Weaving a Collaborative History

TCU LEADERS OF WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES SHARE STORIES

Welcome to a Multi-vocal History of Women and Gender Studies (WGST) at TCU

We are excited and honored to bring you an updated edition of a collaborative project initially created in connection with the 25th anniversary of Women and Gender Studies (WGST) academic and co-curricular programming work at TCU. For the project's initial publication, a team of undergraduate and graduate students, coordinated by faculty member Sarah Ruffing Robbins, interviewed leaders who had been involved in various stages in WGST's important history, up to the 25th anniversary period. Meagan Solomon, then a graduate student earning her WGST certificate, prepared a digital edition of that collection for online publication on the then-new department's website.

In 2025-26, with substantial support from the TCU English Department, Madeline McCormack (that unit's Gauthier Apprentice—an undergraduate research position) collaborated with Dr. Robbins and WGST associate chair Dr. Layne Craig to revitalize digital design and formatting, as well as add new materials to this resource. For Madeline, a double-major in English and WGST, her editorial role provided an affirming opportunity to put her learning into action. As Madeline noted, "insert a quote here, which may be several paragraphs in length."

With pride in the longstanding leadership of WGST at TCU and beyond, and with optimism for its continued leadership, we invite you to explore these stories from a number of its most dedicated advocates.

Madeline, Layne, and Sarah

Weaving a Collaborative History:
TCU Leaders of Women and Gender Studies Share Stories

Preface: Reflecting On 25 Years of Women and Gender Studies at TCU

Meagan Solomon and Sarah Ruffing Robbins;
Updated 2025 by Sarah Ruffing Robbins

In 2019, students, staff, and faculty celebrated twenty-five years of Women and Gender Studies as a recognized academic enterprise at TCU. What began as the Women's Studies Program and minor in 1994 brought a graduate certificate in 2004 before undergoing a name change to "Women and Gender Studies" in 2014. Four years later, in 2018, Women and Gender Studies became an official department in the School of Interdisciplinary Studies with a corresponding major, minor, emphasis option, and graduate certificate.

This collection commemorates the important twenty-fifth anniversary of WGST as a milestone in TCU's history through a series of interview projects completed by students in Dr. Sarah Ruffing Robbins's Fall 2019 Feminist Inquiry course, with additional material supplied by 2019-20 WGST graduate assistant Andreley Bjelland and Lorraine Sherley Chair graduate student research associate for the same year, Meagan Solomon. As each interview illustrates, the journey to establish Women and Gender Studies at TCU did not come without institutional challenges, many of which were reflected in the larger feminist movement's history during those same years, while some were unique to TCU. The success of the program, now department (as of the original publication of this collection in 2020), can be attributed to the longstanding passion and commitment of feminist faculty, staff, and students invested in intersectional gender justice and LGBTQ+ rights.

The interviews from founding members showcase over fifteen years' worth of organizing and activism by women faculty and men allies urging the university to implement Women's Studies courses as early as the 1970s. Despite the emergence of Women's Studies programs across the country during this time, TCU lagged approximately twenty years behind most universities in the United States when it instituted the first program in 1994. Dr. Jean Giles-Sims, the first Director of Women's Studies at TCU, reflects on this local tension with national politics as she recounts coming to TCU in the 1970s from the Northeast in the 1970s, where feminist academic and co-curricular programs were emerging in mass. Having witnessed this movement firsthand, Dr. Giles-Sims helped lead the efforts to bring TCU up-to-speed by working in collaboration with other feminist faculty featured in this collection, including: Dr. Priscilla Tate, Dr. Bonnie Melhart, Dr. Linda Moore, Dr. Nadia Lahutsky, Dr. Australia Tarver, Dr. Joanne Green, and Dr. Claudia Camp.

In the section of our collection that focuses on the early years, each of these founding members reflects on the challenges faced at various stages of organizing the first program. Women represented only a small percentage of faculty at TCU in the 1970s to 1990s, and they faced institutional barriers from the top down. As these interviews illustrate, the founding members of the program succeeded only when people in power, mainly male administrators and faculty, served as allies in the movement.

