

Women's studies in Australian higher education: Introduction and brief history

Lyndall Ryan,
Flinders University

What is Women's Studies? What are its origins and development in Australian higher education? How is it currently organised? What are its current intellectual preoccupations and where does its future lie in Australian universities? The articles collected for this issue of *Australian Universities' Review*, address these questions.¹

Definitions

Women's Studies is the analysis of the condition of women rather than a set of political conclusions about them. This analysis is now called feminism. There are many kinds of feminist analysis ranging from radical, liberal, socialist and Marxist feminism to ecofeminism and the many forms of postmodern feminism. They all share the belief that women's status is a social matter rather than a natural condition, and that this status can be changed. Their differences lie in the ways in which they see how women's status can be changed. In 1983, Susan Magarey defined Women's Studies as a 'transdisciplinary field of knowledge and inquiry which focuses upon the position of women, but extends to the whole social formation' (Magarey 1983:167). Judith Allen pursues these definitions in her article in this issue.

As Susan Sheridan points out: 'Women's Studies is often used as an umbrella term to cover a wide range of research and teaching on women and gender' and that it is

a distinctively interdisciplinary project in feminist research and teaching that is institutionally located in higher education but which has some degree of independence from particular disciplines and vocational courses (Sheridan 1987:2).

Origins and Development

The emergence of Women's Studies in Australian universities can be placed in three phases: 1973-1982; 1983-1988; and 1989-1991.

Phase One 1972-1982: revolutionary feminism versus liberal feminism

The first Women's Studies topics offered in Australian universities came as a result of agitation from university students and staff in the Women's Liberation movement who wanted to question the hegemony of patriarchal course structures and content. This happened in two ways: by offering a 'Women and ...' topic that challenged the discipline within existing structures; and by offering Women's Studies as a new interdisciplinary topic.

The first direction began in 1972 when Beverly Kingston began teaching about women in Australian history at the University of New South Wales. Since she could find no published primary sources about women to fulfil her teaching strategies, Kingston began a project to recover women's past in Australia. Her monograph *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann* (1975) and her book of documents, *The World Moves Slowly* (1977), were among the first challenges to the patriarchal nationalism of Australian historiography. Now there are countless 'Women and History' topics offered in Australian universities, to which have been added a range of

other 'Women and ...' topics as diverse as 'Women and Geography', 'Women and Politics', 'Women and Biological Science' and 'Women and Literature'. These topics have usually provided university students with the first introduction to feminist perspectives in a traditional disciplinary framework.

The second direction came in 1973 when Jean Curthoys was appointed as a tutor in the Philosophy Discipline at Flinders University to offer the first Women's Studies topic. Susan Sheridan considers that this topic

pursued the radical educational goals of student group self-management and self-assessment, believing that these were crucial for the development of women's confidence and solidarity. The curriculum of its foundation course was not discipline-based but was rather a classic of the kind of integrative feminist work that shapes itself around the women's liberation movement's concerns with the nature of oppression and the conditions for liberation. The course had marginal - indeed precarious - status in the university, being dependent on one department's setting aside some of its part-time teaching funds and agreeing to appoint a philosophy tutor who would also be qualified to convene Women's studies. But it was marginal in a more purposeful and deliberate way, too, in that the participants wanted the course to remain on the edge of the university in order better to involve women from, outside the academic community (Sheridan 1987:3).

The first direction I have called 'women's studies (small s) or liberal feminism and the second, Women's Studies (big S) or revolutionary feminism (Ryan 1988). Both directions became the basis for Women's Studies majors that would develop in the 1980s. The first was easier to argue for within existing academic structures and by 1982 nearly all Australian universities offered at least one 'Women and ...' topic. But the second direction produced the most intense debates about the teaching of Women's Studies not only in content but in form. Some of these debates can be found in early issues of *Refractory Girl*, established in Sydney in 1972, *Scarlet Woman*, established in Melbourne in 1974 and *Hecate*, established in Brisbane in 1975. In 1976 for example *Refractory Girl* ceased to call itself a Women's Studies journal, 'in order to dissociate (itself) from university courses which it described as "conservative in methodology and reactionary in content". The fierceness of this dismissal indicates how high were the expectations ... of Women's studies as a revolutionary force for change' (Sheridan 1986:3).

