Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies Volume 2

Edited by
Catherine M. Orr and Ann Braithwaite

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Designed cover image: Jaroslava Sobiskova

First published 2024
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2024 selection and editorial matter, Catherine M. Orr and Ann Braithwaite; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Catherine M. Orr and Ann Braithwaite to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

ISBN: 978-1-032-59376-0 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-59369-2 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-45442-7 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003454427

Typeset in Sabon
by SPi Technologies India Pvt Ltd (Straive)

Contents

Acknowledgments *xvi*
About the Contributors *xix*

Introduction: Why Rethink Women's and Gender Studies Now? 1
CATHERINE M. ORR AND ANN BRAITHWAITE

SECTION I
Foundational Assumptions 9

1 Indigenous Feminism 11
ASHLEY GLASSBURN

Oddly enough, it is precisely the whitestream feminist instinctive move to be at the cutting edge of each new political movement for social justice that prevents many WGS scholars from really listening to Indigenous feminists' analyses of the field.

2 Femininity 22
M. NICOLE HORSLEY

It is precisely because femininity is at the center of challenges to the humanity of non-white feminine-identified subjects and bodies that we must decolonize femininity in WGS. Otherwise, its attempts to be inclusive will render me, a self-identified Black femme, invisible.

3 Citizenship 33
AMY L. BRANDZEL

Citizenship sucks. Literally. Citizenship wastes our energies, drains our resources, and creates the conditions by which non-normative and variously excluded peoples and communities fight against each other in order to be "included."

4 Inclusion 42
AHALYA SATKUNARATNAM

Inclusion is valued as a transformative practice that promises liberation; but it is also subject to scrutiny and suspicion for how it can disguise and uphold oppressive systems while producing positive, "feel good" effects.

5 Intersex 52
DAVID A. RUBIN

Intersex exceptionalism suggests that intersex bodies are the exception, not the rule. This view, I argue, has serious, under-interrogated implications for how WGS practitioners think and teach.

6 Expertise 63
HEIDI R. LEWIS

Even when WGS scholars may agree on what WGS expertise is (and we don't always), we also do that in the face of disagreement (from both within and outside the field) about who is able to claim it, as well as how that expertise can and should be employed.

SECTION II
Ubiquitous Descriptions 75

7 Belonging 77
KATHERINE SIDE

I am also more unclear now than I was 20 years ago about who and what belongs to WGS, and about the basis for that belonging.

8 The Ph.D. 86
JENNIFER MUSIAL, LESLIE KERN, AND SONJA THOMAS

The WGS Ph.D. is an important but fraught object that critiques structures of power while remaining embedded within one—academia.

9 Nation 98
DEBJANI CHAKRAVARTY

I argue for a rigorous re-investigation of issues of nation, nationality, nationalisms, and nativism within WGS, where terminologies do not replace or reduce, but open up newer, more nuanced categories of analysis.

10 Women 110
HEATHER HEWETT AND MEG DEVLIN

Should "women" remain the object of study in the discipline, as was the case when the field was founded as "Women's Studies," or does retaining "women" (even as one of many objects of study) limit intellectual inquiry and turn away potential students who do not identify as women?

11 Innocence 121
ERICA MEINERS AND JESSI LEE JACKSON

In the always changing "we" of WGS, innocence appears at times as an object of critique, and at other times as a strategy, an assumed perspective, or even a precious resource.

SECTION III
Epistemologies Rethought 133

12 Genealogy 135
MICHAEL ENG

As a basic methodological assumption in WGS research, not only, then, is being genealogical a condition of being "good," but there is always the concomitant chance (threat?) that one is not being genealogical enough.

13 Generation 146
RACHEL ALPHA JOHNSTON HURST

Generation is a tenacious concept in WGS, not because it provides an explanatory framework (narratives structured by generational logic) but because it is a site of creativity and conflict (a generative psychic space).

14 Critical 157
AGATHA BEINS

Because of its epistemological power I recognize the important work critical does. But I am also wary of its proliferation and argue that although "critical" has been a valuable tool, relying so heavily on it might paradoxically foreclose some of our revolutionary goals, especially those aimed at transformation within and of academia.

15 Choice 168
ERIKA DERKAS

I long for WGS to both speak and enact a discourse that is experienced by women, LGBTQI+, and / or BIPOC that pushes us all to see how any discourse conceptualized through liberal notions of individuality and choice affects various communities overall.

16 Self-Care 179
WEI SI NIC YIU

Carrying on from the caring tradition of love in Black feminist literature, we must persist in using self-care as an affective political tool of world making.