In that vein, the contributions administrative leaders like Dr. Alan Shepherd and Dr. Mike McCraken made to WGST's growth and acceptance on campus should be recognized.

In subsequent years, as the critical mass of feminist faculty grew, they continued to face institutional challenges when attempting to enhance the program. While the overall number of women faculty gradually increased, progress in specific departments and colleges moved slowly and unevenly, often requiring individual newcomers to face working contexts far from welcoming, as Dr. Joanne Green recalls of her own first years at TCU. And in 2014, when faculty pushed to change the name of the program to "Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies," consistent with patterns of scholarship and curricular designations at leading institutions across the country, they met administrative resistance. They were ultimately restricted from including "Sexuality" in the title by the Office of the Provost. Interviews with leaders working at the time of this project's development (2019-20), including Dr. Joanne Green, Dr. Karen Steele, Dr. Nada Elias-Lambert, and Dr. Ebony Rose, reflect on their experiences surrounding this era of organizing and their participation in the program as it evolved into a department.

Alumni of the graduate certificate program are also included in this collection. Altheria Caldera, Mayra Guardiola, and K Wywrick each offer student perspectives on both the challenges and successes of Women and Gender Studies during their time at TCU. In particular, their interviews reflect the longstanding struggles of Black, Brown, queer, and gender- non-conforming students to feel fully accounted for and represented on campus. At the same time, their testimonies point to new directions for the department in the early 2020s as it continued to be strengthened by growth in student enrollments and leadership, enhanced curriculum, and WGST's evolving partnership with the Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies Department as "sister" programs in the new School of Interdisciplinary Studies (SIS).

In May 2019, J.R. Hardy made history by becoming the first student to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Women and Gender Studies. Underscoring the significance of WGST's first undergraduate major being a man, Hardy has commented that, for him, his choice of major mattered personally and programmatically, enabling him "to be a male activist educating other men on issues of violence against women and ways of debunking the societal pressures to conform to hyper masculinity."

Now, when the authors were composing this introduction in the spring of 2020, Women and Gender Studies had grown to include 10 majors, 31 minors, 7 emphasis students, and 50 graduate certificate students. With a deeper investment in intersectionality, the department also had also grown to include courses that better represent the breadth of Women and Gender Studies as an academic field, including: Queer Theories, Women of Color Feminisms, and Transnational Gender and Sexuality. Fall 2020's courses also included the first offering of a class in Black Masculinity developed by English Department faculty member and WGST affiliate Brandon Manning. With a more conscious effort to foreground such areas of study, the department aimed to grow and reach more students invested in the history of feminist (and womanist) activism and education led by queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, women of color. Meanwhile, WGST at TCU also affirmed the increasingly transnational focus of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies as a field through the hiring of Assistant Professor Randa Tawil, who will be joining the department in fall 2020.

Preface

In any account of a social enterprise's birth and ongoing development, it is important to acknowledge that much leadership is exercised both collaboratively and quietly. In feminist/womanist work particularly, the communal nature of interventionist change can, over time, obscure important contributions. Thus, beyond the stories included in this collection, we should celebrate the vital activism of individuals and groups not directly represented here. In that context, the material conditions specific to gathering this set of interviews (such as the unavailability of several key figures during the period when the initial interviewing occurred) led to a level of incompleteness that we expect anyone familiar with WGST's history at TCU would recognize.