Indeed, Robyn Rowland recalls that in this period:

The original aims of feminism within the academy were: to find, reclaim, and rename ourselves; to consider all issues and knowledge with women reintroduced; to create woman centred knowledge; to understand power and its relation to gender; to search for the origins of women's oppression and therefore to develop strategies for changing that oppression. Women's studies itself was/is such a strategy. Women's studies was intended to empower individual women, while making them aware of their obligations and accountability to women as a social group. It was also intended to empower students with a love of knowledge (Rowland 1987:520).

It soon became apparent that these strategies struck at the heart

of the patriarchal culture entrenched in the Australian university system. Some big S women's studies topics were only offered after confrontation that bordered on the revolutionary. A strike by staff and students at the University of Sydney in 1973 forced Philosophy to split into two separate departments, so that one could offer a Women's Studies topic. At the Australian National University in the following year, students 'mounted ... an "education campaign" during which they occupied the Chancellery for twenty-four hours demanding *inter alia* a women's studies course' (Magarey 1983:164). This led to the appointment of Ann Curthoys as a temporary lecturer in Women's Studies in 1976. The success of her topic led the ANU to appoint Susan Magarey as the first tenurable lecturer in Women's Studies in 1978, with the brief to develop the first Women's Studies major in the Bachelor of Arts program in any Australian university. In the same year, after strong intervention by Denise Bradley, the Women's Adviser to the Minister for Education, the Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Women's Studies) began at the Salisbury College of Advanced Education in South Australia. A Graduate Diploma in Women's Studies was also established at the State College of Victoria.

In other universities, such as Griffith, LaTrobe, Macquarie, Murdoch, Queensland and Tasmania, Women's Studies topics, both big and small 's', may have had an easier gestation (Magarey 1983:164). But they were usually taught on top of existing loads and many tutors were exploited in taking on full lecturing programs without any compensation in status or salary.

Conferences

The first Women's Studies conference, the Women and Labour Conference, was organised by Sue Bellamy and others at Macquarie University in 1978. In keeping with the general aim of taking feminism outside of the universities, the Women and Labour Conference encouraged women from all walks of life to attend and 3000 turned up. Some of the papers from that conference were collected in a major publication (Windschuttle 1980). Three further Women and Labour conferences took place in 1980 (Melbourne), 1982 (Adelaide) and in 1984 (Brisbane) and two further books of conference papers were published. These conferences and their publications probably did more to raise the consciousness of Australian women about the need for Women's Studies programs in tertiary education institutions than any other means.

Research

International Women's Year in 1975 was the starting point for the publication of research in Women's Studies in Australia. Between 1975 and 1982, at least three collections of documents and at least three major bibliographies of published and unpublished source material appeared, complemented by at least four general texts on the historical experiences of women in Australia and a number of volumes of collected articles. Most publications were designed for small 's' Women's Studies topics like 'Women and History', 'Women and Politics', 'Women and Literature' and 'Women and Sociology'. *Hecate* published a range of research articles by Women's Studies postgraduates with interests in the intersection of race, class and gender. This phase ended with the publication of the first Women's Studies text to take a multidisciplinary approach (Grieve and Grimshaw 1981). Australian book publishers noted the extraordinary sales of all these texts and predicted that Women's Studies would be the academic publishing boom of the 1980s.²

Student Profile

This first phase of Women's Studies coincided with the abolition of student fees in tertiary education institutions in 1973 which saw a dramatic increase in female enrolments including mature aged women. In their desire to make up for lost time and in having the confidence to challenge traditional academic conventions,

many of these women found Women's Studies topics either in big or small 's' forms, a necessary catalyst to their own personal and intellectual development. They fuelled the demand for Women's Studies topics.

