

***Transforming Scholarship: Why Women's and Gender Studies Students Are Changing Themselves and the World, Second Edition***

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### **Introduction:** Transform Yourself: An Invitation to Deepen Your Commitment to Women's and Gender Studies

This chapter covers what the book is about, who it is designed for, and why this book will serve students who have embarked on an academic career in women's and gender studies. We share our experiences as professors intimately working with the challenges of students seeking to understand and use their women's and gender studies training. We signal to students that they are embarking on a great intellectual and experiential journey and need specific skills and competencies to prepare for it. They must take their journey with this book.

### **Chapter 1:** Claiming an Education: Your Inheritance as a Student of Women's and Gender Studies

This chapter deepens the reader's knowledge about the vibrant interdisciplinary arena of women's and gender studies. This chapter explores the past, present, and current field of women's and gender studies. It makes an argument that women's and gender studies students are part of an intellectual tradition and legacy, one that produces a student with a particular set of skills, ways of problem solving, and worldview. That intellectual tradition, as with others, has produced a distinct set of ideas and concepts that students learn through coursework and other learning experiences.

### **Chapter 2:** Developing the Core of Your Academic Career: Coursework, Internships, Study Abroad and More

This chapter explores the advanced curricular building blocks that students may pursue during their WGST training including: internships, study abroad programs, praxis and capstone projects. An interview with Dr. Katherine Brooks provides critical information about working with a career counselor in helping students to identify their talents and interests.

### **Chapter 3:** How *You* Can Talk About Women's and Gender Studies Anytime, Anywhere, and to Anyone

The ability to communicate complex ideas to others is heralded as a skill women's and gender graduates possess, yet seldom are beginning students prepared to deal succinctly and powerfully with the stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding women's and gender studies. Not only will we directly address common misconceptions of women's studies, but this chapter will provide models or guides for students to use in developing their own "scripts" of what women's and gender studies is and why it is a useful, desirable, and marketable area of study.

### **Chapter 4:** Discovering and Claiming Your Internal Strengths and External Skills

What are the tangible and intangible skills that one develops through women's and gender studies training? In this chapter, we begin with a discussion of the top concepts that graduates identified in our survey as important to their professional work. These concepts emerge from the feminist classroom and also through applied learning opportunities. We also show you how these concepts are used in their professional lives.

This chapter focuses on supporting the student in assessing what he or she has done thus far in their academic career. We suggest how a student might begin to organize what he or she learns in women's and gender studies (e.g. concepts, theories, frameworks, etc.) through the framework of "internal strengths" and "external skills." Skills and strengths grow out of the work that is done both inside and outside the classroom.

**Chapter 5** So, What *Can* You Do With Your Degree? Exploring Various Employment and Career Pathways

In this chapter the reader is introduced to the rich survey data that shows the multitude of employment paths that women's and gender studies graduates have taken. We supplement this data with an exploration of the many different kinds of employment opportunities that await students in the health and medical, legal, science and technological, academic, government, information and academic professions.

**Chapter 6:** Women's and Gender Studies Graduates as Change Agents: Seven Profiles

In this chapter the reader is introduced to the survey data that shows the multitude of employment paths that participants have taken. We present the idea of women's and gender studies students as *change agents*. We have developed three categories of "change agent" types in relation to future career pathways: sustainers, evolvers, and synthesizers. We then explore the experiences of six people who are exemplars of the three categories. Students can use this typology to initially identify themselves, provide possible career options, and investigate options for further skill development.

## **Chapter 7: Transform Your World: Preparing to Graduate and Living Your Feminist Life**

This chapter attends to two issues—helping the students who are poised to graduate think about the transition from college to professional life and also cultivating a vision of social change and transformation.

This chapter contains the nuts and bolts essentials for helping the student understand the preparation that it will take to leave the college environment and engage the world in a new role. The chapter gives suggestions on developing or expanding one's feminist community outside the safe environs of the college campus.

