Ball State's Women and Gender Studies Program:
A Transformation in Education
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

An academic transformation is underway in universities across the United States in an attempt to integrate women's experiences into a previously androcentric educational system. Ball State University is participating in this process through its Women and Gender Studies Program. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a history of Women's Studies and to give a synopsis of the goals and benefits of Women's Studies. Along with the general description of Women's Studies is a detailed discussion of Ball State's Women's Studies minor and Women and Gender Studies Program. This includes a history of Ball State's programs as well as an explanation of the Women's Studies minor and a description of the Women and Gender Studies Program including its resources and sponsored events. All of this information is designed to give the programs more exposure in the hopes of getting more people involved and helping the programs grow.
I. INTRODUCTION

One of the devastating weaknesses of university learning, of the store of knowledge and opinion that has been handed down through academic training, has been its almost total erasure of women's experience and thought from the curriculum, and its exclusion of women as members of the academic community. (Rich, 1979, p.232)

Education, especially at the university level, has traditionally been centered around men with classes about men being taught by men in order to prepare men to enter the male dominated professional working world. Even when universities became co-educational, they still failed to offer equal educational opportunities for men and women. As early as 1968 women first began to document the existence of a sex bias in education, which led them to develop academic courses to compensate for the lack of information concerning women in the current university curriculum (Schmitz, 1985). Thus, the idea of women's studies was born, and programs have been developing at campuses all over the United States ever since.

II. HISTORY OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

The university is often viewed as a microcosm of society, a mirrored reflection of America's cultural beliefs and values.
Therefore, the inequalities and discrimination that abound in society also permeate the university setting as well. Courses in all departments focused largely on men -- their history, their contributions and accomplishments, and their roles in society. Women were all but omitted from academics, as subjects and as sources of information because men determined what would be taught.

Women's Studies grew out of the women's movement because feminists began to realize the social and political inequalities that existed in the academic arena (NWSA-A Report, 1991). Such inequalities are inherent in an academic system that revolves around androcentric views of human behavior, culture, and society.

The first Women's Studies program was officially approved at San Diego State University in 1970 (Musil, 1992). Ten years later there were 300 programs on campuses all across the United States. Today, the number has grown to 621 programs nationwide. Women's Studies programs can now be found at two-thirds of all universities, one-half of all four-year colleges, and one-fourth of all two-year colleges. Of these programs 102 offer graduate level studies in Women's Studies, and opportunities for full masters degrees in Women's Studies are available at five institutions.

Women's Studies continues to grow because it meets the intellectual needs of women students by taking advantage of the already existing structure of the university in an attempt to
transform the present curriculum to involve women's experiences.

Because the original impetus for Women's Studies programs came from dissatisfaction with the traditional university curriculum, one of its most predominant goals was to provide students with objective, in-depth information about women and their experiences to compensate for the subjective, cursory information about women that men have chosen to incorporate into the classroom (Stake & Gerner, 1987). Its other goal was to provide information in a more open and supportive atmosphere that was more student-centered. These two goals provide the basis for the main objective of Women's Studies programs: to promote the professional and personal growth of students in an attempt to improve the status of women in society.

Research suggests that Women's Studies programs are reaching their goals. For example, Stake and Gerner (1987) found that both females and males who participated in Women's Studies programs reported higher self-esteem, motivation, and job confidence than students who had not been involved in Women's Studies.

Many universities now include Women's Studies courses in their general studies requirements (Spaid, 1993). Thus, a more diverse body of students are exposed to women's issues at these universities than they are in universities which offer Women's Studies courses as electives only. Some of the strongest Women's Studies programs are located at large state universities. Ivy League schools and private women's colleges began their programs
later and are not as well-established.

III. CURRENT STATUS OF WOMEN’S STUDIES

Although Women’s Studies continues to grow as a discipline, it faces criticism and opposition (Musil, 1992). Established in an atmosphere in which hostility, suspicion, or at the very least indifference toward the idea of Women’s Studies was quite prevalent, the founders contended with more than their share of hardships. Critics accuse Women’s Studies programs of trying to politicize the university, and they claim that it is ideological, not scholarly; therefore, it belongs outside of the academic arena. Opponents have deemed it "oppression studies" and have claimed that "it silences everyone who disagrees" (Musil, 1992, p.4). They feel that Women’s Studies provides students with a polarized climate in which students are encouraged to participate in critical thinking that they view as anti-American. Some critics do not feel it is necessary for the special interest group called "women" to have their own discipline of study, despite the fact that females constitute the majority of the human race.

Although this opposition is detrimental to the maintenance and/or advancement of Women’s Studies, it demonstrates that Women’s Studies is being taken seriously and is seen by some as a force to be reckoned with. As long as there are critics, Women’s Studies will remain alive.