Consolidation Thwarted

Paradoxically, the arrival of these women coincided with a general decline in federal funding per student. In the ensuing struggle inside the universities for a share of the diminishing federal government dollar, traditional areas of study like history which had declining enrolments and too many tenured staff survived at the expense of new areas like Women's Studies which had increasing enrolments but few tenured staff. At Flinders University for example, where enrolments in the two Women's Studies topics had steadily increased, the temporary tutorship in Women's Studies was downgraded to part-time status. The location of these topics in the Philosophy discipline where overall enrolments had declined, meant that in time of fiscal restraint, untenured posts regardless of the areas they served, risked abolition.

So Women's Studies programs missed out on a crucial period of consolidation. While Women's Studies topics were offered at most Australian universities by the end of the 1970s, the Australian National University was still the only higher education institution to offer a Women's Studies major (Walker and Smith 1979:375).

These issues of survival and consolidation surfaced at the first Women's Studies practitioners' conference at the University of Wollongong in 1981. While many cited the entrenched patriarchal institutional opposition to Women's Studies generally, most practitioners were at odds with each other over their methodological approaches to teaching Women's Studies. Many conference participants considered that they had gained more intellectual excitement from the first Women's Studies section of ANZAAS which had been organised by Frances Lovejoy in Sydney a few months before. This absence of unity among feminist academics was reinforced when the conference did not pursue the suggestion to form a national Women's Studies association and to form links with similar organisations in New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.

Conclusion to Phase One

This first phase clearly demonstrated the demand for different approaches to women in university teaching in both content and form. While the revolutionary feminist approach of Women's Studies topics like those at Flinders University faced increasing vulnerability, they had successfully questioned patriarchal structures. The liberal feminist topics which successfully critiqued the existing disciplines had an equally precarious existence. But the dramatic shift in the gender composition of Australian tertiary education students and their continuing demand for Women's Studies topics indicated that the 1980s, despite the declining student dollar, the determination of entrenched academics to keep Women's Studies in a marginal status and the uncertainty of many Women's Studies practitioners about their future direction, would see a change in the academic status of the area.

Phase Two: 1983-1988. The development of academic feminism

In this phase the legitimisation of Women's Studies as a discrete field of intellectual enquiry, research and teaching began to take shape.

Women's Studies as a field of intellectual enquiry

In 1983 Women's Studies gained a higher intellectual profile with the successful Women's Studies section at the ANZAAS Congress in Perth in May 1983. Organised by Cora Baldock and Bev Thiele, the section gained a considerable media profile and a positive critical response from congress delegates generally. In

1984 the Women's Studies section of ANZAAS in Canberra, organised by Desley Deacon and Marian Simms, was easily the most well attended section of that Congress. At the 1985 Congress held at Monash University, Robyn Rowland and Susan Magarey contributed to a range of Congress panels on New Reproductive Technologies and workforce restructuring. In the public world of academia, Women's Studies had arrived.

The papers at all four Congresses revealed the emergence of Women's Studies as a transdisciplinary enterprise which endeavoured to transcend a specific range of disciplines. These papers were beginning to establish criteria for assessing and selecting techniques and procedures according to their usefulness in pursuing feminist questions (Magarey 1983:167). As Judith Allen argues in her article in this issue, 'Women's Studies ceased to be posed as servant of the women's movement. Rather it became recognised as part of it.'

A further sign of intellectual maturity came in 1985 at the Women's Studies conference at the University of Sydney. The published papers revealed a new theoretical sophistication in Women's Studies in Australia (Caine et al. 1987). In 1986 the Humanities Research Centre at the ANU sponsored three major international conferences on feminism, two of which were held in Canberra and one in Adelaide. The papers from the first conference, published as *Grafts* and edited by Susan Sheridan, were the first to contain contributions from Australian and overseas feminist scholars. Both collections demonstrated the shift in intellectual concerns of Women's Studies in the 1980s from the Women and Labour Conference papers only five years before.

Research

Between 1983 and 1988 nearly 300 research publications in Women's Studies in Australia fulfilled their promise of the early 1980s. They focused on public sector feminism, women's history, feminist history, Australian women writers and the beginnings of feminist post-modernism. In this period too postgraduate enrolments in Women's Studies dramatically increased. However Women's Studies still did not have its own number listed with the Australian Research Council.

