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'A Hybrid In All Sorts of Ways': Teaching Women's Studies in the Academy

Sue Jackson¹

Introduction

There has been much discussion of late of the decline in women's studies in the British academy. Discussion has ranged around the institutional closing down of women's studies departments and programmes, and around the experiences of students on women's studies degrees. What is it like, though, to be a lecturer in women's studies in an academy, which often feels like an alien and unwelcoming place to be. What brought lecturers in women's studies to their discipline, and how do they see their future? What constraints do they face on their current work? Can women's studies challenge traditional academic structures? What *is* the role of women's studies in the academy?

I have documented the briefer views of women's studies lecturers on these issues elsewhere (Jackson, (1999(a)); Jackson (2000(a)). This article is based on in depth interviews with the lecturers in one women's studies department in a 'new' university in London (see appendix 1 for the interview questions). As with any group of women (albeit a very small group of four), the lecturers have differences between them, as well as similarities they share. I have here, for reasons of confidentiality, chosen to say little about the lecturers individually in terms of social class, age, sexuality etc. Nevertheless, these differences are issues, which the lecturers discussed during the interviews, and they will be included here. I have on the whole chosen to write their comments collectively rather than separately, again because of issues of confidentiality. Some of the lecturers commented that their positions are well known within their department, and this alone might identify them. Although then my collective and nameless writing up might appear to distance the lecturers and seems not to acknowledge them as people this is not my intention. The lecturers all work within women's studies, some full-time, whilst others work part-time in women's studies and part-time in other disciplines, and have been working at the university for a varying number of years.

A Career in Women's Studies?

I started off the interviews by asking the lecturers what led them to a career in women's studies.

This turned out to be the wrong question, as none of the lecturers felt they *had* a career in women's studies. Indeed, for as I will show elsewhere (Jackson, forthcoming), it is often difficult for women to document a career in higher education. Whilst many women are keen to transcend the boundaries of more traditional academic research and teaching, the gatekeepers of the academy ensure that the work of women academics remain undervalued, with severe effects on their career opportunities and development. Women, for instance, are more likely to earn less than men, are more likely to be on short-term contracts, and less likely to be in senior positions.

For some of the lecturers their current job in women's studies seemed a natural progression, for others it came about accidentally. Two of the lecturers came to women's studies via what they described as their "career in teaching". One of the lecturers came to women's studies after an "identity crisis" in her own life, and via therapy. She sees the "kernel" of this as "the link between my self development and my development as a woman". The fourth lecturer drifted into teaching as a mature student, "not knowing what else to do", and started off by teaching pre-

degree work in further education colleges. Although she did not teach women's studies within further education, most of her students were mature women, and she was left very much to design her own programmes, so "in some ways I was teaching women's studies, and it was at that level very experientially based". She initially "got into women's studies (at university) ... by chance", being introduced to it by a lecturer who was "sympathetic to women's studies", and offered her some hourly paid work.

She does not see her future "entirely within women's studies" although it will "always be connected with gender". This is partly because of her own developing interests, and she is starting to feel that "it would be a positive development" to move from women's studies to gender studies, particularly at postgraduate level. Although she thinks there is a role for women's studies, she thinks too that gender studies opens up more theoretical possibilities. In addition, much of the current teaching on women's studies, where "people pour out their personal life ... is very intense" and difficult to teach – it "verges at times on therapy" – and it would be a relief "to be teaching something which doesn't engage so much with the personal". However, her reasons are not all theoretical. She also sees her future elsewhere "partly because I don't know if women's studies will survive, so it's also a practical decision". She prefers to think of career development in terms of university level work, rather than women's studies.

The second lecturer who entered via "a career in teaching" started work initially as a schoolteacher and then also moved into further education (pre-degree level education). Although she was "interested in gender – it was a real passion", and had been "active as a feminist" for many years, initially she had to take what work she could get. When she finally saw her present post advertised she thought "wow – this is a post made for me ... I just didn't think there'd be a post like that!".

The third lecturer also came to women's studies via other teaching, where she found that she was getting "an enormous amount of unwanted attention from the male staff because I was a young, pretty female". This gave her a "crisis of confidence" about her teaching, feeling that she was no more than an object. In addition, she described how she "clawed my way up through bum jobs, building up my teaching until eventually I blackmailed my way into a full time job through a lot of political manoeuvring". Even then, in her last job, she felt that she was working in a hostile environment, all but "expelled" from her previous teaching position:

forbidden by the incredibly patriarchal ... head of the ... department, who was absolutely horrified that I would set up ... a women-only non-hierarchical ... course, that he would have ... no control over.