In its third decade, Women’s Studies has achieved remarkable
success despite strong opposition and adversity. Eight hundred and eighteen institutions of higher education have at least one women’s program, such as a Women’s Studies program, a women’s center, or a women’s research center (NWSA Directory, 1990). Women’s Studies programs seek to effect changes in curriculum through feminist scholarship; women’s centers direct their services to students and the community by offering such programs as career counseling, support groups, and services concerning sexuality and violence against women; and women’s research centers produce research on women that can have an impact on university policies and can generate new scholarship in the form of curriculum transformation, faculty development, and public programming.

A report by the University of Alabama Women’s Studies Program in 1987 found that 47% of all programs consider themselves to be firmly established, 37% are established but struggling, 5% are new, and 4% are facing possible elimination (Johnson, 1988). In many instances Women’s Studies is fighting an uphill battle just to stay afloat in the midst of a lack of available staff and financial support. Stress is caused by the fact that an overwhelming majority (73%) of these programs are directed by professors who have part-time or even full-time appointments in other departments. As a result, the time they can devote to Women’s Studies is often quite limited.

Women’s Studies programs are usually understaffed, often burdening the faculty, which are primarily women, with higher
teaching loads than many full-time professors (Subcommittee..., 1989). Because Women's Studies has not been widely accepted, there are some disadvantages for the professors who participate in the programs; such as, the devaluation of research and limited career opportunities in the Women's Studies field.

Women's Studies programs are not reaching enough people. One study (Subcommittee..., 1989) indicated that almost 50% of students not involved in Women's Studies were not even aware that such a program existed. Not only must this program deal with underexposure, but also it is forced to contend with large segments of the university's faculty and students who view Women's Studies as a program with limited value. Despite these adversities, the overall perception is optimistic due to the fact that Women's Studies continues to grow.

Women's Studies programs are generally organized into one of three forms: transitional, autonomous, or permanent. Transitional programs challenge and correct existing inequalities in other disciplines by incorporating scholarship by and about women into all other departments, so that eventually there will be no need for a separate Women's Studies department. The autonomous program conducts itself independently, paralleling the structure used in other programs. The permanent program combines both of the other forms. These Women's Studies programs work to incorporate women into other departments while at the same time they conduct research and offer classes as an independent department.
Ball State University’s Women’s Studies program is organized according to the permanent structure. This means that the program is meant to remain an independent department while at the same time be involved with other departments in an attempt to transform curriculum. It is not meant to be transitional or temporary, nor is it meant to remain constant at its present level. Instead, it is likely to continue to grow and expand.

A large proportion of faculty and students view Women’s Studies as merely a fad, something with limited value, that should simply be ignored; but those who have been exposed to the programs usually have an entirely different, much more positive, opinion (Johnson, 1988). The Association of American Colleges conducted a three-year study entitled The Courage to Question: Women’s Studies and Student Learning (Musil, 1992). This 213-page report assessed hundreds of faculty and thousands of students on seven college campuses throughout the United States. The results show the tremendous, often far-reaching, benefits that Women’s Studies offers students, faculty, the community, and society as a whole.

The overall opinion was that Women’s Studies provides students with a sense of empowerment that comes from giving them a voice of their own, a sense of self. It fosters an atmosphere of critical thinking in which students are transformed from being the objects of study to subjects with their own voices. After taking Women’s Studies courses, the majority of students felt that they had developed a sense of self and said that they were
made to feel as if they had something valuable to contribute to class as well as to society. Some of the ways in which this goal is accomplished are through structuring opportunities so that each person has a chance to talk, relinquishing control by instructors, and emphasizing student-led, collaborative assignments. In this way students are not only encouraged to speak openly and freely but are provided with ample opportunities to do so.

Courses in Women's Studies are designed to increase awareness and acceptance of difference and diversity. Multicultural issues such as gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, and class, are addressed more often than in other disciplines. Due in part to the fact that Women's Studies is interdisciplinary, feminists have a greater understanding of, as well as a greater respect for, diversity because feminist scholarship, or Women's Studies, has its intellectual roots in the contrast between females and the dominant male society. As a result, Women's Studies programs aim to help students function in a multi-cultural, pluralistic world.

