GENDER A VÝZKUM
GENDER AND RESEARCH

Teaching and Researching Women's and Gender Studies in Post-apartheid South Africa

Deirdre Byrne

Abstract: This article argues that South African universities experience a variety of constraints upon their freedom to teach and conduct research. These restrictions affect all academic disciplines, including women's and gender studies. The hegemony of neoliberalism affects the formation of collective and individual subjectivities. Its cultural operations possess the power to privilege and promote concepts that serve its monetary goals, while suppressing those that do not. Unfortunately, the managerialist turn in universities has meant that courses and units that are perceived as profitable receive funding, while those that are perceived as unprofitable do not. Women's and gender studies tends to be a casualty of the neoliberal approach to higher education, with university managements allocating some funding to its operations, but frequently not enough to allow these units to flourish. This often becomes a self-reinforcing situation, where the university management claims that the unit in question is not successful, and then cuts funding, which further curtails operations. Consequently, women's and gender studies units in South African universities remain marginalised, despite their potential to destabilise heteropatriarchal hegemonies.

Keywords: women's and gender studies; neoliberalism; postcolonial university

Byrne, Deirdre. 2017. 'Teaching and Researching Women's and Gender Studies in Post-apartheid South Africa.' Gender a výzkum / Gender and Research, Vol. 18, No. 1: 113–129. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13060/25706578.2017.18.1.352

Introduction: positioning the research

In the spirit of positionality,[1] I need to declare at the outset that I am a white, female, feminist professor of South African nationality. I work in my university's gender studies unit, which is located within the College of Human Sciences. I occupy a particular position in post-transitional South African society as a member of a formerly privileged and oppressive racial group. My critical approach to my context, my job and myself dictates that I constantly problematise and interrogate myself as a white professor. In this regard, I agree with Shireen Hassim and Cherryl Walker when they stated after a watershed conference in South Africa in 1990 on Women's Studies that: 'White feminists need to confront the insidiousness of racism in all areas of society, including the universities, and reflect on their own practice' (1993: 527). Part of reflecting on my own practice involves understanding the ways in which my experiences of privilege have shaped my actions as a teacher and researcher of women's and gender studies. Women's and gender studies has a long history of engaged scholarship. This has included championing the rights, narratives, and history of marginalised groups within society and this conceptual lineage is still relevant. My work involves several theoretical commitments: to decoloniality, intersectionality, and feminism. As a decolonial feminist, I need to reaffirm my ideological and pedagogical commitment to subverting systems of oppressive power and giving voice to those who have been marginalised. As a gender studies teacher and researcher, I also need to work from an intersectional viewpoint (Crenshaw 1993). This theory points to the necessity to take into account the multidimensionality of oppression at work for the researchers, teachers and students of women's and gender studies, who often experience different kinds of oppression in their own contexts.[2]

---

[1] Cheryl Hendricks and Desiree Lewis argue that, unless white women researchers in the field of women's and gender studies in South Africa declare and interrogate their own position in relation to their data, 'There will continue to be a struggle over the right to interpret experience, instead of a mapping out of different experiences and of how we are to relate our understanding of our own experience to our theorization of others' (1994: 73).

[2] Throughout this article I make reference to 'women's and gender studies'. This is not to deny the conflict that has surrounded the choice of names for such units, which has frequently been highly contested (see Richardson and Robinson 1994: 12). Sometimes these units are called 'centres', 'institutes', or 'departments' and sometimes their names incorporate concepts that are related to gender, such as 'sexuality' or even 'HIV/AIDS'. They deal with the general academic area of women's and gender studies, although their emphases may differ. For this reason I include all such units within the purview of this article.