However, change isn't easy. Even within women's studies – where she is back to a fractional post - she feels disadvantaged "in an increasingly competitive academic environment" where no account is taken of her life outside the academy, as a mother, and she is "not too confident of my job at the moment.

The fourth lecturer said she came to women's studies through her interest in interdisciplinary work. She, too, "wouldn't say (she has) a career in women's studies": indeed, she feels that she would not want one. She prefers to "work in different areas", and use "different approaches", and she thinks "about women's studies as something I can take out into other areas of work". Although this tutor would not like to see her own teaching confined to women's studies, she does think it is also "important that women's studies has its own base". However, she sees this as problematic: women need a woman-centred space, but she feels that this should not be the only space they occupy within the institution.

Another of the lecturers also emphasised interdisciplinary aspects of her work, describing herself as what eventually became the title of this article: “a hybrid in all sorts of ways”. Although this could be problematic, “being pulled in all directions”, and finding it “incredibly difficult to keep up with all the literature,” she also feels that it is “much more exciting than being concentrated on one narrow road”. She also preferred to view career development in terms of university level work, rather than in women’s studies or any other discipline. She is, she says, “very resistant to that sort of linear progression of a career, that masculine model of careers”. Although this means that the future is uncertain, she also finds this exciting, leaving her to imagine “all sorts of possible scenarios” and “so many possibilities”.

Women’s Studies – the Pleasures...

I went on to ask the lecturers about the main pleasures they derive from teaching women’s studies. For one, it is about “the idea of empowering people and encouraging them to reach their potential”, although she saw it as problematic that personal enrichment would not give them a “lucrative career”. Additionally, she is concerned that helping people to “open their minds and think critically” may just “leave them more frustrated” when they are “plunged back in” to their previous lives. Another of the lecturers says that what she most enjoys about women’s studies is that “it is so opposite, different, completely different in every way” to other teaching she has done in more traditional disciplines. Previously, she had felt herself “very remote” from the students:

Whereas before I had a fascinating group of students in terms of a rich diversity of ethnicity, gender and class, I couldn’t really talk to them ... whereas in women’s studies it’s central to the curriculum, so it’s really exciting, and I really enjoy teaching it. It doesn’t feel like teaching in the same way as (other) teaching was ... It feels like a development, an experience.

As Sandra Harding (1987) has shown, the central focus of a feminist standpoint, starting from the position of women’s lives and experiences, is a key element of women’s studies. For another lecturer, the main pleasure of women’s studies was for students to use this feminist standpoint to discover different ways of knowing (see Gilligan, 1982; Belenky et al, 1992; David, 1994). This led to their academic development with something

in which they feel they have a personal investment. I suppose it’s really creative. For me, creativity is a really important element in all of this – a combination of creativity and understanding ... There are ... times when something quite miraculous happens and you think wow! At the very best, it’s an involvement of (the students’) whole being into what they’ve been doing, and there’s a huge sense of empowerment for them ... and that’s what’s creative.

... and the Disappointments

However, there are also disappointments in teaching women’s studies, and it can be

a difficult emotional responsibility, and establishing the boundaries of that responsibility, and making spaces safe, has become quite an important issue ... The kind of teaching that goes on is at time pretty emotionally demanding ... And I don’t know whether I would always want to continue teaching that way.

In addition, a “huge down side” of women’s studies is that “it’s a disappearing subject”.

One of the biggest disappointments for one of the lecturers is “the lack of tolerance that students have for each other around difference”. Although she “got over the shock very early that students aren’t interested in feminism”, finding that some students find it difficult to engage with a feminist standpoint (Harding, 1987), it is even more difficult to work with a variety of feminist standpoints. She is starting to find it “tiresome” to continually have to challenge intolerances around difference. In particular, one of the lecturers spoke about intolerance of lesbianism – which she referred to as “the L word”:

The L word has to be dealt with carefully because so many students have problems with it ... I have students who come up and say that this whole course is about Black women and lesbians, as if that wasn’t what one would expect on a women’s studies course.

Another lecturer said although amongst the women’s studies staff it is “fine to be out”, this was not the case with all the students, some of whom are homophobic.

