Voices, the Women’s Studies Newsletter makes its revival after lying dormant for many years. This issue of Voices contains the narratives of students who talk about their lived experiences as feminists at Boston College. Their stories are filled with courage, activism and a scholarly commitment to social justice for all women. This newsletter contains artistic contributions, scholarly articles, information about activist initiatives on the Boston College campus, as well book and television series reviews.

Reading through this issue of Voices, reminds me how important the goals of feminism are and how vital it is that we strengthen our support for women’s studies on the Boston College campus. It is only in the last 35 years or so that most colleges and universities have fully admitted women to the range of majors outside of nursing and education. Laws against sexual harassment in the workplace were only enacted in the early 1990s. While there is much good news to report—women are entering male-dominated professions such as medicine, business and the law in increasing numbers, gender discrimination in the hiring and promotion in these male-dominated professions remains. Only few women reach the top echelons of these professions—managing to break the glass ceiling once in a while. Women as a whole, however, continue to earn only 70% of the earnings men earn in equivalent positions, and they continue lag behind in science and engineering as well as in the very the fields of upper-level positions in law, business, and medicine.

The United States continues to lack of affordable and quality child care and corporate America still remains an inhospitable environment for men and women who want to balance their work and family lives. The “feminization of poverty “ is on the rise with women and girls making up the largest group of those who are poor. Violence against women and girls continues to grow and expand locally, nationally and globally (see: Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2005*).

What history tells us is that enacting social justice for all women requires that it be actively promoted by women for women. Can men be feminists? Of course. Building bridges across gendered differences is important. There is a pressing need to have women-centered issues and concerns be addressed and to continue to motivate activism initiatives on behalf of all women.

VOICES, the newsletter for women’s studies is committed to the goal of social justice for women. Giving voice to women’ lives and experiences is the beginning of addressing social justice concerns for all women. Women’s Studies today is forging bridges across the myriad of differences among women with regard to intersections of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability. A range of feminist theories today reflect the diversity of women’s lives and perspectives on their socio-economic history. Whatever differences there are among women, gender oppression in its variety of forms, remains ever present within American society and around the globe.

I want to thank Ximena Ramirez, our Women’ Studies research assistant and student editor of VOICES for taking the initiative in re-starting up this newsletter. Her tireless efforts, motivation of her peers, wisdom and energy have made this newsletter a reality. I also want to thank all the student contributors to this issue as well as a heart-felt “thank you!” to the wider university community for their financial support.

Sharlene Hesse-Biber
Director of Women’s Studies
Professor, Sociology Department


I AM A FEMINIST FOR...

It is inevitable that in each group of friends certain people take on certain roles. There is always the mother type figure of the group and the baby; the wild child and the book worm; the shy one and the outspoken one.

In my circle of friends I am the feminist.

It’s true. My friends may poke fun at my liberal ideals and girl power rants, but I remain firm in my beliefs regardless. In fact, I am not fearful of the f-word in the slightest. It is part of who I am. It is one of the core characteristics embedded in my identity.

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EMILY MACMILLAN - GRADUATE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF WSP

My name is Emily MacMillan and I am the graduate assistant director of the Women’s Studies program. This year is my first at Boston College – I am starting out on the (very long) path to my PhD in sociology. I graduated from Syracuse University in 2004 with a degree in Women’s Studies and Political Science. I spent the last two years as a Teach for America corps member – I taught Spanish at Roosevelt High School in St. Louis. I miss my students very much but I am very happy to be at BC and I know that the knowledge that I am acquiring here will help to further my goal of revolutionizing the education system in this country.

While many people label me, and feminists like me, as “crazy idealists,” I believe that feminism has empowered me to be such an idealist. As a result of studying Women’s Studies and sociology, I have learned about many injustices, but I have also learned about possible solutions to those injustices and I know that I have the power to make change. All feminist communities and Women’s Studies programs are important sites of questioning and empowerment and I am very glad to be a new part of the BC feminist community!
The following courses have been approved for women's studies credit for Spring 2007.

CO45101/CO45102
Gender Roles and Communication
Cuklanz

EN12501/HS14801/PS12501
Introduction to Feminisms
Friedman

EN27501
Early Women Writers
Kellett

EN45201
Gender Trouble in Irish Culture
Kerelkamp

EN51001
Contemporary American Women Writers
Tanner

EN59301
Advanced Colloquium
Wilt

EN60301/HS66501
Seminar in College Teaching: Women's Studies
Friedman

HS5401
Irish Women Emigrants: Irish and American Context
Harris

HS53801
Gender in American History
Lyerly

PS34401
Psychology of Gender
Dempewolff

SC00801
Marriage & Family
Sarkisian

SC52201
Theories of Sexual Identity: Queer Theory and Beyond
Van Wagenen

TH21701
Sex, Gender, and the Human Body
Keenan

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Can Feminists Wear Push-Up Bras?

By: Amanda Denes

On Friday, October 27th, the GLBT/Queer Leadership Council hosted an event called “I Feel Pretty.” The event is an alternative fashion show celebrating all forms of beauty—not just those unreal depictions we see on runways and in catalogs. As I watched each student share his or her own personal reasons for feeling beautiful, I could not help but be struck by one young woman. She walked onto stage, proud and confident, in full dominatrix dress with a whip in hand. “I feel pretty because I am not scared to dress like this, even if it’s not Halloween!” She went on to say that she feels no shame in dressing promiscuously, in celebrating femininity and sexuality and all that it entails. This brought up an important issue that many modern female feminists grapple with: Are we allowed to be sexy?

While songs like “Promiscuous” may be taking sexuality to an extreme, buying into the very objectification we are trying to get away from, they should not sway modern feminists from finding their own inner sexiness. I even used to think that if I ever wanted to be a “real” feminist, I would have to throw away all my make-up, high heels, and push-up bras. So much of what I have learned has taught me that these items are all forms of oppression and I am just being brainwashed into buying them. What I’ve realized, though, is that there are extremes in all situations. The key is a mix of moderation and awareness. It is in loving your natural eyes, but enjoying black eyeliner. It is in embracing your curves, but picking up a pair of Spanx for that little black dress. It is in loving your breasts just the way they are, but relishing them in a push up bra every now and then.

I had the honor of being in The Vagina Monologues cast two years ago, and the experience really opened my eyes to how feminism and sexiness are not polar opposites. The script is oozing with sexiness, but never does it objectify women. The reason is simple—the women are defining their sexuality, not the men. It seems that the reason sexiness has always been a no-no for female feminists is because for decades men were telling us to be sexy and to dress in a way that was visually pleasing to them. Now, in Generation Y, we are deciding what’s sexy for ourselves. For those of us who have enough sense to avoid comparing ourselves to ridiculous media images, can love our curves and even want more of them!

I am not saying we are free of male influence. We still need to keep our eyes open. It is easy to move from defining ourselves to defining ourselves by other people’s standards. But for those who can be proud to be sexy, who dress promiscuously not for male attention but because that is how they feel most beautiful, I applaud them. They inspire me to embrace my own body, and remind me that it’s okay for a feminist to wear a push up bra.