Theoretical foundations

Besides decolonial and intersectional feminism, my argument is grounded in critical responses to the academy within the context of the neoliberal state, as articulated by Penny Jane Burke, Raewyn Connell, Bill Readings, David Harvey and others. Higher education in South Africa, as in many other countries, has historically been created and taught primarily by white men and in accordance with agendas that they have determined. Peggy Douglas makes a similar point in 'Radical Learning: A New Perspective on Feminist Pedagogy'. She recounts her experience of watching a committee of professors arguing that the women's studies programme should be discontinued in the face of budget cuts: 'I wanted to shout that didn't these tenured dinosaurs realize that every other program in the college is, in essence, a men's studies program' (2002: 82). Douglas's experience is echoed in South Africa, where, in the #FeesMustFall protests of 2015 and 2016,[3] student protests successfully halted fee increases for a year and continue to demand free education for all academically competent learners. In the wake of the protests, most universities are implementing budget cuts. Courses of study that are not seen as profitable or mainstream are likely to be 'rationalised' – in other words, discontinued. Although this is done in the name of 'austerity', in reality it serves an ideological agenda. It tends to be done in tandem with neoliberal management, which, as David Harvey points out, has dominated the South African economy in the post-apartheid era (2006: 23). Under a neoliberal government, intellectual and cultural products become commodities. University degrees, especially in the sciences, are packaged as marketable products in the service of capitalism. Universities in the neoliberal state become servants of the market: they are centres of production for knowledge that can be sold, as a degree that will ensure the graduate a job. Courses of study are funded according to the value they are perceived to have for the market. Courses of research and study that are seen as unprofitable, especially when they involve critical thinking such as is nurtured in women's and gender studies, receive less funding from managerialist university executive committees than those that are seen as profitable. In this article, I will unpack how neoliberal and managerialist trends in university administration have impacted negatively on women's and gender studies in South African universities.

In approaching this research, I have drawn on Vivien Burr's understanding that "*Knowledge and social action go together*" (2015: 5), which emphasizes the

[3] #FeesMustFall is the name given to the student protests across South Africa in 2015 and 2016. Originally catalysed by outrage at universities' proposed increase in student fees, they quickly grew to encompass a general call to decolonise university curricula and pedagogies, and to insource campus services such as security, catering, and cleaning.

necessity for engaged scholarship and exhorts us to remember that these findings are, themselves, historically and socially produced. This call is particularly relevant to the intersection of activism and academia in relation to feminist and gender studies scholarship: Amanda Gouws (2010) and others have highlighted the need for women's and gender studies scholars to practice activism in order to bring about gender justice.

In South Africa's postcolonial society, feminist and gender studies take place within a context where race is one system of oppression alongside gender and class. Accordingly, this article employs an intersectional approach to the metatextual study of gender studies. I understand intersectionality as an exploration of the ways in which different systems of domination and discrimination overlap in the experiences of individuals. Kimberlé Crenshaw neatly identifies the need to understand how systems of racial and gender oppression intersect when she writes: 'Feminist efforts to politicize women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains' (1991: 1242). Many of the lecturers and students of the courses on women's and gender studies which I discuss here are women. Likewise, many are black, so it is important to consider the ways in which different axes of oppression and identity (race, class, and gender) impact upon the formation and location of units of women's and gender studies in South Africa. Otherwise there is a risk of failing in the analysis both of race and gender, as Crenshaw notes in her analysis of legal and social interventions for battered US women of colour: 'The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reinforce the subordination of women' (1993: 1241). In a similar vein, Gouws' article on 'South African Feminism Today: Have We Lost the Praxis?' acknowledges that 'feminist scholarship/theory has become far more sophisticated in an attempt to incorporate the intersectionalities of women's identities of race, class, gender, disability and others' (2010: 13). At the same time, Gouws notes the progressive weakening of feminist activism within the South African political arena. Shan Simmonds also notes the importance of intersectionality for effective feminist curriculum design in South Africa in his article 'Curriculum-making in South Africa: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women (?)' (2014: 641).

Finally, this article is aligned with the trend of metadiscursive scholarly reflection on university structures and management within the global neoliberal regime and, in particular, with an understanding of South African universities as they are positioned in a postcolonial neoliberal state. Neoliberalism has impacted upon all features of social and economic functioning, as Raewyn Connell notes: 'Neoliberalism broadly means

the agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market. It also means the institutional arrangements to implement this project that have been installed, step by step, in every society under neoliberal control' (2013: 100). Connell's analysis of the effects of neoliberalism on Australian education, which is described as an attempt by state and economic forces to widen markets wherever possible, including via the technicisation of knowledge, is relevant to other contexts as well. As Penny Jane Burke argues in her article, 'The Right to Higher Education: Neoliberalism, Gender and Professional Mis/recognitions' (2013: 109), 'Higher educational spaces are always sites of struggle in which shifting, complex, and discursively produced power relations are at play in the formation of gendered subjectivities and in the privileging of particular epistemological and ontological perspectives and frameworks'. Burke's article goes on to explore the working of power and privilege in universities in the United Kingdom, arguing that programmes designed for 'widening participation', although initially conceived within the framework of social justice, are used for meritocratic and neoliberal ends. Burke's analysis of the position in Britain applies equally well to South Africa: 'A lack of attention to the ways some groups have unfair access to the material and cultural resources needed to get ahead tends to individualise "failure", explaining it in deficit terms as lacking ability, determination or aspiration' (2013: 111).