For another of the lecturers, the disappointments are not within women’s studies, but within universities. She does not like the institutional politics, nor “all the anxieties people have about jobs and all the tensions that goes along with it”. There is also disappointment for one lecturer with changes in education in the UK more generally, which has led to having to teach “the kind of students ... who are not necessarily interested in learning”. Students do not “respect” staff, and do not believe that they have to work to gain basic skills, without which it should not be possible to gain a degree. She believes that many students today are entering university before they are ready to do so, and would like to see increased access course support for non-traditional entrants. She spends much of her time teaching literacy, and thinks it would be beneficial to have more formal assessment within women’s studies, including examinations. One of the ways to become empowered, she says, is to learn to write independently.

This is not, she says, a question of being “elitist”, and is very keen to support entrants from non-traditional backgrounds, speaking of her own working-class background and route to higher education as a mature student. Indeed, some non-traditional entrants, she says, come with a very sound background in skills and experiences (see Luttrell, 1992; Zmroczek and Mahony, 1997; Jackson, 1998; Reay, 1998). However, she is concerned about the credibility of higher education generally if it accepts students who are not yet ready for university..

This was a concern for another lecturer, too, who speaks about the diversity of students. Whilst some have a very “rich educational background”, others are floundering. The challenge is to meet the needs of both groups. One way in which she does this is to try and engage in dialogue with them, but the restraints of semesterisation make this challenging and difficult. She also thinks that it would help to have access courses lined to the degree. Women’s studies in particular, she thinks, is likely to attract students for whom education is a completely new experience. However, failing that, she feels the women’s studies department is working hard to make first year units link to study skills development.

Women’s studies and constructions of ‘academic’

I raised the issue of the ‘academic’ nature of women’s studies in these interviews. One of the lecturers said that whilst ‘academic’ is “a notion of a body of theory, an intellectual area, the exercising of judgement”, women’s studies is more than this:

women's studies is academic, but it's also emotional and personal, and about building confidence, and understanding what's happened to you ... I'm not interested in a pure subject, or an elitist notion of education ... it is as much about personal growth as it is about a subject.

Nevertheless, this does not mean to say that women's studies is not "a very sophisticated academic subject", particularly in the way it reassesses knowledge that has gone before. As Maggie Humm (1989) has shown, it is a central aspect of women's studies to encourage students to think theoretically.

However, another lecturer was concerned that some women might chose women's studies because it is seen as non-academic, with "all these people outside ... saying, 'oh you just chat away in women's studies', or its feminist, or whatever. Nevertheless, by the end of their degrees, no women's studies student should doubt its academic nature:

Their own experience of studying it should tell them that they're dealing with really quite theoretical material that is intellectually challenging in every way – as challenging as English or whatever.

Nevertheless, she reflects, it might be that in their first year in particular, students are upset if they get a low mark because they think women's studies should be easy – "you just need to sit down and write a few things down". In addition, she says, women's studies is very personal, and women take a low mark as "an indication of their lack of personal worth". Another lecturer also spoke about marks. If the students get high marks, she says, they "think we're not academic", and if they get low marks they think women's studies expects too much.

However, as I have shown elsewhere (Jackson, 2000 (d)) the term 'academic' is problematic, and one of the lecturers does worry that an emphasis in women's studies on "personal journeys" might mean that basic literacy skills are ignored. Women's studies is viewed as "not academic enough", but

Academic to me means that there is some sort of learning, there is some kind of core of knowledge there, but mainly that (the students) are encouraged into critical thought and analysis, learning to think for themselves and to develop arguments ...

When students learn to do this well, they can challenge the lecturers' ways of thinking, so that lecturers learn from the students. This, says one lecturer, is "fantastic and really something which is possibly unique to women's studies". Another lecturer, too, describes a first class essay as something which "fulfils the academic discourse around writing skills, etc", but also as something which

makes me think 'well, I hadn't thought of that', or 'that's an interesting idea': - something that's new ... Some of them will write an essay and I think 'I wish I'd written that!'

The challenge for women's studies is how to be both traditionally academic and creative, and to not see the two as a dichotomy. One way in which some of them encourage their students to explore academic creativity is through journal writing, developing ways in which challenges to constructions of 'academic' can be made (see Lubelska, 1991; Jackson, 1999 (b); Jackson, 2000 (d)). As Sarah Mills (1997) has shown, journal writing is one way to enable women to develop

their identities, and the use of auto/biography as been central in feminist work, placing individual experiences into wider contexts (see Stanley, 1992; Marcus, 1994; hooks, 1995).

