did a really powerful one that really impacted a lot of students. A lot of people really found [the presentation] moving and inspiring, and they felt empowered. I had students emailing me that it changed their lives. One student talked about how she also had been abused and how Dorothy’s courage in facing the abuse and talking about it and writing about it, was really like healing for her and very inspirational and it made her feel less ashamed.

Kendra, one of the students, who works in the office, said her favorite speaker was Dorothy Allison, author of *Bastard Out of Carolina*. Kendra read Allison’s book for WGS 124. Kendra said she felt a strong connection to Dorothy Allison because she was also sexually abused when she was a child.
Evie said she “really likes Peanut Butter and Gender” because “it brings many influential women's and gender studies scholars and activists to the campus which reinforces job prospects in WGS.” She also said:

They also get community members and other departments involved in the campus and WGS program, which I think helps others understand, appreciate, and learn from the kind of work we do.

Peggy explained that the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons started at Berea as a brown bag lunch program in about 1992. She said the WGS Program normally puts on between five and eight a term.

Barbara added, “In the early days, Peanut Butter and Gender started as a brown bag lunch with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches always available, where people, who had an interest in gender issues and women’s issues, just would get together and throw out a topic.”

When Peggy took over, I think she saw the value in really developing an elite program, and as far as campus, Peanut Butter and Gender is really one of the best, if not the best. So she worked very hard to get the extra funding and early on, I don’t even think we had this room. I can remember we would set up some tables out in that sitting area. There wasn’t any furniture. We had no kitchen and so we would just take things down to the Green Room. There was a kitchen off the Green Room that has a sink and we would tote everything back and forth to wash.

The students really enjoy and value these programs as part of the curriculum. William said the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons “really extend your thinking and get you to think critically about these issues and allows you to go back into the classroom and discuss these things much further and understand different perspectives.” Sadie identified Nikki Giovanni and
Vandana Shiva as her favorite speakers that have presented at the Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons. Sadie said that she had read books written by both of these speakers and that it was powerful to meet the authors of the books she read. Sadie said Nikki Giovanni helped her value the more outspoken part of her personality because Giovanni’s outspokenness is what has made her so successful. Kadence talked about a presentation by bell hooks, at a Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheon, that led to a presentation at the National Women’s Studies Association conference that she attended. “The Help discussion was a discussion even before NWSA we had at Berea because bell [hooks] did a talk about The Help.”

When Stephanie came to work in the WGS Program, she knew that the Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons were a big part of the program and that a lot of work went in to it, but she wasn’t sure what to expect. She went to the first one of the season, where bell hooks was presenting themes from her book, Feminism is for Everybody. Stephanie said, “It was really nice to see everyone there from the administration, to staff, to students, to people from the community.”

I thought, wow this is really beautiful because to me because it models that whole community piece. It becomes a site where people are coming together across multiple kinds of difference to engage with the same ideas. To me that is very feminist and it is very crucial to the work that we do that transcends the academic or scholarly element. It meant a lot to me and it was a great talk that was both local, personal, communal and also larger ideas being discussed and it was really powerful and very courageous in addressing issues about inequality and other things that women, women of color are facing in leadership positions and what our history teaches us.
The Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons provide inspirations to the students, faculty, staff, administration, and community surrounding Berea College. Two important themes that I noticed from the interviews include: the ability to help students see themselves in the speakers and be able to heal and thrive because of that and the exposure to diverse ideas and philosophies in a space were it is small enough to be able to have discussions about them.

**External Programming: Conferences**

Peggy and Stephanie both spoke about the value of taking students to conferences and their opinions were echoed in the experiences of the alumnae and current students who have been able to attend conferences through the WGS Program at Berea College. The National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) is the big conference that was mentioned by most of the participants. NWSA was founded in 1977, and it “leads the field of women’s studies in educational and social transformation” (Kimmich, 2007, p. 1).

Taking students to conferences opens up their experience to more than their immediate classes and professors. It opens them to the larger discipline of women’s studies. It helps them to see where they fit in the larger community and lets them dream about where they would like their academic endeavors to take them. William said:

For the student who is unsure about the major and who is not sure about how they fit and where they can enter in the major, a conference allows them to explore that and develop their own opinions about the major and really allows them to enter in and feel comfortable in that setting.

He went on to say that conferences also “serve as a way to extend the experience and really to talk with other young active people who share the same interests with you” and “all those things together work for a general success of students.”
**NWSA.** The NWSA conference is an annual conference that is “dedicated to showcasing the latest feminist scholarship” (NWSA.org). Peggy and Stephanie have both held positions of leadership in NWSA. Peggy was on the Governing Counsel and served as the Elections Chair. Stephanie served as the Women of Color Caucus Chair with Aisha Durham and is currently serving as the Elections Chair.

Most of the findings about conference participation come from the NWSA conference because it encourages students to get to know the field of women’s studies better. Peggy talked about how student participation at national conferences, “provide students an opportunity to interact with some of the authors they read.” More specifically, “Plenary sessions are exciting moments for students as the ideas they engage in class come to life in the words of national and international scholars they have met in the written word.”

Stephanie experienced a great deal of mentorship and encouragement there and would like to carry on that tradition by bringing students to NWSA to benefit from the leadership and mentorship there. She explained how her involvement with NWSA led her to getting the job at Berea College. It resulted from her educational path and the network she became part of at the National Women’s Studies Association. Stephanie was encouraged by her Dean to get involved as a graduate student because she thought it was a good way for Stephanie to explore her interest in women’s studies.

We put in a proposal based on some literature that we were reading at the time about Alice Walker reclaiming some of these feminist figures of the past. She talked mostly about that and I talked about Clementine Hunter, who was a slave and became a folk artist. I talked about the importance of reclaiming her and why art is important in a
feminist context, as an extension of Alice Walker’s work with reclaiming Zora Neal Hurston.

Stephanie explained how conferences help students to make connections and learn important lessons. “You have to go outside the classroom and move beyond that space to have those transformative experiences.” Stephanie talked about taking students to the NWSA 2011 conference in Atlanta.

They had an amazing time. All of them are very committed feminist but in very different ways. [Lucy’s] interest was in environmental stuff and mothering and child family studies. And then [Kadence] was more interested in Black feminism, and specifically the relationship between women of color feminism and anti-White supremacy. And then Katherine was interested in more like feminist theory, sexuality, queer studies, and women’s health, and sexual violence. So it was great to bring them all and have all their needs met. They are some of our best students.

Kadence said attending this conference changed her perspective about academia. When she spoke about NWSA, she said “it definitely empowered me more to stay with women’s studies and it definitely cemented that this was the right field for me.”

Kadence explained how much she enjoyed meeting people she admired at the conference, like the Combahee River Collective, Chandra Mohanty, Barbara Ransby, and Angela Davis.

My favorite part was when I got to meet Angela Davis. We were coming out of the Women of Color Caucus and Angela was strolling by and she saw Peggy and Linda and was like, “oh hey how are you?” And I was just like, “Holy crap its Angela Davis!” [My friends] are telling me not to freak out. How can I not freak out? Its Angela Davis and I want to be this woman! And then she looks at me and they introduce me. Angela is like,
“Hi”, and I’m like, “Hi.” And she’s like, “I like your hair”, and I was like, “Oh my God, thank you!” And then she is laughing and I was like, “Oh my God that was Angela Davis.” And Linda was like, [Kadence], really? You can talk to anyone else but with Angela Davis, you don’t. I was like, cause it is Angela Davis! You don’t speak; you just bask in the greatness.

Stephanie is looking forward to taking students to NWSA in November 2013. She has a group of students who are presenting at the conference for their first time. In this way, she is carrying on the tradition of mentoring students to go to NWSA. She will be taking William and Evie to do their first conference presentation. William said:

We will be doing a roundtable discussion about the varying different texts that we have and we will be talking about our social media projects that we will be doing in the class to spread feminism on the social media level.

Sadie, Vanessa, Kendra, and Allayah are also very excited about going to NWSA

**Other Conferences.** Other conferences mentioned by the participants include: the Feminist Majority Foundation Young Feminist Leadership conference in Washington D.C., the Social Justice Feminism Conference, which was held in Cincinnati, Ohio at the University of Cincinnati Law School at the Center for Race, Class, and Gender, the Hip Hop Literacies Conference at Ohio State, and the Show and Prove Hip Hop Research Conference in New York at New York University.

William talked about his experience when Peggy took him and other students to the Social Justice Feminism Conference in Cincinnati. He said it was “a really profound experience” because
The people who were presenting, were primarily women of color who were talking adamantly about issues and, Patricia Hill Collins was there and she reaffirmed my whole notion about social justice feminism. . . and reaffirmed my experience in women’s studies here at the college. . . and [the conference] showed me how you can apply Women’s and Gender Studies and African and African American Studies to a career in law, which is what I want to do.

Another conference that the students mentioned and shared some experiences from was the Show and Prove Hip Hop Research Conference at New York University. Stephanie told me about her Fabulachia Project that she presented at this conference.

I was presenting on some of the interviews that I had done here with students, Black female students from urban areas about their experiences in Appalachia and kind of using a hip hop feminist lens to talk about the way in which they contextualize their experiences.

Kadence attended this conference with Stephanie. She said it was exciting for her to learn about “the ways that hip hop and hip hop methodology can be applied to education and academia.” She talked about presentations on “using hip hop and images of hip hop in his art classes”, “starting an alternative school using hip hop, using rap, to keep the kids in school”, and using “hip hop and rap to help inmates spiritual lives while they were in prison.”

Taking students to conferences and presenting current research at these conferences is a big part of what the WGS Program at Berea College does. It is important for the aforementioned reasons presented above, but most of all because it brings students into the larger community of the field of women’s studies. It is important for students to see that they can be part of a larger
academic community, especially if the one they have at their institutions are marginalized or isolated.

**Environment**

The WGS Program at Berea College is located in the Phelps Stokes building, just a short walk away from the Berea Coffee and Tea Company, called the BC&T by the community. The WGS has a relaxed environment, and I participated in some of the program traditions when I visited. Before I went to the WGS Program office, I stopped and got a cup of tea. As I walked up to Phelps Stokes, I saw the clock on the top steeple of the building and knew I was in the right place.

When I opened the door, I saw a beautiful wooden staircase leading to the WGS Program. In the main office, there is a library of books, a main desk for the Office manager, and other desks for student labor workers and students who are not labor workers to sit. There is also a full kitchen with cabinets. To the right of the main office is Peggy’s office, which is full of books and videos and artwork. The whole building is full of artwork. Peggy has a couch where students often sit and talk to each other and her. On the other side of the main office, there is the WGS classroom, Room 204. This classroom is right next to the Women’s and Gender Studies Program office, with one door that leads directly to it and two more from the hallway. The ceiling is high, and there are large windows. It is a beautiful classroom with audio-visual equipment and moveable tables and chairs. On that day, the tables were arranged in a circle, with the chairs on the outside so students would be able to see each other.

Evie connected the influence of environment on the culture of the WGS Program, when she said:
The WGS Program does have a unique culture, which I think is evidenced by our office. The office is a library, workstation and kitchen, all in one. This describes our culture perfectly: one of vast feminist knowledge and room for educational growth, a culture of hard-work and effort and a culture of open invitation and comfort. There is always more to learn by talking with other majors, teachers and staff, by picking up a book or talking to one of the many PB&G speakers.

