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An inside look at Wellesley's (in)famous minority

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"It's not a girl's school without men, but a women's college without boys." Or is it?

This popular catchphrase, along with a host of others, can be found plastered on Wellesley t-shirts and bumper stickers. However, one look around the campus reveals that this phrase is not completely true.

Though Wellesley has been a women's college since its founding, the campus is constantly filled with men: professors, staff, boyfriends, fathers, and recently, students.

At the college where "BYOB" stands for "Bring Your Own Boys," the idea of a male student may seem to be a kind of joke. But the truth is that male students are present at Wellesley in ever-growing numbers, and as one Wellesley student put it, "It's obvious when they aren't in class."

The registrar's office reports that there are currently 65 male students enrolled in classes at Wellesley from nearby colleges including Olin, Babson, Brandeis and MIT.

The most popular classes for male students at Wellesley this semester are studio art, music and language courses. There are also several males enrolled in economics, political science, and sociology courses. Another interesting fact is that famous alum Hillary Rodham Clinton '69 did not face the effects of male students in her classes, as the first male student did not register at Wellesley until 1972.

With Spring Open Campus right around the corner, it is clear that male students at Wellesley can make a drastic impact on the essence of the college. Many prospective students are drawn to a women's college because it can be less intimidating to speak up in class without men or because it is less time consuming not to get dressed up for every class because a cute guy is there.

For some, the importance of a women's college stems from an even deeper desire to live and learn in a community of independent and intelligent women. So how do guys fit into this picture?

It is not an easy task to evaluate the extent to which male students affect the dynamics of a women's college. Fortunately, as with almost everything, Wellesley students have an opinion.

When Wellesley first years were asked what they thought about having male students in their classes, the answers varied from the comical "now I'm going to have to start brushing my hair regularly" to the more serious: "I don't particularly like the only guy who I've had in class." Another demonstrated that she really did not care about having male students in her classes when she said, "So? They're all way too scared and quiet to make much of a difference."

Yet even the fact that the first years wished to remain anonymous in their responses could

be attributed to the growing influence and power of male students here. However, not all members of the Wellesley community believe in conspiracy theories about male infiltration into the college.

Nancy Hall, professor of Spanish, has taught multiple male students during her 17 years here. When asked whether she believed that the dynamic of a class changed with the introduction of a male student, she responded, "Because of a man's presence? No, although for a minority of female students it might be an issue. The dynamic may change if there are strong personalities of either gender involved, but not simply because someone is male or female."

What is the opinion of the offending party? Michael Boutelle, a cross-registered student from Olin, shared his experiences at Wellesley. He said, "I must admit, it was a bit odd stepping into the classroom for the first time. This was not mainly because the composition of the class was entirely of the fairer sex but because at Olin, whenever I entered a room, I already knew all of my peers. I was worried about how I would be received as an outsider, and being the only guy there, my status as an outsider was blatantly obvious."S

o, taking into consideration all these opinions, only a few questions remain. If a Wellesley College student is declared to be "not a girl, not yet a woman" as a recent article in the Harvard Crimson concluded, does that make male students at Wellesley boys or men? Also, is that guy on the exchange bus on his way to see his girlfriend or on his way to class?

Like it or not, the guys are here to stay. If they get out of hand, there are, no doubt, some Wellesley women willing and ready to cut them down a few notches. After all, Wellesley is famous for "130 years of women on top."