## PREFACE

Our goals in the first edition of *Transforming Scholarship* were multi-faceted. We wanted to create a user friendly, accessible guide that supported women's and gender students early in their college career as well as declared majors and minors. The first edition was originally borne out of a desire to change the question and skeptical conversation that women's and gender students often face: What can you do with that degree? We wanted we wanted to write a book that spoke to the progress and aspirations of women's and gender students, and provided strategies for how to communicate that interest effectively. We wanted to give students the tools to encourage them to be pro-active in thinking about their education and their careers. We wanted to create a book that grappled with the messiness of living one's women's and gender studies values after leaving college.

We were also responding to a significant gap, in the field of women's and gender studies, of texts that supported and prepared graduates for their role as feminist thinkers, workers, activists and leaders. And, we wanted to try to empirically answer the question, 'What *can* you do with an interest in women's and gender studies?' We, women's and gender studies professors, and friends, with a combined 15 years in the field, took on the challenge of answering this question by first surveying over 900 graduates at 125 colleges and universities across the world to find out how the major shapes life paths after graduation, as well as interviewing women's and gender studies professors, former students who had graduated with a degree in the field. We scoured the academic literature on women's and gender studies students' post-graduation (which is scant) and followed debates and trends in the blogosphere such as in popular feminist websites like *feministing* but also in social media spaces like Facebook .

*TS* incorporated unique features that included creative self-assessment and self-discovery tools. Drawing on our rich and persuasive data (and the largest global database of women's and gender studies graduates), we made graduates' career journeys come alive for readers and hopefully provided a guide for those finishing their degrees, as well as those who may be considering career changes. .

The response to the first edition of *TS* has been powerful. We have heard from students, faculty members, parents and administrators that *TS* has been useful in a variety of ways. Faculty found ways to integrate it into the curriculum; some used it for introductory courses, others as part of a capstone or internship course, others in feminist theory. Along with critical acclaim there also came questions: Why didn't you include more focus on feminist lawyers? Why did you focus so much on the difference between departments and programs? Why doesn't this book reflect concerns of students who are already committed to women's and gender studies? After hearing from colleagues (informally and through the reviews), teaching the text and also conducting national workshops, we have welcomed the opportunity in this new to strengthen current material and fill in missing gaps.

The second edition of *TS* offers three substantive changes. The most important of the three is that this edition is aimed at and addresses students who have proceeded in their academic trajectory past the introductory Women and Gender Studies course level and have a firm connection to their major/minor or specialization. This assumes that readers will have committed to women's and gender studies and have taken 2-3 courses prior to reading the book. We assume that these readers are looking for ways to deepen their training in women's and gender studies. And, that they will also be interested in all of the features offered in the second half of the book — exercises to help flesh out talents, passions and skills and how to link them to employment,

information about the diversity of employment opportunities (and further professional training) available, a plan to help prepare for graduation, and how to live a feminist life after graduation. This overall emphasis on advanced undergraduates makes this book appropriate for advanced feminist theory courses and all women's and gender capstone courses, but also for those who have finished their degree and need a resource to assist in conceptualizing the answers to the question "What's next"?

Practically, this change means that much of the Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 is condensed and revised to reflect a more knowledgeable audience. Chapter 1 focuses on the centrality of women's and gender studies in the mission of liberal arts and higher education and helps students understand the value of this rich intellectual tradition. It also addresses contemporary changes in the field (such as names changes of departments and degree programs within the discipline) and the professionalization of the discipline through organizations like the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA). This chapter also explores how Women's and Gender Studies is organized in other countries, such as the U.K., New Zealand, the West Indies and Lebanon.

In our revised Chapter 2, we spend less time attending to the composition of degree programs and instead spend more time on areas in which juniors and seniors might want to consider as part of their women and gender studies education: study abroad, civic engagement projects, internships, independent studies and honors theses. We provide examples of how students use their training create compelling learning experiences, often outside the classroom. Moreover, we focus some on the politics and culture of student life (e.g. the roles of work, activism, social life, etc.).

Chapters 3 and 4 are updated but remain similar in structure to the original edition. In the

last edition, we packed a lot into Chapter 5—both information about career pathways and substantial profiles of six graduates. In this edition Chapter Five is completely revised and provides readers an in-depth look at career pathways. Chapter Six is also updated and we have added another profile, bringing the total to seven. Chapter Seven includes new topics about activism after college, building and sustaining feminist communities and also feminist parenting.