With that in mind, we want to give a special thanks to several members of our TCU WGST community who were not (yet) interviewed but who played significant roles alongside those whose reflections appear here. While this list is not exhaustive, we especially wish to recognize the important labor and leadership of Dr. Jeannine Gailey, the first Department Chair of Women and Gender Studies from 2018-2019; J.R. Hardy, the first Women and Gender Studies graduate; Dr. Margaret Lowry, the first Women and Gender Studies Lecturer; Dr. Nino Testa, Associate Director of Women and Gender Studies beginning in 2017; Dr. Theresa Gaul, Director of Women and Gender Studies from 2012-2018; Dr. Laura Prestwood, Director of Women and Gender Studies from 2009-2012; Dr. Marcy Paul, former director of the now defunct Women's Resource Program; Paige Pohle, WGST minor alum who contributed to the program's website and archival history; and the many more community members and leaders not listed here. We hope that these and other major contributors to the increasing impact of WGST as a vital program at TCU will be commemorated in future interview projects seeking to embody and extend a local version of feminist historical recovery.

Introduction: Across Time and Within Contexts of a Feminist Interviewing Project

Sarah Ruffing Robbins and Meagan Solomon

The interview-based feature stories presented in this collection emerged originally from a course project for WGST 50103 (then named Feminist Inquiry, later Feminist and Queer Inquiry) in the fall of 2019. TCU's Women and Gender Studies Department was then celebrating the 25th anniversary of the field of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies as an academic program space at the university. Taking advantage of that milestone, Sarah created an assignment for students in the class that asked them to draw on feminist interviewing theories and methodologies to help assemble a recovery project honoring key leaders in the program's birth and development.

Light revision and editing of the stories occurred in spring 2020. During that semester—a time far more likely to be remembered as a Coronavirus/Covid-19 era than for other reasons—we (Sarah and Meagan) returned to the draft texts from the fall to assemble them into this collection. Given this chronological context, the anthology of stories we present here took on a different form than what we envisioned during the fall. That is, our anthology was both constrained by and benefited from the inescapable impact of a pandemic on all academic—indeed, all communal—enterprises that spring.

The constraints Covid placed on our editing seem obvious as we write this introduction but may need to be noted for future readers. They included, for instance, the impossibility of in-person re-connecting with interviewees or the wonderful student team who generated the stories in the first place. Constraints also entailed facing the restrictions we, and all those who contributed to our editorial work, were dealing with intellectually and emotionally during those months. Concentrating on any task was harder. Access to resources we might have otherwise employed, such as the university's Center for Digital Expression, was unachievable. Such limitations, accordingly, made us especially grateful that interviewees responded to specific queries about their stories' content and that various student authors found time to answer questions as well.

Why bother to cite this context? One reason lies in a wish to affirm the kind of learning about feminist recovery work that had already emerged through studying models and then doing our initial interviews in fall 2019. Cultural memory is fragile. Social histories tend to erase the contributions of marginalized individuals and communities, as well as the quotidian contexts in which they struggled. Impossible as it might have been for us to believe while we were actually living day-to-day in the time of Covid's outbreak, we know that even such a far-reaching event as the 2020 pandemic fades, in time, from shared memory. As we compose this introduction, we are aware of--and we want to contribute to--calls like one then emerging from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and other cultural institutions to chronicle the specific context of Coronavirus's impact in 2020. Acknowledging ways our efforts to produce this anthology were shaped by that time is one way of noting how, as has often been the case across feminist and womanist histories,

individual women like us and "women's work" more broadly have to get work done in less-than-ideal ways.

Our research for this project had confirmed that pattern, long familiar to feminist and womanist scholars. All of us who did interviews for this project during the autumn class encountered multiple examples of how official institutional memory around particular moments in WGST's history at TCU was in danger of erasing particular contributions and challenges unless they were captured and recorded--that is, unless we carried out a collaborative intervention. We repeatedly learned, through our interviews, about hard work, personal roadblocks encountered, and social contexts that we were amazed we had not known about. Keeping alive these stories of WGST's development at TCU became very important to all the project participants through interviewing and composing the resulting reports. As we traded drafts, we were repeatedly surprised by elements of program history that had not received adequate recognition or critical review. Therefore, since each interviewee had been boldly, insightfully honest about those specific moments and complex contexts shaping them, we knew we too should be forthright about our own constraints. A genuine history of WGST at our university, we realized, needed to include the messiness of daily constraints as well as milestones.