The critique of the university as an institution of neoliberalism may be seen to have begun with Bill Readings' now-classic *The University in Ruins* (1996), which explores the role of universities in the neoliberal era, aptly critiquing the role of corporatisation and managerialism within universities along with pressures for such institutions to rationalise their course offerings and remain cost-effective. His argument is that the historical role of universities as authoritative repositories of knowledge is no longer sustainable in a context where the social and political role of scholarly knowledge is moot. Ulrike Kistner's article, 'Under New Management: The Ambiguities of "Transformation" in Higher Education' decries the 'relatively ephemeral effect of "external" directives, policy directives, and managerialism' (2011: 146), while her polemical article, 'Unchaining the Human of the Humanities', explores the way the demands of a 'developmentalist state' (2012: 16) covertly direct the agenda of human sciences in ways that constrain thinking, rather than liberating it. Readings' astute critique resonates with Bonnie Morris's insights in her chapter, 'The Backlash against Women's Studies' (2002). Morris notes: 'not surprisingly, women's studies as a separate field has never enjoyed an easy relationship with those Ivory Tower institutions that accredit women's studies' (2002: 161). While critiques of the position of higher education in the postcolonial neoliberal state frame discourse around the problems relating to the fate and fortunes of gender studies in the South African academy, Morris's chapter provides an important analysis of some of the key problems that have beset women's and gender studies units

and programmes world-wide. Morris records that '[t]he exacerbated backlash against women's studies in the 1990s [in the USA] was two-fold: institutional cutbacks on the one hand and a very well-funded conservative opposition to women's studies on the other' (2002: 162). In my discussion, I argue that the discipline of women's and gender studies in South Africa has been negatively affected by a neoliberal understanding of the university, as well as by patriarchal ideology. Cuts in university budgets joining forces with a conservative management approach to women's and gender studies means that, while executive decision-makers continue to speak about the strategic importance of such units, there is little real commitment to the agenda of gender transformation, either of research or pedagogy in South African higher education. In addition, in the wake of the #FeesMustFall movement of 2015 and 2016, as Ruchi Chaturvedi has argued, the politics within universities has shifted away from binary logics (such as Europe/Africa; civilisation/primitivism; reason/passion) and towards the crafting of a postcolonial counterpublic that 'literally speaks in many languages … is impolite, conflictual, conscious of its minor and marginal location, and sets itself up against the dominant public genres and forces' (2015). In the wake of the #FeesMustFall movement, a new dynamic has entered the politics of university management: an urgent call to decolonise higher education. A major part of this project is the 'delinking' of key concepts 'from the Totality of Western epistemology' (Mignolo 2007: 493), which has for centuries dictated to colonised peoples in Africa how to think and behave. The call for decolonised curricula and pedagogies sees higher education as a tool for social and retributive justice, restoring resources (including epistemological resources) to the colonised, who were dispossessed by colonialism. Women's and gender studies units in South Africa align themselves with this call and embrace a decolonial agenda, which sees colonialism as a patriarchal project and one that aims to keep previously colonised people subjugated. Yet, as I shall show, their ability to subvert dominant epistemologies is constrained by managerial decisions shaped by neoliberalism.

Women's and Gender Studies in South Africa

Following the global trend, many of South Africa's 17 public and comprehensive universities have units, departments, centres or institutes[4] that deal with women's studies and/or gender studies, as in the University of the Western Cape's Department of Women's and Gender Studies, or sexuality studies, as in the University of

[4] In South African universities, departments conduct teaching courses and programmes, while centres and institutes frequently refer to non-teaching units that focus either on research or on non-formal teaching offerings.

Pretoria's Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender. The position of each of these units is summarised in a table below. In many countries in the global North, the situation regarding women's and gender studies is as uncertain as it is in South Africa, with some authors blaming neoliberalism for a new conservatism in gender and sexuality studies (such as Woltersdorff 2011). In the context of the United Kingdom, Jen Marchbank laments '"Ding, Dong, the Witch Is Dead, the Wicked Witch Is Dead": The Reported Demise of Women's Studies in the United Kingdom' (2009) in narrating the irony of the closure of undergraduate courses in women's studies, while simultaneously affirming the ongoing vigour of feminist scholarship in that country. Exploring the causes for the termination of women's studies at undergraduate level, she notes that 'the position of women's studies is often one of fragility and marginalization; programs are underfunded; administrators and other faculty are frequently unsympathetic; women's studies lacks power in the academy; and in times of cutbacks, women's studies is dispensable' (2009: 197). The three areas that Marchbank identifies as contributing to the instability of women's and gender studies courses and units – the lack of sympathy from university management, the corresponding lack of power of these units, and their vulnerability to funding cuts – have much to do with neoliberalism's grip on higher education and the need to subordinate it to market forces, which also apply to South Africa. Certain groups of disciplines receive more funding than others, as the following table demonstrates.