In 1983 the University of Adelaide established the Research Centre for Women's Studies with Susan Magarey as its director. In 1985 she launched the new journal *Australian Feminist Studies*, a clear sign that academic feminism now had a secure intellectual status. In 1984 the Women's Research Centre was established at the University of Sydney to promote research about women academic staff and students. The head of the Centre, Dr Gretchen Poiner carried out a number of path breaking research projects about the position of women in academia.

In 1985 the Women's Archive and the Women's Studies Program at ANU published the first *Directory of Research on Women in Australia*. At the same time the *Violet Pages Directory of Research on Women*, was published by Lenore Coltheart, Bronwyn Davies and Shirley Fitzgerald from the University of New England. Both publications revealed the enormous range of feminist research taking place in Australia both inside and outside the academy. But the fact that both publications had appeared independently of and unknown to each other and that both were the result of many hours of voluntary labour, was clear evidence of the lack of organisation of Women's Studies as a professional area in the higher education sector.

Their fate can be contrasted with similar publications such as the *Bibliographies in Women's History*, which are produced by the Australian Historical Association, the professional body representing practising historians. These bibliographies have appeared as the result of funding to establish original data bases that can be regularly updated.

New Programs

In this phase, two major debates emerged about the organisation

of Women's Studies as an academic program. The first involved autonomy versus integration: whether Women's Studies should be integrated into existing disciplines, or whether it should continue to be established as an autonomous body of knowledge. The second debate revolved around disciplinary versus transdisciplinary enterprises: whether Women's Studies is a 'discipline' or a 'field of knowledge', annexing and synthesizing methodologies and content from other disciplines; or whether it is trans-disciplinary, with its own particular methodology, teaching approaches, and modes of construction of knowledge (Rowland 1987:519).

In 1983 a Women's Studies major in external mode was developed as a co-operative initiative by feminist faculty at Deakin, Murdoch and Queensland universities. This co-operative approach would become a hall mark of a number of Women's Studies programs in the 1980s. Kay Schaffer and Bev Thiele provide the background and survival of this important initiative in their article in this issue.

By contrast Flinders University decided in 1983 to scrap its Women's Studies topics on the grounds that they were taught by part-time tutors. In response the students used two strategies to retain the program. On campus women wore paper bags over their heads to draw attention to the fact that the University gave them no formal existence. Off campus, two Women's Studies graduates who were now Members of Parliament in South Australia organised a petition to the Flinders University Council, signed by members of both Houses of Parliament, demanding the retention of the Women's Studies topics and their expansion into a coherent program. The Council was forced to respond to such pressure and set up a committee of enquiry. In 1984 it recommended the establishment of a Chair and several lectureships in Women's Studies. The Council compromised by establishing a Readership and a tenurable lectureship in Women's Studies with the brief to develop a second major in Women's Studies in the Bachelors degree program.

My appointment as Reader in Women's Studies at Flinders University in 1986 was the first created at senior level and added to the establishment of the first tenurable lectureships in Women's Studies at Deakin, Griffith and Murdoch universities in 1984, at Flinders in 1986 and a tenurable senior lectureship at La Trobe University in 1988. All these appointments indicated that Women's Studies had moved into a period of consolidation.

By the end of 1988 women's studies undergraduate majors were offered at six universities and one college of advanced education, with postgraduate programs offered in three universities and three colleges. Most other Australian higher education institutions offered women's studies topics in various forms.

Attack from the Patriarchy

However these changes were not achieved without conflict with some male staff. At Griffith University in Queensland for example, the decision to establish a major in Women, Gender and Society in 1984, was opposed by the professor of political theory. He argued that his own publicly documented views on the social consequences (for men) of women's 'cryptic ovulation, made him such an expert in gender studies, that he should run the program. He took his case to the Bjelke-Petersen Government which promptly appointed a fundamentalist Member of Parliament to the Griffith University Council as a watch-dog on feminist activities. When the University pointed out to the Government that according to the University Act, sitting MPs were not eligible for appointment to the Council, the Government changed the legislation overnight to confirm the appointment.

At Adelaide University funding for the Research Centre for Women's Studies came from soft money so that its continuance was dependent upon an annual review of the university budget. This meant that the research centre could not supervise postgraduate students in its own right. This state of affairs has continued for eight years. No other research centre in the

University has suffered this indignity for so long.