**Culture of the WGS Program**

**Trust.** The culture in the WGS Program at Berea College is unique. While it is clear that academic performance is a big part of the culture, there is a culture of trust that exists here as well. The theme of trust is organized into the following subthemes: strong bonds with course material and other majors, relationships with faculty, and feelings of family and home.

One reason trust is so important to this program is because many of the students have personally experienced abuse and poverty firsthand. This influences the strong connection they feel to the course content (which often addresses these issues), and also the strong bond they form with other members of the program. This inclusive culture creates a strong sense of trust that is apparent in the classroom. Kendra describes the culture as:

This is gonna (sic) sound incredibly depressing, but the people here; we probably had the highest concentration of horrible things that ever happen to people. We are those people. Because, almost everyone I’ve talked to, something bad has happened in their life and that’s why they are here. I mean via poverty, abuse, none of us have made it out of 18 years of life of living without being unscathed. So, I feel like the Women’s Studies Department here, we literally are in practice with what we read. Like, many of us, when we read about domestic violence, most of us can fathom what it is because we have
witnessed it. And if we haven’t personally had that experience, then we know someone who has and we have been there and have seen the detrimental effects that it has had on them. So I feel that that’s what makes us unique is that most of us have lived it.

A strong sense of trust is also expressed when students discuss course content and their instructors’ teaching styles. Evie spoke about the culture at the WGS Program as being “highly educational yet personal. The classes are places where difficult subject matter challenges the students’ misconceptions about gender, sexuality, and race while providing a safe environment for personal sharing and development.”

During my participation at Berea, I have personally witnessed how their open teaching styles foster pedagogical spaces where students learn the importance of the course content through connecting with each other. I share one example of how the classroom works by telling about the first time I went to WGS 124, the Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies, for classroom observation at the end of the fall semester in 2012. The class settles in to watch Iron Jawed Angels, a film about women’s suffrage in the United States. The room is freezing. I’m shivering and I need my coat. While we are watching this film and everyone is paying attention so deeply to the film that they didn’t seem to notice it was cold in the room. They had already seen some of it, so it started when the suffragist were on a hunger strike in prison, when Alice Paul was being interviewed in the psychiatric wing of the prison.

Across the room, the farthest point from me, I saw two female students one Black and one White sitting together. They were moved by the following two scenes: when the women in the cafeteria sing the song, May the Circle be Unbroken, and during the forced feedings, it looked like they might be singing along. I saw students visibly moved to cry and look away. There were female and male students, Black and White students together watching this film and
learning about the suffrage movement. This is important because it follows the mission of the WGS Program and it allows students the space to be able to talk about some difficult topics in a humane and constructive way.

After the film, people moved their chairs to be able to see everyone. One student said it makes her feel like everyone who does not vote is spitting in the faces of these women who fought for suffrage. She mentioned Ida B. Wells, and another student mentioned Alice Paul. Then another student said that she never learned about Ida B. Wells, Alice Paul, or racism in the suffrage movement until now. The conversation moved to the sacrifices made by the suffragists. They talked about how many of these women gave up having a family life to be activists for the vote and Peggy reminded the class that activists were not robots and she talked about how these women were real people who dedicated their lives the cause, but they were still human.

After the discussion about the film, Peggy put the class into two smaller groups to discuss the readings for the day. The moved their chairs and tables to fit the activity, and then the groups met for about 15 minutes. Peggy sat with one group and Kurstin sat with the other and there was a big discussion when the groups came together about the salient parts of the readings. At the end, Peggy did individual group checks on the Students Engaged in Active Learning projects and then dismissed the class.

The environment in the room, allowed for many different uses of this space for one classroom period. First, they could move their chairs to all look forward to watch the film. Then they could move to talk to the group and then get into smaller groups to discuss the readings and their field projects. Utilizing the physical space as open and adaptable seem to mimic the experiences of the students. I could really sense how their minds and hearts opened not only to the serious topic of discussion, but also to each other.
Another aspect of cultural trust is illustrated in the close relationships faculty have with their students. Students often commented on how the faculty is very available. Kendra emphasized this by stating how much Peggy makes herself available to students when compared to faculty in other departments. She expressed that her pre-med advisor rarely responded to her phone calls and emails, and that Peggy is the opposite. Kendra said:

But Peggy is here and I use her for everything. Because if I need something, she is my advisor and my boss and she is also my teacher and my friend. So, I get everything I need from her. And I feel like that is the difference between women’s studies and then other majors on campus because even the majors can’t get a hold of her (referring to biology advisor). Not everybody in the science department is like that, but she is the pre-med advisor. And we really need advising, and she is never there when you need her. But over here if I need something, I know where Peggy lives. I have her phone number and she answers emails. She is either gonna (sic) be at the office or at her house. I mean if I need something, all I have to do is ask.

Sadie expressed a similar sentiment when she discussed how the WGS Program caters to the needs of students by encouraging them to focus on a particular interest area.

I’m interested mostly in women’s health and there is only one class that specifically focuses on women’s health, but that class is really intense. And then all of the other classes you are going to touch on things like abortion and rights for women’s health and things like that.

In my interview with Barbara, the Office Manager, she talked about how much she loved the students. I can imagine Kadence and Barbara talking together and sharing a cup of tea.
Barbara said, while the only women’s studies program she has ever worked in is the one at Berea College, she believes it has a unique culture. She said:

I think Berea is a unique place and because of our students’ backgrounds and just a lot of things, it is just a unique place partially because Peggy bends over backwards for the students.

Barbara was days away from retiring when I interviewed her. She recalled many memories of her experiences working with students over the years and it became very clear to me that she loves her job. She said she wished she would have kept a journal of all the students who came through the program.

Another aspect of cultural trust is demonstrated by the expressions from the students and alumnae about how the WGS feels like a family and a home on campus. For instance, Kendra explained that it is “more familiar, like a family sort of atmosphere.” In the suite of her dorm that has twelve students total, they have four WGS majors. She said

We all know each other and we all talk. We go places together. I also feel like I have a relationship with the professors. Like Peggy, I was at her house today. I was cooking for the Take Back the Kitchen class today, but she ended up making me food. It is one of those scenarios where you walk into somebody’s house and you feel very comfortable. So, it’s a different atmosphere than I have with other professors.

Tanya referred to the WGS Program as “a safe zone” and “an open environment” where “everybody can bring to the table things to discuss.” She also said:

Once you are part of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, its such a small program that you know everybody and so your friends with everyone, so you have a lot of support from a lot of different people for a multitude of different things.
Kadence talked about there being something special about being a WGS major. She said she had friends that were minors, and “while they got a taste, they didn’t really get to experience what it was like to be a major.”

As a major, you spend so much time there cause you’re taking all these classes and your constantly dealing with them cause they are your advisors, so I mean to be a major was an amazing thing. I’ve enjoyed it. I was so glad I made the switch away from Philosophy cause I probably would not have been happy.

Kadence described it as a very nurturing space where there was always lots of food. Food is a big part of any culture and the culture of the WGS Program at Berea College is not different. Kadence said there was “always food in the office”, either left over from the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheon or what the faculty and staff would bring in for the students.

Kadence also shared how she was able to develop her own “identity more as womanist black feminist than just a regular everyday feminist” because of the culture that encouraged self-empowerment and exploration. She realized her “love of politics and law” could be integrated into her “love of feminism and gender equality.” When Kadence graduated, she thanked everybody in the WGS Program for begin part of her academic journey. She wants to hold on to the relationships she built with her professors because, “I’m very happy that I made that decision to be a Women’s and Gender Studies major.” She reinforced the concept of being a home on campus:

While it is very academic and we do the whole academic thing where we deconstruct and we break down. Its also like one of these environments where I knew at any point in time, especially my senior year, when I was working in the office and taking all these classes and trying to prepare for grad school, I could drop in anyone’s office, if they were
there, and just talk to them about anything and everything and it was a very good
environment. I really enjoyed it and I know a lot of people in my cohort, and a lot of
people from the past and from the present, feel the same way. For a lot of people it was
kind of like a second home.

Because many of the students have personally experienced abuse and poverty firsthand,
the culture of trust is an important component of the WGS Program. It influences the connection
they feel to the course content, the bond they form with other members of the program, and the
close relationships faculty have with their students. The WGS Program creates a space that feels
like family and a home on campus.

**Academic Achievement and Activism.** The academic branch of women’s studies
comes from feminist activism within academia to value women’s experiences and to investigate
the intersections of gender, sex, race, ability, sexuality, class, and religion in people’s lives.
Therefore, WGS classes make students more aware of oppression and empowerment.

The students and alumnae I interviewed talked about the importance of the academic
vigor of the program and the opportunities for activism on the campus and in their communities.
Lucy explained that the classes gave her the academic foundation she needed and this gave her
the desire to want to be active.

I was dealing with a system that wasn’t aimed at me personally, but definitely affects me.
And so understanding sort of the gender dynamics of my own family and of my peer
experiences and sort of having a light to look at the professional world and try to stay
aware and make sure that I don’t become a victim of gender discrimination. I think it
was really important for me to learn the systematic problems of patriarchy and all of that
and understand how they work so that I can begin to navigate them and push boundaries.
William also expressed how the culture of the WGS Program is affected by the greater understanding of oppression and empowerment that comes from the material in WGS classes. People who take the courses in WGS, they are typically more aware of patriarchal structures and there is sort of a bond made between you and those students when you go into different classes and you are able to bring your feminist consciousness into those classes and bring those up in discussion. I think there is another culture in academia for women’s studies.

Berea College does not have a Women’s Center that does the activist work like the Take Back the Night March and awareness campaigns for sexual assault prevention. The WGS Program does this work. This creates a culture in academia of both activist principles and academic achievement. Stephanie said the WGS Program at Berea has the capacity to do both.

The strength of our particular program at Berea is that we don’t have a women’s center so we do all the work in WGS as a program and its hard, but its also really great that we have that unique opportunity to talk to students about these issues and to bring in the academic piece. We are able to show what those relationships are and students get a lot out of that.

**Student-Centered.** Being student-centered is a valuable element of the WGS Program that surfaced in this study. The students’ voices are valued in the WGS Program at Berea College because of the importance of feminist pedagogy and the size of Berea College.

Stephanie mentioned this when she said:

At Berea, because it is a small campus, I would say it gives us the opportunity to really work with students in WGS and so I think that is one of the other key things. At big schools, it is harder for students to receive the individualized attention and get their
questions answered and do the things that ultimately get them interested in taking more courses and then doing the minor and eventually the major. We are able to work in a very special way here and we are able to respond to the interests of the students.

Stephanie described the culture of the WGS Program as being student-centered and able to respond to the students needs in real time. For instance, she said when the students expressed interest in wanting to learn more about sex trafficking and sex work, she developed a class that to be taught the summer of 2013, Sex in the City: Intro Global class. She also talked about how much Peggy believes in meeting the needs of students through student-centered feminist pedagogy and being resourceful.

Another example of how the WGS Program values student voices is evident in the Classic Texts course. This class was adapted to meet students’ needs. In an exit interview with Peggy, Lucy shared a critique of Classic Texts, saying it was very whitewashed. She described this to me in an interview:

It was very White and it was really frustrating for us at that time, the only minority writer that was included in the class was a story about Sojourner Truth, which was not even written by Sojourner Truth. . . I’ve heard from friends who are still there that they are incorporating more diversity into the normal curriculum, which I think is really great.