However, the questions of academic creativity is problematic for another lecturer, who feels that women's studies occupies "a rather uneasy place" between the two perspectives: "it tries to be different", but also needs to "keep its standing as an academic subject". This is a difficult path to tread. "You should" she says,

Hear the snide remarks I get from colleagues who often just presume the subject matter – 'oh, ha ha', you're going to do your class on menstruation – as though this is not a subject that academics should be willing to deal with.

It is just as bad outside the academy, where it is best, on the whole, not to mention women's studies. And "don't say you're a feminist" either, or "you'll have interesting conversations and a certain amount of hostility!". The politics of speaking as a feminist (see Cockburn, 1991; Faludi, 1992) often means that as Lewis (1993) and Luke (1994) have shown, women do at times choose to use a silence of resistance. However, such choice can become problematic within the politics of women's studies, with its focus on the finding of 'voice'. This applies not just to individual voices, however, but also the political voice of women's studies.

Indeed, one of the lecturers emphasised the importance of challenge. "What's positive about women's studies" she said "is that we are challenging what academic means", and "women's studies is something that redefines and is challenging academia", including being able to "utilise your personal experiences in terms of critiquing what you read". As Lana Rakow (1994) has shown, making meaning is a political act, and it is important for lecturers to consider different ways of making meaning for themselves and their students. They should think about how they "structure seminars, or the kind of atmosphere one created – whether you allow yourself to be questioned (and) how approachable you make yourself ...".

A further, challenge, however, is how to deal with the responses that students get when they say they are studying women's studies, a challenge which is sometimes met with a politics of silence. Students do worry that women's studies is not seen by other people as academic enough and:

in a sense I think that's probably true. But we can't tell them that when they start. We can't tell them that a women's studies degree may not be valued as much as another degree...or they'd go away ... So perhaps that's a kind of lie to students. It's a silence, not telling students that it may not be as valued as another degree ... They'll soon discover that they may have trouble convincing people that it's as academic and rigorous ... as other degrees.

Taken for granted assumptions about the curriculum, assessment criteria and academic standards can be difficult to challenge (see Weiner, 1994). On the question of credibility, one lecturer describes women's studies as an "anomaly", holding little value either within HE or within the university, although another lecturer describes women's studies as having "achieved this peculiar status". Although it is highly rated for teaching and research, "it has a low status in terms of people's private opinions about it, or indeed their publicly stated opinions". This, says another lecturer, is because if something is perceived as what women do, then "the skill is devalued, it's not skilled, it's something women do". This has personal implications, as for women's studies lecturers:

what we do individually is probably looked down on because we teach women's studies ... I think it's assumed that we ... have very narrow perspectives ... are that we don't engage in contemporary theory ... I suspect we're seen as a soft option and ... viewed with suspicion and not seen as particularly academic.

Another lecturer confirmed this. Women's studies, she said,

Is regarded with quite a considerable amount of suspicion within the academy ... I think it would be viewed that it's very separatist and secretive ... There's also a feeling that it's a pollution: that (students) are getting their degrees too easily; that it's not ... a pure subject; that standards are not maintained. It is quite anomalous in terms of other more traditional subjects ... who view it with suspicion.

In addition, another lecturer added that there's "much more pressure on us now to become part of the academy ... and we know they'll look more kindly on us the more we move towards what they want us to do". And being part of the academy seems to mean moving away from women's studies. On obtaining a full-time job at the university, she very quickly realised that she would "be seen as far more credible academically if I don't appear to be solely associated with women's studies".

If lecturers are serious about career development, then

distancing oneself from women's studies ... is a way of endearing oneself ... and being taken seriously ... You just know you'll get more rewards if you move further along that line.

It is a "balance between survival and compromise", between making political challenges and using a silence of resistance.

Holding onto the politics

One way to "be looked on with more respect" is to simply change the name of the department to gender studies. This change would give the lecturers "some credibility", even without changing the content of the units. Whilst this lecturer supported such a change, any decision that she made would never be "purely theoretical", but would be more likely "to do with protecting our jobs and protecting some of what we do". Part of that protection involves enrolling sufficient students on courses, and she feels that a move towards more joint degrees which include elements of gender studies would be more attractive to students than a single honours women's studies degree. Another lecturer agrees, and thinks gender studies might be more marketable, and seem "less exclusionary", although she suspects that "whatever stereotypes people hold about women's studies ... will just cluster around gender studies eventually". She is, she says, not so worried about the title as the politics. Is it, she asks, "a way of expanding women's studies ... or ... a way of losing (it)? ... I hope we can hold onto the politics".