Women's Studies courses engage students intellectually and attempt to make education more than a collection of courses but a way of life. The courses seek to challenge students to re-examine what they have previously learned using the socially constructed concept of gender as the tool of analysis and by adding women's lives, culture, and history to an academic curriculum that has previously ignored these issues.
Not only do Women's Studies courses affect the students' academic experiences, they also have the potential for lifelong impact because they foster social responsibility and motivate students to actively shape society. As students progress through Women's Studies courses progress, they move from finding their own voices to feeling a sense of empowerment to an eventual sense of social duty. An examination of course evaluations at Wellesley College (Musil, 1992) showed that students who were not exposed to Women's Studies courses answered the questions in more instrumental, narrow ways and emphasized the importance of functioning smoothly in the world. On the other hand, Women's Studies students spoke of future commitments to social reform through community and political action in the hopes of effecting change in the world.

In essence, Women's Studies does much more for students than simply providing them with facts and figures: it offers an education in life. It challenges people to, if not resolve, then at least find a way to live with the contradictions and uncertainties that pervade today's society. As one student from Wellesley College described it, Women's Studies is "learning that does more than fill your brain. It fills your body, it fills your heart, [and] it makes you grow" (Musil, 1992, p. 1).

The Women's Studies learning process is more personalized than courses in other departments in part because it attempts to link intellectual knowledge with experiential knowledge. The courses are organized to be more student-centered by encouraging
an atmosphere of exchange, collaboration, and community. Often this is aided by placing the classroom chairs in a circle and allowing the students to discuss topics with each other rather than being forced to always address the professor. In this way the instructor relinquishes some of his/her power and authority in order to give more power and self-confidence to the students. Thus, the faculty member becomes a learner as well as a source of expertise. Oftentimes Women's Studies courses are perceived as more difficult than other courses because the students are required to question what they think and feel, to incorporate this new thinking into their lives, and to take responsibility for their own learning.

Women's Studies courses differ from courses in other disciplines not only in pedagogy but also in the content of the curriculum. Due to its virtual non-existence in high school curriculums, students generally enter Women's Studies courses without prior knowledge or with some misconceptions. Although there is no universally set Women's Studies curriculum, there are some basic similarities, especially in the introductory courses. "The content of Women's Studies gives students detailed pictures where there was formerly a blank canvas; a critical framework where there was feigned neutrality; and a language to describe what had been nameless and invisible" (Musil, 1992, p.4). Some of the most widely accepted topics in introductory courses are identity formation, cultural representation, work, family, sexuality, violence, class stratification, and racial and
cultural diversity.

Women's Studies courses are multi-faceted, yet they all strive to provide an environment in which students feel free to express differing viewpoints and opinions. The aim is to focus on participation, experience, and empowerment in an attempt to help students undergo a personal transformation as they continue to acquire knowledge. They are taught to produce as well as reproduce knowledge and to question not only the answers but also the questions. Eventually, students may learn to validate their inner voices and to respect the voices of diversity and change. The responsibility and goal of Women's Studies courses is two-fold: to provide students with a safe place to nurture their inner voices and at the same time to create discomfort and introduce risk so that students will explore issues and assumptions that remain unexamined. Although this is a difficult task to undertake, the programs continue to be successful.

IV. BALL STATE UNIVERSITY'S WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

The informal inception of the Women's Studies Committee at Ball State University was in 1974. In 1975, the Committee was given official status by the Vice President and Dean of Faculties Richard W. Burkhardt with the responsibility of developing a Women's Studies Program. Althea Stoeckel, Professor of History, served as the first chair. Along with Stoeckel, the original members of the committee were Enye Flores-Meiser (Anthropology), Donald Goertz (Foreign Language), John Hannaford (Economics),
Sharon Hannum Seager (History), and Dorothy Rudoni (Political Science).

The first Women’s Studies course was the Introduction to Women’s Studies (ID 210), an interdisciplinary course created in 1971 by Betty Newcomb from the English department and Sharon Seager from the History department. It was first available to students in the spring of 1972 and was team-taught by its creators and Sociology Professor Marie Vogel.

In 1974 Women’s Studies courses were added to the curriculum, and an ad-hoc committee was appointed by then-Dean Richard Burkhardt with the task of developing sound, thorough, and professional Women’s Studies courses. Departments then began creating courses in Women’s Studies, including Culture and Women (ANTH 350), Women in Politics (POLS 474), and Women of Ancient Greece and Rome (CC 266). By 1976 Ball State University offered seven courses in Women’s Studies. In 1977 the number of courses increased to 12, and plans were initiated for an undergraduate minor. Final approval was received in December of 1980, and Women’s Studies was officially declared a minor at Ball State in 1981.

At this time the Women’s Studies Committee was composed of faculty and students who were interested and involved in promoting the academic study of women. The members were appointed by the Provost upon recommendations from the committee’s chair and officers, and they represented a wide variety of university departments. Each member served a three-
year term with the option of being re-appointed. The goals of the committee were to facilitate communication between interested persons in the university as well as between the university and the community and to supervise, develop, and promote Ball State’s Women’s Studies program. Other duties undertaken by the committee included counseling interested persons about the program, reviewing funding allocations, and electing officers.