I even used to think that if I ever wanted to be a “real” feminist, I would have to throw away all my make-up, high heels, and push-up bras.

Amanda Denes is a senior in A & S.
People rarely pause to consider why we commend any man with a baby in his cart at the supermarket. Is it so radical to see a father take responsibility for an afternoon alone with his child? Nobody blinks when women carry babies through train stations, fairs, or libraries. Yet “it’s so cute” when a man slings an infant from his arm in public. The difference in our reaction reveals society’s attitude toward childcare. Women are simply doing their job, while men have gone “above and beyond.”

The classic argument: maternal instincts drive women to assume the role of nurturing the children. Why fight against centuries of custom and social norms? In every society, females have always fed, cleaned, and played with infants. The simple presence of breasts and a uterus lead to the obvious conclusion that infants need their mothers. Therefore, society has assumed that maternal instinct justifies a woman’s place at home.

However, recent scientific studies reveal that nature may also biologically equip men for fatherhood. Several years ago, an experiment occurred in the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota that examined the difference between the hormonal changes of fathers as opposed to the average male. Sandra J. Berg, M.Sc., and Katherine E. Wynne-Edwards, Ph.D., of the Department of Biology at Queen’s University (in Kingston, Ontario, Canada) took saliva samples from 23 expectant fathers (during the first trimester of pregnancy) and 14 control subjects who were not fathers. After analyzing each sample, the two researchers discovered something interesting-levels of testosterone and cortisol were significantly lower in the expectant fathers. Expand a little here for the non-scientific person. What does this discovery mean?

Furthermore, Berg and Wynne-Edwards checked the concentrations of estradiol in the men. Estradiol, “an important hormonal component of mammalian maternal behavior in women,” was found in much higher levels in the saliva from fathers. Ironically, estradiol is normally labeled as a female hormone; it’s somewhat representative of estrogen. To date, virtually no research has been conducted on estradiol in male mammals. (One may assume levels of testosterone and estradiol decrease and rise, respectively, as the birth of the baby nears. More research has yet to be conducted on males during the progression of pregnancy.) However, it now seems that men’s hormones fluctuate during pregnancies, just like those of women.

Relevant? Americans think so. Before this decade, the idea of stay-at-home fathers seemed a product of radical thinking springing from the women's liberation movement. Yet, increasing numbers of fathers are choosing to remain in the house to raise their children. This change in family structure has led to such websites as rebeldad.com where men can join in “Dad blogs” and “Dad Groups” across the country, or catch up on the events at the last “At-Home Dad Convention.” Similar websites are exploding on the Internet to include everything from the analysis of current social trends to plain advice on parenting.

Information on rebeldad.com also displays statistics from the Census Bureau indicating an increase of American stay-at-home fathers from 98,000 to 147,000 in the 2003-2004 year. However, the media rarely reports on this recent phenomenon in our culture. The truth is that it is gradually becoming more acceptable for boyfriends and fathers to live at home doing laundry, cooking meals, or helping with homework. For the first time, women entering the work force can walk out the door with the comfort of knowing a parent is watching her kids.

This does not mean feminists are calling for women to abandon their offspring, or that they believe pressure should be placed on women who do choose to leave work to care for their kids. However, women should know that they deserve a choice.

Finally, a new spirit has begun to infuse upcoming female generations. The combination of “girl power” and exposure to strong women in leadership positions is gradually influencing America’s daughters. There’s always friction when people “on the fringe” begin redefining gender roles, but as women we must press on. The fact is that there are many mothers today who are becoming the sole breadwinners in the family - they are no longer on the fringe. Ideally, our society will reach a moment when stay-at-home dads don’t raise eyebrows when they introduce themselves at parties.

The revolution is quiet, but gaining momentum. Men, young and old, are preparing to take responsibility. Childcare, dishes, laundry, anything is possible. The question remains: Ladies, are we ready?
The Conundrum of Women in the Sciences

By: Dr. Sharlene Hesse-Biber, Director of The Women’s Studies Program

Harvard University’s president, Lawrence H. Summers, cites innate differences between men and women as a primary reason for their under representation in the sciences. He perceives women’s characteristics and deficiencies as causes.

One thing that has been left out of this discussion is the fact that women are indeed pursuing the sciences, especially when we consider the data on degrees awarded to men and women at the bachelor’s level. These data reveal a silver lining concerning the situation of women in the sciences that has not been part of this discourse. If we look at the bachelor’s degree data depicted in figure 1, we can note that there is a marked increase in the percentage of women receiving bachelor’s degrees in the sciences—biology, engineering, mathematics, and physical sciences—relative to men (see Hesse-Biber and Carter, 2005). At the Master’s level, while women are more likely than men to obtain this degree, fewer women go on to attain their doctorates. Those women who continue on to receive their doctorate, however, (see figures two and three on pg. 18) are also pursuing the sciences, especially medicine and dentistry. However, their numbers in engineering, computer science, mathematics and the physical sciences are lower relative to males. Women still gravitate to what are considered more traditional female-dominated fields, like English, Foreign Languages, Literature, and Education (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005).

From these data, it appears that the transition from college to a career in science is a critical moment for decision making for women regarding their career and family goals. Yet, at this crucial juncture, there may be fewer structural supports for women especially the career guidance they may need to continue to pursue a non-traditional career choice like the sciences; a choice they may perceive will make it more difficult for them to combine their work and family goals (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005). In addition, the current lack of sufficient female role models in the sciences, and the current lack of advancement of women in the sciences, may temper the aspirations of young women currently contemplating scientific careers. More research is needed, however, to ascertain the range of factors and their interrelationships that are at play in this critical decision-making stage in a young woman’s life.

Answers to the following questions, while not exhaustive, are important to ascertain at this juncture in our understanding of the conundrum of women in the sciences:

- Why do women who major in the sciences at the undergraduate level continue to pursue their master’s and doctorate in the sciences? Why do some women discontinue their interest in science as a career? Do women who continue or discontinue their pursuit of science as a career differ from each other in terms of their social and economic demographics (class, race/ethnicity, etc.)?
- What type of career guidance do women who major in the sciences receive in college? Post-college?
- What are the factors that make for women’s continued interest in the sciences, especially among those women who go on to receive their master’s and doctoral degrees in the sciences?

- What do women who major in the sciences in college and post-college perceive as the costs and benefits of pursuing a scientific career?

Lawrence H. Summers’ emphasis on what he sees as the “innate” differences between men and women as an explanatory route, alleviates focusing on important societal factors that might serve as a competing explanation for the paucity of women in science—gendered hiring practices, the lack of promotion of women within the sciences, and the inability of the scientific enterprise to support a family friendly work environment.

The media deluge following Summers’ remarks suggest that even if his biological explanation might be terribly misguided, women nonetheless, freely “choose” to limit their own scientific career options. It is argued that women seek careers that allow them the flexibility to spend time with their families. This choice prevents them from obtaining the training and other credentials to compete effectively with men in the sciences.