The second substantive change is that throughout the text we showcase how the debates over political, social and cultural issues involve the theoretical insights and conceptual tools developed in women's and gender studies classes. In this edition we have worked with a talented group of women's and gender studies graduates as well as scholars in the field to help us to produce 'Point of View' materials. In these POV pieces scholars focus on contemporary issues and deepen a student's understanding of the organizations and individuals fighting to end sexist oppression. To be clear, this is not a feminist theory text (as there are many wonderful ones already on the market), but materials suitable for a more sophisticated audience. Areas that we pay particular concern, in developing cases, include: GLBTQQA issues, global issues, immigration, secularity, and reproductive rights. We have kept the tone similar to the rest of the personal and intimate feel of *TS*, so often these pieces are written in the first person.

The third substantive change is that the profiles that we featured in our rubric of career pathways: evolver, synthesizer, and sustainer throughout the book has been expanded and we have updated the life and career changes of many of the graduates who shared their experiences in the first edition.

We give thanks here to the many people who helped us along the way.

*Michele would like to thank:* As always to my partner, Timothy Dane Keim who makes me laugh and keeps me sane when my eyes begin to cross during another round of edits. My moods, during periods of sustained book writing, also have the tendency to be cross, too. Thank you for your love, support, and always good cheer.

I would also like to thank my writing group, composed of two dedicated sociologists: Lisa Pearce and Karolyn Tyson. They are amazing scholars and friends who have provided me with support, nurturance and critical feedback through both editions.

Periodically, I asked Daiysha Smith, my research assistant for another project, to assist on this project. She did terrific work and I am thankful for her assistance. I also wish to thank the students in Fall 2013 ‘Feminist Principles of Inquiry’ who gave helpful feedback on chapters 4-7, especially Kevin Claybren.

And, lastly, to a brilliant conspirator of all things women’s studies related and to my cherished collaborator—Cheryl. You make me remember why I decided to get a Ph.D.! I’m always moving between two states when we’re together. One is rolling around on the floor because I’m laughing so hard and the other is deep amazement at the way you have just pulled two different ideas together and intertwined them into a new pattern. I hope to always call you friend and collaborator.

*Cheryl would like to thank:* During the course of transforming oneself in order to transform the world, I met many folks who not only inspired the book, but gave me support as well. I will always be indebted to all the gender and women’s studies students, who I wo/mentored or

tormented as students at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Minnesota State University, Mankato, and College of Southern Nevada, who participated in our survey, but also those who took the time to be interviewed and also gave their insight into the chapters of the book. I am in awe of Adriane Brown, Judi Brown, Caryn Lindsay, Jennifer Pritchett, and Diana Rhodes for their contributions to the world. I also want to thank my friends and activists in the HIV/AIDS community in Las Vegas for providing me with inspiration on a daily basis. Your creativity, grace, ability to organize events and work with ever changing funding sources, and educate the public amazes me and I feel blessed everyday to work with such amazing people.

I also want to thank my fellow graduates from the Elizabeth Kearney Women's Leadership Program, my colleagues from the Mankato American Association of University Women (AAUW), the FIRS (faculty-in-residence) and participant of New Leadership Nevada and Tri-State, as well as my mentors Avra Johnson and Anne Ganey for giving me the encouragement and strength to follow my vision for leadership as well as reviving my belief in sisterhood when I was questioning it. I also want to thank John Alesio, the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at Minnesota State, Mankato, and Provost Scott Olsen for approving my leave of absence in order to explore different career and research opportunities. I also want to thank my peer mentors, in particular Jaime Phillips, Becky Bates, Anne Lascamana, Gina Winger, Sarah Sifers, Caryn Lindsay, Laura Yavitz, Lori Andrews, Crystal Jackson, Nicole Rogers, DeAnna Beachley, Lois Helmbold, Barbara Brents, Kathryn Hausbeck Corrigan, Rebecca Boulton, Aliya Buttar, my colleagues, past and present, at the Southern Nevada's Health District, those students who I fe/mentored (and was schooled by as well) at MSU Mankato and in Las Vegas (such as Saswait Sakar, Jennifer Macken, and Christal Lustig), my colleagues and mentors at AASECT and SSSS, and everyone else at UNLV and MSU who helped make me the feminist I am today. In between

