

PREFACE

In the 1990s, many women's studies programs have turned their attention to graduate education. This movement has led scholars to ask old questions in new ways and for new times. Once again, we are struggling with what women's studies is and whether its values will transform or be transformed by traditional disciplines. In the wake of two decades of success for women's studies research and curricula, these concerns raised in the 1970s as abstract quandaries are now concrete realities, especially for those programs sufficiently established to institute M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. At the same time, the conservative resurgence in the United States during the last two decades has made the work of feminist scholars both more critical to forging political agendas and public policies and more vulnerable to challenges from within and without the university.

In this context of growth in the midst of constraint, debates among women's studies practitioners over definitions of feminism, the (inter)disciplinarity of women's studies, and philosophies of doctoral training have gained vigor and significance. This issue of *Feminist Studies* focuses on dilemmas and opportunities presently facing women's studies in the academy. Our contributors address both long-term debates over feminism and the more recent challenges raised by the possibility of the women's studies Ph.D. Scholarly essays focusing directly on women's studies education are complemented by poetry, fiction, and visual art that illuminate the ways learning and power interact in women's daily lives.

Discussions of doctoral programs in women's studies form our dominant focus of inquiry. Four essays explore the dilemmas posed by graduate training in the field, four sketch models of doctoral education offered by pioneer programs, and one challenges feminist scholars to embrace the "promise of the Ph.D." Across the different opinions staked out by our contributors, we find both a surprising consensus on the central issues raised by the women's studies Ph.D. and an unanticipated concern with questions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. The issues raised are practical, pedagogical, and philosophical. Although Susan Stanford Friedman, on the one hand, and Judith A. Allen and Sally L. Kitch, on the other, ultimately offer different assessments of the possibilities and problems posed by Ph.D. pro-

grams in women's studies, they agree that most current women's studies faculty are anchored in a discipline, that feminist scholarship and even teaching are usually multidisciplinary at best, that genuine interdisciplinarity is rare. How then can discipline-based faculty train students in truly interdisciplinary research? And if they succeed, will there be a sufficient number of jobs for scholars trained outside existing disciplinary conventions? Ultimately, do we want to create women's studies as an "interdisciplinary" discipline, with theories, methods, and professional regimes of its own, or do we want to retain our current approach, making strategic forays that disrupt and reconfigure existing disciplines?

The discussions of interdisciplinarity throw into sharp relief other issues that must be confronted at this early stage in the formation of doctoral training in women's studies. Perhaps most importantly, Beverly Guy-Sheftall asks "whether earlier critiques of undergraduate women's studies by scholars of color, and the new impetus toward global perspectives, are being reflected in the ways these new programs are being conceptualized." Will research on women of color and women in various parts of the world be at the core of doctoral training or will it be relegated once again to elective courses and marginalized faculty? Will the pioneering role of scholars of color, such as those who founded Clark Atlanta University's Doctor of Arts in Africana Women's Studies, be recognized as the history of doctoral training gets written and evaluated? The same questions might be asked of the ways in which sexual issues and identities are integrated into new Ph.D. programs and into our assessments of them.

The relationship between scholarship and activism, intersecting with concerns about (inter)disciplinarity, race, sex, and globalization, is similarly integral to any discussion of the women's studies doctorate. As Jacky Coates, Michelle Dodds, and Jodi Jensen note in their essay, "Isn't Just Being Here Political Enough?" the "split between activism and academics" has widened in many ways as women's studies has become more entrenched in the academy. Graduate training, with its emphasis on "success in course work, a scholarly thesis, competition with colleagues for scarce resources, and rapid degree completion," poses serious obstacles to feminist "action-oriented" research

that requires collaboration with individuals and organizations outside the university, including those with explicitly political agendas. As undergraduate programs continue struggling to integrate service learning, internships, and life experience with more traditional course requirements, will the rigors and regulations of graduate training and the competition for research funds and other markers of disciplinary capital shift the balance between feminist activism and academic achievement? And what are the implications of doctoral programs for undergraduate women's studies education? How will constraints on university resources affect the balance between the two?

While recognizing these concerns, Marilyn J. Boxer, in the last essay in this cluster, argues that graduate training offers the best way to extend the transformation of the academy that began with the introduction of undergraduate women's studies courses. She explores "the contributions that a 'freestanding' or 'autonomous' doctoral degree in women's studies might make not only to . . . a field but to the map of higher education as we enter a new century." While recognizing the difficulties posed by other authors in this section, Boxer argues that doctoral programs in women's studies would "produce the fullest flowering" of the field.

The dilemmas and solutions suggested by the authors noted above have begun to be tested as a number of universities have initiated doctoral programs in women's studies. In 1996 York University in Toronto hosted a conference to address concerns raised by the emergence of graduate education in women's studies. Having itself created a thriving women's studies doctoral program—the largest in North America—York offered a perfect location for thinking collaboratively about these issues. The questions raised at York have been echoed at other feminist gatherings; in reports for major foundations; and in books, anthologies, and women's studies journals focused on curricular development for the twenty-first century.