When the Women's Studies Unit was established at Flinders University in 1986, the Academic Committee, contrary to usual policy of granting new academic areas a library budget, refused the grant on the grounds that the university had been forced to permanently establish the area against its will. New serials could only be ordered when the Head of the School in which the Unit was placed, donated her chairperson's allowance to the unit.

Similar stories happened with Women's Studies programs in other universities (Musil 1988).

Conclusion to Phase Two

This phase was one of consolidation in a time of fiscal restraint. Women's studies programs moved into the mainstream of university discourse as more feminist academics developed their careers in the area. Two signs of recognition that Women's Studies needed to become a professional area came in 1987 when Robyn Rowland started the *Australian Women's Studies Newsletter* and in 1988 at the Gender section of ANZAAS in Sydney when I was charged to organise a Women's Studies practitioners' conference in Adelaide the following year.

Phase Three 1989-1991: Women's Studies in the Post Dawkins era

This phase has been marked by the establishment of a professional association, the organisation of Women's Studies programs into four models, an increase in the number and diversity of research publications, the establishment of new senior positions and new research centres in Women's Studies, changes to teaching practices to reflect a different student profile, and the expansion of some programs and the contraction of others.

Establishment of the Australian Women's Studies Association

In July 1989 the first Australian Women's Studies Association conference was held in Adelaide. Organised by a consortium of Women's Studies practitioners from Adelaide and Flinders Universities, the South Australian College of Advanced Education and the South Australian Institute of Technology and TAFE, the conference attracted 170 participants from all over Australia. Papers ranged from teaching practices to theory and new research areas. The conference laid the groundwork for the establishment of a national association. Most of the papers in this issue of *Australian Universities' Review* derive from the second AWSA conference held in Melbourne in September 1990. The third conference takes place in Brisbane in November 1991.

Why has it taken so long for a Women's Studies Association to be formed? Most other countries whose universities offer Women's Studies programs such as New Zealand, Canada, the United States, India, Pakistan, United Kingdom, have well established Women's Studies associations of many years standing and major journals associated with them. Most publish directories of Women's Studies programs and research projects and have held regular conferences for at least fifteen years. So why then has Australia taken so long?

First, Women's Studies in Australia has been a series of individual struggles with no resources. Most programs and topics have developed in isolation. Secondly a number of professional associations such as The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) the Australian Political Science Association (APSA) and the Australian History Association (AHA) now have women's sections that provide opportunities for feminist scholars in these disciplines to become effectively networked and to critique their disciplines (Huxley 1988; Thornton and Thornton 1986). Finally, the long debate about whether Women's Studies should be a separate program or an integrated program has never been resolved. As a result Women's Studies remained fragmented as a professionally organised area.

This fragmentation was sheeted home in 1986 when Bronwyn Davies collated the range and organisation of Women's Studies topics and programs in the old university system (Davies 1986). Some conveners refused to respond to her request for information while Bronwyn missed others because she had no reference to them. Jacqui Woodland found similar problems in 1989 (Woodland 1990). Equally important has been the absence of a national body to take up the cudgels on behalf of Women's Studies when it has been under attack, to promote the area generally and to defend individual Women's Studies practitioners when they are intimidated by those in more established positions. Indeed, even with a national association, it has proved difficult to organise research and teaching data bases and to make the association a visible presence. At every step along the way, lack of funding, lack of skills about how to get funding and sheer exhaustion, have often led to despair and inactivity. Judith Allen addresses this important issue in her article.

Organisation of Women's Studies Programs into Four Models

1. Trans-Disciplinary Model

This model comprises an undergraduate first or second major leading to honours with all topics specifically designed as part of a coherent program. Such programs are offered at ANU, Deakin, Flinders, Griffith, and Murdoch universities. All these programs have permanent staff designated as teachers in Women's Studies and spend the majority of their time in this area. Until 1991 Queensland offered this model in external mode but without specifically designated Women's Studies staff. In 1991 the University of Adelaide merged with the City campus of the South Australian College of Advanced Education and in this new form offers a Women's Studies major in external mode in conjunction with Deakin and Murdoch. While a range of differences in feminist methodologies are reflected in these programs, they are the best examples of the fact that Women's Studies has become a field of academic study in its own right. However only Deakin, Murdoch and Queensland offer Women's Studies at first year level.