17 Consent 189
ELIZABETH GROENEVELD AND CARRIE RENTSCHLER

We believe consent is worthy of more focused and critical discussion in WGS—discussions that fundamentally grapple with questions of power, domination, and agency, and the structural and systemic limits to individual and interactional models of consent in conditions of ongoing colonialism, racism, and ableism, among other oppressions.

SECTION IV
Silences and Disavowals 199

18 Settler Colonialism 201
BEENASH JAFRI

Ultimately, taking this work seriously means that WGS practitioners will need to prepare for the field to transform—not merely reform—into something that will look very different from WGS as we know it now. It will necessarily be unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and unsettling.

19 Asexuality 211
ELA PRZYBYŁO

I wish to open up WGS's vocabulary by suggesting that a focus on erotics, rather than sexuality, might offer promising new directions for the field that are hospitable to critiquing compulsory sexuality, creating conceptual spaces for asexuality, and centralizing antiracist approaches to thinking about intimacy.

20 Cis 222
MEGAN NANNEY

Cis is a method that returns our attention to a critical examination of the discipline's premises, allowing us to examine how sex and gender, and the field more broadly, are not inherently stable but rather are made temporarily stable as they are put into practice.

21 Disability 232
SUSAN G. CUMINGS

To rethink the term disability in WGS, we have to think it in the first place. You can't rethink what you haven't thought.

22 Nonhuman Animals 244
JENNIFER A. VENABLE

I question whether utilizing "the human" as the standard for social justice ultimately reinscribes white supremacist and ableist ideologies within WGS.

SECTION V
Establishment Challenges 255

23 Humanitarian 257
DANIELLE BOUCHARD

The history of the humanitarian is also a history of racism, of race's production with, beside, and through sexuality and gender, and of the western effort to define humanity in order to support its imperial, economic, and military aims.

24 Sexual Violence 267
AMBER DEAN

Might the seemingly "natural" affinity between WGS programs and institutional responses to sexual violence tell us something about how deeply embedded histories of white supremacy remain, not just in our universities, but in WGS as well?

25 The Gaze 277
KIMBERLY LAMM

Questioning the desire for mastery, psychoanalysis offers a pertinent reminder that the vulnerabilities we repudiate might be defining us more than we think.

26 Transdisciplinarity 288
SHANNON A. MOORE

Transdisciplinarity secures the ground to examine disciplinary structures and to question what qualifies as knowledge in a manner that helps maintain the dissident potential of WGS.

27 Transformation 300
SAL RENSHAW AND RENÉE VALIQUETTE

Here's the question: if an ongoing commitment to transformation is so deeply ingrained in the history, epistemology, pedagogy, and institutionalization of Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) that it amounts to something like an ethos, is there a risk that it might also be the discipline's undoing?

28 Branding 311
KARLYN CROWLEY

If we're not in charge of our brand, others are. If we're not ahead of the WGS story, others will tell it, and potentially tell it badly.

Conclusion: Continuing the Conversation 324
CATHERINE M. ORR AND ANN BRAITHWAITE

Works Cited 328
Subject Index 358

Section I

Foundational Assumptions

In the first version of *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies (RWGS)*, "Foundational Assumptions" included terms often claimed as foundational to the intellectual work of the field—such as feminism, interdisciplinarity, and pedagogy. The authors of those chapters insisted that such terms needed further interrogation precisely because of that claim and went on to examine which narratives of the field were upheld by unexamined assumptions about those terms. While we use the same section headings in *RWGS 2*, "foundational assumptions" in this volume points to a somewhat different story. The chapters included in this section don't identify new or additional foundational terms to WGS as much as they work to speak back to and challenge unspoken assumptions about what is or should be foundational. In "Indigenous Feminism," for instance—an approach increasingly taken up in WGS (especially in the country called Canada)—the author confronts the ongoing whiteness at the core of so many versions of WGS, pointing out just how "foundational" and largely unrecognized assumptions of whiteness have been—and continue to be—in the field. In exploring a number of examples where a desire to include Indigeneity instead perpetuates the ongoing exclusion of Indigenous perspectives, the author questions what centering Indigeneity would mean for the everyday content, and practices, of WGS both intellectually and institutionally. The chapter on "Femininity" continues to expose how whiteness, and white femininity in particular, is thoroughly embedded throughout WGS's everyday discourses. In both revealing and decentering the anti-Blackness sedimented in so much of WGS, though, the author avoids a simple outright rejection of that term, and instead argues for new ways to make space for all those who claim femininity / femininities as a gendered / sexualized expression.

