What's in a Name?
A Conversation about Women's Studies

In the early 1970s, riding on the swell of the second wave of feminism, students, community members, and faculty across the country created courses and developed programs to make room for what was variously called female studies, feminist studies, and women's studies. With roots in community activism, such programs generated alternative approaches to teaching; alternative research methodologies; and a transformative body of knowledge about women, gender, and sexuality in relation to race, class, ethnicity, ability, and culture.

In a recent conversation, the teaching staff of the University of Pittsburgh's Women's Studies Program (WSP) reflected on this legacy as they discussed the present and future of the program. They each came to WSP from different disciplines and with differing personal histories, and those differences helped to make the discussion especially valuable as they thought (and laughed) together about their teaching. Running throughout the conversation was the common emphasis on wanting knowledge to have a positive effect in the world.

Here, then, is an introduction to this year’s WSP teaching staff and a brief snapshot from that conversation.

**Dramatis Personae**

Alice Crawford (AC), visiting assistant professor, grew up in an activist family and thought of activism as a normal way of life until she majored in philosophy as an undergraduate. As powerful as is philosophy, Crawford was struck by how “disembodied” study in that field could be. She determined that her doctoral work would be different. Both women's studies and cultural studies provided her with ways to understand how bodies are “marked” in terms of gender, class, and race—even in cyberspace.

continued on page 6
As the new director of the Women's Studies Program, I inherit a strong, healthy program that draws on the talents of more than 70 faculty members from more than 30 programs or schools at the University of Pittsburgh. As of the printing of this newsletter, 107 undergraduates are working toward the certificate in women's studies, and 36 students are seeking an MA or PhD certificate.

The fall line-up of brown-bag talks has been a celebration of the diversity of interests that students and faculty bring to the program, including Frayda Cohen on Chinese-U.S. transnational adoption, Seung-Hyun Yoo on gender stereotypes in Japanese comic books, Lisa Huebner on sexual harassment in care and service labor environments, and Aisha White on the availability of information in a women's prison. In the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Associate Dean Katherine Seelman and her colleagues Ashli Mollino, Mary Ellen Buning, Miriam Herz, and Lucy Spruill in the Disability Studies Program conducted an inspiring panel on the challenges and triumphs that women and girls with disabilities navigate in mainstream society. Vice Provost for Graduate Studies Patricia Beeson; Carolyn Ban, dean of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs; Maureen Porter, associate professor of education; and Kellie Robertson, assistant professor of English, shared their experiences with university service as an important form of leadership.

The Women's Studies Program will continue to support and make visible a diversity of work on women, gender, and sexuality. We hope you will join us this spring for more informal brown-bag talks, films, and speakers.

News of note: a year ago, the Women's Studies Steering Committee published a statement in the fall 2003 newsletter urging the University of Pittsburgh to extend benefits to same-sex partners. This summer, Pitt joined the ranks of other universities that support the principles and practices of equality in the workplace by extending benefits to same-sex domestic partners. Change happens.

Kathryn T. Flannery

Women's Studies Announces Dissertation Prize

The Women's Studies Program is pleased to announce the selection of Kelly Happe's "The Rhetoric of Genetification: Science, Ideology, and the Case of Breast Cancer" for the Women's Studies Dissertation Prize. Happe (F'03) examines the debates over the etiology and treatment of breast cancer, skillfully weaving together several important threads in feminist social studies of science. The selection committee praised this work as a "model of feminist scholarship" because it treats highly technical materials with care and is, at the same time, written "in a lively and accessible style." Happe's dissertation advisor is Carol Stabile, associate professor of communications. This prize is supported through the generosity of Vice Provost for Graduate Studies Patricia Beeson's office and the Schools of Arts and Sciences, Information Sciences, Law, Medicine, Nursing, and Social Work.
FACULTY NEWS

KATHLEEN BLEE (Sociology) has been selected as a winner in the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh Racial Justice Award by the YWCA Center for Race Relations. Blee was honored at a celebration on November 4 for her commitment to racial equity.

New Sociology Faculty Study Gender, Cultural Issues

The University of Pittsburgh Department of Sociology is pleased to welcome three new female faculty members.

CHERIS SHUN CHING CHAN is interested in research and teaching pertaining to culture, economic practices, globalization, theory, qualitative methods, and sociocultural changes in post-socialist societies. Her dissertation, “Making Insurance a Way of Life in China,” examines how local culture shapes the way a transnational market is formed. During the spring semester, she will teach Sociology of Culture and Global Society. She received her PhD from Northwestern University.