Table 1: Funding groups for 2012/13: based on 2008 CESM[5] categories

Funding group	**CESM categories included in funding group**
1	07 education, 12 law, 18 psychology, 19 public administration and services
2	04 business, economics & management studies, 05 communication & journalism, 06 computer & information sciences, 11 languages, linguistics & literature, 17 philosophy, religion and theology, 20 social sciences
3	02 architecture & the built environment, 08 engineering, 10 family ecology & consumer sciences, 15 mathematics & statistics
4	01 agriculture & agricultural operations, 03 visual & performing arts, 09 health professions & related clinical sciences, 13 life sciences, 14 physical sciences

(Styger 2014: 14)

[5] CESM refers to the Classification of Educational and Study Material.

Funding group 1 receives the lowest amount of state funds while funding group 4 is the most generously resourced. Women's and gender studies are classified as part of social sciences in funding group 2.

As is well known, racial oppression has shaped South African history more than other forms of oppression, such as gender and class (even though these forms of oppression work intersectionally). Under apartheid, race was brought to the fore in ways that centralised it as the main axis of identity politics and political endeavour. So, while the struggle against apartheid was fought on the battlefield of race, it was assumed, even by feminists within the anti-apartheid struggle, that it was more important than the struggle for gender equality. This did not mean that the battle for gender equality was shelved: rather, it was seen as a cause that could be taken up once the battle for a democratic society had been won. It was assumed that racial liberation would come first and would be followed by gender liberation. This is borne out by Melissa Steyn, who states that 'South African activist women [immediately post-apartheid] were determined that the women's movement in South African should not meet the fate of so many other women's movements in nationalist struggles, namely, that once liberation had been won, women's issues would once again be relegated to a subordinate role' (1998: 42). Many activist women, from all sectors of the South African population, were committed to bringing about racial equality before fighting for gender equality. Substantive democracy in South Africa was achieved in 1994, as is well known, though many have questioned whether it has brought about racial equality in terms of access to resources. Theoretically, though, having achieved a racially free society, South Africa is free to pursue the ideal of gender equality. It seems logical, therefore, that women's and gender studies units would flourish as centres of research and teaching at higher education institutions in South Africa. However, this has not proved to be the case.

In 2007 Jane Bennett and Vasu Reddy, under the auspices of the African Gender Studies Institute at the University of Cape Town, conducted an introductory audit of teaching modules across South Africa that were dedicated to women's and gender studies. They explored modules that had women's and gender studies as their explicit focus as well as those where either gender, women's studies, or the body formed part of the curriculum. Their findings are sobering as they conclude that 'the national context creates powerful dilemmas for both faculty and students' (2007: 59). They go on to provide an insightful analysis of the problem:

> [W]hile such teaching [of women's gender and sexuality studies] does indeed offer a route into potentially transformative learning for students, this route is compromised by the general academic environment, but more seriously, by the intransigence of the idea that 'academic theory/writing' is fundamentally separable

> from 'ways of living your life'. Even in disciplines committed to the presence of 'the body' (through diverse, even contradictory, routes), the role of the university as a route into 'professionalisation' trumps – or challenges – efforts to radicalise consciousness at every level. (2007: 59)

Bennett and Reddy point to some of the most problematic challenges surrounding the teaching of women's and gender studies in South/ern Africa: the division (whether real or perceived) between academic study and professional training; and the impact of the neoliberalisation of universities, where courses of study that do not lead directly and clearly to employment opportunities are deprioritised by both staff and students. As Desiree Lewis notes in her essay on the #FeesMustFall movement (2015: n.p.): 'Universities … have increasingly become sites for supporting the status quo, both in their teaching methods, the managerialist bureaucracies they set in place to monitor academics, and the methods of teaching they encourage. Rather than being spaces for promoting imaginative and animated scholarship focusing on the humanities, the modern university, which privileges the hard sciences and downplays the humanities, is an efficient site for the neoliberal commoditizing of knowledge.'

The table below summarises the findings of my research into women's and gender-studies in South African universities.