Ball State’s Women’s Studies program includes an interdisciplinary minor that has been designed to offer students the opportunity to study the experiences of women, emphasizing the image, role, and reality of females especially in Western tradition but also touching on the experiences of women in other cultures. Its courses focus on the theories and methodologies of the discipline while attending to such pivotal issues as gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, age, race, class, ethnicity, and religious diversity.

Students are made aware of changing trends and issues related to gender roles and stereotypes by exploring the roots of sexist beliefs and practices in society. The goal is to assist students in eliminating the distorted views of women that are prevalent in society as well as to help them learn more about themselves, including the challenge of being a female and the independence and responsibilities that go along with it. It is also hoped that students will develop a better sense of self and a higher feeling of self-confidence that will accompany them outside of the classroom and beyond their college years.
Although the minor was designed for students from all walks of life, it will be most beneficial to the section of the student body whose numbers are continuing to rise: women in preparation for entering professional fields from which they have previously been excluded and older women who are re-entering the university. It is hoped that students in Women’s Studies courses will learn critical thinking, skillful analysis, research-reference abilities, and talented writing skills to express their ideas. Overall, students should walk away from their experiences in the Women’s Studies program with a much better sense of themselves and the society in which they live along with an understanding of the cultural patterns and societal forces that have created and shaped today’s world.

The Women’s Studies minor requires 18 hours of course work, including a three hour introductory course (WMNST 210) and 15 hours of electives drawn from a variety of departments; such as, Anthropology, Criminal Justice, English, History, Health Science, Psychology, Political Science, and Sociology. It is expected that six to nine hours come from Humanities and six to nine from the Social Sciences. The WMNST 210 course is designed to introduce students to the methodologies and philosophies of feminist scholarship and to provide them with a framework for the issues concerning women in society by drawing from all different disciplines. Also available are the Women’s Studies mentorship, a paid internship, a special topics course, and an independent study. Because the university does not hire professors
specifically for Women's Studies, the types of courses and the number of courses that are offered depend entirely upon the willingness of other departments to allow their faculty to teach Women's Studies courses.

The Mentorship (WMNST 370) involves one to three credits of voluntary participation in an organization, agency, corporation, or business that provides students with work-related experience and a context in which to apply the knowledge they have gained throughout the courses. Each semester, several students are chosen to be mentees in the Women and Gender Studies office under the supervision of the Women and Gender Studies director. This usually requires four to six hours per week in the office, with duties including typing, filing, answering the telephone, and other basic clerical work. In addition they are responsible for planning, advertising, and promoting the events sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies Program, such as the lecture series and Women's Week. Along with these duties and responsibilities, the students are required to choose a particular project they wish to accomplish during their mentorship.

Another option is the Paid Internship (WMNST 369), which allows students to earn from one to six hours of credit. This resembles the mentorship in that it provides students with valuable work experience by integrating the knowledge of Women's Studies that they have acquired with actual experience. The difference is that the student performs supervised duties in a paid setting, rather than a volunteer setting.
A total of six credits, no more than three per semester, may be earned through the Special Topics (WMNST 400) course, which provides students with information on gender-related topics that are not covered in other courses. The content of the courses changes, and topics are announced in advance.

Finally, the Independent Study (WMNST 498) involves one to three hours of credit. This option allows the student to choose a topic and to research and study that topic under the guidance of a professor who has special expertise in the particular area. Students may accumulate these hours over a period of more than one semester.

V. BALL STATE UNIVERSITY’S WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM

In addition to the Women’s Studies minor, the Women and Gender Studies Program sponsors a wide variety of campus events throughout the year. The office, located in North Quadrangle 113, provides students and faculty with many valuable resources. It is directed by a member of the faculty and is staffed by students who receive credit for their work. For the 1992-1993 academic year, the program received $4,500.00 for supplies and expenses and $1,634.00 for student help. Donations from external sources are handled through the Ball State University Foundation.

The Women and Gender Studies Program adopted a new administrative structure in 1989 that replaced the original Women’s Studies Committee. At the basis of the program is a the Program Committee, which consists of 12 to 15 members who are
selected from Ball State faculty, professional personnel, and students representing various departments. This committee is responsible for electing the director and the Policy Committee, and its members make the final decisions regarding curriculum, fundraising, personnel, and budget matters. Members of the Program Committee serve three-year terms and may serve consecutive terms. They are nominated by Friends of the Program and then must be approved by the existing members of the Program Committee.