Yet there is an important counter-argument to this type of reasoning:
- Is a woman’s choice to limit their career in the sciences so free?
- What constraints does society impose (for example societal expectations regarding gender roles, employer discrimination) that serve to limit a woman’s ability to choose their careers freely?
- Do all women have the economic resources to choose between work and family?
- What do women who major in the sciences in college and post-college perceive as the costs and benefits of pursuing a scientific career?

Research on workplace factors that contribute to women’s disadvantaged position in the sciences has a lot to do with employers’ “tastes” for discrimination. Employers are influenced by stereotyped cultural images of women’s place. They may choose male or female workers because they seek traits that they believe to be masculine or feminine, regardless of whether specific women or men possess such traits. To this extent, women’s labor-market situ-
Each year as the leaves begin to fall, the Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (GLBT) community presents National Coming Out Week, an opportunity to embrace and celebrate all forms of sexual orientation. At Boston College, National Coming Out Week is a much needed opportunity for the GLBT community to make its presence known and remind students that they are not alone in the coming out process. This year, National Coming Out Week took place October 10-16th. The week was shortened due to the holiday weekend and faced competition with both the Virginia Tech football game and Homecoming Week. Nonetheless, the GLBT/Queer Leadership Council (GLC), Lambda, the BC Law coalition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender students, staff, faculty and supporters, and Allies were all able to produce enlightening and inspiring events for the gay and gay-friendly at Boston College.

The week kicked off with the BBQ—“Bisexual, Bi-curious, Questioning BBQ.” On a sunny afternoon in the Dustbowl, the BBQ welcomed all BC students to share a burger and spend some time with the GLBT community. Pamphlets on coming out, rainbow ribbons, and safe zone flyers were distributed to passers-by. While the event was a success, one could not help but be dismayed by the looks of some Boston College students and who passed by the rainbow flag and rejected invites to the BBQ. Though the number of unwelcoming Boston College students seems to be shrinking, many still were critical about the necessity of such events. There seems to be a lack of realization that GLBT students DO exist—they are your friends, teammates, and classmates. They are student leaders, Truman scholars, distinguished faculty, and powerful administrators.

It was these influential GLBT students and professors who filled the Chocolate Bar the evening of October 10th for “Opening Boston’s Closet,” a chance for the GLBT community to share their coming out stories. The night began with Professor Kevin Ohi, followed by students and audience members who were compelled to speak during the “open mic” portion of the evening. The following night one of the most popular events, “Guess Who’s Gay?” took place in Gasson Hall. Students filled the room to guess whether their fellow classmates were “GLBT” or not. Audience members were allowed to ask any questions to the participants, as long as the questions did not pertain to the subject’s sexuality. At the end, it is the audience who tried to decipher who was and was not GLBT. The point of the program, aptly proven that evening, was to break down the stereotypes that plague that GLBT community and make clear the absurdity of such assumptions.

The following Monday, Allies, the gay-straight alliance at Boston College, hosted an event entitled “Unconventional Conversations: Everything You Wanted to Know about BC but Were Afraid to Ask.” The event provided a chance for students to speak with faculty and other experienced students about their concerns as Boston College students. Topics ranged from socializing and relationships to being an ally, or getting more information about campus resources. “Unconventional Conversations” proved the necessity of having such resources consistently available to GLBT BC students.

Continued on page 7, Denes

TRIPPING EACH OTHER

BY: CECELIA FIERRO, CAROLINE MULLIN, & EMILY PLANE

A girlfriend of ours works in the pre-practicum program for LSOE at a local high school. She recently met a senior doing her full-practicum at the same school. My friend had anticipated that the senior would become a mentor figure who could help her pick classes and suggest high schools to work in after graduation. Unfortunately, she continues to receive the cold shoulder and inattentive responses.

In her talk, Barash cited “mentoring” relationships as a very complex issue in modern day society – particularly for our generation. Since women are now able to work alongside men in many occupations, it has become our responsibility to make this transition permanent for all women – not just ourselves. In order to do so, we must be supportive of one another. If we do not respect each other as aspiring women role models and hard-working people, we are succumbing to the patriarchal structure that society already thrusts at us.

If we do not respect each other as aspiring women role models and hard-working people, we are succumbing to the patriarchal structure that society already thrusts at us.

Continued on pg. 7, Fierro, etc.
role models and hard-working people, we are succumbing to the patriarchal structure that society already thrusts at us.

We often see females consumed by envy everyday and it can affect us in many negative ways. Have you ever wished for someone else’s body? Your best friend’s boyfriend? Her money? Her job? Many women wish they could have something another woman has, whether it be a personality characteristic, a material possession, or a significant other. More often than not, a little dramatic tension between women turns into envy, which in turn transforms into malice, and eventually blows up into a fight. Barash spoke about this process as well – the idea that women are in competition in order to gain what another has. She says that females too often feel as though they are involved in a black and white, win-or-lose situation and think that if their best friend has something they want, they can’t have it too. She believes that women must understand that more can be done for the good of females on the whole if cooperation and communication are involved.

Susan Shapiro Barash has seen all kinds of tension between women – between those of different races, ages, careers, family situations, socioeconomic statuses, etc. Out of all of the hostile emotions that women feel towards each other, she finds jealousy to be the most detrimental. The audience was taken aback when Professor Sharlene Hesse-Biber, in her intro of Shapiro-Barash, told the shocking story that recently came out in the New York Times:

A patient was admitted to a hospital for plastic surgery where her former friend from high school worked as a nurse. When the nurse made the connection that her patient was the same woman who had stolen her boyfriend in high school, jealousy consumed her. The patient died in surgery, and the nurse was recently convicted of aiding in her death.

On a smaller scale, perhaps one more applicable to college life at BC, Shapiro-Barash believes that jealousy emerges in the sympathy or lack thereof, that we feel for each other when something goes badly for a friend. For example, let’s say you have a friend who has always gotten everything she’s wanted. She got 4 years of housing, a scholarship, the internship that both of you applied for, and, most importantly, the man you’ve always wanted. Internally, your jealousy has gotten to the point where you might go behind her back to make her suffer – it isn’t fair that she’s so perfect! When the day comes that something wrong finally happens to her, you smirk on the inside. On the outside, as Barash said, you “run over with chicken soup and cookies” but internally you feel a sense of gratification and satisfaction at her pain.

To consider that the world is such a competitive, heartless rat race that no woman can trust another is upsetting. These emotions are entirely unnecessary, and fueled by some kind of invisible anxiety that is instilled in women from youth according to Shapiro-Barash. Perhaps it is the influence of the media – of shows like “Desperate Housewives,” “Tiara Girls,” and “Laguna Beach,” and movies like “The Stepford Wives” which glamorize rivalry and submissiveness. Women must overcome the influence of these images in order to have more productive relationships with each other.