Table 2: Summary of South African Women's and Gender Studies Units

University	**Name of women's and gender studies unit**	**Staff with doctorates and NRF ratings**	**Courses/programmes taught**
University of the Western Cape	Department of Women's and Gender Studies	4 staff, 3 with doctorates and two with NRF ratings	Courses are taught from second year to doctoral study
University of Cape Town	African Gender Institute	3 staff, two with doctorates	Courses are taught from second year to doctoral study
University of the Free State	Interdisciplinary programme in Gender Studies, housed in the Centre for Africa Studies	1 staff member with a doctorate	A taught master's degree

Rhodes University	Critical Studies in Sexuality and Reproductive Health	1 staff member with a doctorate and NRF rating	No courses taught
University of KwaZulu-Natal	Department of Gender Studies	2 staff members, both with doctorates	Courses are taught from second year to doctoral study
University of Pretoria	Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender	3 staff members, 2 with doctorates	No courses taught
University of South Africa	Institute for Gender Studies	1 staff member with a doctorate and NRF rating	Interdisciplinary Honours in Gender Studies

In the following section, I discuss how women's and gender studies (and related fields of study, such as HIV/AIDS and sexuality) fares in South African universities. In order to gather the data presented here, I conducted semi-structured interviews between March 2015 and October 2016 with seven colleagues at different South African universities who work in women's and gender studies units. These units represent the total offerings in the field of women's and gender studies in South African higher education. The research subjects were chosen because they had experience of working in women's and gender studies units, either as directors or as senior staff. Ethical clearance was obtained for the research from the Ethics Review Committee of the Institute for Gender Studies at Unisa and the interviewees were given an opportunity to check my account of the data before publication. E-mail was used to ask follow-up questions when necessary.

The findings show a definite trend relating to neoliberal control and funding. South African universities are funded by the state according to two main outputs: graduating students and published research. State funding is allocated by university management to the units where it is generated. There is, therefore, pressure and competition to produce successful students and research outputs in the form of articles, books, and conference proceedings. Those units that produce more outputs receive more funding, and the converse is also true.

Western Cape universities

There are three universities in the Western Cape which teach women's and gender studies; the University of the Western Cape, the University of Cape Town

and Stellenbosch University. One of the most successful women's and gender studies units in South Africa is the Department of Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) at the University of the Western Cape. Tamara Shefer (a senior professor in the department) and Judy Aulette (2005: 105) reflect that it grew out of an interdisciplinary programme that was initially hosted by the Arts Faculty and became a fully-fledged teaching department within the university structures in 2010. Shefer and Aulette go on to explain the variety of activities that typically characterise women's and gender studies programmes and units: '[the women's and gender studies programme is] active in a wide range of research activities and international and local collaborative endeavours … [and] works hard to maintain a strong local and community orientation' (2005: 105). Desiree Lewis, another senior professor in the department, recounts that an external reviewer for the university advised the staff that formalising the unit into a teaching department with the same status as all the other teaching departments would offer institutional stability to the unit, and this advice was followed. The department consists of four members of staff, who teach courses in gender studies from undergraduate to doctoral level. All four of the staff members, as well as the doctoral students, are highly productive and ten doctorates have been conferred since 2005. Shefer remarks that all the faculty are productive researchers with excellent records of achieving rating by the National Research Foundation and attracting funding. Despite the department's successes, Lewis explains that other teaching departments at the university feel that they do not need to address gender in their research or teaching because it is being taken care of by the WGS. This is an unforeseen and unfortunate consequence of establishing a separate department of women's and gender studies and may lead to the university's teaching offerings in other disciplines not containing as much content about gender as would be required from a full gender mainstreaming exercise in the area of curriculum development.

By contrast, at the University of Cape Town, the African Gender Institute (AGI) is located within the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics (School of African & Gender Studies, Anthropology & Linguistics 2016). According to Helen Scanlon, who teaches the gender studies curriculum, this federal 'school' is known as AXL and was created out of four previously separate academic units by the process of rationalisation, used by university managements to merge departments and units within faculties or colleges into more cost-effective but still heterogeneous bodies. The motive for such mergers is generally financial, as such a combined unit may only require one head and fewer administrative staff than four separate ones, and, in my view, is clearly a response to neoliberal imperatives to turn universities into cost-effective and market-related structures. The AGI separates teaching from research and the teaching of Gender Studies courses at undergraduate

and postgraduate levels is run by a different staff complement from those who pursue teaching and edit the journal that is housed at the institute. The separation of teaching and research in the area means that student success attracts separate funding from research outputs and thus splits the income that flows into the AGI into two streams, unlike most academic departments.