Both alumnae I interviewed expressed concern that there weren’t sufficient numbers of women of color represented in the Classic Texts course. After listening to their concerns in exit interviews and because their voices are valued, they made changes to the next Classic Texts class. Peggy shared some history about this class:

This course was a gift from Juliet Schor when she was coordinator of women’s studies at Harvard. “Classic Texts” was a reading course for majors at Harvard, every student
responsible for completing the reading on their own. We decided to make it a full course, and under Linda Leeks’ guidance, we added several readings by women of color. Linda taught the course for many years, and students were pleased with its content. Because Linda “was very active outside of the Women’s Studies Program, in both General Studies and African American Studies”, Peggy asked an affiliated faculty member to teach the Classic Texts course.

Students were less satisfied when the course moved out of the core curriculum. Several students wanted a feminist of color teaching the course, so we returned to the course to the core curriculum. Our new colleague Stephanie Troutman has increased feminist of color readings by incorporating bell hooks and Alice Walker into the 315 course.

Another way the leadership listens to students relates to including methodology in the introductory courses. One of the things that Lucy brought up was that she felt unprepared for the methodology of the senior research project and that she wished there had been an introduction into feminist methodology earlier in her college experience. This is another instance where the WGS Program adapted to the student needs. The current syllabus for WGS 124 has a Feminist Methods and Research Interview assignment.

Peggy and Stephanie are very keyed into listening to what students want and need. They value the voices and experiences of students and believe the WGS classes are essential to the WGS Program because they help it to move forward in its mission to “study of the roles, contributions, and global conditions of women throughout history, as well as the exploration of human experience as viewed through the lens of gender” (Self Study, 2008, p. 1).
Engaging Classes

Overall, the scope of the classroom curriculum in the WGS Program is deep and rich and has the content one would expect in a women’s studies program. Given the space constraints, I can only highlight some of the material from the classes I visited. This section provides descriptions and details from some of the WGS courses as examples of the learning culture, context, and experience for the students. Findings reported here come from the formal description of the course from the catalog and the syllabi, interviews with students and faculty, as well as observations of the courses.

WGS 124. WGS 124 is the Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies. It brings the most students into the WGS major and minor. It is required for students pursuing either a major or a minor in Women’s and Gender Studies. All of the students I interviewed mentioned the importance of WGS 124 in their foundational understanding of the discipline. The course catalogue describes WGS 124 as:

The inter-disciplinary field of Women’s Studies draws from the often-neglected experience of women in order to describe, analyze, and more fully understand the gendered world order. Students will read several primary source selections from each of the different eras of the international feminist movement, as well as complementary texts in Women’s History and Literature. This introduction to Women’s Studies will engage students in a deeply personal and academic journey that involves classroom discussion of individuals’ perceptions and critiques, journal responses to both discussion and reading, and a media project analyzing cultural images of women.

Tanya especially liked taking WGS 124 with Peggy. She said, “We did a lot of readings about a lot of different topics dealing with women and gender studies.”
We covered racial discrimination, discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, women in the work place, and of course women in religion, women and disability… we covered a lot… women in education and schooling and how they respond… we watched a documentary called *Jane*, about abortions, and that was my favorite.

Kendra enjoyed taking WGS 124 with Stephanie. She particularly appreciated the information about advocates in women’s health. “That’s when I realized that I could take the fact that I love medicine and I love science, and this need to better women’s health, and put it together.” Stephanie introduced the class to the New Opportunity School for Women, and now Kendra is planning to volunteer there.

Sadie took WGS 124 twice at different points in her life. She said it was interesting taking it twice with different professors six years apart. She said:

As far as the personal stuff that I took from the class, I *really* got to do it twice and at two different parts of my life, so it was a really good class to be a part of. I really think they should make it a requirement for everyone that goes here.

The second time she took the course, she took it with Peggy. She said more about what she got out of the Introduction course.

It is not like it is a cake course or anything; its real work, but its real work that is about understanding yourself and understanding that a lot of things about yourself really come from society and you know patriarchy. We say patriarchy more than I can count. About how much our hetero-normative patriarchal society really affects who you are. And so the work that you do in that course ends up not feeling like work because it’s really good for you personally.
I observed WGS 124 three times, once at the end of the Fall 2012 semester and twice in the Spring 2013 semester. When I visited WGS 124, in the early spring semester, 26 students were in attendance and five students presented their Personal Autobiography assignment. This is the assignment that Lucy said was particularly significant to her. In this assignment, the students analyze their own standpoints about growing up and learning gender roles, body image, spiritual values, and political beliefs and attitudes.

Each presentation lasted between six to ten-minutes. The first presenter seemed to be a very stoic 22-year old Black woman who talked about growing up being adopted by different people and having many last name changes over the years. She learned the difference between girls and boys, men and women when she was molested. She learned that boys and girls were treated differently on her co-ed soccer team when her coach told them that soccer was a boy’s sport and he only let the boys play. She said was content with her body being Black and thick and that she doesn’t wear makeup. She loves the songs, *I’m not my Hair* and *Because I’m a Queen* by Indie Arie. She was raised Pentecostal, and in general, is a Democrat. She is a Peace and Justice major and believes that abortion is an issue where women should have control over their own bodies. The other four students also introduced themselves and answered these questions in ways that were unique to each of them.

After the presentations, Peggy introduced a speaker to talk about the Green Dot activities on campus. Green Dot is a peer-to-peer educational group to address power-based violence. Many of the students in this class appear to be active with the Green Dot Day activities.

WGS 124 is a foundational course for students entering into the WGS major and minor. It is clear to me through my observational experiences and by the interviews with students and alumnae that this class is an essential building block to understanding the courses to follow.
Another important course mentioned by many of my participants as an important part of their academic journey is WGS 127.

**WGS 127.** WGS 127, Riding the Waves: Women of Color Feminism, was added after the program’s Self Study in 2008, completed by Beverly Guy Sheftall and Amy Levin. The course catalogue describes it as:

This course will analyze the various "waves" of feminism, (First, Second, and Third) as the wave metaphor indicates that each moment in feminism has flowed naturally into the next moment. The course will spend a significant amount of time analyzing the positions of women of color, especially African American women, in the Second Wave, which ushered in the contemporary feminist movement, and how the critiques of various women of color and women from other marginalized communities (lesbians, women of lower-socioeconomic classes) challenged mainstream, white, middle class feminism to recognize the different positionalities of all women. African American, Appalachians, and Women's Perspective.

When I visited Stephanie’s WGS 127 class at the end of the fall of 2012, there were 23 students in attendance. Stephanie had just returned from the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) conference. When Stephanie came in the classroom, the students started talking with her right away. Stephanie shared her experiences from the NWSA Conference with the students. She had just returned and her excitement was contagious. Stephanie chaired a panel on Nicki Minaj and as she talked about this panel, the students listened intently. Then she shared information about the Brown Boi Leadership Project she learned about at the conference.

Then they got started on the classroom activities for the day around their readings from the book, *To Be Real*, by Rebecca Walker. They all pulled out their books and Stephanie
instructed them to get into groups of no more than three students each. Each group chose one chapter out of *To Be Real*, to discuss. Stephanie put up these directions on the board while the students grouped themselves:

- Main idea <start/middle/finish> overarching themes
- Identify the central tension in the piece? <Argument>
- Aspects that connect back to previous readings or concepts
- Talk about the piece and then come up with a clear statement of the main idea.

Then Stephanie lead the larger group discussion and the students used the guidelines she gave them to talk about the chapters. The discussing went by quickly because the students were thoughtful about their responses and Stephanie was very skilled in asking good questions.

**WGS 286.** Another class that was mentioned often by current students was WGS 286, Hip Hop Feminisms and Urban Literature, a special topics course.

This course has a bi-fold purpose: to introduce Hip Hop Feminism – in theory, in relation to the evolution of Black feminism/s, and as a conceptual framework; we will explore Black women’s participation in all aspects of Hip Hop culture: rape music, breakdancing, emceeing, DJ-ing, video performance, spoken word, graffiti-art and fashion. We will use the theories, frameworks and information as a lens through which to analyze and critique Urban fiction texts, which rely heavily on the dramatization Hip Hop culture. Specifically, we will focus on Black female sexuality, gender roles in urban environments and Black gangsta masculinity/ies and femininities. Artifacts and contributions by so-called ‘conscious’ males in Hip Hop culture will also be included for discussion. (WGS 286 Spring 2013 Syllabus, p. 2)
I visited this class twice, once in the beginning and then again at the end of the spring semester. Each time, the students were engaged in the experience. There were approximately 15-20 students in the class each time. Stephanie started the first class with an introduction to the film, Say My Name, a documentary about female hip hop artists in 2009, and then she showed it. Say My Name, showcased artists like MC Lyte, Chocolate Thai, Estelle, who said females have it hard in hip hop, Rah Digga, who talked about the importance of writing your own rhymes, Roxanne Shante, Jean Grae, Shanika, Miz Korona, Invincible, who said hip-hop is a tool for social change, Trine, Remy MA, GIA Crew, Erykah Badu, the GA Gurlz, Diamond, Big Manda, Mystic, who talked about being a conscious rapper, and Sparky D.

She reminds them of the film they already watched, Nobody Knows My Name, made in 1999 about female hip hop artists and asked them to think about the changes that have occurred in decade between them. She also reminds them that they will be discussing the assigned reading from the book, When Chicken Heads Come Home to Roost when the class meets next.

Allayah passionately described how significant this course was to her. She talked about how much of an influence hip hop has played in her life. She enjoyed the opportunity to apply a feminist perspective to it in a WGS class with Stephanie.

The second time I visited the class was at the end of the spring semester and students were presenting their creative projects called “My Life in/as Hip Hop.” The students were asked to: “formulate a project that explores the utility of Hip Hop in conveying the narrative of one’s life/experience and standpoint in relation to the broader culture and society” (WGS Syllabus, 2013). The most memorable presentations in the class was about hip hop in Islam, from a student from Morocco. She talked about growing up there with hip hop being part of her life and
she talked about sexism in Moroccan hip hop. She played the hip hop of an artist named, Dros, and talked about how much he tries to emulate the hyper masculine hip hop of the United States.

Allayah shared her presentation with me after class because she wasn’t scheduled to go the day I was there. She created a hip hop rhyme that was a beautifully written, powerful piece about how growing up. Hip hop was kind of like a father to her because her father was absent. She talked about how the men of hip hop taught her about what was acceptable for men to do. Allayah is a spoken word artist and she wants to see hip hop include more women and include more women friendly lyrics. She talked about how important this was for her daughter as well.

**WGS 286ST.** WGS 286ST, Black and White Sexualities, was another special topics course that the participants mentioned as being significant. William, Kendra, and Kadence took Black and White Sexualities with Stephanie. William identified Black and White Sexualities as the reason why he added the WGS major.

I’ll tell you essentially why I decided to join the WGS major my junior year. I had taken Black and White Sexualities, which is a course that studied the different intersections of black and white sexualities in the U.S. I really enjoyed the course and I had a friend who was a double major, AFR and Women and Gender Studies. And so it just clicked for me that I might as well just go ahead and do it and I realized there is so much intersectionality between African American Studies and Women & Gender Studies because both of them really study the oppressed, the people who have less access to power, the people who are marginalized the most in society.

Kendra shared how she learned so much in WGS 286ST about women’s experiences of being treated as sexual objects and about how women of color experience unique stereotypes that she didn’t know about. She said she also “learned about the treatment of gay, lesbian, bisexual,
and transgendered people” and “how Black men are made out to be these sexual machines and how they are given this whole rep for being sexually aggressive and animalistic and different things like that and Black women as well.” Kendra talked about how learning about the effects of pornography made a strong impression on her, especially when she read an article that was an “in depth look at how women are treated in porn.”