The next three chapters in this section highlight how inclusion continues to be a driving—and contested—force in WGS. "Citizenship" explores how WGS is always already embedded in regulatory narratives of belonging that belie the many costs and violent consequences of that belonging. If the inclusion accorded by citizenship, the author argues, is ultimately about maintaining a selective status (albeit at times expanding its scope to incorporate more people), it also necessitates the continued exclusion of an

DOI: 10.4324/9781003454427-2

"other"—raising important challenges to the perceived benefits marked by this oft-circulated term in WGS. Similarly, the chapter on "Inclusion" examines this foundational impulse, arguing that although it echoes an almost benign and unquestioned "good" in, or even aim of, WGS, the reverberations of exclusion are a constant and perhaps insurmountable tension. How, this author asks, do moves to include also always result in further exclusions, and how can WGS negotiate this tension in its intellectual and pedagogical practices? Aligning with these insights about the costs and consequences of inclusion, the chapter on "Intersex" focuses on how the terms of inclusion for some bodies, identities, and sexualities have been mobilized within WGS classroom practices for the explicit purpose of breathing life into basic theoretical claims about sex and gender. While the author here acknowledges the perceived use-value of such moves pedagogically, they also pointedly question who is—and, significantly, who is not—tasked with bearing the weight of "proving" taken-for-granted claims in WGS about the construction of sex and gender. Finally, "Expertise" picks up a thread implicit throughout the other chapters in this section, highlighting some of the consequences to the institutional organizations of and intellectual claims made by WGS. The author explores the common ("founding") institutional arrangement of programs and departments that places new generations of fully-appointed faculty, often with Ph.D.s in WGS, alongside faculty appointed in other departments, especially in governance structures. What often emerges from these combinations, the author explores, reflects very different stakes for WGS as a knowledge project, challenging such basic assumptions as who and what constitutes the field and what knowledge production is recognized within and as WGS.

Each of the terms in this section points to the field's latent assumptions about what is always already there, albeit so often unacknowledged or even "invisibilized." Questioning how foundational an assumption is, and continues to be, is a way to point out that in simply accepting its centrality, WGS practitioners too often miss opportunities to consider the consequences that ensue. For example, is "indigenizing" WGS syllabi, curricula, faculty, or research actually "reconciliation"—a coming-to-terms with the histories and ongoing processes of colonization—or is it just another "add-and-stir" gesture that leaves structures and practices of colonial exclusion in place? Does WGS invest in ideas of knowledge production that too often accept—as opposed to challenge—institutional hierarchies of expertise, and what are the effects of this broad umbrella approach for those in the field and for the intellectual, and even political, work taken up as the field? What alternative notions of collaboration and community might arise if we were willing to rethink who and what is held up as "foundational" to WGS?

6 Expertise

Heidi R. Lewis

"Think of how all her efforts to be heard, to get through that wall of silence, that wall of indifference, that wall of whiteness, come to nothing. Think of how all the frustration, that rage, can become a tipping point. It is only when you seem to lose it, when you shout, swear, spill, that you have their attention. And then you become a spectacle" (Ahmed 2017b). When I first read Ahmed's lecture, I recalled a moment when I had what she refers to as a "feminist snap." It's when those walls closed in, my pleas became expletive-laced shouts, and I transitioned from feminist darling—heroine, even!—to spectacle. It happened a few years after I started my first job as a faculty member in a Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) program, and two colleagues (one an affiliate of WGS) scoffed when I advocated for more tenure-track lines for all interdisciplinary programs. One even asked, "Who does she think the college is, Santa Claus?" During a similar conversation with the Dean of Faculty, rather than advocating for WGS, a then-director of the program asked, "Why should interdisciplinary programs get more faculty when departments like mine need more, and we're regularly denied?" My "snap" happened shortly after, during a program meeting when the aforementioned affiliate faculty member dismissed my idea that the program *might* benefit from requesting jointly-appointed tenure-track lines, wherein a faculty member's position is in two programs or departments, especially if the college provided clear and reasonable expectations for those appointments. He rolled his eyes and said, "That's ridiculous! All my friends who have joint lines hate it!" When I tried to re-enter the conversation to share my knowledge about challenging *and* successful joint appointments held by my WGS colleagues at other colleges, admittedly reciprocating the eye-rolling, the program director put her hand way too close to my face and demanded my silence.

I was filled with that suffocating rage theorized by Ahmed when she notes, "When we think of such moments of snap, those moments when you can't take it anymore, when you just can't take it anymore, we are thinking about worlds; how worlds are organised to enable some to breathe, how they leave less room for others" (2017b). My snap was so vicious I immediately went to the Dean of Faculty's office to resign. Perhaps she, also a woman of color, didn't accept my resignation because of her familiarity with a desire to "snap."