Also in the Western Cape, the University of Stellenbosch offered a postgraduate MPhil degree in Gender Studies between 2000 and 2007.[6] In South Africa, the MPhil degree is designed for students from diverse academic backgrounds, who might not meet the requirements to qualify on the basis of their academic qualifications. It was a taught master's degree, where students had to sit for examinations as well as submit a short dissertation. It differs from a research master's degree in that the latter requires only a dissertation to be submitted and passed. Gouws (a senior professor who taught the course) explained that students who registered for the course were enthusiastic about gender studies, but tended to be under-prepared because of the lack of feeder courses dedicated to gender studies. The national Department of Education, within the neoliberal South African state, does not fund taught master's degrees at the same level as research master's degrees. When this change took place in national Higher Education funding, Gouws narrates that the degree was no longer viable and was discontinued after the retirement of one of the professors in charge. The students were thus denied an opportunity to be exposed to critical and engaged scholarship in the field of gender studies at a high level. Individual faculty (some of whom were involved in teaching the taught MPhil) still offer modules on gender studies in their own departments, but the university does not have a dedicated women's or gender studies unit.

University of the Free State

Nadine Lake, who manages the University of the Free State's interdisciplinary programme in Gender Studies, explains that this programme came into being out of concern among faculty in 2000 about the institutional culture, which included significant gender inequalities. The programme has a limited market and only offers a taught Master of Arts degree and a postgraduate diploma. It had 23 registered students in 2015. Since 2000 the programme has changed disciplinary homes three times, and since 2010 it has been hosted by the Centre for Africa Studies. It is run by a single dedicated academic (Lake), although lecturers in other departments also assist on a voluntary basis with teaching and research. The lecturers in the UFS programme in gender studies come from various disciplines, such as English, psychology, and the

[6] Gouws, Amanda (2015); personal communication, 6 February.

Centre for Africa Studies and Communication Studies. This creates an unfortunate situation where individual faculty are torn between their departmental duties and their loyalty to the gender studies programme. While the diversity of disciplines represented in gender studies at the UFS is good for its interdisciplinary standing, the paucity of funding means that these faculty have to split their time between their substantive disciplines and their teaching in gender studies. This problem is also seen at women's and gender studies units in the global North. Deborah A. Burghardt and Carol L. Colbeck, writing within the context of the USA, observe: 'Many WS [Women's Studies] faculty hold appointments in disciplinary departmental homes where colleagues agree to loan them to teach WS courses. WS faculty have two homes, but they may perceive their disciplinary departments as having more organizational power than their WS programs' (2005: 306). Lake concludes that the gender studies programme attracts a small but significant cohort of postgraduate students each year and conducts gender-related seminars and events.[7]

The University of KwaZulu-Natal

The University of KwaZulu-Natal has two campuses and runs a gender studies programme, which is staffed by two full-time members of staff. Janet Muthoni Muthuki, one of these two lecturers, explains that gender studies forms part of a cluster of disciplines in the university and does not have autonomous standing. Nevertheless, women's and gender studies has been mainstreamed across several disciplines in this cluster. The fact that the programme is split between two campuses of the university, with only one academic in each campus and nearly 90 kilometres separating them, means that the funding that accrues to a single programme has to be split between two centres. This, in my view, is an unambiguous indication of the way the neoliberal regime in the country values gender studies in the province. If women's and gender studies were seen as more valuable, resources might be allocated to allow more faculty to work in this programme. This is highly regrettable given that KwaZulu-Natal is also home to harmful practices such as the Reed Dance, where virgins dance before the Zulu King and compete for his attention, and the 'virginity bursaries' which subsidised young women to attend university as long as they remained virgins, as proved by an annual virginity test.[8]

[7] Lake, N. (2016). Personal communication, 28 October.

[8] See Khoza (2016) and Gqirana (2016).