DEBORAH GOULD's research and teaching interests include social movements, social and political theory, sexualities, emotions, and queer studies. She is currently finishing a book, Feeling Activism: Emotions and Reason in ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS, that asks why lesbians and gay men became politically active in the face of AIDS, why they embraced defiant and oppositional street activism after a generation of engagement in routine interest group politics, how the street AIDS activist movement ACT UP sustained itself for a number of years, and why ACT UP declined in the mid-1990s. She received her PhD from the University of Chicago.

ASSATA RICHARD’s research interests include social movements and prisons. Specifically, she is concerned with understanding the emergence of social movements and the dynamics of social movement participation, as well as the growth and change of prison organizations and the life course implications of incarceration. Her teaching interests include social movements, Black nationalism, prisons, race and ethnic relations, and research methods. She received her PhD from Pennsylvania State University.

Title IX and Gender Equity in Education

In March 2004, the University of Pittsburgh's Women's Studies Program and Women's Law Project hosted a two-day conference designed to educate the public about Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and to promote gender equity in Western Pennsylvania public schools. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities at educational institutions that receive federal funds. Speakers included Donna Lopiano, executive director of the Women's Sports Foundation (named by Sporting News as one of the 100 most influential people in sports); Verna L. Williams, author of Reform or Retrenchment: Single Sex Education and the Construction of Race and Gender; Nan Stein, author of Classrooms and Courtrooms: Facing Sexual Harassment in K-12 Schools; and Eric Pillner, program coordinator for the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students for the Massachusetts Department of Education.
In her essay “Experience,” Joan W. Scott calls into question the meaning, importance, and usage of experience in histories. She objects to the use of experience to provide evidence contrary to conventional histories because, she claims, “by remaining within the epistemological frame of orthodox history, these studies lose the possibility of examining those assumptions and practices that excluded considerations of difference in the first place.” She also claims that historians’ use of experience pushes aside “questions about the constructed nature of experience.” Although I think Scott makes many good points about people’s experiences being constructed by external systems, she misses the thrust of what makes experience so important. It is, in fact, the construction of experience by society that makes gathering experience so vital. It is only through the amassing of stories told by the people history ignores or misrepresents that historians are able to analyze the external factors that caused those experiences in the first place.

For groups of people whose knowledge has commonly been subjugated, regardless of how that group came to be seen as a group, experience is vital. Mainstream history (not to mention mainstream media) has ignored or misrepresented them to such an extent that a natural distrust of people outside of their collective experience occurs. In Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, Patricia Hill Collins writes of the period between the 1950s and 1970s in the United States when Black women became more legitimate agents of knowledge. She writes, “No longer passive objects of knowledge manipulated within prevailing knowledge validation processes, African-American women aimed to speak for ourselves.” The experience of Black women had been so devalued that the right to even have their stories told was a great victory. Experience was the only thing they had to prove that external systems were oppressive to them because history had been so contrary to what they knew to be true in their lives. “To be credible in the eyes of [Black women], Black feminist intellectuals must ... have lived or experienced their material in some fashion, and be willing to engage in dialogues about their findings with ordinary, everyday people,” Collins writes.

Scott claims, “Talking about experience [as internal and external, subjective or objective] leads us to take the existence of individuals for granted (experience is something people have) rather than to ask how conceptions of selves (of subjects and their identities) are produced.” But people really are individuals. Experiences are not shared psychologically. A person really does have “an experience.” However, this does not mean that the production of conceptions of selves cannot be analyzed. This was quite apparent in Ruth Frankenberg’s essay “Growing Up White.” Beth claimed to have had an all-White childhood but had in fact been in contact with quite a few women of color, including a family maid who had taught her to walk. It was only because of her mental construction that she had failed to notice the presence people of color in her life. In other words, we can take for granted the existence of an individual without canceling out the ability to ask how conceptions of selves are produced.

Scott’s decision to play down individualism is one I agree with; individualism tends to do more harm than good, unreasonably placing responsibility onto a person stuck in a system rather than placing that responsibility on the system itself. But it seems to me that she should acknowledge the existence of subjects with agency before she attacks the idea of an individual. For many people, an individual means the same thing as a “subject with agency.” It is that agency that one refers to when she considers herself as an individual. The linguistic difference is important, no doubt, because the word “individual” is linked with the concept of individualism, which is counter to social constructionism. I don’t think Scott attempts to deny the importance of experience. However, I think her attack on experience cuts off her nose to spite her face. It is essential to the study of subjugated knowledges that experience be valued. Without it, the knowledge of women and people of color in the United States gets swallowed by mainstream history, which effectively claims that those experiences don’t exist. Clearly, experience alone proves nothing; experiences are innumerable, open to interpretation, and likely to change over time. But the analyses of experience are important. These analyses are bound to look at the social forces that enable experiences to come into existence at all. This is what Scott and Collins seem to advocate.
ALISON BODENHMIER ('04) is the co-owner of Girls’ Night In, a business committed to a feminist vision of sexuality exploration and education. More information is available online at www.girls-night-in.com.