Kendra shared how powerful it was to be exposed to the art of Kim Walker because it introduced her to the violence faced by Black slave women in the United States. Learning that Black women also experienced torture had a profound impact on Kendra. She talked about how “the father of gynecology” used “slave women to understand what we know now about women’s bodies. And they did not have any anesthesia.” She expressed horror that the field she was about to go into has such a “bloody history.” “These women suffered horribly. He was doing surgery on them and they were completely aware of what was going on.”

**WGS 315.** When I arrived to the Classic Texts course, Stephanie and her students were already engaged. There were eleven students in attendance. In the course catalog, WGS 315 is described as:

A study of the Western version of the Women's and Gender Studies canon, with readings spanning the last two centuries in history, philosophy, literature, psychology, sociology, biography, and critical theory. Both old and new classic texts will be paired together to help students develop a coherent narrative about gender and sexuality over the past two hundred years. In addition, the idea of a "canon" will be raised as a problematic issue in a rapidly changing academic field.

Everyone seemed very engaged in the discussion about the similarities and difference between the book, *A Woman Warrior*, by Maxine Hong-Kingston, and the film, *Mulan*. The
class was deconstructing the gendered and racial themes in Mulan and ways silence was defied and reinforced.

Then Stephanie started asking questions to the class about the book and the author’s experience of girlhood identity as a Chinese American girl. Then they talked about the fact that the warrior girl in the book had a completely different experience that Mulan in the movie because she had seven years of training to be a warrior and in the book, she fights wars and she is the leader. She is stronger and she is fighting for the people in her village. The conversation was interesting and thoughtful, especially when the discussion moved to the silence that was both in the book and the film. They talked about how other authors they have read, like Alice Walker and bell hooks, discuss the politics of silence and coming to voice. At the end of the class, Stephanie reminds them to keep intersectionality in mind when reading the next book, *A Room of One’s Own*, by Virginia Woolf.

**WGS 486.** The last class I describe seems to be one of the driving forces of the WGS Program at Berea College. WGS 486, Take Back the Kitchen, is a higher-level special topics course. The spring 2013 syllabus explains that this course is an act of resistance:

> As visionary resistance, the Fourth Wave of Feminism includes a movement to take back the kitchen from the hands of the profit driven fast food industry. In this course, we will engage critical texts and practice the feminism we study by learning to cook simple, healthful community meals. Each class will end with a dinner party prepared by classmates.

It was about 2:00 p.m. on a chilly Tuesday in January when I arrived to Peggy’s Take Back the Kitchen for a classroom observation. The classroom was Peggy’s house. When I
arrive, Peggy is working with two women in the kitchen to prepare for the class that starts at 3:00 p.m. and last until 7:00 p.m.

Shortly thereafter, Peggy’s friend Peg arrived, who I will refer to as Peg, to keep them distinct. Peg has been a friend of Peggy’s for over 30 years and she came to help with the class. Another older woman named Dandelion arrived; she is a student. Then more and more students arrived until the house was full of people. Peggy gathered all the students in the living room to begin the class. This is where she does the actual lecture and class discussion.

Peggy starts talking with the students about their Food Autobiography assignment that they were turning in that day. Then she read part of her essay, *Take Back the Kitchen: A New Agenda for Feminism’s Fourth Wave*, as a way to set the stage for the food autobiography presentations later. In it, Peggy talked about how she became interested in food studies. This essay is incredibly inspiring and the students listen intently as she tells about how fast food companies have affected people’s health and how people can reclaim their health by reclaiming their ability to Take Back the Kitchen. She writes:

Feminists, who understand that the McDonaldization of feminism has endangered the health and survival of humankind, must be leaders in the fourth wave of feminism. We need to theorize resistance and we need to reclaim the kitchen, both the process of food production and home cooking so that food is once again, nurturing and not life destroying. Our theory can begin with the cultivation of awareness and basic suggestions for critical intervention.

At the end of the essay, one of the students says, “Amen! Preach it sister!” Then another student asked her to explain what she meant when she referred to suicide seeds developed by Monsanto. She answered:
What has happened in the past 15 years, a way that seed companies can ensure their corporate growth, is to create seeds that are not renewable. So their annual seeds, sort of like a geranium; they don’t grow back. The suicide seeds actually dissolve at the end of the first growing season.

The discussion went on for a few more minutes and then it was time for the cooking demonstration, so the class left the large comfortable space in the living room to go to the smaller space around the kitchen. Peggy and Janice lead the demonstration about how to make spicy pinto beans, blueberry cobbler, and corn bread. The students were all watching and paying attention.

Next, the class separated into smaller groups. One group of students would be cooking another round of these dishes like they were just shown how to do. The second group would prepare the two large tables for the meal along with the place settings, decoration, and water. The third group discussed and designed a blessing they could agree on to give before the meal. The fourth group planned the meal for the following week.

When they were finished and the food was cooking, Peggy gathered the students back into the living room to continue class by discussing the salient points from the reading assignment they had and then a few students presented their Food Autobiographies. One student talked about growing up as a single child whose parents worked a lot. She had frozen meals she would put in the microwave and she ate them alone. Another student talked how her family ate everything from their garden and their farm and they always ate meals together. Another student talked about how her grandmother cooked for her when her mother was away in the military. This assignment was so powerful because it helped students reflect on their relationships with
food and be able to discuss them in a way that helped the other students learn about the diversity of ways people have relationships with food.

The house was beginning to smell incredibly good and everyone was talking about how hungry they were. Peggy announced that Chad Berry, the Academic Vice President and Dean of the Faculty, would be joining the class to demonstrate about how to cook Swiss chard. He arrived and everyone moved to the kitchen. When all the food was finished, everyone sat down and the group that was in charge of developing a blessing for the meal shared it.

Kendra, Tanya, Sadie, and Kadence talked about the Take Back the Kitchen class with excitement. Kendra expressed how she is “getting a very in depth perspective of food economy in the U.S.” She said she took the class because she needed to learn how to prepare nutritious meals for herself to treat her Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. Tanya and Sadie said they are learning a lot from the class about food and food politics. Kadence said she never took the Take Back the Kitchen class officially, but visited it a few times.

It was great to be at Peggy’s house and cooking and eating and it was a great time!

That’s where Peggy’s heart is at; Peggy’s heart is in the kitchen and cooking and food and food rights and land rights and I think that is great. Hearing Peggy talk about that stuff gets you excited about food, plus Peggy’s bread is amazing!

Challenges for the WGS Program

What are the challenges and why are they important? The challenges for the WGS Program include issues related to the marginalization that affect the WGS Program and the WGS students. There is increasing pressure for the WGS Program to have higher numbers of students and to work with fewer resources. For students, there is a very real concern with what happens to them when they learn about the extent to which violence and patriarchal oppression affect
people’s lives. There is also a need to explicitly connect the skills they learn as a WGS major to employment. The challenges of marginalization affect the ability of the leaders of the WGS Program to address these student needs. It is important to understand and address these concerns to make the WGS Program more able to meet the needs of the WGS students.

**Marginalization of the Program.** Peggy explained how marginalization affects her ability to build a faculty in the WGS Program and to build up the program to meet more of the students needs. She explained that this is a challenge for anyone running a WGS program. When she served on the Governing Council of the NWSA, she learned that being marginalized on the periphery of higher education is a challenge typical of the women’s studies experience.

This marginalization is seen on the recent focus to increase the numbers of majors and minors in the WGS Program and other areas on campus as well. She said:

Four years ago, we didn’t have to worry about numbers; we had to worry about quality programming. Now we have to worry about numbers and that’s a problem because people are afraid to major in women’s studies unless they are majoring in something else.

Stephanie also mentioned the organizational marginalization as being a challenge to consider when looking the WGS Program’s situation. She explained how this is a problem for all Area studies, “whether that is WGS, Ethnic Studies, African American Studies, are always under attack.” She compared it to civil rights or abortion rights. “These things people take for granted should not be taken for granted because they are always under attack. It is a constant struggle to maintain these privileges. And the same goes with WGS studies and Area studies in college.”

Stephanie went on to say that it should not be assume that an area of study will continue to exist because:
In an institutional, in a corporate institutional framework, it’s about how many students you have to function and constantly trying to push the value of these programs in spite of low numbers. And seeing the low numbers as you know endemic and indicative of a larger issue around what is valued in our culture and why, which is why we do this work! So that’s the irony of it, it’s the reason we are here and why we have to fight to stay here.

She explained that this issue is “not just at Berea”; “it is everywhere that Area studies people have to push and have to prove our worth and our value in ways that I think are really unfair as academics and scholars.” Stephanie added that programs in history and philosophy typically have small numbers, but no one has to prove why history or philosophy should exist. They don’t have a large number of history and philosophy majors; yet, there is never a question of not having a philosophy department. So, there are those kinds of things that again just indicate where women and minorities stand in relation to academic knowledge and to subject areas and disciplinary fields.

Kendra, Tanya, Sadie, William, Kadence, and Lucy openly expressed their concern when they wished more faculty members would be dedicated to the WGS Program. Sadie expressed her concerns about the marginalization of the WGS Program.

We don’t have enough professors here in the department and that’s a big issue for us. So a lot of classes get picked up by people outside of the department which kind of works, but it would be nicer if we had at least three professors that could really focus just on women’s studies. We need that; we don’t have that. So we work with what we have. I think that on some levels our college does not value the department as much as other departments. Which is strange to me because this is one of the departments that is definitely geared toward the College’s Great Commitments.
Because many WGS students double major in WGS and another area on campus, they experience additional challenges. When I asked Peggy if she thought it was problematic for students in women’s and gender studies to double major, she said:

Students double major in women's studies because they don't have the confidence that a single major in women's studies will lead to a successful post graduate life, whether in graduate school or the marketplace. Unfortunately, students are often over-extended when they double major in women's studies, and consequently, the women's studies program is impoverished rather than enriched. Too often student allegiance is to the mainstream major, whether psychology, child and family studies, English, etc. This puts women's studies in the position of accommodate, accommodate, accommodate. It becomes the stepchild of other majors. And this is very difficult. But Berea is not unusual in this regard. This is the story of women's studies across the country.

**Marginalization of the WGS Student**

Sadie and Lucy brought up a challenge faced by WGS students. Sadie said one of the reasons their numbers may not be as high as some think they should be is that many times people don’t understand what you could do with a major in WGS.

There are a lot of people who are like, I want to be a women’s studies major, but I want to be able to get a job when I get out of here. So I think that there is not enough education on campus about what you can do with different majors.

She explained that the more that people are aware of the work people can do with WGS degrees, then more people would major in WGS. “If we had more majors, there would be more money for the department and more professors for the department.” Lucy mentioned the following ideas to address this issue:
Maybe an assignment or a more pointed discussion where you talk about some of the more common things you might think of a women’s studies student doing, like teaching or counseling or working at a rape crisis center. Those are great, but I don’t really think they really push beyond the envelop of what feminism can be added to. I think an assignment or conversation or some kind of talk or workshop series about incorporating feminist principles into different kinds of work, so that you can still see being a scientist as being a feminist path. And then also, helping students identify what skills they have learned in a women’s studies program and identify how to market them.