Universities in Gauteng

Gauteng is the economic heart of the country and contains five universities. Of these, only two have dedicated units for women's and gender studies. The University of Pretoria (UP) housed an active research Institute for Women's and Gender Studies until 2012. This Institute was housed in the Department of Sociology as a small sub-unit and was involved in organising a national sociology conference in 2011 on the theme *Gender in Question*, but since Elaine Salo, the professor in charge, left the university, the institute has been closed. An informal Gender Research Group (known as GR@UP) was run by two postdoctoral fellows in 2014 and 2015 and arranged various gender-related events, but when the two postdoctoral fellows left the university, GR@UP also ceased operations. The university's gender efforts are presently coordinated by the Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender, which, according to one of the Directors, Mary Crewe, functions as an extra-curricular unit. It does not teach formal programmes or courses. Rather, it conducts research, educates the university community about HIV and AIDS, and organises campaigns to raise awareness of sexual diversity.[9]

The situation is somewhat different at the University of South Africa (Unisa), where I am situated. Unisa is the largest Open and Distance Education provider in Africa. It hosts a small Institute for Gender Studies, staffed entirely by faculty on contract until such time as it has managed to cover permanent staff salaries through research output subsidy. In this funding model, it is possible to discern the workings of a neoliberal approach to university management, where teaching and research units are expected either to source or to fund their own operations. In this way, South African university management conforms to Brenda R. Weber's assertion that 'the neoliberal university is an institution that routinely places financial robustness over educational or pedagogical quality' (2010: 128). The institute coordinates an interdisciplinary Honours degree in Gender Studies, which is taught by interested faculty in different disciplinary departments on a volunteer basis and without any reward for this teaching. It also arranges research seminars and conferences; coordinates the South African Association for Gender Studies; and hosts an academic journal called *Gender Questions.* Despite these diverse activities, without secure funding for permanent academic posts in the institute, faculty tend to seek disciplinary homes that can offer more financial and professional security and a more definite career path.

[9] Crewe, M. (2016). Personal communication, 21 October.

Conclusion

My research has found that women's and gender studies does not fare very well in postcolonial South African universities. My findings chime with Burghardt and Colbeck's finding that '[d]espite 30 years in the academy [in the USA], most WS and other interdisciplinary studies units … that cross disciplinary boundaries to foster integrative thinking remain in marginalized positions as programs rather than departments' (2005: 301). There are several possible reasons for this. One is that, although women's and gender studies is an important component of many teaching programmes, it is not yet fully mainstreamed in university offerings. Another is that only two South African universities (the Universities of the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) offer undergraduate courses in gender studies. Finally, a perception exists that 'there are no jobs for gender studies graduates' besides NGO work, and in a climate of intensifying professionalisation of university degrees, a programme that does not lead to vocational opportunity is perceived as not being very valuable. As a result, these units tend to be marginalised by university managements. This is, however, the result of a neoliberal approach to tertiary education, which commodifies knowledge offerings in terms of their market value. It does not respond to the need for gender transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, where patriarchy is still dominant. This is regrettable, since these units have the potential to destabilise western epistemologies, including received hierarchies of knowledge and power. In this regard, I agree with Weber's comments on feminist pedagogy as a potential force for changing entrenched power relations when she remarks that 'active feminist pedagogy strategies … are specifically designed to break down traditionalist models of teaching that rely on authoritative professors and compliant students, and in so doing, they work to redefine notions of value, identity, credibility, and merit' (2010: 129). Women's and gender studies units can foster critical engagement with existing regimes of heteropatriarchy and their relation to racial supremacy. It is unfortunate, therefore, that they are perceived within the neoliberal paradigm as not possessing market value that would allow them to be funded accordingly.

References

Bennett, J., Reddy, V. 2007. '"Feeling the Disconnect": Teaching Sexualities and Gender in South African Higher Education.' *Feminist Africa*, Vol. 9: 43–62.

Burghardt, D. A., Colbeck, C. L. 2005. 'Women's Studies Faculty at the Intersection of Institutional Power and Feminist Values.' *Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 76, No. 3: 301–330.

Burke, P. J. 2013. 'The Right to Higher Education: Neoliberalism, Gender and Professional