As role models, which all women are for future generations and for each other, women must begin to seek out ways in which they can encourage difference and support one another’s achievements. They must bump the standard up a little higher – for themselves, for their best friend, for their boyfriends, for their husbands, for their employers, for their mentors, for their mentees, for their mothers, for their daughters. A new kind of relationship among women is entirely possible, especially with the help and support of male counterparts. At some point, we have to help all women become queens. By affirming that each of us will have the tiara at one point in our lives, we can smile as the prom queen is crowned because you know exactly how she must feel.

The final event of National Coming Out Week, “I Feel Pretty,” was postponed until Friday, October 27th. “I Feel Pretty” is an alternative fashion show celebrating all types of beauty, not just the standards that the media presents. It offered students a chance to strut their stuff and share what makes them feel pretty—dimples, not wearing J. Crew, playing rugby, having curves. Some students took a more performance aspect to the evening, singing songs, playing violin, and reciting poetry. Ultimately, the evening reminded students that beauty is unique—no one standard can define what is and isn’t beautiful.

National Coming Out Week at Boston College is an important time for the GLBT community to share their stories with one another and the campus as a whole. On a campus where homophobia is still present, it is necessary to have such events to remind both closeted and out students that there is a community of support here at BC for them. The GLC, Lambda, and Allies look forward to producing a number of other events this year to help raise awareness and support for the GLBT community and ultimately help all students find their place at Boston College.

Amanda Denes is a senior in A & S.
SHROUD

BY: ANI DI FRANCO

I had to leave the house of fashion
go forth naked from its doorscuz women should be alliesnot competitors
and I had to leave the house of god
cuz the cross replaced the wheel
and the goddesses were out in the garden
with the plants that nourish and heal

I had to leave the house of privilege
spend Christmas homeless and feeling bad
to learn that privilege is a headache
that you don’t know that you don’t have

I had to leave the house of television
to start noticing the clouds
it’s amazing the stuff you see
when you finally shed that shroud

times women’s skills are overshadowed by their physical appearances and their identities essentially become invisible.

“Hello Mr. Man. You didn’t think I’d come back...Now that I’m a zillionaire, you scan the credits for your name and wonder why it’s not there.”

Alanis’ tale doesn’t end on a hopeless note, however, as the last verse details her success, a success she achieved independent of any man’s help. Unlike a Cinderella-type figure, Alanis was saved by her own strength and perseverance, rather than the arrival of her very own Prince Charming.

This song speaks to the ability of women to overcome obstacles presented in the workplace. The women’s movement is still evolving and enacting change and I believe it is important for young feminists to take control of their own destinies and contribute to these societal transformations.

As college students, the glass ceiling is very likely to be an obstacle we will encounter in the working world. It is crucial that we do not let it, or any man or woman, hold us down. We need to move right on through.
GET INVOLVED!

BOSTON COLLEGE’S WOMEN’S HEALTH INITIATIVE TACKLES REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ISSUES

By: Andrew Kaplun

For decades, reproductive rights issues have taken on a certain primacy among the pantheon of American social and political controversies. Pro-Choice vs. Pro-Life, comprehensive sex education and other related topics are a flashpoint in debates from local PTAs to the House of Representatives, and this debate rages on at Boston College as the Women’s Health Initiative fights to have a voice on campus to advocate for reproductive rights.

Founded in 2004, the Women’s Health Initiative is essentially an advocacy and resource group of and for BC students, both male and female, who are concerned about women’s health issues. One of the primary goals of WHI is to spread the word and promote awareness of these issues, which affect this campus, our country and our world.

Among the initial principals of the group were Esme Deprez A&S 2006, Reena Parikh A&S 2006, Katherine Adam A&S 2007, Julia Simon A&S 2007, Cecilia Fierro A&S 2008, Seif Ammus CSOM 2008, Caroline Vuilleumier LSOE 2007, Laura Martin A&S 2007 and Stephanie Lyndon A&S 2007, who worked alongside the Global Justice Project and the College Democrats of Boston College to get things up and running. In the beginning, the group was just a small circle of people thinking about how they might make a difference in the Boston College community. The organization since has become more than just a place to share ideas; it has taken on an active role in shaping debate and discourse at BC while also making significant contributions to broader women’s health causes.

During the 2005-2006 academic year, WHI was still very much in the philosophical stages of development, determining the course its future actions would take and deciding upon a foundational set of beliefs from which all else would spring forth. There has been a great deal of question about the necessity or morality of a pro-choice group at a Catholic university, especially in light of changes this year to the speakers’ policy which have placed increased emphasis on the primacy of Catholic values over freedom of inquiry. But the consensus of the founding principals was that their voices needed to be heard, so that all those in the BC community would have access to information about their health and their rights.

Despite the lack of a warm welcome, the members of WHI decided to plot out an uncompromised plan to promote awareness of and advocate women’s health issues, especially those associated with reproductive rights, while still remaining true to the mission of BC. However, many in the administration did not feel similarly and set up institutional roadblocks for WHI. For example, university rules preclude WHI from receiving any university funds, from meeting in any university building, and from participating in or sponsoring any university event on campus. When WHI sought to have an expert panel convened at BC on February 28, 2006 to discuss the nomination of Samuel Alito, the Office of the Dean of Student Development cancelled the event at the last minute, and it was only with the help of the Sociology Department that the panel was allowed to go forward. The goal of the panel was essentially to discuss the current status of reproductive rights in the United States, what the future of those rights might be in light of the additions of Justices Roberts and Alito, and other related issues and concerns. The panel was ultimately well attended and well received by many, and was WHI’s first major success.

Despite the loss of valued veterans Esme Deprez and Reena Parikh to the steady toll of graduation, the progress of the Women’s Health Initiative continues unabated into this year. Working hand in hand with other social justice groups on campus, WHI has received an outstanding response from both experienced upperclassmen and freshmen just learning about its mission. On October 15, more than a dozen members of the group participated in the American Cancer Society-sponsored Hope Starts Here Boston Walk to raise money for breast cancer research, eventually raising close to $2,000 in donations. On October 18, several people gathered in the Dust Bowl for a vigil, in memory of all those women who have passed away as a result of unsafe abortions.

We ended the fall semester with an event co-sponsored by the Women of Color Caucus and the University Issues Department of UGBC - a November 6th appearance (7 PM in Gasson 305) by Loretta Ross, executive director of the SisterSong, a collective committed to human rights, women’s rights and racial justice, as well an ongoing campaign of awareness of the Global Gag Rule, an official U.S. policy prohibiting foreign aid to any entity that mentions the right to choose or counsel safe sex.

To keep your finger on the pulse of what’s going on right here at BC in regards to women’s health issues and the efforts of the Women’s Health Initiative, look out for future editions of Voices.