Another challenge for the student concerns the sad content and the problems associated with being an injured student. Peggy addressed a very real concern with what happens to students when they start to learn about the extent to which violence and patriarchal oppression affect women’s lives. She said:

While learning about domestic violence and institutionalized sexism in patriarchal culture is very eye-opening for our students, it can also be depressing to the point of disheartening. Women's Studies is a vast discipline that also includes the exhilarating work of eco-feminism. The Take Back the Kitchen course is a way of broadening our program focus to include a powerful re-envisioning of the world's food systems in a hands-on way where students prepare foods and plan their own gardens, and sometimes make new decisions about how they will lead their lives.

Students see themselves in the curriculum and that is one of the reasons they are more successful in this program than other programs. This is also one of the reasons why there are many injured students who come to WGS programs. Peggy said, many students who are attracted to the WGS Program are those who have been abused. Peggy touched on how the
corporatization of women’s studies affects the way WGS programs have been able to operate to include caring for injured students.

**Future plans**

Peggy has been working on internationalizing the program to increase and enhance students’ experiences with diversity and career opportunities. She started with creating another internal programming event organized by the WGS Program to bring awareness to International Women’s Day.

We invited a colleague from Penn State, Madhu Prakash, to be the guest speaker... We served a sit down dinner up in the classroom to 65 people. And we had opera music from faculty and students, and we had this wonderful talk and it was beautiful and absolutely transformative.

She expressed how she would love to do this again, but the WGS Program doesn’t have “the personnel in place to do that” right now. She has focused her energies on creating an international opportunity for students to engage in the Women in Public Service Project in the spring 2014. The Women in Public Service Project is based out of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. When the director of this center, Dr. Rangita de Silva de Alwis, presented at a Peanut Butter and Gender luncheon in the fall 2012, Peggy talked with her about the possibility of Berea College becoming part of the Women in Public Service Project because Hillary Clinton, a founding member, wants to include a non-elite school to the Women and Public Service Project. Now, after Peggy has gone to Boston, and twice gone to Washington D.C. to meet with different people, Berea is becoming part of this project.

In a presentation Peggy made to students and faculty, she explained, “The Women in Public Service Project was founded by the U.S. Department of State and the Seven Sisters
Women’s Colleges including: Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Wellesley.” Its purpose is “to advance women into positions of influence in governments and civic organizations worldwide” by “educating women leaders across the globe and linking them to each other through powerful intergenerational networks.” She said the vision for this project is “a world in which political and civic leadership is at least 50% female by 2050.” She asked the students, to think about the real question: Where do you want to be when you graduate from Berea College? What sort of leadership positions do you want to be in?

She will help them answer these questions by teaching WGS 386, Empowering Women for Global Leadership, in the spring of 2014. Peggy is excited to be internationalizing the WGS Program by connecting students in WGS 386 to the Seven Sisters Women’s Colleges Women in Public Service and Leadership Project. She hopes to have a “cohort of students, both from Women’s Studies and the International Center who would be participating.”

Peggy has a Fulbright Scholarship in India in the fall of 2013. Stephanie is stepping in as Interim Director while she is gone.

Stephanie has been given some space in the media to share her teaching about sexualities and trends about feminism. This will help to highlight the work that they do at WGS at Berea College. She will be on “Connections” with Renee Shaw, which is on Kentucky Educational Television. She will be talking about sexualities courses as part of the changing trend of the field and curriculum around women’s studies in the 21st Century. She also will be talking about feminism in K-12 on “Feminist Magazine” which is an L.A. based radio broadcast.

Stephanie is teaching a new course this summer, Sex in the City, to respond to the student demand to learn more about sex trafficking, prostitution, and sex work.
Kendra is excited to get involved in the New Opportunity School for Women and do an internship there in the future. She is also looking forward to getting her rape counseling certification and her doula licensure. She has talked to Peggy about doing an internship in Costa Rica, where she can be helpful to the women and also better her Spanish speaking skills. After she graduates, she wants to go to medical school and practice in a birthing center, with midwives, as the doctor on call.

The students are also looking forward to a successful future. For example, William is anticipating a career working on civil rights law. He said his is glad he will have a background that includes Women’s and Gender Studies and African and African American Studies because it allows him to be “an advocate for Black people, women, and LGBTIA communities.”

Conclusions

The findings from this study provide a description of the Women and Gender Studies Program at Berea College. The WGS Program at Berea College is a great program because the leadership responds to students needs and they create opportunities for diverse experiences inside and outside the classroom. The leadership in the WGS Program at Berea College creates a home on campus where students can go to learn about things they can’t find anywhere else on campus.

The findings clustered around themes of organizational structure, courses, program activities, the environment and culture of the program, the challenges to the WGS Program and to the WGS students, and future directions. In Chapter 5, I draw conclusions related to the research questions and make recommendations for the WGS program at Berea, the higher administration at Berea College, the National Women’s Studies Association, higher education administrators in general, and society. I also share some ideas for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE:
CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & FURTHER RESEARCH

Women’s studies students are able to learn about women’s experiences, feminist theories, and how to evaluate ways in which gender, sex, nationality, age, sexuality, race, class, ability, ethnicity, and religion intersect in people’s lives. An education in women’s studies teaches people to apply global understanding and cross-cultural awareness to questions about how these categories affect people’s lives. A women’s studies education enables people to think critically about social and political issues and to consider a subject from many standpoints. More specifically, an education in women’s studies provides the opportunity to link experience with wisdom and activism with theory to apply to social transformation (Levin, 2007, p. 17).

As a researcher, it is important to study women’s studies programs within higher education institutions, since they are often overlooked or misunderstood. They often blend into other programs, are often interdisciplinary, and lack their own departmental structure, full time faculty, or large number of students. These administrative constraints force women’s studies to live in the margins of higher education.

In many instances, the contributions of women’s studies programs, go unnoticed or recognized by higher education administrators who are in positions to make decisions about the position, status, and funding of women’s studies’ programs at their institutions.

The purpose of this research study has been to highlight a women’s studies program that is nationally known and recognized. Through undertaking an organizational ethnography, I
documented the WGS Program at Berea College through multiple standpoints. I showcased how this program serves women and makes the college more accepting of female students, faculty, and leaders. More specifically, I sought to understand and describe the perceptions and experiences of students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae members involved in a women’s studies program.

The WGS Program at Berea College is a model program that celebrates diversity, succeeds under situation of low resources, and clearly values the experiences and voices of the students. Other higher education institutions may see it as a model to use for their own programs in the future. The findings of this study help fill the gap of missing research about women’s studies programs and their contributions to academia and society. I hope it helps to reveal the very real contributions women’s studies makes to academia and the world at large.

This dissertation sought to answer these research questions:

1) How is the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College perceived or experienced by its stakeholders (students, administrators, faculty, and alumnae)?
2) How is its reality constructed through the overlapping lenses of each?
3) How does the WGS Program approach, prepare for, and respond to political and economic challenges?

In this chapter, I offer the conclusions about the WGS Program at Berea College by answering these research questions. I give multi-level recommendations for the WGS Program, for Berea College higher administrators, for women’s studies programs in general, for higher education administrators in general who have administrative power over women’s studies programs, and for society in general. Then I share some ideas for further research.
Conclusions

As I mentioned in Chapter One, I have strong beliefs and much experience related to feminism and how a women’s studies program ought to be run. After conducting this study, I conclude that the WGS Program at Berea College is a successful program. It provides a wide array of experiences for the students, and it gives them some hands on experience in addition to a diversity of classroom experiences through student-centered feminist pedagogy. Like any academic program, it does face challenges, but it is unique because of the strength of its leadership and the passion of the stakeholders.

**How the WGS Program is perceived or experienced by its stakeholders.** By looking through the overlapping lens of the experiences of the students, alumnae, faculty, and administrators, I believe the WGS Program is perceived by its stakeholders as an academic home on campus; a unique culture; and an environment where the students and the alumnae could learn about issues and experiences that were not being taught in other places. The students and the alumnae talked about the faculty in the WGS Program being very helpful and available for students. They clearly felt mentorship and respect for Peggy and Stephanie.

The WGS Program is doing much with very little. This thought was expressed by almost everyone I interviewed. From an outsider perspective, it is incredible that they are able to provide a great diversity of classes for the students, support the students in professional development opportunities at conferences and in internships, and host the Peanut Butter and Gender Luncheons for the students, faculty, staff, and community members.

**How is reality constructed by the stakeholders.** The administration lens sees the WGS Program as a group in Division Six. The faculty and staff see the WGS Program as a rewarding place to teach and contribute to the Berea College community. The students see the WGS
Program as an academic home on campus where they can learn about subjects not discussed in other departments. The alumnae see the WGS Program as a place where they learned the foundation of understanding of feminism and activism through academic excellence and community involvement. Their overlapping experiences show the WGS Program as a place of trust and caring preparing the future leaders in the fourth generation of feminism.

**Ways the WGS Program approaches, prepares for, and responds to political and economic challenges.** The contributions of the WGS Program at Berea College add to the tapestry of what makes Berea College so special. The WGS Program provides a unique space to learn about the intersections of gender, sex, sexuality, race, ability, religion, and ethnicity, and apply theory to this knowledge through academic vigor, activism, and civic engagement. The WGS Program is also growing to embrace an international component that allows the students to see beyond Berea and beyond Kentucky to broaden their horizons to include global leadership opportunities.

Peggy, the program Coordinator, responds with a clear vision of internationalizing the WGS Program and, by doing so, also helps Berea College to become internationalized, as well. The students who are participating in the Women in Public Service Project are able to jumpstart their careers on an international leadership level.

The WGS Program is also providing a lens through which students can see where they fit in the fourth wave of feminism. Some students may move toward Peggy’s empowering concept of Taking Back the Kitchen from fast food companies. Other students may move toward Stephanie’s groundbreaking work with Hip Hop and Feminism and Black and White Sexualities. Either way, the students are in an environment where the leadership in the WGS Program listens to their voices and adjusts to their needs.
The WGS Program hosts the Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons to the Berea community, which brings the opportunity to have a nationally or locally recognized leader to campus and then the space to talk about current important issues.

The WGS Program also provides students with hands-on experiences that apply to learning about such topics as domestic violence, the feminization of poverty, and women’s health by helping their students connect with internship opportunities like the one Kendra will experience at the New Opportunity School for Women, where Kendra will become an advocate for women there, or like the one Lucy experienced at the High Rocks Educational Corporation helping to empower girls to navigate the world. Providing these opportunities is one of the ways the WGS Program focuses on the economic and political challenges of the times.

Lastly, the WGS Program responds to attacks on women’s sexuality, reproductive health, physical safety, equal pay, and the overall War on Women, by offering the education to effectively offer resistance by investigating the intersections of the roles and experiences of women and girls affected by the War on Women. The education the WGS Program offers empowers students to reject misogynist political messages and leads them on a path to becoming leaders in international and local changes to create a more equal and just world.

**Recommendations**

For the recommendations section, I offer layers of recommendations. These levels include: the WGS Program at Berea College, the higher administration at Berea College, women’s studies programs in general, higher education administrators who have power over women’s studies programs, and society in general.
**WGS Program Recommendations.** These recommendations are for the WGS Program at Berea College. They address some of the concerns that surfaced during my research. These concerns include issues related to the double majors, reaching out to the alumni, and self-care.