These politics are about having a commitment to topics that are central in women's lives, and a commitment to women students and their experiences. It's also about teaching methods, and providing "safe but challenging space". Another lecturer also spoke of these politics, but saw discussions of any change to gender studies linked to the "politics of the women's studies group itself". In times of falling student numbers, it is increasingly difficult to argue for the separatism of women's studies, which might end up a "form of suicide". In any case, she felt that the majority of the women's studies lecturers were more politically committed to a change in gender

studies. Indeed, another lecturer said that gender studies would enable her to “ask questions about masculinity and the formation of men”, which she considers important for women to do.

Although for one lecturer women’s studies is very central to her, “an important part of my life”, she and other lecturers felt isolated from institutional structures. One lecturer said she is “quite inward looking” within the department, whilst another describes women’s studies as “very localised”. She has not “got a clear idea of where I’m located or where women’s studies is located” and she does “not feel that I know or have much access to this whole body that is the university”. Indeed, she often feels quite “fragmented” within the university, and says that she would not know most of the university staff “if I bumped into them at the supermarket”. Part of this isolation is because women’s studies is perceived as political. Students and lecturers alike learn to cross the borders of academic disciplines and constraints, and to locate feminist pedagogies in the classroom (see Jackson, 1998). Although *all* teaching is political – “any communication has got lots of meanings in it” – with women’s studies, it is more “obvious”:

Politics, relationships, ethnicity, class, gender, all those things are all very important and up-front, and there’s also the link with activism, and lots of women have been involved in political action.

This lecturer is clear that she brings her own politics to all her teaching, and found herself very surprised that in one of her units “all the males were very interested in gender and did the essay on gender”, although she is unsure of their motives. One issue that came out for students was the question of men in the women’s studies classroom, and I raised this with the lecturers. One of the lecturers spoke of the value of women-only groups, where women are able to explore their own sense of self and of identity. Another of the lecturers is quite clear that when she started out in women’s studies she was very much against the idea of men in the classroom, as “it would have been completely contrary to what women’s studies was all about”. In many ways, she says, she has not changed from this position, believing that women need the freedom and space of women-only classrooms. Men would alter the dynamics, and women would be constrained in what they wanted to say, particularly in their use of personal experience.

However, power is at its most dangerous when it is impossible to see (Maguire, 1992), and can lead to dominant ideologies being focussed in an apparent liberalist approach. Despite her beliefs about men in the women’s studies classroom, this lecturer added that “to be very liberal about it”, there could be some positive interactions if men were there, and she believes that the majority of women students would not mind if men were in the group. She does, though, believe that “we have to look carefully at why men might want to do women’s studies”, and soon returns to her view that men would “prevent discussion”. She has already seen in the women’s studies classroom how lesbians are silenced by heterosexual women, and Black women silenced or marginalised by white women. In addition, these groups are continually being put in a position of having to defend themselves, and are viewed “in a block”, with no consideration given, for instance, by white women to differences between Black women. The same, she says, would be true for all women if men were in the group. Indeed, she acknowledges that her feelings are very contradictory, saying she should be “liberal” and that she “has an open mind” and “would be prepared to have men in the group”. However, she is “quite relieved” that she has not yet had to, and “in the end I’d rather not have them there”.

The male-centred university?

This lecturer’s feelings are also confused about whether the university at large is male-centred, although “just by looking in terms of statistics at who’s in a position of responsibility, it’s

certainly controlled by men”. However, in some departments “some of the strongest personalities and most dominant ones are women”, although she suspects that they are “operating under male guidelines”. It is, she says, “quite confusing”:

There are a lot of women, very powerful women, who are quite hostile – are very hostile – towards women’s studies, and possibly have problems with feminism ... I don’t think it’s as straight-forward as men being in control... It’s women positioning themselves differently in relation to men, and certainly in relation to feminism and women, so I think it’s a difficult one to answer.

Another lecturer, too, discussed issues of women in power:

I think some of them are the kind of women who are so male-identified that they actually find it quite threatening to be challenged by other women, or they see in those women some of the weaknesses that they themselves have tried to overcome, so they’re very threatened by that. Or else they view you as a kind of dogsbody, someone who will work very hard for them, whereas they treat the men with more sort of chivalry or something like that.