Three members of the Program Committee comprise the Policy Committee, which is responsible for developing the Women's Studies curriculum and for planning events. They may also generate policies that are subject to approval by the Program Committee. The members also collaborate with the Office of Research regarding applications for outside funding as well as with the library concerning collection development.

The director, who is elected to a three-year term, is a member of both the Program Committee and the Policy Committee and reports to the Assistant Provost and the Dean of Sciences and Humanities. His/her duties include initiating projects and programs concerning women and gender, coordinating the Women's Studies curriculum as well as developing new Women's Studies courses, searching for funds and grants, working with community organizations, and managing the Women and Gender Studies office and staff. Along with these duties, the director is responsible for convening and chairing the Program Committee, which oversees
the entire program. All of these duties and responsibilities are a combined effort to fulfill the educational, programmatic, and administrative policies developed by the Program Committee for the Women and Gender Studies Program.

Friends of the Program are any individuals who would like to support the Women and Gender Studies Program. This includes faculty members, professional and classified personnel, students, and members of the community. Friends of the Program receive periodic mailings from the director and also have two regularly scheduled meetings each academic year.

The Women and Gender Studies Program also has three standing committees: Curriculum Committee, Events Committee, and Women's Week Committee. The Curriculum Committee is responsible for developing and evaluating the Women's Studies courses. The Events Committee plans special events such as lectures, films, cultural activities, conferences, newsletters, and receptions. Finally, the Women's Week Committee is responsible for the activities that take place during Women's Week.

The Women and Gender Studies office provides Ball State faculty and students with several valuable resources. One of which is the graduate school information file available for anyone interested in Women's Studies graduate programs at other universities. Each school that offers graduate school opportunities pertaining to Women's Studies has its own file with information concerning its programs, courses, and degrees. As of 1988, there were over 80 such programs available at universities.
scattered throughout the United States. The office also has information from other colleges and universities about undergraduate majors and minors in Women's Studies.

Another valuable resource available is the Women and Gender Studies library, which is stocked with books, journals, magazines, and textbooks on topics related to women and gender. Most of these resources may be checked out by faculty and students. All of the materials are organized and on a computerized card catalog system so that they are readily accessible. A list of items, along with a short abstract, is available to facilitate research. Most of the materials were acquired through donations, and the collection continues to expand. This is a valuable resource because it consolidates information about women and gender at one specific site. Further information can be obtained through a guide to library research which details the available resources and describes how to do Women's and Gender Studies research.

The Women and Gender Studies office also provides referrals for people, especially women, in need of help. Even though the staff is not trained to handle crises such as sexual assault and rape, sexual harassment/discrimination, domestic violence, pregnancy, eating disorders, and psychological problems, they are prepared with a handbook of emergency services that can provide the needed services.

"The Purple Sheet" is a monthly newsletter that is written and distributed by the Women and Gender Studies Program. It
provides students, faculty, and the public with information regarding the program and includes a list of upcoming events sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies Program as well as other area events that concern women or gender-related issues. It also informs faculty and staff of calls for papers and proposals, conferences, and career opportunities in the field of Women's Studies.

The idea of beginning a Women's Center at Ball State has been on the agenda of the Events Committee for several years, however a lack of funds and available staff has produced little progress. If developed, a Women's Center could house the Women and Gender Studies office and provide space for many other programs and services. Some of the possibilities are psychological counseling center programs, films and lectures for women, self-help resources, a more complete library/resource center, and a women's health clinic. It would also be a place in which members of the Ball State campus and members of the surrounding community can interact.

During the 1987-1988 academic year, the Women and Gender Studies Program initiated the Women's Studies Lecture Series, under the direction of Dr. Irene Goldman, Professor of English. Six lectures by Ball State faculty and staff are now given each year on a myriad of topics ranging from the social sciences to journalism to English and literature to home economics to art and music.

In addition to the Lecture Series, the Women and Gender
Studies Program sponsors several other lectures each year. For instance, Marion Wagner, the President of the Indiana Chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW), spoke to students about women's issues. Other prominent speakers that have been sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies Program are Mary Kay Blakely, award-winning columnist and author who spoke on "Women's Humor"; Althea Grant, Director of the Rape Counseling Center of the Detroit Police Department; and Jane Brody, *New York Times* health columnist. Gwendolyn Brooks, well-known writer and poet who was the first black writer to win the Pulitzer Prize, spoke to students and gave a poetry reading as well as provided a workshop to help students who were interested in becoming writers. Mary Elizabeth Murdock is the Director of the Smith Collection at Smith College, which is one of the finest women's history collections. She spoke as an authority on women in the nineteenth century social reform movement in the United States.