Why is there such a high need for WGS students to double major? The problem essentially is the concern about, “What will I be job ready to do with a WGS degree?” I recommend addressing this question early on, so that students are able to explicitly connect the skills one learns as a WGS major to employment. The WGS Program can address this problem through an assignment in the WGS 124 Introduction to WGS course, by dedicating a Peanut Butter and Gender luncheon to this topic, or by doing a workshop with the affiliated faculty to help them incorporate how their course applies to what WGS majors can do. In my interview with Kadence, she said, “The really interesting thing about Berea is that we have these perspectives, so a lot of people do take intro to women’s studies” to fill their perspective. She also said “a lot of classes cross-list with women’s studies, so potentially, everyone on Berea’s campus has taken a women’s studies course whether or not they know it.” They might be cross-listed with African and African American Studies, Social Justice, History, Child Family Studies, Psychology, English, or Religion. She also said “for all the classes we offer, we have to branch out and have other teachers teach them and those other professors don’t quite understand women’s studies. If the WGS students involved in Triota were to get involved, they could address this issue by developing presentations to do in the WGS cross-listed courses.

Taking the students to the National Women’s Studies Association conference is something the WGS Program is already doing to address this issue. Many of my participants said that going to these conferences helped them decide what they want to do with their WGS degree. Sadie said:
I think that the typically thought is that, if you are getting a women’s studies degree, then you are probably going to get a Ph.D. and teach. That is fabulous and fun, but not everyone can do that, and so these conferences have really been where I’ve learned what people are really doing.

As students are able to envision what jobs they can do with a WGS degree by itself, they may be less likely to double major.

What happens after the students graduate from the WGS Program? In this study, Lucy, one of the alumna, recognized that the size of the WGS Program affected its ability to stay connected to alumni. While she understood the constraints, she still wishes to be able to stay connected to the WGS Program at Berea College. Kadence expressed this desire as well. I recommend creating a way for the WGS Program to stay in contact with the WGS graduates to be able to grow this community of support.

The WGS Program could engage the alumni and current students who are in their junior and senior years, to get involved in this endeavor. The students could start an alumni association as a class project or as part of the student labor program. It would be good to connect them to graduates of the WGS Program, so that they can start networking and building relationships. This could also be a project of Triota (Iota, Iota, Iota), Women’s Studies Honor Society. It is important to build this base of support through a social media network in addition to sending out a survey to discovery what the alumni wish to have as part of their organization. Ultimately, it grows into leadership in the community of graduates that continue to stay connected to the WGS Program at Berea College. This association could decide what they want to do to stay engaged with the WGS Program, whether it be by organizing an alumni gathering or a social media site to exchange job announcements and opportunities.
If students want to complete a double major, how can the WGS Program best help them? I recommend that the WGS Program continue to be available to students by advising them through the maze of classes on the best way to make it through. Through this support the students will be more likely to stay with the WGS Program as their major program. I understand the myriad of obligations that people in the WGS Program have, so I am suggesting that the current students could use these ideas as opportunities to engage in activities that will ultimately help them professionally and to leave a legacy in the WGS Program.

How does the higher administration at Berea College learn about the WGS Program? I recommend creating more internal marketing to educate up and reach the higher levels of administration at Berea College. Share the contributions of the WGS Program with them, especially to those who have no experience with women’s studies in general. Share the work being done in the WGS Program to internationalize the program and the success the student-centered feminist pedagogy is having by bringing more students to the WGS Program.

**Berea College Recommendations.** To the higher administration at Berea College, I want to bring awareness of the outstanding WGS Program to your campus. The WGS Program has been able to grow in an environment where its mission is supported, but the Director is doing the work of two or three people. Her work not only fulfills the primary commitments of Berea College, but it also makes Berea College a desirable place to work and visit. The Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons are a signature experience one can only have at Berea College.

I recommend continuing to support the WGS Program by allowing students and faculty to attend conferences and I recommend increasing support to the WGS Program as well. In Chapter Two, I discussed the report by The Teagle Working Group on Women’s Studies and Civic Engagement and the National Women’s Studies Association. They found that it is not
uncommon for women’s studies programs to “lack adequate resources at both the institutional and national levels” (Orr, 2011, p. 18). The lack of resources affect decisions about the position, status, and funding of women’s studies programs at their institutions. The Teagle Group collected national survey data from both students and faculty and found that “[f]aculty made a near universal mention of the need for more support that recognizes the crucial role that courses like these play in forwarding the mission of their respective institutions” (Orr, 2011, p. 18).

Berea College is unique in many ways, but it also does not provide adequate resources to the WGS Program. I recommend that Berea College allocate more support to the WGS Program. One way to give more support would be to change the part-time Office Manager into a full-time position. This would help the Director to continue to advance the program by providing the full-time staff necessary to organize the Peanut Butter and Gender luncheons, to manage many of the administrative tasks related to helping students succeed, and to cultivate the connection between the Seven Sister’s Colleges through the Women’s Public Service Project, which will help mobilize students into global leadership positions. This support will help attract more students to the WGS Program, which will increase the number of students graduating from Berea College with WGS degrees.

Another very important way to provide support would be by allocating another faculty line to the WGS Program. In the 2008 Program Review for the Women’s Studies Program, the outside reviewers emphasized that the program was understaffed with teaching faculty. All the students and alumnae in this study spoke about the need to have more faculty lines dedicated to the WGS Program. The NWSA Governing Counsel Statement, *What Programs Need: Essential Resources of Women’s Studies Programs* (2000), states that, “It is critical that at least some permanent base-budget FTE lines be controlled by Women's Studies programs.”
Faculty lines in Women's Studies are necessary to: staff core and other interdisciplinary Women's Studies courses, provide instructional stability and the ability to control and plan course offerings, provide a service component for the program, and insure that faculty members are evaluated upon and rewarded for teaching, service, and research in the area of Women's Studies. (p. 1)

I strongly recommend the faculty addition to be a full-time women’s studies line. A shared line with African and African American Studies would be acceptable if both areas share tenuring and salary review responsibilities.

**Higher Education Administrators in General.** In the 2007 report, *A National Census of Women’s and Gender Studies Programs in U.S. Institutions of Higher Education*, Reynolds, Shagle, and Venkataraman explain that the benefits and contributions of women’s studies programs, like the opportunities to connect the intersections of theory, experience, knowledge, activism, civic engagement, and citizenship, think critically, consider issues from multiple perspectives, and apply global awareness about women and gender to cross-cultural research, go unnoticed or unrecognized by higher education administrators. Often, these contributions go unnoticed by higher education administrators who are in positions to make decisions about the position, status, and funding of women’s studies programs at their institutions.

I recommend for administrators in these positions to learn about the very real contributions of women’s studies. Women’s studies is an interdisciplinary area of study that provides valuable services to institutions of higher education and unique opportunities for students. By creating space for feminism, women’s studies programs provide a space largely missing from other classrooms. Women’s studies programs also provide opportunities for civic engagement in higher education. Many offer internships inside women’s studies offices and
outside the university at community organizations, non-profit organizations, and businesses. Women’s studies programs also provide programming of educational and entertaining events that tend to be made available for free to the campus and community. They also offer students the ability to network with women’s studies scholars through the National Women’s Studies Association. These opportunities provide the experience and the connections needed to pursue gainful employment and further their education. I recommend considering these contributions and the research on women’s studies program assessment before making any decisions about the position, status, and funding of women’s studies programs.

**Societal Recommendations.** The general public should pay attention to the current debates that revolve around women’s bodies, women’s safety, and women’s freedom, and then get involved in the local organization to advance the movement for equality. There has been a great movement toward understanding the need for activism for women’s rights over our own bodies, whether that refers to the right to not be raped or the right to decide when to have children. On social media and on the news, it appears that people are becoming very engaged in these issues.

I recommend addressing stereotypes about women’s studies programs in higher education by considering the importance of understanding women’s experiences and how people experience the intersections of gender, race, sex, religion, ability, sexuality, and more. I also recommend considering the importance of having a place to learn how to discuss these intersections humanly and how to move forward through researching and learning about these topics more fully.
Further Research

Reflecting on my own study, I see things that I would do differently or that someone else could do differently if she were striving to learn about the culture of a women’s studies program. It would be interesting to survey all the students in the WGS program, the majors and the minors, about their experiences. It would also be interesting to survey the alumni about their experiences in the WGS Program and what they did after they graduated.

There are some topics that surfaced in my research that would be interesting to pursue with more vigor. First, I am motivated to study the career roles and experiences graduates with degrees in women’s studies pursue and find. Second, the “corporatization of women’s studies” was a topic that came up a few times, and it would be interesting to seek out opinions women’s studies faculty and directors have that relate to their experiences with this topic. Third, the “injured student” was mentioned in the interview with the Director. It would be valuable to do more research about students who come to women’s studies and ways women’s studies programs meet or do not meet the needs of these students.

Women’s Studies. It would be valuable for more researchers to also do qualitative analysis of different women’s studies programs. While many women’s studies programs experience similar challenges, our techniques to overcoming or managing them are unique to our individual circumstances. These studies could include other institutions that offer undergraduate degrees or graduate programs in women’s studies. It would be valuable to understand more about how the stakeholders of these programs experience the environment, the culture, the classes, and the internal and external programming.

It would also be valuable to delve into the concept of the corporatization of women’s studies and how activism and civic engagement are or are not involved in women’s studies. The
research about activism and civic engagement in women’s studies programs is very important. With the increase of the corporatization of women’s studies, activism is being pushed out the back door and that really takes some of the lifeblood out of any program. A women’s studies perspective comes from feminist activism in academia, therefore women’s studies students tend to want to do something with the education they are receiving. It is very common to hear something like, “Ok, now that we’ve learned about this issue, what can we do about it?” Activism is quintessentially a part of women’s studies. I would like to see contributions to research that showcase the role of activism in academic women’s studies programs.

**Area Studies.** It would be very valuable to use organizational ethnography as a research tool for other Area studies, like African and African American Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, Native American Studies, and more, to bring more awareness to their contributions to campuses, communities, and to the larger societies.

**Arts-based Research.** The WGS Program at Berea College utilizes many methods of teaching and learning. It would be significant to include research on the use of making meaning from arts based research, like the use of drama, craft, poetry, etc. For instance, at Berea, the power of arts based research could be seen in the “My Life in/as Hip Hop” assignment Stephanie gave the students in the WGS 286, Hip Hop Feminisms and Urban Literature class. Another example of the power of arts in education is the cookbook that was developed by the Take Back the Kitchen class. Using arts-based research is an incredibly powerful learning tool and it would be valuable to include more research about how it is being used in the classroom.

**Fourth Wave.** The Fourth Wave of Feminism is still emerging and it would be valuable to include research about the characteristics of it. For instance, Peggy’s call to action for the Fourth Wave of Feminism involves taking back the “control of intimate acts of eating from
corporate fast food giants” by reclaiming healthy eating and taking back the kitchen. This is one interesting way the Fourth Wave is emerging. Continued research in reclaiming healthy eating as a feminist act would be valuable.

Contributions about the other components of the next wave of feminism are important to include in future research. It would be very valuable to involve research that strives to understand feminism through the younger generation’s eyes.

Another growing area of study that coincides with the Fourth Wave of Feminism is the War on Women. I mentioned in Chapter 2, women’s ability to access birth control, safe abortions, and overall health care has been part of the War on Women, which is the increasing activity of political conservatives to undermine women’s abilities to achieve economic and social parity with men. It would be valuable to include a critique of media that contribute to rape culture, which is the cultural manifestations of rape jokes, rape scenes that belittle and humiliate the victim, and rape acceptance that is showcased by politicians who use the term “legitimate rape.” It also would be very valuable to include quantitative research measurements on the increasing attacks on women’s reproductive rights. Women’s right to be free from rape has been an issue that is constantly being battled.