Andrew Kaplun is a sophomore Political Science and Economics major in A & S.
Daniela Ramirez  
Class of 2008  
School of Arts & Sciences  
Major: Sociology  
Minor: WOMEN’S STUDIES

When asked why I became a Women’s Studies Minor, I can only respond with one question, how could I not be? Since the start of my college career my eyes have been opened to a world I had no idea I was a part of. I realized that I had been living in this world that thrives on my own degradation, that was strategically designed to keep women like me down, and that all the insecurities and failures of my past were centered around the sole attribute I had no control over, my gender. All the ambiguous angst, the mixed messages, and the myths that were born in my little girl head were all part of what I took for granted as simply part of being a woman. All it took was one course at Boston College, Women and Work, and it suddenly became so clear, that was all I needed. I was hooked. I felt as if a weight had been lifted and I finally understood why I never felt good enough, for anyone or anything in the past. I felt deceived, confused, but most of all inspired.

Studying the role of women has forced me to re-think the structure of our society, a difficult yet promising task. Through women’s studies courses I have been made aware of the vast challenges I will face as a woman in this world. While this may seem to be a disheartening reality, when I hear all the stories and experiences of women in the past who have fought to make a difference, who have overcome the stereotypes, the violence, and the injustice, I am filled with nothing but hope. I know that I too can become part of that movement and the history of influential women of this world.

I added the Women’s Studies minor to my transcript just this semester, on the first day of junior year. I was greatly enjoying the introduction to an English course, Convents, Covens, and Crusaders, that scrutinizes literary portrayals of women from medieval to Elizabethan times Everything the professor mentioned about gender roles —past and present — and the trajectory of our course fascinated me as an English major and as a proud feminist, and I wondered, how it could possibly have taken me so long to discover my perfect minor. After that class, I raced back to my dorm room and began toying with my schedule, searching the inventory of courses. Shopping the Women’s Studies classes, I resembled a three-year-old in a candy store.

Why was this something I just knew I had to do? Because nearly every English essay I have ever written deals with the novel’s female characters.

Because I have an amazing single mother, but have never studied the social constructs of marriage and the reality of divorce that leaves women to raise their children largely alone.

Because I have two beautiful, intelligent, and quirky little sisters, but have little idea of how to help them navigate the gendered world they will undoubtedly face.

Because my best friend and I are ardent feminists who love to debate women’s issues, but do not have the theoretical background for our arguments or the connections to make the type of change we desire.

In the best decision I have ever made on a year’s first day of school, I selected the Women’s Studies minor to establish that knowledge base and those connections with all the amazing women of Boston College. My only regret is that I did not declare this minor the moment I arrived at BC.

Lindsay Williams  
Class of 2008  
School of Arts & Sciences  
Major: English  
Minor: WOMEN’S STUDIES

The minor consists of a total of 6 courses:

Two Required Courses:
1. Introduction to Feminisms  
   (EN125 / HS 148 / PS 125 / SC 225)

2. Advanced Topics in Women’s Studies  
   (EN 593)

Four Additional Courses:
For a list of the Spring Semester Women’s Studies courses see page. 3.
Sheila McMahon really wants to help you. The moment you cross the threshold into her office in the Women’s Resource Center (WRC), it’s evident that she’s passionate about connecting with you, as both a student and a woman. Her enthusiasm is contagious, and if her optimism and excitement are any indication, she’s a perfect fit for her new role as director of the WRC.

McMahon stepped into her new job just this fall, taking over for Jennifer Tilghman-Havens, the WRC’s first director, but McMahon was far from unfamiliar with the program. She graduated from Boston College in 1998 with a major in English and a minor in Women’s Studies. She credits the Women’s Studies Program for fostering a lot of conversation on campus during her days as a student.

"It was a really vibrant program. There was a large population of minors. There was a lot of energy around the program and people doing some really interesting research. I remember having a really wide array of views among the students and that was a really helpful teaching tool also," said McMahon.

After BC, McMahon went on to pursue a master’s degree in divinity at Harvard University. After receiving her master’s degree from the Divinity School, she sought a job where she could really help lead a ministry of sorts, leading her to the vacant director position at the Women’s Resource Center. McMahon had worked at the WRC in her undergraduate days, and was involved with women’s spirituality on campus, in addition to working with Campus Ministry and serving as an Appalachia volunteer. BC left an indelible mark on her and it seemed a natural choice to come back to her old stomping ground.

"I really loved the Jesuit commitment to the development of the whole person and also the social justice emphasis. And I really missed being in a higher education setting and among people who were asking questions and thinking critically and exploring new ideas," said McMahon.

As the new director, McMahon is eager to examine what works for the WRC and for women at BC as a whole. She has nothing but praise for her WRC staff and credits them with helping her get into the routine of her new job.

“I have a staff of 7 undergraduates and one graduate student and they’re just incredibly thoughtful, creative, and engaged in a way that is really compelling and makes everyday sort of an adventure,” said McMahon.

She and her staff work hard on programs and events geared towards BC’s female community. They run programs throughout the year dealing with everything from women’s health issues to sexual violence education.

“Our big push right now is working on the events for “Love Your Body” Week and really trying to develop a series of programs that really emphasize positive body image for students on campus,” said McMahon. “It’s a way for us to really reach out to students, to encourage the formation of a culture that really values positive body image.”

“Love Your Body Week” runs from November 9th to the 17th and activities that the WRC is sponsoring range from salsa lessons to conversations about healthy eating in the dining halls.

The WRC has also initiated a few new programs under McMahon this fall, including a freshman’s interest group that targets first-year women and provides support during their transition into college. As McMahon says, “A lot of what I’m trying to do this year is just really listen and get a sense of where people are at and what they need, what their interests are so we can continue to expand our programs based on those needs and interests.”

McMahon also advocates open and mutual dialogue between women on campus and the University as a mean for BC women to begin to understand their connection to Boston College and the history of women at their school.

“The history of this institution in many ways doesn’t include women, because we were just not here as a physical presence on campus. I think that having a place like the WRC is an opportunity not only to support women on campus and support women’s issues but also to invite the University to think about how the institution has been shaped by women, how it continues to change because of women students being here on campus and how the institution reflects that presence in a way that really fulfills its mission of educating the whole person,” said McMahon.

She believes that involvement in the WRC and its programs, as well as involvement in other specifically women-based groups on campus, can greatly enrich a person’s self-identity and college experience.

McMahon understands the challenge of reaching out to all women on campus, but she and her staff are dedicated to becoming a visible force on campus this year first. McMahon says that it’s an ongoing process, but that every individual women needs to know that she has a support system in place for her.

“I want her [BC women] to feel that this is a place where she belongs. I want her to feel that her values and needs are being addressed and recognized, and that she has a voice and that, that voice is valuable.”

Natalie Horbachevsky is sophomore English major in A & S.

The WRC is located in McElroy Hall Room 141.
I like to consider myself an aficionado of television. Head priestess, if you will. The bottom line is this: I watch a lot of TV. My shows range from the incredibly fabulous “Nip/Tuck” to embarrassing reruns of “The Nanny.” I do drama, I do crime, I do sitcoms. I even do the occasional reality show.

But one thing I didn’t do, until quite recently, was gender.