HALEIGH HANLON ('04) is working at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic as a milieu therapist. She is also attending the University's School of Social Work to earn a Master of Social Work degree.

The University of Pittsburgh and Family Services of Western Pennsylvania are developing a research and service network by creating a collaborative infrastructure between academics and community agencies to foster improved services for low-income populations. LIBBY LARSEN (PhD '02) has accepted the position of lead ethnographer in this five-year National Institute of Mental Health-funded grant, which began last May. The ethnographic study of the cultures involved in the collaborative process will involve periodic feedback to all parts of the system to increase the effectiveness and longevity of the academic-community collaboration, facilitate patient access, and improve clinician morale.

STUDENTS

KAT CARRICK is a contributing author for a chapter on lesbian and bisexual women’s health, which will be published in the Handbook of LGBT Public Health in Fall 2005. She also presented “Student Attitudes Towards Aging, Sexuality, and Human Rights: Bridging the Gap When Advocating for LBGT Elders” at the Senior Action in a Gay Environment conference in June.

With Gratitude
January–July 2004

The Women’s Studies Program would like to extend its sincere thanks to the following alumnae: current or former faculty, staff, and students; and friends. This support provides funding for student research as well as other women’s studies events and projects. Please consider giving through the University of Pittsburgh’s Annual Fund, the program’s annual appeal, or any time that is convenient for you!

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NEW SECRETARY

Welcome Michele Aldrich to our staff as our new part-time secretary. Feel free to contact her at 412-624-7503 or aldrichm@pitt.edu with any questions about women's studies programs.

CONGRATULATIONS WSP
Spring & Summer 2004
Certificate Recipients!

Spring 2004
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Beverly J.R. Aurand

UNDERGRADUATE
Erin Blache
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Ankita Shah
Alexis Storch
Sara Turkovich
Susan Vanderale
Kay Veselsky
Monica Wellsing
Adey Woldeamanuel

Summer 2004
GRADUATE
Rebecca Myers

UNDERGRADUATE
Kelley Hanahan
Keriann Hansen
Amy McDonough
Earning her PhD in communications and rhetoric from the University of Pittsburgh in 2003, Crawford wrote her dissertation on information technology, utopianism, and urban life.

Fraya Cohen (FC), a teaching fellow working toward a doctorate in cultural anthropology, is researching international adoption in China. Anthropologists are careful to take a nonactivist stance in their research for sound reasons, and yet Cohen wants her research to have an effect beyond the confines of the University. She is drawn to women's studies' methodology because it helps her better articulate the relationships between academic research and those adoption programs and practices that affect children's lives.

Lisa Huehner (LH), a teaching fellow, earned her Master of Arts degree in women's studies from the University of Cincinnati. She then drew on her women's studies courses as she worked in the community on behalf of victims of domestic violence. Wanting to strengthen her knowledge so that she could be more effective on behalf of others, she is currently working toward a doctorate in sociology—a field increasingly interested in public sociology—in the intersection between academic theory and the larger world, an especially important emphasis as she studies sexual harassment in the workplace.

Kathryn Flannery (KF), professor of English and women's studies, is the new WSP director. She came to feminism through what the poet Adrienne Rich calls the women's university-without-walls, a mix of counterinstitutions in the late '60s and early '70s that made up the working structure of the women's liberation movement. Because women and women's work had been largely excluded from universities, counterinstitutions worked to rediscover and create better knowledge about women and to make that knowledge more widely available. That revolution in knowledge found its way into universities through the first women's studies courses. Flannery took what was likely the first feminist philosophy course in the country, taught by Alison Jaggar in 1970. Later, after several years as a special education teacher, she returned to the University of Pittsburgh to pursue a doctorate in English and was surprised by how little of the activist past was visible in the University. This led her to research why that was the case. Her account of that history can be found in Feminist Literacies, 1968–75 (University of Illinois, 2004).

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LH: Especially in the undergraduate classes, a student may say, "I am not a feminist, but, oh my gosh, this is relevant to my life." Students may come from places where none of this is ever talked about, and Introduction to Women's Studies or Introduction to Feminist Theory is their first opportunity to engage in sustained inquiry about women's experience or to consider to what extent it is meaningful to talk about women in the aggregate. Women's studies provides a bridge between the academy and the world of work. Service learning courses in universities across the country have appeared as if they were new, but women's studies has been doing service learning—providing learning opportunities in the community, outside the classroom, where students learn how to be of service to the community—from the beginning. We have learned a lot from that kind of teaching and learning about how academic work and work outside the university can be mutually informing.