Women’s studies education empowers students and educators to reject misogynist political messages and end the War on Women and become leaders in international and local changes to create a more equal and just world. It would be interesting to include more research on ways women’s studies programs approach, prepare for, and respond to political and economic challenges.

**Including Freire in Women’s Studies Dialogue.** In a conversation with Peggy about standpoint theory, she reminded me that Paulo Freire, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
(1970), was one of the ultimate standpoint theorists because he looked at things from the standpoint of the poor and illiterate people. She worked with Freire and then wrote her dissertation on this experience. After she talked about it, I realized that Peggy applies these Freirean principles as she guides the WGS Program. It would be interesting to see how people could apply Freire to women’s studies because the emancipatory models of both are very similar. It would be exciting to see research about the inclusion of the works of Paulo Freire in women’s studies research and the active application of his approach toward dialogue and consciousness-raising.

**Final Conclusions**

In this dissertation, I sought to understand the culture of women’s studies at Berea College by exploring the experiences of students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae from multiple perspectives. In Chapter 1, I presented the marginalization of women’s studies in higher education as the problem my research initiative addressed. I also described how I planned to bring awareness to the contributions of women’s studies and shared my experiences with women’s studies.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature examining information about and further defining feminism and feminist theory, especially feminist standpoint theory. I focused primarily on the work of Patricia Hill Collins, Nancy Hartsock, Alison Jaggar, Sandra Harding, and bell hooks. I explained why standpoint theory is the right choice for this research. Then I reviewed research on women’s studies programs and explained why research on women’s studies programs is important, and about why we need to understand women’s studies in the first place. Then I highlighted Berea College as a model educational institution and the WGS Program residing there as a model program.
In Chapter 3, I described the feminist framework I used to complete a constant comparative analysis of the data that I collected at Berea College. First, I provided an overview of qualitative research methods in general, before focusing on ethnography. Next, I explained organizational ethnography as a tool that exists within organizational communication studies and highlighted how feminism has been influential to organizational communication studies. Then, I discussed how I used ethnographic observations and qualitative interviewing, and described my own specific qualitative methods using organizational ethnography. I also provided a description of my informants and described how I chose them. I also shared the data collection design and analysis method used for understanding and interpreting the interviews and observations.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the findings from this study and provided a description of the Women and Gender Studies Program at Berea College. The findings clustered around themes of organizational structure, courses, program activities, the environment and culture of the program, the challenges to the WGS Program and to the WGS students, and future directions.

In Chapter 5, I offered the conclusions about the WGS Program at Berea College with answers to the research questions. I gave multi-level recommendations for the WGS Program, for Berea College higher administrators, for higher education administrators in general who have administrative power over women’s studies programs, and for society in general. Next, I shared some ideas for further research.

I concluded that the WGS Program at Berea College is a strong program because the leadership responds to students needs and they create opportunities for diverse experiences inside and outside the classroom. The WGS Program at Berea College is a model program that celebrates diversity, succeeds under situation of low resources, and clearly values the experiences and voices of the students. The leadership in the WGS Program at Berea College
creates a home on campus where students go to learn about things they can’t find anywhere else on campus.

I hope that this research will contribute to the larger body of knowledge about women’s studies. This research could help administrators within institutions of higher education make more informed decisions about women’s studies programs. While the data gathered from this study is not generalizable to all women’s studies programs, it provides a portrait of the program at Berea College. With a great deal of diversity among women’s studies programs, it would be beneficial to do more studies like this one to add to the larger body of knowledge about women’s studies.
REFERENCES


Goodall, Jr., H. L. (2009). From tales of the field to tales of the future. *Organizational Research Methods*, 000, 00, 1-12.


http://www.niu.edu/wstudies/staff/files/documentpretty.pdf


Plankey-Videla, N. (2012). *We are in this dance together: Gender, power, and globalization at a Mexican garment firm.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.


APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Questions
Appendix B: Introductory Email Script
Appendix C: Informed Letter/ Informed Consent Form
Appendix D: Berea College Administrative Organizational Chart
Appendix E: Berea College Academic Organizational Chart
Appendix F: Berea College Letter of Support
Appendix G: All IRB Communication
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Project Title: A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women's Studies
Principle Investigator: Julee Rosser
Interview Questions

For Student:
How did you learn about the WGS Program at Berea College?
Are you a major or a minor in WGS?
Please describe why you chose to major or minor in WGS at Berea College?
Do you work in the WGS office? If so, what is your role?
What is the environment at the WGS Program at Berea College like?
Do you think the WGS Program has a unique culture? If so, please describe it.
Please describe some of your experiences with the WGS Program at Berea College?
Please describe the classes you have taken in the WGS Program.
What do you think of the Peanut Butter & Gender Lunches?
Have there been other events you have attended that were organized by the WGS Program or any conferences?
Is there anything else you think I should know about how students experience the WGS Program?

For Alumnae:
When were you a participant in the WGS program at Berea College? (YEARS)
Please describe some of your experiences in the WGS Program.
How would you describe the environment at the WGS Program at Berea College.
Did you major or minor in WGS Studies? How did you learn about the WGS Program at Berea College?
What were some of your experiences that lead you to the WGS Program?
Please describe why you chose to major in WGS at Berea College? How would you describe the culture of the WGS Program? Please describe some of your experiences with the WGS Program at Berea College? Please describe your relationship with the WGS Program at Berea College after you graduated.
Please reflect on your experiences in WGS Program at Berea College?
Can you think of anything else you would like to add to this research about the WGS Program?

For Office Manager of the WGS Program at Berea College:
How long have you been associated with the WGS Program? (Years)
Please describe how you got involved with the WGS Program.
Where does the WGS Program fit into the larger systems at Berea College?  
Please describe some of your experiences with the WGS Program.  
Please describe the classes offered in the WGS Program.  
Are there anything we have talked about so far that you think is important to know about the WGS Program?  
How would you describe the culture of the WGS Program? Do you think it has a unique culture? If so, please describe it.

For Director of the WGS Program at Berea College:  
Please describe your administrator and faculty position with the WGS Program at Berea College.  
Please describe your administrative experiences with the WGS Program at Berea College.  
How long have you been associated with the WGS Program?  
What classes do you teach?  
Please describe your experiences in the classroom with the WGS Program at Berea College.  
Do you think the WGS Program has a unique culture? If so, please describe it.  
Please describe the classes offered in the WGS Program. Who teaches these classes now?  
Where does the WGS Program fit into the larger systems at Berea College?  
In an earlier conversation, you mentioned the current transition of the College. Please explain this transition and how it affects the WGS Program.  
Do you think the WGS Program has a unique culture? If so, please describe it.  
What are some of the challenges you have witnessed in the program?  
What are the challenges you see yet to come?  
Are there other things about the WGS Program at Berea College you would like to share?

2nd Interview Questions  
Please tell me the story of how Stephanie came to Berea College.  
Where does the WGS fit in the Berea organizational structure?  
Is Mada Mendall Ray still the division chair?  
What was it like to have Linda Leek become the Division 6?  
Was five hours a week was added to the Office Manager’s position to provide administrative assistance to the Division Chair for Division 6?  
Will you describe the process for Women’s Studies to become a major?  
Is the catalogue online?

For Faculty in the WGS Program at Berea College:  
Please describe your position at Berea College. Please describe your path to learning about Berea College and the WGS Program?  
How long have you been associated with the WGS Program? What classes have you taught and which ones are you teaching now?  
What classes do you plan on teaching in the future?  
What have your Peanut Butter and Gender experiences been like?  
Do you think the WGS Program has a unique culture within academia? If so, please describe it.  
In a recent email from NWSA calling for nominations for leadership positions, I noticed you are the NWSA Elections Chair. Will you describe your position and what lead you to that position?  
Have you taken students with you to the NWSA conference? How do you think this has added to their understanding of the field of women’s studies?
Have you take students to other conferences as well? What was that like?
What are some of the challenges you have witnessed in the program?
What are the challenges you see yet to come?
In what ways have you seen the WGS Program respond to political and economic challenges?
Are there other things about the WGS Program at Berea College you would like to share?
Is there any student or alumnae who you think I should interview for this study?

For Administrator at Berea College:
Please describe how you came to learn about and become involved with the WGS Program?
Please describe why you chose to come to Berea College?
What is your current position at Berea?
In your current position, would you consider yourself to be an advocate for the program? If so, what do you do to advocate for the program? If not, what is your relationship to the program now?
What classes have you taught in the past for the program?
What is the environment at the WGS Program at Berea College like?
How much does food play a part of the Programs events?
How would you assess the current direction and leadership of the program?
How important do you think the change in the divisional structure has been to the WGS Program? How has restructuring affected the WGS Program?
Given the new division structure, what are some of the challenges you see ahead for the WGS Program?
During my interviews, racial tension at Berea has been a reoccurring topic. How do you think the WGS Program has responded to these issues? Do you see this area as a strength or weakness of the program?
The student and faculty gathering at Peggy’s house on Wednesday for the senior send off, dinner with Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner, and the Triota initiation ceremony was such so nice. How important do you think these events are to the students and the WGS Program?
How important are Peanut Butter & Gender Lunches to the program?
Please describe any experiences students have had at the NWSA Conference and other conference that you think are important.
Is there anything else you think I should know about concerning the WGS Program and students’ experiences with the program?
APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTORY EMAIL SCRIPT

Good afternoon, (Name). I hope you are doing well.

We met at Berea College last November. I am conducting research for my dissertation, A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies. The purpose of my research is to understand and describe the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at Berea College by exploring it through the experiences of students, faculty, administrators, and alumnae. I would like to interview you for this study. Are you still be interested in participating in this study?

Best wishes for a pleasant week.
Julee

---
Julee Rosser, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Adult, Higher, & Community Education
Instructor, Women's & Gender Studies Program
Ball State University
Muncie, IN
APPENDIX C: INFORMED LETTER/ INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Introductory Letter

Study Title
A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies by Julee Rosser (Principle Investigator)

Study Purpose and Rationale
The purpose of this qualitative research is to understand and describe the Women’s and Gender Studies (WGS) Program at Berea College by exploring it through the experiences of students, faculty, administrators, alumnae, and community members. I will design and implement an organizational ethnographic qualitative analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews from 8-12 people affiliated with the WGS Program at Berea College.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must affiliated with the WGS Program at Berea College and be between the ages of 18 to 100.

Participation Procedures and Duration
For this project, you will be asked to participate in a series of 2 or 3 interviews. Each interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete.

Audio Tapes
For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio taped. Any names used on the audiotape will be changed to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office for 5 years and will then be erased.

Data Confidentiality
All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data unless you give permission to do otherwise. The data may be used publicly at Berea College. Do you give your permission for me to use your name in the publication or presentation of the data? Please circle: Yes or No and initial here ________.

Storage of Data
Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office for 5 years and will then be shredded. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer for 5 years and then deleted. Only members of the research team will have access to the data.
**Risks or Discomforts**
There are no anticipated risks for participating in this study.

**Who to Contact Should You Experience Any Negative Effects from Participating in this Study**
Counseling services are available to you through the College Counseling Center at Berea College (859-985-3212) if you develop uncomfortable feelings during your participation in this research project. You will be responsible for the costs of any care that is provided [note: Berea College students may have some or all of these services provided to them at no cost]. It is understood that in the unlikely event that treatment is necessary as a result of your participation in this research project that Ball State University, its agents and employees will assume whatever responsibility is required by law.