This wasn’t from a lack of trying. For a long time, it seemed the best programming for the feminist within was a midnight rerun of “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” and a “thank-god-life-isn’t-like-this-anymore” viewing of “Leave it to Beaver.” For the feminist viewer, or anyone wishing to find any realistic portrayal of women living the American dream on television, the offerings were as disappointing as late-night Chuck Norris infomercials. It was a white canvas dominated by the tough guys of primetime: Perry Mason, Tony Soprano, Dr. Doug Ross, House, and the like. Women on TV were simpering plastics for the romantic aesthetic, save the notable exceptions like Murphy Brown and the ladies of “Sex and the City.” Not much has changed until, 2005, when a new medical drama was unveiled punching a hole in the television landscape to refocus the role of women in primetime.

“Grey’s Anatomy” is profoundly popular. I watch it, my roommates watch it, my parents watch it, and I’ll wager a dollar or two that you’ve caught at least one episode. “Grey’s” is one of the powerhouse hits that has brought ABC back to the table of notable broadcasting, but it has also brought a new perspective to the evening lineup. “Grey’s Anatomy” focuses on the lives and loves of interns in a bustling Seattle hospital. But perhaps more importantly, the show has redefined leading roles on television and empowered women in the production process. While “Grey’s” is not the perfect vehicle for elevating the cause and visibility of women on television, it has made great strides in pushing through the glass ceiling of television norms.

First-time “Grey’s” viewers (fondly called “virgins” by many longtime fans) would probably be most startled by the diversity of the cast on “Grey’s Anatomy.” We live in a world where television’s medical dramas have been populated by upper-class white doctors. “ER” is the quintessential example here; doctors like George Clooney schmoozed the pretty-in-pink scrubs nursing staffers while the female doctors became overly emotional (Dr. Corday), lesbians (Dr. Weaver), or AIDS patients (Dr. Boulet). While these are generalizations, they illustrate the point that women in medical shows were grossly underrepresented before the advent of “Grey’s Anatomy.”

Three of the five central characters on this show are intelligent, forthright women. Meredith Grey, Izzie Stephens, and Christina Yang compete tooth and nail with the men in their cohort and, delightfully, win more times than not. These interns work under a powerful resident nicknamed “the Nazi,” but many have been startled to find that “the Nazi” is Dr. Miranda Bailey, an African-American female doctor. As characters’ stories develop and expand, the show illuminates many problems faced by professional women, including “mommy-tracking,” sexual objectification, and the woes of competition, but writers still manage to make the female characters more believable. The program also empowers these women with mental and sexual powers, as they harness these abilities to advance their careers and relationship. Indeed, rather than be limp rag dolls in a hospital full of male competition, these female interns accelerate their personal and professional lives to compete and assert their visibility on an unprecedented level in television.

The strides and victories “Grey’s” has made on television are not limited to gender. The show has, in fact, broken many barriers for racially-diverse characters on television. Grey works with two prominent African-American...
The Red Tent by: Anita Diamant

Reviewed by: Jackie Hubbell

The Red Tent, by Anita Diamant, is a historical fiction set in the biblical times, told from the perspective of the women of the Bible. This approach is unique because we know so little of the lives of the women who appear throughout the Bible. The novel is based on the sequence of biblical events surrounding the life of Jacob and his wives, and through Diamant’s fictitious descriptions of their everyday joys and struggles, she creates a window for us to see the reality of their lives.

The book is narrated by Dinah, a daughter of Jacob mentioned briefly in the context of her brothers avengement of her rape. In the novel, however, it is through her eyes that we learn about Jacob’s many wives, and are able to understand the complicated nature of their relationships, which are sometimes characterized by bitter rivalry, and other times by selfless love and loyalty. The focal point of the women’s lives is that Dinah, the only female child of the community, is allowed to be a part of the “red tent,” where the women go each month for the duration of their menstrual periods. The women’s time in the “red tent” demonstrates their reliance on one another for community, and their reverence for the sacred nature of their ability to give life.

The novel celebrates the communal values and strength of women that existed in the Biblical times, despite its envelopment in a strict patriarchal structure. The Red Tent provides the women of today with an example of the importance of passing on the stories of the women who have come before us, the strength that is found through a community of women, and the self-love that comes from embracing the things that make us women.

“Grey’s Anatomy” has also improved the visibility of women writers in the television industry.

“Grey’s Anatomy,” and I’ll take a bit of McDreamy on the side for garnish. At the risk of sounding overly-optimistic or dramatic, I think “Grey’s Anatomy” is a great sign for changing times. Perhaps now, when I open my TV Guide, I’ll begin to see more listings featuring kick-ass female firefighters or witty and independent female stock brokers. Perhaps we’ll see more brazen independence, assertive braininess, and personal drive. Perhaps we’ll see more size eights and fewer size zeroes, more assurance and less Maybelline, more friendships and less cattiness. But until this utopian TV lineup comes to fruition, I’ll be satisfied with the bridges being built by the smart, innovative interns of “Grey’s Anatomy,” and I’ll take a bit of McDreamy on the side for garnish.

Jackie Hubbell is a sophomore English major in A & S.

Cooley Horner is a sophomore Communications major in A & S.
Over 40,000 women die of breast cancer every year in the United States, making it the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women every year, behind only lung cancer. In light of this startling epidemic, a nationwide effort has been underway to promote research for new treatments and preventive measures. October is the month when this campaign kicks in to high gear, as it is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. With this in mind, Boston College’s very own Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) took to the streets of our fair city on October 15 with thousands of others to raise money to fight for a cure.

My friends and allies within WHI, had no idea what to expect in terms of response from the BC student body’s attendance and fundraising abilities. We started with a modest goal of raising $100 for the American Cancer Society, but our humble initial goal ultimately proved to be just a little too humble. Ultimately the participants raised more than 17 times of our initial goal, close to $2,000. Although a six mile walk early in the morning after homecoming didn’t seem like anyone’s idea of fun, we were all really pumped up at the sight of the thousands of others who turned out alongside of us. Our group, which numbered approximately 15, paled in comparison to the armies of volunteers who were unwaveringly and energetically devoted to the walk, but instead of feeling intimidated by our comparatively small numbers, we only felt invigorated and reinforced (two good feelings to have as you scale a narrow path only feet away from cars flying down Storrow Drive).

Despite the fact that I’m male, and it may be puzzling to some as to why I’ve chosen to become such a staunch advocate for comprehensive women’s health, I find that my advocacy is something completely independent of gender. I am truly an advocate for the health of all people, because at the very core of who I am, I believe that all human beings deserve free and uncompromised access to the best healthcare possible. It is with that in mind that I so strongly pursue my goal of better health for women, and for all people, and looking back on my experience now, it was incredibly rewarding to do something that will eventually contribute to the cause of women’s health. The existence of the Women’s Health Initiative at Boston College has become so surrounded by politics, ideology and morality that it’s sometimes hard to put all of that aside for the greater non-partisan good, but in spite of tiring legs and lingering hangovers, the never-ending smiling faces of my compatriots demonstrated to me that that is exactly what we did.