We have sought to honor that commitment here by describing the broader social context of our spring 2020 editing process. Relatedly, we have tried to reflect the messy lived context of that time by keeping to student writers' rhetorical and visual design variations throughout the collection. In doing so, we have affiliated with calls by Marjorie L. DeVault and Glenda Gross, whose "Feminist Interviewing" essay the fall 2019 class members studied at the start of the project. DeVault and Gross call on feminist scholars to carry out interview research and writing "reflexively and relationally," by incorporating "our own intellectual biographies and contexts" into our reporting and using "interview data. . . to explore language and discourse itself" (173). In our case, that commitment is manifest now in our descriptions of both the spring 2020 challenges we were facing (personally, professionally) and the editorial decision-making steps that we referenced above.

Recovery as Program Resource

In line with much feminist research on interviewing as a knowledge-making endeavor, our project generated practical program-level rewards beyond the stories themselves. For instance, the interview data enabled us to connect current advocates for childcare on campus with longstanding activists whose earlier efforts could help the ongoing campaign. This first-hand experience of repeatedly discovering the potential power of safeguarding such experience-based resources, in whatever form possible, would, in turn, lead us to make particular editorial decisions in spring 2020. For example, readers will find that some pieces in this collection give substantial space to self-positioning by the interviewer and blend her voice with that of the interviewee—whether by utilizing a Q and A format for presentation, or by presenting an account of the writer's actual interview process, or by weaving in reflections on biographical connections between interviewer and interviewee. (See Cotterill and Letherby on these concepts and practices evident in much feminist knowledge-making.)

Along related lines, content emphasis varies. Some of the stories here focus on challenges the interviewee recalls from helping to lead WGST's growth, with associated reminders about important work still to be done. Others emphasize achievements more than roadblocks. Having re-read the full

set of stories as we began our editing process, we opted not to erase such differences. Similarly, we made no attempt to create a set of standard/required content elements, which we admittedly could have done, even after the fact, by going back to multiple interviewees with follow-up queries in spring 2020. One factor shaping this decision related to the constraints on our own time posed by the Coronavirus context, as noted above. But another was grounded in our commitment to affirming the agency of the students who had done the initial research and the interviewees who also made choices about what (and how) to share their own personal perspectives through collaborative conversations.

In our organization of the stories we were able to gather for this admittedly limited record, we signal three stages in WGST's still-unfolding history at TCU. The first section focuses on founding figures who came to the university when the faculty and administrative leadership was overwhelmingly white and male. These women founders of the program operated through limited, if strategically enacted, paths of action. The second section spotlights turning points and gradual progress. In this stage, for instance, WGST at TCU began to grapple with significant limitations in feminist work which, at other institutions, may have been possible to address sooner, such as the need for more intersectional approaches. The final section foregrounds graduate students recently (around 2020) involved in WGST at TCU by honoring new voices enacting feminist leadership in academe and beyond. If these interviewees' experiences offer cause for celebration—and they do—their stories also sometimes point forcefully to unfinished agendas demanding our attention. We recognize that these stories from graduate certificate-seekers point to continued shortcomings in TCU's WGST community and context, even as their voices also give us hope by representing a vision of future leadership. Consistent with scholarship by Sylvanna M. Falcón on being marginalized within a field whose actions are not always in line with ideals "for social transformation and justice," we embrace these stories' implicit hopes to "decolonize knowledge production" and embrace activism in feminist work (175).

Teaching about Feminist Inquiry Processes

Besides providing a snapshot of feminist inquiry in action, as well as offering a historical mapping toward future program enhancement, we hope this collection can serve as a resource for teaching and learning about feminist recovery work. As such, the collection might productively be read alongside records of the fall 2019 course and specific project guidelines that students used to guide their interviewing and writing. With that goal in mind, two appendices appear after the interview stories. One of these documents the assignment directions students in the fall 2019 class received that semester. Another (a copy of the syllabus) situates the project within the larger framework of the course as offered in fall 2019.