2. Inter-Disciplinary Model

This model consists of core topics with surrounding electives, such as those offered at La Trobe and Macquarie universities. Some designated Women's Studies staff have been appointed at these universities but rely upon other staff to make cross listed topics available in order to constitute a Women's Studies major. These programs have been very successful in attracting a wide range of students. Variation of this also exists in a number of coursework Masters programs in Women's Studies, such as those offered by Melbourne, Monash and Victoria universities, the joint program offered by Adelaide and Flinders universities, and the MA in Women's Studies and Australian Studies at the University of Western Australia.

3. Multi-disciplinary Model

This model is a series of topics which can be taken in some kind of sequence to form a Women's Studies major, and in which some topics have become informal core topics. These have developed from the 'Women and ...' topics of the 1970s and 1980s. Almost no staff are designated Women's Studies specialists. This model is offered at Melbourne, Monash and Sydney universities. These arrangements are currently under scrutiny by feminist staff who are agitating for more specifically designated appointments in Women's Studies so that a stable and more formalised program can be offered.

4. Elective model

This model operates where some Women's Studies topics are offered towards the undergraduate degree program. This model is offered at Edith Cowan, New South Wales, New England, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and Wollongong universities and at University of Technology, Sydney, the University of Western

Sydney and at RMIT. No staff have been appointed as Women's Studies specialists and some still teach Women's Studies topics on top of their usual teaching load.

Informal discussion among Women's Studies practitioners about the best ways of offering Women's Studies in Australian higher education have reached no firm conclusions. While four universities offer Women's Studies topics at first year level, women's studies or feminist perspectives are sometimes examined in interdisciplinary first year programs such as that offered in Humanities at Griffith University (Bulbeck 1991, p.30). The program at Flinders University is currently considering a first year topic to be offered in 1993.

While the four models are in operation in 1991, no one is preferred, recognising that each has emerged according to local institutional needs. However a coherent Women's Studies program must address feminism as a separate intellectual field and should provide some critique of the traditional disciplines. Equally important the program should be organised by at least some specially designated tenurable staff who have equitable teaching loads and who can undertake their own feminist research and provide adequate postgraduate supervision.

Since 1989 the greatest growth in Women's Studies topics and enrolments has occurred at postgraduate level, with at least 10 universities now offering some form of higher degree program. While some Women's Studies programs have an innovative record of cooperation by cross institutional accreditation, as Kay Schaffer and Bev Thiele reveal in their article in this issue, they also point out that the post-Dawkins era now prefers competition instead of cooperation. In this new environment cooperation with other new higher degree programs such as Australian Studies, Nursing Studies, Environmental Studies, Primary Health Care and Legal Studies becomes problematic.

Current Teaching Practices

Teaching practices have changed significantly since the 1970s. While no Women's Studies topics impose exams, peer assessment seems to have disappeared and non-graded assessment is dying out. Teaching is more likely to have returned to traditional methods like formal lectures, tutorials and seminars but some aspects of the informality of the 1970s have remained. Some programs still take their students on orientation camps, still offer close personal support to students, still offer forms of group assessment and still insist upon regular course evaluation by students. Does this mean that Women's Studies has become just like all the other social science and humanities programs thus fulfilling Rita Helling's prophecy (Helling 1983)?

It could be argued that Women's Studies has become as elitist as other university programs. But most Women's Studies practitioners would argue that they have responded to the widening demographic and social profile of university enrolments and have provided consciousness raising for those students who are often the first women in their families to attempt higher education.

Student Profile

The student profile has also changed since the 1970s when a significant proportion were aged over 21. While mature aged students continue to form a significant minority of enrolments, many of whom are former nurses, most Women's Studies practitioners have noted the younger ages of students and have adjusted their course content accordingly (Bulbeck 1991, pp34-5). Most undergraduates still combine Women's Studies with other disciplines like Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, Literature, Philosophy, History and Politics. A small number try to fit in at least one Women's studies topic in their Science, Medicine and Law degrees. The arrival of Nursing Studies in the tertiary sector has provided new opportunities for research and teaching in women's health.