DOI: 10.4324/9781003454427-8

Perhaps it was because I spent several months explaining to her that my colleagues' reliance on my labor in the program—which was not accompanied by an acknowledgement of the WGS expertise I brought to it—exacerbated by their unwillingness to confront their racist sexism, was unsustainable for me. I had also shared my increasing concerns regarding our disproportionate commitments to the program and its intellectual work (and worth). In any case, I remained at the college and spent the next several years claiming space for WGS expertise and reshaping the program along those lines, including hiring two additional full-time faculty who share much of my vision but who also have the expertise necessary to develop and advocate for their own.

While my new WGS colleagues each have areas of specialization in various subfields, we collectively developed a mission statement that concisely articulates at least some of the ways we understand the content and function of WGS expertise in our program. In it, we claim to collaboratively "study and develop critical interdisciplinary and feminist theories and practices" and that we foster "inquiry into structures and modes of power as they are mediated by gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, class, caste, nation and citizenship, age, and ability" (Feminist & Gender Studies Program 2021). While some WGS programs and departments are not as focused on feminism, most are (or aim to be) committed to employing interdisciplinary approaches to studying myriad issues particular to women and focused on gender more broadly. As Sally L. Kitch notes, "In women's studies, issues that have demanded and benefited from interdisciplinary scholarship include motherhood, the feminization of poverty, and violence against women. Interdisciplinary work can also reveal structural features of the world or of experience that only an integrative process can expose" (2003, 440). Further, as Vivian M. May points out, our "focus on the intersections of knowledge and power offers a heightened capacity to navigate and negotiate institutional structures, policies, and procedures" and requires us to engage "internal and external critiques of the field—its own gaps, errors, politics—and [seek] to change it for the better" (2002, 138). Hence, in addition to attending to relationships between identity and power, especially as it relates to women and gender, WGS expertise allows us to think seriously about relationships between institutions and power within and outside our field. But it's not at all that simple. As my narrative illustrates, even when WGS scholars may agree on what WGS expertise is (and we don't always), we also do that in the face of disagreement (from both within and outside the field) about who is able to claim it, as well as how that expertise can and should be employed.

Here, then, I consider the ways narratives about "expertise"—whose, what kind, about what—function within and frame WGS both implicitly and explicitly, paying particular attention to the historical and contemporary landscape of the field and focusing on some of its institutional, pedagogical, and personal implications. For example, I would argue one impetus for resistance to expertise in and about the field of WGS is that many people in WGS programs (affiliated faculty, and even program directors, as in my above

example) have experienced their feminist scholarship being subjugated in other disciplines, resulting in WGS creating and maintaining a longstanding commitment to the inclusion of many of these faculty members. However, as my "snap" experience led me to wonder: what happens when a victim becomes a perpetrator? What happens when white women suffering greatly from sexism in other disciplines find themselves routinely silencing or ignoring people of color in WGS due to racism? What happens when the creators and beneficiaries of academic "safe havens" like WGS feel "pushed out" by the very students who took the courses and earned the degrees they fought so hard to create? By posing and engaging these and other questions, I aim to be especially attentive to how struggles with expertise uniquely impact scholars with multiply marginalized identities. In doing so, I aim not to provide definitive answers for how to contend with and make space for WGS-specific expertise, but to instead insist on the importance of that contention, even as we remain critical of the ways particular notions of and relationships with expertise have functioned as means of domination and subjugation in academia. I also offer some considerations that encourage us to ask questions about our (WGS's) own potential to dominate as we do about other people and institutions that generate the kind of suffering we aim to analyze in our work.

Additionally, I consider how struggles with expertise in WGS often result in what I call the "overdetermination of accessibility"—that is, in a multifaceted commitment to ensuring mass legibility and a simplistic rejection of the so-called "elitism" of WGS scholarship, which poses especially dangerous implications for those who engage with us as knowers. WGS scholars have long grappled with the relationship between the academic significance and extra-academic legibility of our work. As Judith A. Allen points out regarding the ways WGS scholars are compelled to "engage in outreach to women in the community" and "intervene in women's movement political struggles, as if it were not, by definition, already doing so," the "implication of this demand is that women's studies' work *inside* the academy is either not political or not political enough" (1997, 371). Hence, I will also illustrate the ways WGS work within the academy has largely been and will likely continue to be political, even as it will always warrant critical engagement.

The Institutional

Just before completing my doctorate, I earned a fellowship in a WGS program that allowed me to gain meaningful experiences teaching at a liberal arts college while completing my dissertation and entering the academic job market. During conversations with the director, who assured me the program was making every effort to convert my fellowship to a tenure-track position, I learned my hire also served several institutional purposes. I was a diversity hire, a young Black woman at a predominantly white and wealthy institution in a program comprised almost entirely of white women who had long-since earned tenure; my background in the humanities was meant to be a response

to critiques leveled at the program due to most of its affiliate faculty being trained in social science fields like Psychology or Sociology; I was trained in interdisciplinary theories and methodologies while earning my doctorate in American Studies; and I demonstrated substantial commitments to WGS, evidenced by the graduate certificate and experience in teaching I earned in WGS during my doctoral studies, as well as my regular attendance at the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) annual conference. The icing on the cake was my previous teaching experiences at liberal arts institutions. At the time, I interpreted all of this most favorably. WGS has long been accused of centering white women, and here was a program making tangible changes to address that. However, continually reflecting on this over the past decade-plus has given way to less favorable interpretations.