The Women and Gender Studies Program also provides Ball State with many different programs and events each year. During the 1987-88 academic year, the Women and Gender Studies Program sponsored "Women in Business and Professions," which was a series of four programs that addressed the various issues that females encounter in the business and professional world. The final lecture in this series was given by Ms. Jane Brody, who is an author and columnist for the *New York Times*.

A symposium entitled "Gender Roles Through the Life Span," took place on October 14 and 15, 1988, on the Ball State campus.
Funded by a grant from the Ball State University Foundation and under the direction of Michael R. Stevenson (Psychological Science and Women and Gender Studies), the symposium was a joint project sponsored by the Psychological Science department and the Women and Gender Studies Program. It was designed to provide information on the development and influence of gender roles throughout four life phases: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and aging. Nationally recognized experts, representing such disciplines as psychology, sociology, anthropology, literature, education, and human development discussed a wide range of topics including language, sexuality, interpersonal relationships, and gender in the workplace.

Another important event sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies Program was the Midwestern Society for Feminist Studies Second Biennial Meeting, which was held at Ball State on May 11-13, 1989. This three-day conference covered such topics as feminism and religion, men in feminism, sexuality, women and careers, women in academics, and a woman's place in a man's world. Contributing speakers came from many outside organizations and universities including some from Ball State. The keynote address was given by Virginia Sapiro, Professor of Political Science and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who is well known for her widely used Women's Studies textbook.

A new program was initiated in the 1992-1993 academic year entitled "Feed Your Mind: Lunch On Books." Four book talks were
held during the noon hour, and students were encouraged to bring a lunch and gather together for an informal discussion of books by or about women. Discussions were facilitated by Ball State faculty who had a particular interest in the subjects of the books being discussed. Two of the topics included menopause and detective novels.

Also in 1993, the Women and Gender Studies Program co-sponsored a panel discussion entitled "Why Fear Feminism?", in which several self-proclaimed feminists addressed the reasons so many people are fearful of feminism and are leery of calling themselves feminists. Panelists included Ball State students and faculty as well as Sue Errington, a prominent member of the Muncie community.

One of the biggest annual projects sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies program is Women's Week, which is five days of programs that recognize and celebrate women. The events range from lectures and panel discussions to films, workshops and other special programs. The week is designed to give people the opportunity to learn about women--their experiences, their trials and tribulations, and their triumphs.

President John Worthen officially declared April 14 - 21, 1988, as Women's Studies Week because he recognized the program's importance and Ball State's responsibility to meet the intellectual needs of both its male and female students. He felt it was an attempt to further Ball State's goal of creating a society in which there is equal opportunity, regardless of
Women's Week is coordinated by the Women and Gender Studies Program in conjunction with various other university departments and organizations. The events are largely planned by students and the Women's Week Committee. Many of the Women's Week programs feature Ball State faculty from a wide variety of departments. The events in the past have covered such topics as health, history, architecture, psychology, politics, sexuality, abortion, rape, domestic violence, law, feminism, sexual harassment, and gender equality.

Along with the Ball State faculty, Women and Gender Studies has brought in several well-known, influential women to speak during Women's Week. Among some of the most prominent have been Betty Friedan, noted feminist and author of *The Feminist Mystique*; Irene Natividad, Executive Director of the National Women's Political Caucus; Anna Quindlen, *New York Times* columnist; Barbara Boyd, Channel 6 news broadcaster; Susan Bayh, Indiana's First Lady and staff attorney with Eli Lilly and Company; Judy Collins, professional singer; and Molly Ivins, columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

VI. BALL STATE STUDENT AND FACULTY OPINIONS

A survey was given to 52 Ball State students, approximately half female and half male, of various majors (See Appendix A). These surveys were given to students in several different classes
as well as to students living in a residence hall in an attempt to determine students' opinions of the Women and Gender Studies program and the Women's Studies minor. Students were asked to describe their awareness, involvement, and feelings concerning the programs.

Most (63%) of the students were aware of Ball State's Women and Gender Studies Program although only 25% actually knew where the office is located. Although more than half of those surveyed knew about the program, a very small minority (23%) were able to name any of the programs or events the Women and Gender Studies Program has sponsored, and an even smaller percentage (3%) had taken advantage of the programs and/or services provided by the Women and Gender Studies Program. One positive point was that all of the students who had participated in one of the programs felt that they had benefitted in one way or another. These results show that the Women and Gender Studies Program is not reaching a large number of students at the present time, but that it has been helpful to those who take advantage of it.