Some postgraduates now see Women's Studies as a mother

substitute, which must provide all the things that undergraduate study apparently denied them, such as a shoulder to cry on, someone to scream at, and the provision of study and work conditions that no Australian university could even contemplate at this period of time.³ Most however are full time workers, anxious to engage with feminist ideas and research that relates to their workplace (Schaffer and Thiele).

Relationship of Women's Studies to the non-academic world

Throughout the seventies the strength and resilience of Women's Studies came from the non degree students, and from its close association with the women's health and women's refuge movement and with the feminists in the bureaucracy. Now no femocrat worth her salt can become one without having done Women's Studies. The same applies to an increasing number of women parliamentarians of all political parties. Women's Studies relies on its survival with those continuing links. Most Women's studies programs make strong use of feminists in these areas by inviting them to give guest lectures, to jointly supervise research students and to jointly sponsor research projects. An example of this preoccupation with the non-academic world is found in the subtitle of the third AWSA conference in Brisbane in November, 'Policy, Politics and Research'.

Research

The major areas of research in Women's Studies in Australia are in public sector feminism, feminist history, cultural studies, post modernist theory and the politics of difference, the relationship between gender, race and nationalism, women's health and new reproductive technologies. All of this work has placed Women's Studies in Australia firmly in the international feminist arena. While neither of the feminist research directories published in 1985 has survived, Women's Studies as a dedicated area of research now has its own category number in the Australian Research Council listings. Little of the debate about what constitutes feminist research or research in Women's Studies has found its way into print, largely because however much as practitioners we might argue among ourselves we are acutely conscious of a need for solidarity in the face of cost cutting institutional policies and practices.

Expansions and Contractions in Women's Studies

The first chair in Women's Studies was filled by Judith Allen at Griffith University in 1990. Her article in this issue, based on her keynote address to the second AWSA conference in Melbourne in 1990, identifies and discusses the major issues confronting Women's Studies in the 1990s. Chairs in other areas like Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, Education, Law and Literature, have recently been filled by feminists who have encouraged the development of Women's Studies topics and programs. Some of these appointees originally taught in 'Women and...' topics in their own disciplines in the 1970s and 1980s.

It would be cheering to say that Women's Studies is expanding. The establishment of a professional association, the appointment of more senior tenured staff, the consolidation of programs, the possibilities for new opportunities with the mergers, does take Women's Studies into different terrain. Yet the program at ANU has been cut back and the data base of Women's Studies programs has floundered. In another article in this issue, Dorothy Broom and Jill Julius Matthews provide a salutary account of the fortunes of the Women's Studies program at ANU to remind us that the problems of consolidation that were conspicuous in the first and second phases are still with us. In another hard hitting piece, Deborah Chambers and Christine Wienecke show us how women's research centres are established in new universities in the post-Dawkins era and how they are expected to survive with

almost no funding.

Conclusion

Nearly twenty years after the first topic offering, Women's Studies has become an established intellectual field which has a formidable record of teaching and research and has informed and enriched the traditional disciplines. It has both remained on the margins and moved into mainstream academic practice. The articles in this issue show how political, intellectual and industrial concerns have constantly intersected in the struggle to provide coherent programs and they show how the slogan 'the personal is political' is still as present in 1991 as in 1972. None of the authors of the articles in this issue is unaware of the tough times ahead.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Susan Magarey, Susan Sheridan and Roger Smart for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.
2. John Iremonger, then head of Allen and Unwin Australia, contracted a number of Women's Studies researchers for their first books between 1979 and 1982.
3. At the second AWSA conference in Melbourne in September 1990, some postgraduates complained about the inadequate facilities and the high cost of registration. Yet the conference had a cheaper registration than the year before and was by far the cheapest registration of any conference of its kind in Australia. The facilities were centrally located at the University of Melbourne which offered the best access by public transport and to food and refreshments.

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