That semester, as in the initial run of the course in 2018, some class members were undergraduates, and some were graduate students seeking the WGST certificate. All joined in fostering a spirit of collaboration that celebrated diversity—an ethos we hope our readers will see embodied in this anthology as well.

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Founding Figures

Megan Solomon in Dialogue with Jean Giles Sims

When I (Meagan) began the Women and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate at TCU, I did not initially consider the decades of organizing that enabled my ability to do so. Given the significant number of WGST departments firmly rooted across and beyond the United States, it is easy to lose sight of the long histories of struggle that have made that possible. As I reflect on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Women and Gender Studies at TCU, celebrated in 2019, the same year I celebrated my twenty-fifth birthday, I am reminded of the generations of people, primarily women, who fought tirelessly to establish a department that should have always been here. At the same time, I am reminded of how seldom students learn the histories of university departments and how seldom we are confronted with the politics surrounding the formal study of any marginalized population.

In commemoration of this long-awaited anniversary, I had the privilege of speaking with one of the founders of TCU's Women and Gender Studies Department, Dr. Jean Giles-Sims. On Labor Day, coincidentally, we spoke about the many years of (unpaid) work she and several other women faculty did to establish the initial Women's Studies Program. Dr. Giles-Sims graciously shared her story of co-founding the program, a story that is just as much, and in many ways even more so, an integral part of our campus's history as those of the founders and donors publicly displayed around the university. Yet, there are no statues of these women, no paintings.

When celebrating a milestone like WGST's twenty-fifth year of official course work at TCU, it was crucial that we centered the stories of the women who made waves on campus when it was highly unpopular to do so. Drawing on her own experiences organizing at TCU, Dr. Giles-Sims shared with me three things movements require: 1. passion and commitment, 2. organizing and critical mass, and 3. official recognition and support. Though it took decades, the feminist movement at TCU eventually garnered all three, and it is women like Dr. Giles-Sims who made that possible.

Passion and Commitment

Coming from another university, where the Women's Movement of the 1970s brought feminist issues to the forefront of academic discussions, Dr. Giles-Sims found a different culture at TCU when she arrived in 1979. While feminist organizing in many parts of the country could be heard across university grounds and in the streets that surrounded them, TCU, and Fort Worth at large, told a less enthusiastic story. Indeed, it was not rallies or protests that could be heard on TCU's campus, but silence. The limited number of women faculty with secure, tenured positions relegated feminist discussions to private spaces, as the risks of institutional retaliation could have threatened their job security. Because some as-yet unenlightened men dominated positions of power, collectively making most of the university's financial decisions, women faculty were subtly discouraged from voicing their feminist concerns. At the same time, many departments in the late '70s had only a single woman faculty member, or none at all, resulting in feelings of isolation.

Yet, the passion and commitment of women faculty on campus were never compromised. The university's norms called on women to dress femininely, keep their caregiving roles private, and

remain excluded from men's informal networking groups. Given those patterns, women faculty felt all the more impassioned to organize around their shared concerns. While the fluctuation of women entering and leaving the university made organizing difficult, those who remained at TCU worked hard to combat their isolation by connecting across disciplines.

Organizing and Critical Mass

In 1986, Dr. Giles-Sims transitioned from her role as the first woman faculty member in Sociology to her role as the first woman Chair. While Sociology, Criminal Justice, and Social Work experienced departmental progress, the same could not be said for all departments across campus. Though the network of ten faculty members seems relatively small given other feminist efforts across the country, it enabled women faculty to organize in critical mass for the first time in TCU's history. Because many universities across the country had already established similar programs over a decade prior to their organizing efforts, women faculty felt it was beyond time to follow suit.

The movement toward establishing a Women's Studies program developed momentum in 1992 with more women faculty entering TCU. Through collaborative efforts by the rising numbers of women faculty across disciplines, Dr. Giles-Sims co-wrote the proposal for a Women's Studies program with Associate Dean Priscilla Tate and others, including Dr. Claudia Camp and Dr. Joanne Green, with helpful support later from Associate Provost Bonnie Melhart. Comparing TCU to approximately ten competitors who already had well-established Women's Studies programs, women faculty urged the university to get on board.