Similar concerns surface in the essays here that offer a range of models for doctoral programs and provide early evaluations of their strengths and limits. The University of Toronto, for instance, has created a collaborative program not entirely unlike U.S. graduate certificate programs but structured to highlight the place of graduate women's studies within the university it-

self. The collaborative program "brings together existing courses and faculty across cognate units," thereby minimizing startup costs, while "reap[ing] high returns." Coordinating course offerings within this collaborative model sometimes presents administrative nightmares, and the central role of traditional departments in the program's success creates serious barriers to the development of truly interdisciplinary research. The joint doctoral program at the University of Michigan faces some similar problems in balancing the role of traditional disciplines and departments with the interdisciplinary training that is viewed as key to a doctorate in women's studies. Yet like Toronto, the Ph.D. at Michigan has benefited from the strength of its long-standing undergraduate program in women's studies and of the doctoral programs in English and psychology with which it collaborates.

One of the difficulties confronted by any collaborative or joint program at the graduate level is that of fostering a sense of community among students and faculty who have responsibilities to multiple units within the university and often to organizations outside it as well. The University of Washington has addressed this problem by creating a freestanding doctoral program focused on international issues with a particular focus on the social sciences. Situated in the Pacific Rim and in control of its own budget and faculty lines, the University of Washington has both a physical site propitious for international graduate training and the means to develop a program with a clear and compelling focus. Our presentation of different models for women's studies doctoral education concludes with a look at one of the first freestanding programs in the United States. Clark University, located in Massachusetts, initiated in 1992 an autonomous Ph.D. program that draws on faculty from several disciplines to offer a range of possible emphases. The problems and possibilities of pursuing professional training there are analyzed by Angela Bowen, the first student to receive the doctorate in women's studies at Clark. A long-time activist engaged in "grass-roots organizing around race, women's, and lesbian and gay issues in the Boston community," Bowen details her frustrations and achievements as a member of Clark's first class of women's studies Ph.D. students. She addresses through her experiences as a student many of the issues raised by faculty in other dis-

cussions of program models and degree requirements.

The new questions raised by the development of Ph.D. programs in women's studies are critical to the future of the field, but older concerns continue to surface, if sometimes in new ways. Among these, conceptualizations of feminism remain central to discussions of both pedagogy and scholarship. The debate over definitions of feminism has a long history, reaching back at least to the early twentieth century when the term was first gaining attention in Western Europe and the United States. It has continued to serve as a touchstone of debate up through the latest considerations of global differences in the word's meanings, uses, and significance. In this issue of *Feminist Studies* the term is analyzed in two distinct yet related frameworks: on the one hand, in relation to women's studies textbooks assigned in introductory undergraduate courses, and on the other, as it appears in theoretical debates among literary scholars and historians in the United States and Europe.

In her review essay, Patrice McDermott examines the ways in which feminism has been defined, conceptualized, and taught to undergraduates in women's studies courses from the mid-1970s. Tracing the increasingly expansive yet fragmented meanings of the term since the 1975 publication of Jo Freeman's *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, McDermott argues that authors and editors of women's studies texts "wield enormous social authority in setting the terms by which feminists gain self- and community-definition." Closely examining a dozen of the most frequently assigned texts, McDermott explores the impact of attempts to deal with differences among women, changes in the larger society, and competing (inter)disciplinary perspectives. Articulating feminism in these texts as variously a way of seeing, of being, and of doing, McDermott exposes the ways in which women's studies tells our stories to the next generation of students.

Focusing on theoretical debates among feminist scholars, Claire Goldberg Moses turns our attention to definitions of the particular set of feminisms associated with France. Moses demonstrates the partiality of postmodern and literary versions of "French feminism" that have come to dominate U.S. discussions of French scholarship on women, sex, and gender. A serious slippage occurred, Moses maintains, as French women writers, particularly H el ene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kriste-

va, were introduced during the 1970s and early 1980s into women's studies publications in the United States. Presented initially as exemplars of one particular vision of gender analysis in France, they quickly came to stand for "French feminism" as a whole to American academic audiences. By tracing French scholars' own histories of the feminist movement in their country alongside both U.S. activist feminism and the literary version of "French feminism" that was "made in America," Moses challenges us to think anew about "our difficulties in representing feminism as at once theorized and activist and in writing theorized histories and historicized theory." At the same time, echoing the debates around doctoral training in women's studies, she calls on us to recognize "the limitations of interdisciplinarity . . . and transnationalism" in existing academic, including feminist academic, formations. Yet she also challenges us, like Boxer, to change the conditions that create such limits.

Although most of the pieces in this issue focus on women's studies education in the academy, there are reminders throughout that the choices made by feminist scholars are never merely academic. Angela Bowen's personal journey as an activist-academic offers one cautionary if ultimately celebratory tale. So, too, does Chitra Divakaruni's short but powerful poem, "How I Became a Writer." Virginia A.K. Moran's "Algebra of Snow" spins out a distinctly different tale of an academic woman and wife who, having left her job and her marriage, retreats to a cabin in the woods to restore order to her world. Her only compass is the memory of her mother, who died when she was an infant yet who remains her closest confidante.

Each of the contributions to this issue of *Feminist Studies* explores the importance of women's education and of the ways that a distinctly feminist education, however defined and conceptualized, poses both problems and possibilities to the academy and to society at large. As a growing number of institutions, faculties, and students embrace doctoral training in women's studies, feminists must consider anew not only the dilemmas and promises of our research and scholarship, but also their relationship to the worlds from which we come and to which we remain intimately connected.

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