During my first year, I was mostly focused on completing my dissertation, submitting publications, familiarizing myself with new professional landscapes, building new professional relationships, and program-building—which included organizing, hosting, and attending events within and outside the program to make meaningful connections on campus, especially with students. Further, being one of few Black faculty at such a small institution caused several students and colleagues, especially those experiencing various forms of subjugation, to gravitate to me and vice versa. During my second year, my status was converted to Visiting Assistant Professor, which meant I still had not earned a tenure-track position. So, I spent most of my time adjusting to an increased teaching load at an institution with a unique calendar and searching for a tenure-track job, applying to more than 100 positions across four disciplines, including WGS. Still, I was determined to remain the college's and program's "darling," because I wanted to make a significant impact, earn a tenure-track position, and gain meaningful professional experiences along the way. This meant I was teaching or managing many of the program's core courses, advising most of its majors and minors, supervising most of the senior capstone projects, and increasing my attention to programming. Still, I thoroughly enjoyed it. So, I did it all with a smile, and the fun I was having was contagious. My classes were filling, and diverse groups of students began declaring a major in WGS at record-breaking rates. That same year, the faculty member who held the only tenure-track position in the program resigned, the position was offered to me, and I eagerly accepted. In the subsequent year, I was mostly focused on earning tenure. At the same time, WGS affiliate faculty began relying more heavily on my labor—understandably, given everything I was doing. I began teaching *most* of the core courses, advising almost *all* students, supervising almost *all* senior capstone projects, and organizing and hosting *most* of the events. Yet, I *still* thoroughly enjoyed it, *still* did it all with a smile, and the fun I was having was *still* contagious.

But my enthusiasm and patience were wearing thin.

Back then, the program was comprised of anywhere from 12 to 15 affiliate (then referred to as "core") faculty with appointments in other programs and departments, such as Physics, History, and English, with only one or two

having any formal training in WGS at the graduate level. While I was one of few faculty trained in and significantly conversant with the field, though, most of my decisions still had to be approved by this larger group. Further, my colleagues were not as attentive as necessary to the ways my positionality—young, Black, female, and pre-tenure—were often at odds with theirs—mostly older, white, female, and tenured—resulting in my labor in the program being valued (and expected) more often than my expertise about the field (note that while labor and expertise are distinct in significant ways, they are not mutually exclusive). As long as I was working hard and smiling along the way (read: making myself accessible), all was well. When I dared to center my expertise, especially concerning my "critiques of the field—its own gaps, errors, politics" (May 2002, 138) as represented in and by our program, everything changed. At the same time, their patience was wearing thin, because it seemed (to them) that every accomplishment I earned and my increasing comfort within the program and institution resulted in me becoming "ungrateful" for the opportunities that had been *given* to me. They began to feel disrespected and "pushed out" of a program many of them helped create.

Like most WGS programs and departments, ours was created primarily due to the time, energy, and labor of faculty who value the study of women, gender, and sexuality and who often are women and / or members of LGBTQ+ communities, both of which have been subjugated or ignored entirely in other disciplines. As May points out, in response to the ways subjugated people and communities have "been thought to lack the autonomy, independence, control, regimen, order, and reasoning capacity necessary to be a universal knowing subject" (2002, 144), WGS "training translates into an ability to cross boundaries, to move among different groups, forging connections with people who might otherwise remain isolated, asking questions others might not think of, and sometimes accomplishing projects others think are impossible" (138). I witnessed this firsthand when I learned two of my colleagues in the same department (both female, one "of color") offer courses (one focused on women, the other on race) their department does not count for its major, institutionally relegating them to the margins. At the same time, both of those courses count for two interdisciplinary majors. It's not surprising, then, that faculty facing these kinds of circumstances would at least find some respite in interdisciplinary spaces that not only value but *center* their teaching and scholarship.

