

REPORT OF A SURVEY OF  
WOMEN'S STUDIES GRADUATES  
1973 - 1977

Irene Hanson Frieze  
Women's Studies Program  
University of Pittsburgh  
1978

Since the Women's Studies Program was formally instituted at the University of Pittsburgh in 1972, we have had 8 self designed majors and 30 students who have received certificates in women's studies. There are also more than double this number of students currently working for certificates.

In order to gather data for the program development and evaluation, we mailed the attached survey to our 38 graduates during the Fall of 1977. We wanted to determine how they evaluated our program as they looked back to it after graduation. Questions were asked about their current career status as well as their opinions about instituting a women's studies major (see Appendix I). We received 1 response from the 8 women's studies majors (13%) and 15 of the 30 certificate students (50%). Although this was not as large a sample as we had hoped for, it is far better than the 10-20% return rate typical of mailed surveys. Therefore, it was concluded that this data was sufficient for further analyses.

Our certificate students represented a variety of major fields as shown in Table 1. Psychology was the largest single field, followed by English and Life Sciences. There were no history majors. These former students were typically employed full time (63%). None worked part time. Three were in graduate school, one was a housewife and two were unemployed. One of these unemployed was our women's studies self designed major. The other was in political science. The housewife was in Anthropology. Thus, it appears that the certificate students were employed in ratios typical to their undergraduate major generally. The specific types of jobs are shown in Table 2. Students working full time had a variety of jobs. Although none of these jobs obviously require women's studies training, many of the respondents mentioned how important their classes had been to them in getting jobs:

"I would never have had my present job if I hadn't enrolled in Rachael Maines...course...my sensitivity towards women as a constituency allows for better integration of them into the boycott campaign."

"was placed on this committee (Equal Opportunity Advisory Board) because of my women's studies certificate."

"The attitudes I have formulated have been positive and constructive in dealing with others and in seeking a job."

"Insights...into myself and others make me more aware of problems I might face and likewise those of the women and men I supervise and work with."

The respondents generally felt that the women's studies classes they had taken were helpful. Ten felt they were "very helpful", 5 rated them "somewhat helpful" and 1 person responded that they may have been harmful. Overall, students saw the classes as helpful in giving them awareness of women's roles and the problems of women. Nearly everyone mentioned this. In addition, 8 respondents felt the classes were important for personal growth, and 2 spontaneously mentioned that the classes gave them a more positive view of women. Four people mentioned that the courses had helped prepare them for jobs or further academic training.

When asked what advice they would give a young woman student interested in women's studies, nearly everyone said they would urge her to take a variety of women's studies classes in several areas although several also stressed that she should also take the women's studies courses within her major field. One person warned against concentrating too heavily on women's studies, however.

Our final question concerned the advisability of a women's studies major. Slightly over half the respondents were positive. Four said "no" and three were uncertain. The more negative responses tended to focus in areas where there are more courses (Psychology and English) or better job possibilities (Life Sciences). Reasons for not favoring a major concerned its non-relevance for a future career (mentioned by 5 people) and the fact that people react negatively to a women's studies designation on a transcript (2 people). Others felt the self designed major alternative was sufficient or that we should concentrate our energies on a graduate program instead. Thus, there was no clear support from our former students for instituting a women's studies major, especially in the most likely fields of Psychology, English or History.

TABLE I  
 POST GRADUATE ACTIVITIES OF  
 WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENTS

<u>COLLEGE MAJOR</u>	<u>WORKING FULL TIME</u>	<u>HOUSEWIFE</u>	<u>GRADUATE SCHOOL</u>	<u>UNEMPLOYED</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Life Sciences	2				2
Psychology	4		1		5
English	2		2		4
Anthropology		1			1
Communications	1				1
Political Science				1	1
<u>SELF DESIGNED</u>					
Not Women's Studies	1				1
Women's Studies				1	1
<hr/>					
TOTAL:	10	1	3	2	16

TABLE 2  
 JOBS HELD BY CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

<u>TYPE OF JOB</u>	<u>UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE MAJOR</u>				
	<u>LIFE SCIENCES</u>	<u>PSYCHOLOGY</u>	<u>ENGLISH</u>	<u>COMMUNICATIONS</u>	<u>SELF DESIGNED</u>
Counselor		2			1
Office administration		1	1		
Federal government		1			
Armed services	1				
Community relations				1	
Legal assistant		1			
Librarian			1		
Not specified	1				

TABLE 3  
 SHOULD WE HAVE A WOMEN'S STUDIES MAJOR?

<u>COLLEGE MAJOR</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>UNCERTAIN</u>	<u>NO</u>
Life Sciences		2	
Psychology	2	1	2
English	2		2
Anthropology	1		
Communications	1		
Political Science	1		
Self Designed	2		
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	9	3	4

APPENDIX I

SURVEY

WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM  
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
1012 Cathedral of Learning

December, 1977

Dear Women's Studies Graduate:

The Women's Studies Program has just completed its first five years of development. We are now thinking about new directions for the future, and are attempting to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our current program.

"What do Women's Studies graduates do?" is a question often asked of us. And since only you can answer that question, we would greatly appreciate your taking a few minutes to complete and return the attached questionnaire. Your honest reactions to your experiences as a Women's Studies student here at Pitt will help us assess our current program.

Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bazin, Coordinator

MB:es



WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM  
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
1012 Cathedral of Learning  
WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENT SURVEY

NAME..... PHONE.....

ADDRESS.....  
(street) (city) (zip)

COLLEGE MAJOR.....

DID YOU RECEIVE A WOMEN'S STUDIES CERTIFICATE? .....Yes .....No

ARE YOU CURRENTLY:

.....In graduate School? Name of School.....

Field of Study.....

.....Working? .....Part-time .....Full-time

Type of job: .....

.....Other? .....

.....

DO YOU FEEL YOUR WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSES WERE HELPFUL TO YOU IN YOUR CURRENT ACTIVITIES?

.....Very Helpful .....Somewhat Helpful  
.....NOT Very Helpful .....May Have Been Harmful .....Don't Know

IN WHAT WAY(S) DO YOU THINK THE COURSES WERE HELPFUL OR HARMFUL?

.....  
.....  
.....

LOOKING BACK, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A YOUNG WOMAN FRESHMAN OR SOPHOMORE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S STUDIES?

.....  
.....  
.....

DO YOU THINK THAT WE SHOULD OFFER A WOMEN'S STUDIES MAJOR AT PITT? ...Yes ...No

COMMENTS.....  
.....

Please complete and return as soon as possible. Thank you.  
(Self-addressed envelope enclosed)