Although some students (36%) were aware that Ball State offers a minor in Women's Studies, very few of the students (4%) had taken a Women's Studies course. Only 27% said that they knew someone who is a minor or who is affiliated with Women and Gender Studies. These results suggest that the Women and Gender Studies Program and the Women's Studies minor at Ball State have not received sufficient exposure and are not reaching the majority of students.
As a reflection of students' lack of knowledge concerning the Women and Gender Studies Program, almost half (47%) of the respondents answered the question "What does Women and Gender Studies mean to you?" by either leaving it blank or by responding with "nothing" or "I don't know." Some students even stated that it is not relevant to them or to their education. In contrast, several responses were very insightful and supportive. Students defined the program as one which provides equal recognition to both genders, educates people about women's contributions to society, discusses the role of women in society, and helps women discover their equal rights. One student described the Women and Gender Studies Program as "a means of giving more emphasis to an area of study that has long gone unnoticed." One fact that was revealed by these answers is that students do not distinguish between the Women and Gender Studies Program and the Women's Studies minor even though they are two separate entities. This was evident from the responses of many students who described the Women and Gender Studies Program in terms of academics and course content, emphasizing the minor rather than the programs offered by the Women and Gender Studies Program.

Generally, the program has the support of students with 84% in favor of Ball State having a Women and Gender Studies Program, 6% neutral, and only 1% opposed. Thus, the Ball State campus seems to have an atmosphere that is likely to allow and possibly even assist the growth of the Women and Gender Studies Program, so that it may have an even greater impact on students, faculty,
and community members in the future.

Responses from Women's Studies minors, who were given a questionnaire concerning Women's Studies courses and their experiences in them, were all very positive (See Appendix B). Overall, students felt that Women's Studies courses provided them with a safe atmosphere in which they felt free to speak their minds and to share their ideas. They also praised Women's Studies courses for their recognition of and respect for diversity and minorities. Classes were said to be challenging and motivating to students, not only academically but also personally and socially. One student who said that she does not usually get socially involved, credited her Women's Studies experiences with the fact that she joined a feminist organization on campus.

Other students said that the courses helped them to be more mindful of discrimination in other classes as well as in situations outside of the university, and that the courses have taught them to use a more global perspective when viewing society. In this way they look at the effects certain issues have on all women rather than just on the individual. Women's Studies can have a profound impact on students, as proclaimed by one student, "[Women's Studies courses] have been transforming in my academic career - by far they have been my most enlightening and successful courses - there was always a lot of discussion and interest raised in the classroom."

The Women and Gender Studies Program was praised for its
programs and was viewed as a way to provide students with positive female role models. The services such as the lectures and Women's Week activities have proven to be beneficial for students because they offer diverse opportunities to learn. Opportunities that cannot be found in a classroom.

Along with the student surveys, faculty members who are closely involved with the Women and Gender Studies Program were interviewed about their perceptions of the Women's Studies minor as well as the Women and Gender Studies Program (See Appendix C). In defense of the criticisms made against Women's Studies, Ball State faculty members disputed the claim that Women's Studies is not academic and therefore does not belong in a university setting by stating that the first priority of the program is an academic one. The goal is to educate students about women's issues and about the ways that gender operates in society. As a secondary goal, the Women and Gender Studies Program attempts to provide students and faculty with social support and programs that integrate their personal lives with their educational experiences. Placing a priority on academics does not necessarily negate the importance of social issues. Historically, the feminist movement has been social as well as academic, which shows that the two can coincide, functioning smoothly and efficiently together. Often the Women's Studies courses provide information that steers people to the Women and Gender Studies office for support and assistance; thus, the two do work in conjunction with each other.
Regarding the claim that Women’s Studies is too political, professors argued that it is impossible to separate the intellectual from the political and that all academic disciplines are political in that knowledge itself is value-laden with political and ethical contents. Because Women’s Studies courses are in essence an attempt to redefine history, it is by necessity a political battle to keep the program alive. This does not mean that the issues explored in Women’s Studies courses cannot be presented in a fair and open-minded manner.

Men can be valuable assets to the Women’s Studies program, and they can benefit from the courses as well. Although the courses focus on women due to the fact that academic disciplines have previously emphasized males and their accomplishments, issues that affect men are also discussed. Often Women’s Studies courses may be even more challenging to men because they threaten their longstanding dominant position in society, they question the status quo, and they put males in the position of being the minority. Women’s Studies attempts to dissolve the barriers that have been erected by society through the stereotypes of men and women. This means that men would find the freedom to be more open, more vulnerable, and more able to express emotions. It is important that men understand women and that they support feminism. Getting men involved in Women’s Studies courses may help to accomplish this goal.

From the perspective of faculty who teach Women’s Studies courses, the learning process is one that encourages individual
participation, respect for diversity, and egalitarianism. Courses are taught in ways that allow for interaction between faculty and students and among the students themselves. They provide an atmosphere in which the opinions of women are respected and valued.