However, while necessitating interdisciplinary studies' reliance on voluntary labor has the potential to foster dynamic knowledge production and collaboration, it also facilitates the institutional subjugation of spaces for that work, often resulting in noncommittal participation and a lack of serious attention to the ways interdisciplinary fields have evolved. Faculty at most colleges and universities are typically expected to teach core and elective courses in their department or program; to conduct, present, and publish quality research in their field; and to give service to their department or program (such as advising students) and sometimes to their field off-campus

(such as serving as a manuscript reviewer). Faculty with appointments in other programs and departments are thus often unable, albeit not always unwilling, to substantially commit to WGS due to their professional obligations to their "home" disciplines. Still, as Madeleine J. Goodman points out,

> Professors are not self-selected in medicine, law, or dentistry. Yet there seems to be a notion that any competent historian or literary critic or anthropologist or sociologist who is interested, or thinks students might be, is qualified to teach women's studies, quite regardless, for example, of whether this person has done or is likely to do any research of publishable quality in this field.
>
> (1980, 9)

When this emphasis on broad expertise and accessibility is paradigmatic, and that's often the case in WGS, we foreclose the possibility of holding faculty accountable for remaining substantially committed to and conversant with the field—and undermining those who do.

To be fair, many faculty with appointments in other disciplines often do not receive sufficient institutional acknowledgement or reward for their work in WGS. Colleagues in, or affiliated with, WGS usually have an opportunity to write letters supporting them during promotion reviews; however, this typically only happens a few times throughout the duration of a faculty member's career. One often has to hope their "home" department or program and institution value interdisciplinary work enough to consider it in more continuous salary reviews, for example. When I have raised this concern, I have been told faculty volunteering in WGS do so out of "love" and not for reward. This is ironic coming from faculty committed to understanding and addressing various forms of power and oppression, especially since a great deal of our work has been concerned with the ways women's labor is often unseen and undervalued within and outside the home. However, it makes sense when we consider the "outsider status" faculty in WGS have been relegated to and eventually claimed for themselves as a means of resisting the academic status quo, even as we also participate in all aspects of degree and tenure-granting systems.

But this kind of self-exploitation benefits the institution more than faculty or WGS. By resisting a reasonable and substantial relationship with expertise specific to this field, which would allow us to set and hold ourselves accountable to relevant professional standards, we aid colleges and universities in impoverishing WGS, albeit sometimes unintentionally, by relying on exploited affiliate and adjunct faculty, usually women, to administer WGS programs and departments. Additionally, many of those women, usually white, still have not largely contended with how they might also subjugate faculty with other marginalized identities, due to their overwhelming concern with how they have been victimized both by patriarchy and what many claim to be the ageism of younger faculty. This is aggravated by another consequence of the

"overdetermination of accessibility": faculty affiliating with WGS primarily due to identity and / or interest rather than professional commitment and intellectual expertise.

The Pedagogical

When faculty take the approaches described above, students often learn to do the same, which has implications even for white female faculty. As Juanita Johnson-Bailey and Ming-Yeh Lee note, "Given the scarcity of women in the academic ranks, students are not accustomed to seeing them as sources of knowledge, let alone as people who generate or produce that knowledge" (2005, 114). This is exacerbated for faculty of color, especially those additionally marginalized due to other aspects of their identity. For example, in an evaluation of my Feminist Theory course, a student wrote, "Be wary in trying to say something that you might think she'll disagree with. She will jump in and rant loudly for the next 2 minutes after you finish your first sentence. She will try to not let you elaborate on any sort of opinion with which she disagrees." It was unfathomable to this student that I had the authority to offer correction through lecturing, even if only for a mere two minutes. For this student, WGS courses are evidently not about learning from experts who may challenge their thinking, but merely about the exchange of opinions and ideas, and ours just so happened to differ. Further, the student's comment about me being "loud" would be unsurprising to those of us who have experiences with and / or expertise in racist sexism, particularly that aimed at Black women. If I were a white, male Astrophysics professor contending with a student arguing the world is flat, I'm not certain the experiences I've had would be nonexistent, but I am certain they would be fewer and further between—and I probably wouldn't be accused of "loud ranting."

Given the impact of WGS courses on both systems of knowledge and on students, the ways our expertise is understood and contended with is paramount. I make this point, because due to the field's longstanding commitment to interdisciplinarity, many (if not most) WGS courses are cross-listed ones taught by faculty in myriad programs and departments from Biology to Classics. The significance of this shared pedagogical labor cannot be understated. For example, while preparing for an external review of my program, I learned that over the last decade, approximately 25% of degree-seeking undergraduate students where I work have taken a course taught by faculty hired in WGS or a cross-listed course. By comparison, approximately 7% of students have taken courses taught by faculty hired in WGS. Hence, we must ask what students are learning in those cross-listed courses. If faculty teaching them are not experts in WGS and not held accountable for remaining conversant with the field, how can we be certain their courses are? As my colleague Nadia Guessous asked more pointedly during a conversation with me, "What, then, is the function of cross-listed courses other than authorizing the dilution of WGS expertise at best and resistance to it at worst? Why