Mis/Recognitions.' *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, Vol. 23, No. 2: 107–126, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2013.790660.
Burr, V. 2015. *Social Constructionism*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.
Chaturvedi, R. 2015. 'The Rise of a Post-Colonial University.' [online]. [cit. 2/6/2017]. Available from: http://www.africasacountry.com/2015/04/the-rise-of-a-post-colonial-university/.
Connell, R. 2013. 'The Neoliberal Cascade and Education: An Essay on the Market Agenda and Its Consequences.' *Critical Studies in Education*, Vol. 54, No. 2: 99–112.
Crenshaw, K. 1991. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Color.' *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 43, No. 6: 1241–1299.
Douglas, P. 2002. 'Radical Learning: A New Vision of Feminist Pedagogy.' Pp. 79–94 in DiGeorgio-Lutz, J. (ed.) *Women in Higher Education: Empowering Change*. Praeger: Westport, Connecticut and London.
Fraser, N. 2000. 'Rethinking Recognition.' *New Left Review*, Vol. 3: 107–120.
Gouws, A. 2010. 'Feminism in South Africa Today: Have we Lost the Praxis?' *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, Vol. 24, No. 83: 13–23.
Gqirana, T. 2016. 'Virginity Tests for Bursaries are Unconstitutional – Gender Equality Commission.' [online]. [cit. 10/6/2017]. Available from: http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/virginity-tests-for-bursaries-are-unconstitutional-gender-equality-commission-20160617.
Harvey, D. 2006. 'Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction.' *Geografiska Annaler Series B: Human Geography*, Vol. 88, No. 2: 22–44.
Hassim, S., Walker, C. 1993. 'Women's Studies and the Women's Movement in South Africa: Defining a Relationship.' *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 16, No. 5: 523–534.
Hendricks, C., Lewis, D. 1994. 'Voices from the Margins.' *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, Vol. 20: 61–75.
Khoza, A. 2016. 'We Are Ready to Host Reed Dance – KZN govt.' [online]. [cit. 17/5/2017]. Available from: http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/we-are-ready-to-host-reed-dance-kzn-govt-20160905.
Kistner, U. 2011. 'Under New Management: The Ambiguities of Transformation in Higher Education.' *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, No. 77: 136–151.
Kistner, U. 2012. 'Unchaining the Human of the Humanities.' *Social Dynamics*, Vol. 38, No. 1: 15–19.
Lewis, D. 2015. '"Another University is Possible": Thoughts on Student Protests in Postcolonial Africa.' [online]. *Los Angeles Review of Books*. [cit. 10/6/2017]. Available from: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/another-university-is-possible-thoughts-on-student-protests-and-universities-in-postcolonial-africa/.
Marchbank, J. 2009. '"Ding, Dong, the Witch Is Dead, the Wicked Witch Is Dead': The Reported Demise of Women's Studies in the United Kingdom." *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1: 194–202.
Mignolo, W. 2007. 'Delinking.' *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2: 449–514.
Morris, B. J. 2002. 'The Backlash against Women's Studies.' Pp. 158–170 in DiGeorgio-Lutz, J.

(ed.) *Women in Higher Education: Empowering Change*. Westport, CT, and London: Praeger.
Readings, B.1996. *The University in Ruins*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Richardson, D., Robinson, V. 1994. 'Theorizing Women's Studies, Gender Studies and Masculinity: The Politics of Naming.' *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol 1: 11–27.
School of African & Gender Studies, Anthropology & Linguistics. 2016. *African Gender Institute: Overview*. [online]. [cit. 5/6/2017]. Available from: http://www.humanities.uct.ac.za/hum/departments/agi.
Shefer, T., Aulette, J. 2005. '"Doing Gender in South African Universities": Reflections on a Research Forum Celebrating Ten Years of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape.' Feminist Africa, Vol. 5: 105–111.
Simmonds, S. 2014. 'Curriculum-making in South Africa: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women (?)' *Gender and Education*, Vol. 26, No. 6: 636–652, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2014.946474.
Steyn, M. 1998. 'A New Agenda: Restructuring Feminism in South Africa.' *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 21, No. 1: 41–52.
Styger, A. 2014. *Evaluating the South African Higher Education Government Funding Framework*. Unpublished master's dissertation. [online]. [cit. 5/6/2017]. Available from: http://dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/12034/Styger_A.pdf;sequence=1.
Weber, B. R. 2010. 'Teaching Popular Culture through Gender Studies: Feminist Pedagogy in a Postfeminist and Neoliberal Academy?' *Feminist Teacher*, Vol. 20, No. 2: 124–138.
Woltersdorff, V. 2011. 'Paradoxes of Precarious Sexualities: Sexual Sub-Cultures under Neo-Liberalism.' *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2: 164–182.

Deirdre Byrne is a full professor of English Studies and the Head of the Institute for Gender Studies at Unisa. She is the editor-in-chief of the academic journal, *scrutiny2: issues in English studies in Southern Africa* and one of the co-editors of *Gender Questions*. She holds a C2 rating from the National Research Foundation of South Africa as an established researcher. She has published several academic articles on the writing of Ursula K. le Guin and on the representation of gender in speculative fiction. She belongs to the steering groups of an international research project on Gender and Love and ZAPP, the South African poetry project. Contact e-mail: byrnedc@unisa.ac.za.