Throughout the early years, allies from among the male faculty, such as Dr. Don Jackson in Political Science and Dr. David Gunn in Religion, represented one major resource. On the flip side, not all women at the university shared the same ideals. In fact, it was some women staff members who had internalized negative perspectives on feminism who deemed Dr. Giles-Sims "the feminist of Sadler Hall" with a weary tone. With support from the critical mass that emerged, however, Dr. Giles-Sims embraced the nickname and continued her organizing efforts to establish a Women's Studies program at TCU despite those who did not enlist in the movement.

Official Recognition and University Support

In the early 1990s, conversations surrounding sexual harassment against women grew increasingly more public, particularly following Anita Hill's televised case against Clarence Thomas in 1991. The openness of national-level discussions about this issue gave rise to engagement at TCU with other issues disproportionately affecting women on campus, including the lack of sufficient maternity leave for women faculty. Yet, the dominant number of men in positions of power at TCU still posed a challenge for feminist organizing during this time. Navigating the skewed gender makeup of the university meant forming coalitional bonds with supportive male faculty and administrators to strengthen women leaders' base.

While Chair of Sociology, Criminal Justice, and Social Work, Dr. Giles-Sims developed a strong bond with Dr. Tate, whose position as Associate Dean enabled her to recruit much-needed support from men like Dean Michael McCracken. Finally, in 1994, the Women's Studies Program was officially instituted within the College of Arts and Sciences, approximately two decades following

other universities across the country with similar programs. Dr. Giles-Sims became the first Director of Women's Studies in 1994, co-teaching the first Introduction to Women's Studies course with Dr. Tate, as well as the first Capstone in Women's Studies course. The grassroots efforts from women faculty paired with official recognition and support is what ultimately made this possible.

What began as a Women's Studies Program with a single minor and limited course offerings has grown into a Department of Women and Gender Studies with a minor, major, emphasis option, and graduate certificate. In 2007-08, the WOST [now WGST] program began to award a student-based Wise Woman Award to a faculty member. When Dr. Giles-Sims retired in 2012, this award was named the Jean Giles-Sims Wise Woman Award, which means a lot to her to this day. Though key figures like Dr. Giles-Sims have retired from TCU after decades of organizing and teaching, they remain critical to our university's history and its present-day standing.

While the trajectory of Women and Gender Studies at TCU has made significant progress within the last twenty-five years, I echo Dr. Giles-Sims's sentiments that there is still work to be done. It was not until 2019, for example, that the department was granted its first full-time, permanent faculty line. Previously, lecturers or adjunct faculty taught Women and Gender Studies courses, making it difficult for students to sustain lasting relationships with WGST's faculty, given their fleeting roles.

Likewise, the racial makeup of the university, nearly 75% white, has marginalized women and other students of color in the campus's curriculum and its climate. While much-needed progress has been made in recent years, including new course offerings in Women of Color Feminisms and Transnational Gender and Sexuality, there is still much more to accomplish to continue the efforts of decentering histories of white feminism.

As a queer Chicana graduate student, I am grateful for the department's growing number of courses that challenge essentialist notions of gender and sexuality while drawing on intersectional analysis as a key analytic. I thank Dr. Giles-Sims for her relentless advocacy and organizing and look forward to witnessing more growth in my remaining years at TCU.

Priscilla Tate and Marisa Thomas

Profile of Priscilla Tate by Marisa Thomas

Dr. Priscilla Tate has played an integral part in the formation and growth of the Women and Gender Studies Department at TCU. In fact, she has been involved with TCU throughout her own education, acquiring both her B.A. and M.A. in English from the university. Consistent with her subsequent curricular trailblazing as a faculty member and administrator, in 1971 Tate earned the first Ph.D. in English to be given at the University of North Texas (then known as North Texas State University).