do faculty who express little to no interest in WGS feel authorized to seek affiliation through cross-listing courses, to increase enrollment or cultural capital? What legacies have made this practice seemingly necessary even for WGS programs and departments with tenure-track faculty?" As a result of thinking through these and other questions, we recently revised our cross-list proposal process, requiring faculty to converse with our revised mission and vision statements and course numbering system, as well as to submit a working syllabus. We've also discussed conducting workshops to support faculty interested in teaching cross-listed courses. Still, we wonder what it means that we, like many faculty hired in WGS at many institutions, feel obligated to authorize and educate our colleagues in this way. How do we manage extending appropriate gratitude and care to faculty volunteering their labor through cross-listing courses alongside a frustration with their unwillingness or inability to engage with us in other spaces we create to facilitate intellectual collaboration? Why should we be more committed to remaining accessible to our colleagues than we are to maintaining and centering our always-developing expertise in WGS? These questions become critical when considering the full-time faculty in my program are all people of color (and most were pre-tenure until very recently).

Here, I want to be even clearer that the field's emphasis on inclusion has focused mostly on women, meaning that many, if not most, WGS courses are focused on women's (multiple) ways of being and knowing. Similarly, the students in those courses are comprised mostly, sometimes entirely, of women. For example, while preparing for the aforementioned external review, I also learned that over the last decade, nearly 125 students have completed a major or minor in my WGS program and more than 100 of those students identified as women. This is particularly noteworthy, as many women students report experiencing patriarchal subjugation in other courses and can focus primarily on learning in WGS rather than navigating misogyny. However, most of those women are white. Further, as noted by Susan M. Shaw and Janet Lee, merely integrating "women as subjects of study [...] into existing curricula through the development of new courses about women" is what many WGS scholars often refer to as the "add women and stir" approach, which, while important, does not entail "a serious challenge to traditional knowledge and its claims to truth" (2014, 3). So, what happens, then, when "previously unquestioned knowledge" in WGS has been mostly authorized by and disseminated to white women?

As much as ever, WGS scholars, especially those of color, are insistent that expertise in our field means substantial engagement with intersectional and transnational analyses. Hence, a resistance to expertise often results in many, if not most, WGS courses being taught by white faculty unwilling or unable to conduct and teach these or similar kinds of analyses or even *gesture* to them significantly. Over the past decade, over 40% of students graduating with degrees in my program (majors and minors) have been students of color. Since this had never been the case prior to my arrival, one might contend this

is due, in large part, to the hiring of faculty of color. However, my earlier discussion reveals the ways merely hiring faculty of color is not significant enough to shift institutional norms in this way. Rather, I contend our insistence on the program centering our expertise is an impetus most logically situated to theorize the changing racial diversity of the WGS student body. While necessary and important, we aren't "just" faculty of color who engage with intersectional and transnational analyses. We have reshaped the curriculum to be more attentive to intellectual scaffolding by revising the major and minor, more thoughtfully evaluating new cross-listed courses, and more carefully curating student engagement with all cross-listed courses. I would argue students of color have been more likely to pursue WGS because of this, and that all students have had meaningful intellectual experiences realizing our mission and our vision, which is "to remain conversant with myriad intellectual legacies while reimagining the possibilities of feminist knowledge and practice" (Feminist & Gender Studies Program 2021). Still, our ways of being and knowing mean this has not always been—nor will it ever be—easy.

The Personal

As a proud member of the hip hop generation, my way of existing professionally has often been deliberately raw and aggressive, and I have a decidedly close relationship with "braggadocio" and "toast-telling," projecting myself "as a powerful, all-knowing, omnipotent hero, able to overcome all odds" (Smitherman 1997, 12). This, along with my areas of specialization (Black feminism, hip hop, and popular media and culture), makes it especially difficult for many to recognize me as an expert and to engage with my work as that which requires expertise in the academy. Everyone has a race, class, and gender; most people engage with popular media and culture at least to *some* degree; and everyone has an opinion. So again, my commitment to appropriately claiming and naming my expertise is often resisted because of the ways it poses significant challenges to the "overdetermination of accessibility." For example, during a Martin Luther King Day celebration, at which I'd been invited to speak about the "less palatable" King, I was aggressively scolded by several white members of the audience who claimed I focused on King's rage at the expense of his more powerful messages about love and peace. Further, a student in the audience claimed I made him angry, because "it just seemed like you thought you knew more than I did." I responded, "And I do. So, what's the problem? When you're at the dentist's office, and he says words you don't know and uses tools you may not be familiar with, does that bother you? No, because you understand he's the expert and you're the patient. So, when it comes to race and racism, I'm the expert and you're the patient." To the audience, me articulating my knowledge was a dismissal of theirs rather than a salient challenge to their thinking leveled by an expert.