Andrew Kaplun is a sophomore Political Science and Economics major in A & S.
WOMEN IN THE NEWS

SHATTERING THE GLASS CEILING AND ENDING UP IN THE MESS: EXPLORING THE HEWLETT PACKARD SCANDAL

BY: JENNIFER REILLY

In less than two years, technology company Hewlett Packard has made headlines in Corporate America with the subsequent firings of two high level executives. Why the fuss? These two individuals were females, Carly Fiorina and Patricia Dunn, and were among a slim group of women in high-ranking positions in Fortune 500 companies. What brought about their rise to the top and, more importantly, what brought them down so quickly and so publicly?

For the entire month of October, Patricia Dunn was seemingly everywhere in the news. Her Wall Street Journal caricature was repeatedly on the front page and she was under intense scrutiny regarding her involvement in a scandal concerning leaks from the boardroom. The circumstances surrounding her rise to non-executive chairman (chairwoman is more like it, though the Wall Street Journal would never verbalize that!) of the board were full controversy too, as she stepped in around the same time that Carly Fiorina was stepping out or, more appropriately, being pushed out.

Mrs. Fiorina, named by Fortune magazine as the “Most Powerful Woman in Business” and the first female CEO of a Fortune 20 company, was forced out of her high-powered position some 20 months before, in February of 2005. Appointed to the position six years before, her rise to the top and subsequent descent have been the topics of many articles focusing on her role in the technology company as well as women’s positions in the corporate world. Fiorina, quiet until recently, has just come out with a book detailing her experience called Tough Choices: A Memoir.

The reasoning behind Hewlett Packard’s (HP) decision to fire Ms. Fiorina was complex. While HP didn’t exactly take back the CEO position given to Ms. Fiorina, the board did dismiss her on the basis of her less than favorable leadership and failure to produce the earnings she had initially promised. But was that it? Upon accepting the position, Mrs. Fiorina was facing an uphill battle as the technology boom had previously peaked and was now beginning to fade. Fiorina, in her newly elected position, was expected to boost these numbers and jumpstart the stagnant company, a formidable task. This was a daunting job that, though prestigious, would require a great deal of stress, work and self-sacrifice.

Is it a mere coincidence that a challenge like this was delegated to a woman? Hewlett Packard may have merely set up their “it girl” to fail, by providing her with an unsupportive staff and less than favorable working conditions. This may be a cynical take on the first Fortune 20 company to appoint a female CEO, but were their motives for choosing a woman less than sincere? Let us compare the ensuing progress of Hewlett Packard with that of rival, IBM. The newly elected president of IBM, Sal Palmisano, still has his job despite recent decreases in IBM’s earnings while both Fiorina and Dunn, two women CEO’s in similar situations, were fired. The only difference here comes down to gender. Did Fiorina and Dunn break through the “glass ceiling” only to be forced back down, amidst shards of broken glass?

The situation here is complex and no one knows for sure what truly went on behind the closed doors of the Hewlett Packard boardroom. But the subsequent rise and fall of these two women, within the same company, appears all too coincidental and is a testament to the fact that gender does in fact play a role in the workplace, particularly in the corporate world. As women continue to gain more rights and entry into higher positions and occupations, fields that were once formally dominated by an “old boys club,” men are beginning to feel the pressure. Could this have been the case at HP? Upon appointing Fiorina, and later Dunn, did it become too hard for male higher-ups to work and contribute under a female superior? This is purely speculative, but there appears to be evidence demonstrating the rise and decline of support for both females upon their placement in office. What could have led to such a drastic change?

In business, it all comes down to the bottom line. And the bottom line here is that two extremely intelligent women were ousted, receiving a great deal of blame as a troubled company continued its downward spiral. By accepting their respected positions were they being set up to fail? As much as we think strides are being made in the business world, it appears that women still have to fight tooth and nail to get what they want. And sadly, even when we do, it can be taken away in the blink of an eye.

Jennifer Reilly is a junior Finance and Accounting major in the CSOM.
I’M NOT A FEMINIST OR ANYTHING BUT . . .

By: Erin Mindell

We’ve all been there, sitting in a classroom contemplating some piece of writing or another, when it happens. It’s almost slow motion the way her hand rises into the air, her fingers tentatively waggling at the end of her delicate wrist. You know it’s coming. She is called on, her lips part and out comes those words: “I’m not a feminist or anything, but . . .”

I want to be angry with her for starting her statement, or any statement, with denouncing the word “feminist,” but I cannot definitively say that I have not done the same thing. Why? Why are we still so scared to use that word? Dictionary.com defines “feminist” as “the doctrine advocating social, political, and all other rights of women equal to those of men.” By that definition, almost everyone I know is a feminist. Yet, all too many times, we are stopped from using the word because of the ideas it invokes in others. Some people think that feminists are “man haters” or “dykes” or even “bra-burners.” I cannot denounce these stereotypes because, the truth is, feminism is about not having to define oneself by someone else’s rules. Some people may identify as one of these terms as well as a feminist, and they are not wrong to do so. But the fact is these words come from somewhere. In order to understand why they connote negativity, one must look to their beginnings.

It is unclear where the term feminist originated, but it is thought to have come from Europe in the 1800s. During this time, the Industrial Revolution moved communities from rural farmlands to the bustling city. This created a middle class, and, more importantly, a time when men and women’s roles were being strictly defined in terms of public and private spheres. During the second half of the century, the French words “feministe” and “feminisme” started circulating in response to the limited gender roles women were to adhere to. The ideas behind these words were not new, but having a specific term to associate with granting women the rights they deserved was as empowering then, as it is now.

During the 1920s the idea of feminism ran rampant. Women fought for the right to vote and for higher educational opportunities. Unfortunately, once a few goals were met, the movement died down and future generations fell into complacency, or at least silence.

It wasn’t until the Women’s Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s that the word feminist became widespread. It became one of several words used to describe the people behind the movement that called for gender equality. Women’s circles started meeting and talking, creating pamphlets and handouts to spread the word of the movement: equality. Women started referring to themselves as feminists to show a unification that they had long been denied. It was a powerful word that helped women feel less isolated in their private spheres. Those who found the movement and word threatening, however, did all that they could to make these women seem crazy or ridiculous. The media, in particular, had a field day sensationalizing the women’s movement, which is how the term “bra-burner” came to light.

In 1968 the Atlantic City “Miss America” beauty pageant went on, as it had since the 1920s. This particular year, however, a group of feminist women surrounded what they called a “freedom trash can” and symbolically burned their bras, articles they believed demonstrated a man’s oppression over a woman. When asked if the Atlantic City government had objected to the protest, Robin Morgan, one of the women protesters, told a reporter that they eased the mayor’s fire-safety worries by telling him, “we wouldn’t do anything dangerous—just a symbolic bra-burning.” The New York Times reported on the event neglecting to describe the symbolic reasoning behind the “bra-burnings,” twisting the words and context in order to make the women seem petty and absurd. By using this term in a negative way, the Times made these women seem so extreme that it became difficult for both women and men to see the symbolic nature of the incident. Today, “bra-burner” is still used as an insult meant to make women feel menial or trite.