**Benefits**
There are no direct benefits from participating in this study; however, you may feel a sense of satisfaction from having an opportunity to talk about your experiences to an interested listener or from knowing you contributed to the understanding of women’s studies in higher education.

**Compensation**
Compensation will not be offered to participate in this research study.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

**IRB Contact Information**
For one’s rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at irb@bsu.edu.

**Study Title**  A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies by Julee Rosser (Principle Investigator)

**********

**Consent**

I, __________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, “A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.
To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

____________________________________________________
Participant’s Signature                              Date

Researcher Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Faculty Supervisor:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julee Rosser, Graduate Student</td>
<td>Dr. Michelle Glowacki-Dudka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Educational Studies</td>
<td>Department of Educational Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State University</td>
<td>Ball State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muncie, IN 47306</td>
<td>Muncie, IN 47306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: (317) 679-2338</td>
<td>Telephone: (765) 702-4789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:jrosser@bsu.edu">jrosser@bsu.edu</a></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:mdudka@bsu.edu">mdudka@bsu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: BEREA COLLEGE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
# APPENDIX E: BEREA COLLEGE ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

## ACADEMIC DIVISION CHAIRPERSONS, PROGRAM COORDINATORS, AND DIRECTORS

### ACADEMIC YEAR 2012-2013

### Division I

**Chairperson:** Ron Rosen  
**Program**
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Mathematics
- Nursing
- Physics

**Coordinator**
- Dawn Anderson
- Matt Saderholm
- James Blackburn-Lynch
- Carol Kirby
- Tracy Hodge

### Division II

**Chairperson:** Jan Pearce  
**Program**
- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Computer and Information Science
- Economics and Business
- Sustainability and Environmental Studies
- Technology and Applied Design

**Coordinator**
- Mike Panciera
- Jan Pearce
- Ed McCormack
- Nancy Giff
- Alain Mills

**Director**
- Farm: Sean Clark (Fall)  
- Mike Panciera (Spring)

### Division III

**Chairperson:** Janice Blythe  
**Program**
- Child and Family Studies
- Physical Education and Health
- Psychology
- Sociology

**Coordinator**
- Katrina Rivers Thompson
- Stephanie Woodie
- Dave Porter (Interim)
- Jackie Burnsida (Fall)
- Jill Bouma (Spring)

**Director**
- Child Development  
- Lab: Wilma Chambers

### Division IV

**Chairperson:** Rick Meadows  
**Program**
- Communication
- English
- Foreign Languages
- Music
- Theatre

**Coordinator**
- Billy Wooten
- Beth Crischolo (Fall)
- Steve Putsford (Spring)
- Jeanne Hoch
- Steve Bolster
- Shan Ayers

**Director**
- Music: Mark Calkins  
- Theatre: Shan Ayers

### Division V

**Chairperson:** Bob Hoag  
**Program**
- Art and Art History
- Asian Studies
- History
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Religion

**Coordinator**
- Eileen McKiernan Gonzalez
- Visual Arts: Lisa Kriner
- Jeff Richey
- Rob Foster
- Eric Pearson
- John Heyman
- Jeff Pool

**Director**
- Media Studies

### Division VI

**Chairperson:** Meta Mendel-Reyes  
**Program**
- African and African American Studies
- Appalachian Studies
- Education Studies
- Peace and Social Justice Studies
- Women’s and Gender Studies

**Coordinators**
- Andrew Baskin
- Chris Green
- Bobby Starnes
- Michelle Tooley
- Peggy Rivage-Seul

Source: Office of the Academic Vice President and Dean of the Faculty, January 2013
November 5, 2012

Dear Ball State University Office of Research Integrity representative:

I, Marguerite Rivage-Seul, Ph.D., support Julee Rosser’s research project, *A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies*. She has my permission to pursue her research at Berea College. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marguerite Rivage-Seul,
rivage-seulp@berea.edu
APPENDIX G: ALL IRB COMMUNICATION

IRBNet Signature Notification
Wednesday, November 07, 2012 11:38 AM
Julee Rosser [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Rosser, Julee; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Please note that the following package has been signed on IRBNet:
Package: [385953-1] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Signed By: Julee Rosser
Additional information is available in IRBNet.
Should you have any questions you may contact Julee Rosser at jrosser@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

IRBNet Package Locked
Wednesday, November 07, 2012 2:34 PM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle; Rosser, Julee
Please note that Ball State University IRB has locked the following submission on IRBNet:
[385953-1] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Lock Status: Locked - Revisions Complete
Date: November 7, 2012
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

IRBNet Board Document Published
Wednesday, November 07, 2012 4:57 PM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle; Rosser, Julee
Please note that Ball State University IRB has published the following Board Document on IRBNet:
Project Title: [385953-1] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Principal Investigator: Julee Rosser
Submission Type: New Project
Date Submitted: November 7, 2012
Document Type: Exempt Letter
IRB Deferral Request Form
Monday, November 05, 2012 12:10 PM
Rosser, Julee
To: Mangelli, Christopher
Dear Chris,
I am writing to ask you about the IRB Deferral Request Form. The data collection for my research project, *A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies*, will be at Berea College. Berea College only has IRB for undergraduate research. I was told by Judith Weckman, Director of Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at Berea College, that BSU should be the IRB of Record. Will you direct me where to go online to find the IRB Deferral Request Form? I have looked but I have not found it yet.
Thank you, for your time.
Julee
---
Julee Rosser, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Adult, Higher, & Community Education
Instructor, Women’s & Gender Studies Program
Ball State University
Muncie, IN

IRB Deferral Request Form
Thursday, November 08, 2012 10:21 AM
Mangelli, Christopher
To: Rosser, Julee
Julee
Hi there. Can you provide a few more details about the project and the role of Berea College? In general, if we are going to be the IRB of record, you are conducting research as either a student or faculty/staff of BSU and Berea is not going to be involved in the research process (other than as participants) then no deferral is required.
Is Berea specifically requiring a deferral?
Chris M.

IRB Deferral Request Form
Thursday, November 08, 2012 6:15 PM
Rosser, Julee
To: Mangelli, Christopher
Chris,
No, Berea isn't requiring a deferral. I thought I needed to get one, but now I know it isn't necessary.
Thank you,
Julee

**IRBNet Board Action**
Thursday, November 08, 2012 8:05 AM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
Please note that Ball State University IRB has taken the following action on IRBNet:
Project Title: [385953-1] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Principal Investigator: Julee Rosser
Submission Type: New Project
Date Submitted: November 7, 2012
Action: EXEMPT
Effective Date: November 7, 2012
Review Type: Exempt Review
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

**IRBNet Signature Notification**
Monday, January 14, 2013 11:25 AM
Julee Rosser [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Rosser, Julee; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Please note that the following package has been signed on IRBNet:
Package: [385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Signed By: Julee Rosser
Additional information is available in IRBNet.
Should you have any questions you may contact Julee Rosser at jrosser@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

**IRBNet Package Unlocked**
Monday, January 14, 2013 11:31 AM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
Actions
To: Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle; Rosser, Julee
Please note that Ball State University IRB has unlocked the following submission on IRBNet:
[385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Lock Status: Unlocked - Revisions Pending
Date: January 14, 2013
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org
Good morning, John. I am writing to ask you about changing the confidentiality protocol for my study. I want to change it because the administration at the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Berea College wants to be able to use my research publicly. I would like to change the informed consent introductory letter to the following:

All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data, unless you give permission to do otherwise. Do you give your permission for me to use your name in the publication or presentation of the data? Please circle: Yes or No and initial here _______.

I would like to make the following change to the narrative description of my study:

Data Confidentiality
All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data unless participants give permission to do otherwise. In the introduction to the study, I will ask if they give me permission to use their name in the publication or presentation of the data.

What do you think about these changes?

Julee

---

Julee Rosser, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, Adult, Higher, & Community Education
Instructor, Women's & Gender Studies Program
Ball State University
Muncie, IN

Hi Julie,
You can change what you need for your project. You will need to fill out a Modification Form and submit it with revised documents (protocol or consent). The revised documents must be highlighted. I’ve attached the IRBNet User Manual to assist you on submitting a Modification request. Make sure you and your faculty advisor sign off on the submission.

Thanks,
John

From: Mulcahy, John
Sent: Monday, January 14, 2013 10:27 AM
To: Rosser, Julee
Cc: Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Subject: RE: [385953-1] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Hi Julie,

On your Informed Consent, since Berea wants to use your data, please make a statement that the data will be used publicly at Berea. I will unlock your project.

Thanks,
John

John M. Mulcahy, Jr.
Associate Director
Office of Research Integrity
Ball State University
Phone- 765-285-5106
Fax- 765-285-1328
jmulcahy@bsu.edu
http://cms.bsu.edu/About/AdministrativeOffices/ResearchIntegrity.aspx

IRBNet Signature Notification
Monday, January 14, 2013 6:54 PM
Michelle Glowacki-Dudka [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle; Rosser, Julee
Please note that the following package has been signed on IRBNet:
Package: [385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Signed By: Michelle Glowacki-Dudka
Additional information is available in IRBNet.
Should you have any questions you may contact Michelle Glowacki-Dudka at mdudka@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

IRBNet Board Action
Tuesday, January 15, 2013 1:48 PM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Rosser, Julee; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Please note that Ball State University IRB has taken the following action on IRBNet:
Project Title: [385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Principal Investigator: Julee Rosser
Submission Type: Amendment/Modification
Date Submitted: January 14, 2013
Action: EXEMPT
Effective Date: January 15, 2013
Review Type: Exempt Review
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org
IRBNet Package Unlocked
Tuesday, January 15, 2013 1:54 PM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Rosser, Julee; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Please note that Ball State University IRB has unlocked the following submission on IRBNet:
[385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Lock Status: Unlocked - Revisions Pending
Date: January 15, 2013
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

IRBNet Board Action
Tuesday, January 15, 2013 1:54 PM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle; Rosser, Julee
Please note that Ball State University IRB has taken the following action on IRBNet:
Project Title: [385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Principal Investigator: Julee Rosser
Submission Type: Amendment/Modification
Date Submitted: January 14, 2013
Action: PENDING REVIEW
Effective Date: January 15, 2013
Review Type:
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

IRBNet Board Action
Tuesday, January 22, 2013 10:14 AM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Rosser, Julee; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Please note that Ball State University IRB has taken the following action on IRBNet:
Project Title: [385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Principal Investigator: Julee Rosser
Submission Type: Amendment/Modification
Date Submitted: January 14, 2013
Action: EXEMPT
Effective Date: January 22, 2013
Review Type: Exempt Review
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org
IRBNet Package Locked
Tuesday, January 22, 2013 10:17 AM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Rosser, Julee; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Please note that Ball State University IRB has locked the following submission on IRBNet:
[385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Lock Status: Locked - Revisions Complete
Date: January 22, 2013
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org

IRBNet Board Document Published
Tuesday, January 22, 2013 10:17 AM
John Mulcahy [no-reply@irbnet.org]
To: Rosser, Julee; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle
Please note that Ball State University IRB has published the following Board Document on IRBNet:
Project Title: [385953-2] A Qualitative Ethnographic Portrait of Women’s Studies
Principal Investigator: Julee Rosser
Submission Type: Amendment/Modification
Date Submitted: January 14, 2013
Document Type: Exempt Letter
Document Description: Exempt Letter
Publish Date: January 22, 2013
Should you have any questions you may contact John Mulcahy at jmulcahy@bsu.edu.
Thank you,
The IRBNet Support Team
www.irbnet.org