Of course, this resistance can be largely explained by a lack of understanding about and respect for WGS scholars who routinely challenge the status

quo. However, it can also be understood by examining our struggles with expertise *within* the field, particularly the ways the "overdetermination of accessibility"—that is, the belief that our scholarship should be accessible to all women, and perhaps all people—results in us undermining our own scholarship by deeming it largely, if not entirely, insignificant if it's not accessible or legible to "the masses." To be clear, I am not suggesting always-already rejecting accessibility. Much of my work is, in fact, legible to audiences without any formal education, and I often share my work with audiences outside academia, including through popular media outlets. Still, I am an expert; I do often use professionalized language, much like athletes or medical professionals. But is this much different from the ways we adjust our teaching depending on course level? In introductory courses, we do not expect students to have prior knowledge of or experience engaging with theories and methodologies in our fields, so we teach differently in those courses than we do in advanced ones in which we do have that expectation. That scholars pay attention to their audiences is not necessarily elitist. In fact, I would consider it caring and thoughtful.

Further, I find myself asking "which masses" and "to what end?" I ask, because another consequence of the "overdetermination of accessibility" is undermining the complex thinking and engagement our work entails. For example, a journalist once contacted me to request an interview for an article she was writing about ABC's *Scandal*, entitled "Is Olivia Pope a Feminist?" In addition to my reluctance to assign the label "feminist" to anyone, real or imagined, I expressed preference for offering analyses of Pope and *Scandal* through a particular feminist framework so as not to conflate the related but distinct ways of understanding and doing feminist work. After I responded with "it depends" when she asked me what a feminist analysis would yield, she became disinterested, informing me my approach would "take too long," as she was seeking short quotes on a tight deadline. So, at the risk of seeming elitist and potentially limiting our work to the insular confines of academia, I resisted the demand for speed and accessibility.

To be fair, WGS scholars are necessarily cautious about claiming and naming our expertise because of the ways that may situate us above all others in hierarchies regarding who can and cannot produce, authorize, and disseminate knowledge. While many WGS experts are, in fact, members of oppressed groups, many of us are also privileged due, at least in part, to the positions we hold in the academy. Even those of us subjugated within it have the potential to exercise dominance due to that privilege. Grace Chang acknowledges as much when she writes critically about the "notion that 'experts' can understand the lives of those who experience oppression and exploitation in dominant society *better* than the oppressed and exploited themselves" (2007, 201, my emphasis). Still, I wonder if that potential should be located primarily in our claims to expertise. As an expert in Black feminisms, I do not claim to understand the experiences of Black people or even Black women *better* than Black people without academic credentials. Rather, it means I have

studied and continue to study Black feminisms extensively enough to be an expert in the ways that framework yields particular but myriad ways of thinking and knowing.

It also means I learned from Black feminist scholars like Patricia Hill Collins how to create work that aims to "resonate with diverse audiences" and how "to envision multiple interpretive communities for my scholarship" (2012, 19). My critique of the "overdetermination of accessibility" is that it precludes the possibility of WGS scholars creating work directed to our peers, situating it as always-already frivolous or elitist. At the same time, like many of my WGS colleagues, much of the work that contributed to the development of my own expertise was created by intellectuals who did not earn degrees. Along these lines, my first co-authored book, *In Audre's Footsteps: Transnational Kitchen Table Talk* (2021), was given that title in part to honor Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press for the ways it centered the work of serious women of color intellectuals who did not have (and sometimes did not want) access to academic credentials. As I note in the introduction, "Kitchen Table was created and given its name 'because the kitchen is the center of the home, the place where women in particular work and communicate with each other'" and also because the founders "wanted to situate themselves as a 'grassroots operation, begun and kept alive by women who cannot rely on inheritances or other benefits of class privilege to do the work'" (2021, 29). Hence, I wonder about the ways my considerations about expertise might have the potential to subjugate the very intellectuals to which a great deal of my professional life is indebted, even though I have not and would not claim expertise is inextricably linked to the acquiring of any particular degree.

All of the above illustrates why I began this chapter expressing my intention to be attentive to struggles with expertise in WGS without seeking to provide definitive answers. Again, my primary contention is that confronting, understanding, and even reconsidering these struggles is critical to doing WGS. When we insist on rejecting expertise, we run the risk of perpetuating various forms of oppression undermining our work. We also foreclose the possibility of developing substantial ways of holding ourselves accountable. If, however, we confront the ways narratives about expertise function within and frame WGS, we have the opportunity to maximize our potential to ask and address challenging questions that implicate ourselves, with the purpose of thinking seriously about how to carefully engage each other as uniquely subjugated knowers.