The university, she said, is definitely male-centred, and male advantage permeates the academy (see Eveline, 1998). Even if women are sometimes in positions of power, women’s studies occupies a very marginal space. Perhaps it’s not surprising that one of the lecturers thinks that women’s studies is “not a political force within the university”. On the whole, women’s studies staff and students “are very contained ... Maybe that’s how we survive ... just taking the view that we’re lucky to be here at all, so we’d better ... not rock the boat”.

The contradictions are there for other lecturers, too:

Well, you know, part of me says all my knowledge of analysis of institutions, I know they’re male dominated, I know there’s men at the top, I know about the hierarchy, I know all that stuff, I teach about it, I could produce statistics.

However, she returns to her earlier discussion of being isolated, “in a ghetto ... a subgroup I suppose, of women’s studies”. Within her own department, there are a lot of women, and “it feels like a good place to work”. Sometimes institutional gendered hierarchies are revealed to her, and she’s aware that all the “important names ... are all men, surprise, surprise”.

These thoughts are picked up by a third lecturer. The power structures, she says,

are very male centred. You’ve only got to go to the higher levels, to look around at meetings you go to – or in my case in this institution don’t go to! – to see the absence of women.

Nevertheless, some departments are “more women centred” and there’s a high proportion of women students. There are tensions for women who are career centred, where men on the higher levels might “block your trajectory to get to the top”. Even women without career aspirations are aware of such tensions.

Feminist knowledges

The lecturers found it difficult to describe the dominant discourse of women's studies. For one, it is the "emphasis on the personal and the experiential", although she thinks this is influenced by some lecturers, and leads to "conflicts" for others. She also describes "a kind of liberalism, a kind of anything goes in terms of feminism" although someone with "very radical beliefs" might find it difficult to fit in. One lecturer spoke about her belief that women's studies is probably better off outside the academy, working in evening classes and with women's groups. Within the academy, women's studies has to concern itself with the rules of the academy, including formal assessment. She has to teach women's studies in a certain way within the academy, which she sees as problematic. There is, said another lecturer, an academic elitism in the academy, "which leads to quite heated discussions about mitigating circumstances, and marking down certain kinds of work, worries about dropping standards". This has led her to become "quite protective, even secretive, about what I do".

In addition, there was a concern expressed by some of the students that "this academisation of feminist knowledge was actually moving things away from what they thought women's studies was about", and that the course was not "radical enough". Nevertheless, the lecturer feels that women's studies has had a "huge effect as an academic discipline on all other disciplines" by integrating women's studies "here, there and everywhere", becoming part of "everyone's curriculum". However, there is little evidence for such a belief: indeed, an examination of courses available to students within universities shows this not to be the case (Jackson, 2000 (c)). Nevertheless, such a belief leads the lecturer to 'blame the victim', stating that women's studies is a "victim of its own success", helping towards its demise as a separate subject area. However, she also stated that "all the 'isms' have been fundamentally changed by the impact of feminism", and "intellectually, women's studies has had an enormous impact" on the academy, although its future remains none too certain. However, despite this uncertain future, the link between women's studies and feminist politics remains powerful (see Jackson, 2000(b)), where lecturers empower students to consider constructions of knowledge and to find ways to be differently academic (Jackson, 2000(d)). Clearly some of these lecturers do believe that women's studies will disappear from the British academy. However, even if in the end it does – and I passionately hope that it does not – it seems clear that feminist academic women will continue to remain a hybrid in all sorts of ways, finding their own alternative ways to teach women's studies in the academy.

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Appendix

Interview questions

- 1) What led you to a career in women's studies?
- 2) What is your greatest pleasure in teaching women's studies?
- 3) What do you like least?
- 4) What constraints are there, if any, on your academic freedom to determine content, assessment, etc?
- 5) Are there any changes you have introduced, or would have liked to have introduced?
- 6) How valued do you think women's studies is within the university?
- 7) Do you teach or have you taught in other subject areas? Which?
- 8) What do you see as the biggest differences in teaching these subjects?
- 9) In what ways would you consider women's studies to be similar to other subjects in the university?
- 10) And in what ways do you consider it to be different?
- 11) What does it mean to be academic? Is women's studies an 'academic' subject?
- 12) What would you describe as the dominant discourse of women's studies?
- 13) What would you describe as the dominant discourse of this university?
- 14) Adrienne Rich has written about the male-centred university:
Is this university male-centred? In what ways?
- 15) To what extent does women's studies challenge any such male-centred structures?
- 16) What would you describe as the role of women's studies in the academy?
- 17) Is there anything else you would like to add?

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