KF: Whether or not a student declares herself or himself to be a feminist, our courses are valuable in that sense. Women's studies requires a critical engagement of ideas across disciplines and in relation to the world "out there." This is not about ideas in isolation but always in relation—so you have to think about the "so what," and you have to think about how and why a question will be addressed in different disciplines. What do different angles of vision allow us to see or know? What do the very tensions, disagreements, differences among and between ways of seeing help us to understand? The very differences in backgrounds and experiences that students bring to the table is one of the great pleasures of teaching women's studies courses.

FC: If there is a core to women's studies, it is that there is no core—feminism keeps working against boundaries and thus demands an interdisciplinary approach—and that makes it hard to do. And important because it raises the bar with its constant call for accountability in
every field. Claims about the world can't be made in isolation, and we can't impose an explanation on others.

KF: The complex explanations are always more difficult to package. Complex understandings don't make good sound bites. The challenge is to really think about the intersections. Rather than developing a methodology that is purely feminist, exclusively feminist, what does it mean to have a sort of weaving of theories and methods that is more than superficial borrowing? We have to figure out how to talk across disciplinary boundaries, to articulate our understandings in such a way that those from other fields can understand.

LH: There is, of course, the continued importance of "putting women in"—ensuring that women are a part of the story, in whatever field. But women's studies does not stop there. The questions I am most interested in exploring require the nuance of the story, and that comes from research from the ground up, a qualitative methodology. That's not exclusive to women's studies but is more likely to happen here.

AC: To watch as students discover in the history of feminist thought bits and pieces that continue to resonate now is to see how such study works against the misleading notion of feminism as evolutionary, as if it were moving ever closer to one true, best idea. Rather, students discover the sedimentary layers of the past that are still available for critical use.

FC: And it is in those moments that you know a feminist is made, not born!

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**Women's Studies Student Research Awards**

Congratulations to Randee Dunford-Maykall, Annamore Matambanadzo, and Karen Woodcock who have been awarded women's studies student research funds for 2005. Dunford-Maykall, a history major, is working on her undergraduate certificate in women's studies and plans to explore the relationship between contemporary music and feminist activism as a way to understand the third wave of feminism. Matambanadzo is a PhD candidate in the School of Education who is working on her graduate certificate in women's studies. She is conducting a case study of professional development for women in educational leadership. Woodcock, a PhD candidate in the School of Social Work, plans to investigate the mental health needs of women who have suffered violence at the hands of a current or former intimate partner. Each of the awardees will give a brown-bag presentation in the 2005-06 academic year.

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Thank you! New contributors of $100 or more will receive a Women's Studies Program mug!
In addition to an exciting array of films and brown-bag presentations on the calendar for spring, the Women's Studies Program is featuring four events.

**Wednesday, February 9, 3 p.m.**
2205 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

**FAITH ADIELE**, assistant professor of English, will read from her memoir with a reception following. A part of Adiele's story was featured in the PBS documentary *My Journey Home* in April 2004. She is the author of *Meeting Faith: The Forest Journals of a Black Buddhist Nun*, as well as two readers for children, *Time for Kids Reader: A Village Celebration* and *Time for Kids Reader: Life in the City*.

**Wednesday, March 2, Noon**
2201 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

**THERESA M. BEINER**, professor of law at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, will present “How Courts Misapprehend the Dynamics of Workplace Sexual Harassment.” Beiner's book *Gender Myths v. Working Realities: Using Social Science to Reformulate Sexual Harassment Law*, is forthcoming. She is a visiting professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law this spring.

**Wednesday, February 23, Noon**
2201 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

**KATE COLLIGAN**, archivist at the University of Pittsburgh Archives Service Center, will give a talk titled “Gender Research in the Archive: Navigating Sources” as part of the Women's Studies Brown Bag Lunch Series.

**Friday, April 22, 3:30 p.m.**
2205 Wesley W. Posvar Hall

**MARY ANN MASON**, dean of the Graduate Division at the University of California at Berkeley will present “Marriage and Baby Blues: Redefining Gender Equity in the Academy.” A reception will follow. Mason is a professor of law and social work and has published extensively on child custody issues, family law and policy, and children's rights, including *From Father's Property to Children's Rights: A History of Child Custody in America* and *The Custody Wars: Why Children Are Losing the Legal Battle and What We Can Do About It*. In addition to her administrative responsibilities as dean, she codirects a major research project on the impact of family on the career paths of academic women and men. This event is cosponsored with Vice Provost for Graduate Studies Patricia Beeson's office and the Schools of Law and Social Work.

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