the first edition of this book and the current edition, I lost one of my intellectual as well as personal mentors Dr. Ellen Cronan Rose. Your willingness to work with me and support me was unwavering and I hope to become the terrifyingly passionate and smart role model that you were for me. I also want to thank my colleague Dr. Maricela DeMirjyn who was instrumental in her support of me and Women's Studies while we were colleagues at MSU Mankato and regularly was able to help remind me of intersectionality issues, the interconnections between Wome and Gender Studies and other area studies, as well as the importance of making connections with the community. I would be remiss for neglecting to thank Mark Rauls and Troy McGinnis for their continued support either through listening to my endless questions, giving advice on survey question construction, or lending their perspectives on academia and women's studies. I always thank my mother Betty and my brother Carl for their unwavering love and support and, of course, to my colleague Michele—from the minute we met, we knew it was the beginning of a beautiful, long, personal and professional friendship. Michele is not only my co-author, but I consider her my friend, colleague, creative coach, and sounding board. Thanks for putting up with me and always being there. Finally I want to thank my father Robert for his love and support. My father's influence on my feminism is immeasurable.

*We both would like to thank:* Shawn Shulte, our primary research assistant, for this edition. He assisted in the research and reading of drafts. Shawn's fresh perspective as well as his candor in discussing the field of women and gender studies, disclosing and questioning gender and sexuality norms, and his eagle eye in terms of editing and recommendations was truly inspiring. The production of this new edition was helped by the supportive group of readers and informal editors including Kim Andochowski (sp), Catherine Cachett, Chelsi Cheatom, Lindsay Dermid

Gray, and Susan Lee, .

We also would like to thank many of our current and former students who generously gave their impressions and feedback in informal and formal ways throughout the development of this idea to book. Your collective enthusiasm and sense that you would have used this book spurred us on.

Our sincere thanks also go to the many program and curriculum directors, and department chairs and administrative staff of women's and genders studies worldwide who forwarded our request about our survey to their alumni lists. We also have to thank the hundreds of participants who took our survey and the many people whom we had the pleasure of interviewing for this book. We continue to draw on this database.

There are many new contributors in this edition and we believe their insights and analyses make the book stronger. We are appreciative of the people who wrote the new Points of View (POV) pieces for this revised edition including (in the order they appear): Mel Michelle Lewis, Gabrielle Griffin, Adriane Brown, Jennifer Fish, Carol Mason, Jo Reger, Karlyn Crowley, and Anita Tijerina Revilla. Thanks goes Saswati Sarkar, Brad Freihoefer, Catherine Cashett, Lindsey Dermid Gray, Sarah 'Tucker' Jenkins (our amazing research assistant for the first edition!), Kim A (sp) for their contribution of new Spotlights. We also wish to thank DeAnna Beachely for her piece on community colleges in Chapter One and our interview with Katharine Brooks in Chapter 2.

Thanks are also due to the reviewers of this revised edition:

Elizabeth Berila                      St. Cloud State University

Danielle DeMuth                      Grand Valley State University

LeeRay Costa                          Hollins University

Patti Duncan	Oregon State University
Heather Palmer	University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
Nancy Theriot	University of Louisville
Jennifer Reed	California State University, Long Beach
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Melinda Marie Jette	Franklin Pierce University
Don Romesburg	Sonoma State University
Jacqueline R. deVries	Augsburg College
Maxine Weisgrau	The New School
Elizabeth A. Kissling	Eastern Washington University
Jennifer Fish	Old Dominion University
Patricia Pedroza	Keene State College
Mary Zeiss Stange	Skidmore College
Kim Case	University of Houston, Clear Lake

We found your suggestions thoughtful, imaginative, and useful. We wish to thank the production team at Routledge for the careful care the manuscript received from beginning to end. And finally, our editors at Routledge were outstanding to work with during the past two years. We especially thank Samantha Barbaro. Your presence on both editions of *Transforming Scholarship* has been profound. You were always there to answer questions and provide support for us (whether it was answering basic questions and keeping us on task) or helping to organize our

book reception at NWSA, We could not have welcomed our second edition into the world without you.