Another common stereotype of
feminists is that they are “man-haters.” The idea of shaking up the social norms that placed women in the home and men in a position of superiority was terrifying to many. Women, as well as men, thought that what feminists wanted was to take privileges away from men. In fact, in order for women to have equal rights, men would have to give up some of their rights, so the idea behind the threat was real. No one wanted to give up their power, whether they earned it or not, but the idea that women wanted rights just to spite men is unfounded.

The word “dyke” or “dike,” another negative connotation of feminists, originated in the early 1700s. It appeared in British newspaper stories about cross-dressing pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read. One editorial euphemistically referred to their cross dressing with a French word, dike, which referred to men’s clothing (Wikipedia). In the early 20th century the term “bull-dyke” was used to describe lesbians or as an insult to women who were not acting feminine enough. It was abbreviated to “dyke” and has been used to as a derogatory word to refer to masculine women ever since. Yet “dyke” is one of those few derogatory words that has been re-claimed by an oppressed group. Its use among lesbians can refer to active or less feminine women, but the hatred has softened within many lesbian communities.

Given its rich history and the complexity of its usage, it is no wonder that the “f-word” is still so misunderstood. The only way we can begin to breakdown these negative stereotypes is by showing the world how different a feminist can be. If we believe in the definition behind the word, advocating women’s rights and human equality, we should stand with pride. After all, change cannot come unless we are willing to define ourselves in our own terms. Feminist is not a bad word, and calling yourself a feminist does not make you a bad person. This is what feminism looks like, and I am proud to be among those who identify as such.

Erin Mindell is a senior English major in the School of A & S.

THIS IS WHAT A BC FEMINIST LOOKS LIKE

When I mentioned to a family friend that I was a Women’s Studies minor, she suffered a noticeable shudder and said, “You’re not going to become one of those feminists, are you?” I ignored the bile that peppered her pronunciation of “feminist” and considered my hometown’s perception of feminists. In this conservative southern town, a feminist is a mythical figure who stalks through big cities carrying a sack full of bras she’ll never wear tossed over her shoulder. She shirks Christianity, hates men, cannot cook, and neglects her five or six children as she viciously pursues sixteen liberal professions. She is a devious deviant.

Armed with this image, I can only imagine my friends’ horror when they heard I was going to become “one of them.” I’m sure they were even more startled when they realized that I’m not ashamed to be a feminist, and I doubt they’d like to know that it was these distorted stereotypes that have made me the feminist I am today. Indeed, I became a feminist to fight the injustice of stereotypes, such as these, which neatly package individuals into unfair boxes to be judged by society. I have grown up digesting and rejecting these stereotypes of races, people, and ideas, and I’m tired of seeing these notions spoon-fed and embraced by society. Ignorance is hurtful and unacceptable, and it is one reason why I’m fighting such preposterous suggestions about feminists, the supposed evil sisters-in-law of the Wicked Witch of the West. We don’t want to emblazon the female anatomy on the crest of the US, and we don’t want to spend hours upon hours hugging ourselves and celebrating the power of our minds over our wombs.

As a feminist, I want to honor the individuality, intelligence, and importance of women throughout the world and expand their equalities. By rejecting negative, ignorant recipes of feminism, I am perpetuating my own brand of feminism that makes me proud to say, “Yes, I am one of them.”

Laura Mueller is a senior English major in A & S.

I don’t hate men. To borrow from the quintessential anti-discriminator, some of my best friends are men. I was twenty-one years old before I realized that this seemingly ordinary fact didn’t prevent me from being a feminist. And I’m still twenty-one years old, which means it wasn’t that long ago that I started to feel comfortable applying the daunting label of feminism to my own beliefs.

I think what I’d really like to call myself is a social humanist who believes in the equality of all genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, etc., but that’s impossible when my gender is so far behind according to the standards of society and the statistics of the professional world, when homosexuals can’t marry, and when certain ethnicities face unfair discrimination. To be a social humanist in 2006 America is inherently to be a feminist, a proponent of gay rights, and an anti-racist.

Though I only recently began to understand myself as a feminist, the ideas that define me as one have existed for much longer. In high school, I faced sexism as the only female on the varsity ice hockey team, and when I look back on my defiant attitude and my determination to succeed despite this adversity, I don’t question that I was a feminist. But studying feminism and gender roles through an academic lens has showed me that using the word feminism is acceptable, and that I can be a feminist without adhering to a harsh, reverse-discriminatory stereotype.
I am a feminist for those who identify with the feminist mentality, but are silenced by its negative stigma. And above all, I am a feminist for men in general, for the faculty, professors, and deans of Boston College.

I discovered my feminist identity freshman year at BC. I was taking a course, “Women and Work,” and discovered a part of me that I had been carrying all along, but had been unable to identify. I quickly realized that there was no way that I could not be a feminist.

I am a feminist for myself, an ambitious Colombian-American woman who refuses to allow her gender to limit her possibilities.

I am a feminist for my mother and my sisters. For my aunts and my Godmother and my cousins.

I am a feminist for my roommates and my best friends. For the women that sit alongside me in class everyday and the others I pass by on campus.

I am a feminist for the wives they will marry and daughters they will have.

I am a feminist for men in general, who women need as allies in the fight for equality.

I am a feminist for the faculty, professors, and deans of Boston College.

I am a feminist so that the women that come after me will live in a world where they are one step closer to equality.

I am feminist for those who identify with the feminist mentality, but are silenced by its negative stigma. And above all, I am a feminist for men in general, for the faculty, professors, and deans of Boston College.

The creation of this newsletter for me has been a labor of love. While VOICES has been published in the past it has remained dormant for a number of years, but now after much hard work its revival is finally here!

The publication of VOICES could not have been done alone. I want to thank all the intelligent, creative, and strong willed women who were a part of its creation. You are all an inspiration to me.

I would also like to thank those from the BC community who contributed financially to the creation of Voices. Without you the newsletter would have never been possible.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest thanks to Dr. Sharlene Hesse-Biber, my professor, mentor, and friend. Your support is unconditional, your guidance is steadfast, and your example is inspirational. Without you I would have never found my path at BC and for that I am forever thankful.

This is the first of many editions of VOICES. Look out for us next semester and please feel free to contact me at ramirezx@bc.edu with comments, suggestions, or concerns. Enjoy!

Ximena Ramirez is a senior Communications major in A & S.
The creation of VOICES would not have been possible without the help of many people. A special thanks goes out to...

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In a different vein, VOICES seeks creative piece as well to publish in future issues. Is there a particular song or poem that inspires you? Is there an issue at BC that you would like to further explore? Do you have an exceptional professor or women’s studies student you would like to profile? Let us know!

We would also like to hear about programs you may be planning in your own departments and events of interest to women’s studies so that we may list them in VOICES.

We want VOICES to serve the entire women’s studies community and would appreciate any announcements, letters to the editors, comments or suggestions.

Please contact Ximena Ramirex, Editor-In-Chief, at ramirezx@bc.edu