In this supportive environment, students are given more room for discussion that is not often found in other courses, and they are encouraged to think critically, explore questions, and take control of their own learning. Women's Studies courses teach students about life; provide them with a broader sense of society, both its commonalities and its differences; and enlighten them on the ways in which oppression works in today's world.

Professors feel that there are several overriding benefits students receive from the Women's Studies courses. One benefit, which stems from the relevancy the courses have to each woman's own life, is that students learn about themselves as women. Another important outcome is the sense of empowerment students feel after having participated in Women's Studies courses. In general, students derive the most benefits from this part of the program because it has such a dramatic impact on their lives, not only in the university setting but also in the whole of society. One professor commented that students who take Women's Studies courses are never the same again.

Because of Women's Studies, universities along with the entire educational system will never be the same again either.
In the past twenty years, there has been a transformation of academics that will greatly affect the lives of both men and women. Education leads to power and freedom. The knowledge that students will receive in Women’s Studies courses will provide women with a sense of empowerment that they have never before experienced. Also, men and women will be more able to free themselves from the confines of masculine and feminine stereotypes, and will hopefully find an escape from society’s traditional male and female role expectations.

Although Women’s Studies still faces opposition, it continues to grow steadily year by year and day by day. There is still work to be done in order to change the ways of our male-dominated society, but Women’s Studies courses have made a remarkable dent in the process.
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APPENDIX
Appendix A

Women and Gender Studies Program
Student Survey

1. Are you aware of the Women and Gender Studies program at Ball State?

2. Do you know where the office is located?

3. Please list any of the programs WGS has sponsored while you have been at Ball State.

4. Have you ever taken advantage of any of the services provided by the Women and Gender Studies office? Have you ever attended or participated in any of the programs sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies office?

5. If so, have you personally benefited from WGS and how? If not, why do you feel that it was not beneficial?

6. What does WGS mean to you?

7. Are you aware that Ball State offers a Women’s Studies minor?

8. Have you ever taken a Women’s Studies course? If so, which courses and what were your reasons for doing so?

9. Do you know anyone who is a Women’s Studies minor or is affiliated in any way with the Women and Gender Studies office?

10. Do you favor or oppose Ball State having a Women & Gender Studies program?

THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
Appendix B

Women's and Gender Studies Program
Graduating Minors Survey

1. What Women's Studies courses have you taken?

2. How did your Women's Studies courses differ from courses you have taken in other departments? How were they the same?

3. Did the teaching style differ from other courses? In what ways?

4. How do you feel about the Women's Studies courses you have taken?

5. Would you say that you were encouraged to speak out in class? Did you feel that your voice was being heard more so than in other classes?

6. Would you say that Women's Studies courses encourage students to think for themselves, foster social responsibility, and heighten awareness and promote acceptance of diversity? Why or why not?
7. What did you feel were the strengths of Women's Studies courses? What were the weaknesses?

8. Why did you decide to choose Women's Studies as your minor? Are you happy with your decision?

9. How have your Women's Studies experiences affected you personally?

10. Do you actively participate in the programs sponsored by the Women and Gender Studies office?

11. Have you benefitted from the programs and services provided by the Women and Gender Studies office? If so, how?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE WOULD BE APPRECIATED

THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
Appendix C

Faculty Interview Questions

1. What do you feel are the goals of the Women & Gender Studies program? Do academic goals take precedence over social programs or vice versa? Should this be the case?

2. Do you see the Women's Studies program as being transitional (temporary - for the sole purpose of mainstreming into other departments), autonomous (as a separate entity apart from other departments), or permanent (involved in mainstreaming but will remain permanently to deal areas that do not fit into other departments)? Explain.

3. Many opponents of Women's Studies claim that it is political rather than intellectual. How would you respond to that criticism? What role, if any, does politics play in Women's Studies?

4. How do you feel about men being involved in the Women & Gender Studies program? How can they benefit and how can they be beneficial?

5. What is most distinctive about the learning process in Women's Studies courses and how do they differ from courses in other disciplines?

6. What impact do Women's Studies courses have on students as individuals? on society as a whole?

7. Do you feel that Women's Studies courses encourage students to think for themselves? What would be the value of this?

8. Do Women's Studies courses heighten awareness of difference and diversity? If so, how do you feel this is accomplished?

9. In what ways do Women's Studies courses foster social responsibility?

10. Overall, how do courses in Women's Studies compare to courses in other departments? What makes them unique? In what ways are they similar?

11. What are the advantages found in a Women's Studies learning atmosphere?

12. What do you feel is the one overriding benefit students receive from participating in Women & Gender Studies programs and/or Women's Studies courses?