When asked what inspired her deep commitment to Women and Gender Studies as a field, Tate indicated that her initial connection grew from personal experience more than from formal study. "When I was at school," she recalled, "there wasn't such a thing." Nonetheless, she found herself encountering the kind of issues many in her generation faced when trying to make their way into academe. For example, at one point while she was attending graduate school, "The man in charge of graduate studies" had the option of assigning either one or two classes to TAs. She described his telling her: "'I know that you're married and don't need [to be paid for] two classes because you have a husband to support you.'" As Dr.Tate pointed out, this gender-biased gate-keeper could not have known about her first husband's not being a stable provider. Yet, in any case, she "thought there's something not right about this."

In 1979, after teaching at TCU for a number of years, Dr. Tate, along with Jean Giles-Sims, began a campaign to form a Women's Studies program at TCU. Their goal was to recover women's work and preserve their contributions to society in a multitude of ways. The program would eventually start fifteen years later in 1994. The following year, they co-taught the first Introduction to Women's Studies course.

A talented administrator (an assessment shared by many of this project's other interviewees), Dr. Tate was also a dedicated teacher. "I'm glad I always continued to teach," she observed, "because it always kept me anchored. But becoming Associate Dean gave me a chance to do things I couldn't have done otherwise." In particular, she noted, "Working with women—I can't tell you how important that was for me. I got to know wonderful female faculty—some who are still my friends. I think we made a lot of difference in the lives of women," with her administrative position providing a significant springboard to that collaboratively-wrought success.

In connection with her retirement, women faculty at TCU honored Dr. Tate by creating the Priscilla Tate Award for Research and Creative Work on Women and Gender. Appropriately, the scholarship supports TCU undergraduate students dedicated to exploring questions consistent with the aims of Women and Gender Studies.

Dr. Tate's knowledge of the origins of what is now known as the Women and Gender Studies Department is crucial to understanding and honoring the progress that TCU has made since this vital academic program's foundational era.

Editors' Note: Tapping into Dr. Tate's Institutional Memory

From the very start of work on this anthology, as we began planning whom to interview and what types of questions needed to be asked, Dr. Priscilla Tate's name came up repeatedly. Indeed, so many people were citing her role as a pivotal leader, that we decided a preliminary interview with her would help define the landscape for the project's inquiry. With that in mind, Sarah Robbins held a telephone conversation with Tate early in the fall of 2019. Dr. Tate provided an invaluable informal overview of the program's early history, including forces that promoted its founding, as well as difficulties faced from the outset. Topics from that dialogue, in turn, helped the students who carried out the first round of interviewing to develop well-informed questions for those interviewed in fall 2019.

Later, as members of the Feminist Inquiry course workshopped and revised their initial drafts, several important recurring themes emerged as areas around which further information-gathering would be helpful. Dr. Tate generously agreed to address such topics in written responses to queries we sent to her during spring semester. Those comments appear below.

Later still, in the final weeks of spring term, while we were receiving feedback from the interviewees' own readings of drafts from the autumn course, assistant editor Marisa Thomas held a follow-up discussion with Dr. Tate. That conversation provided additional detail for the profile above and also reinforced themes for us to highlight in the collection's preface and introduction.
Clearly, Dr. Priscilla Tate has left a powerful and generative mark on this anthology, just as she did—and continues to do—for WGST at TCU, overall.

Dr. Tate's Written Responses

Role of Dean Mike McCracken

Mike McCracken, Dean of AddRan College of Arts and Sciences (before it was split,) offered professional and financial support to women faculty from his appointment as Dean through his tenure. (One of my first assignments was to review the salaries of women faculty and advise him; many were paid at rates below equally qualified men for no apparent reason, and in his first year he awarded substantial raises to selected women faculty.) He encouraged and expected me to make the lives of women in the college as fruitful as possible; his budget paid for women's breakfasts to allow women from all parts of the university to make connections. When we created a study group, his budget allowed us to reproduce articles for discussion. After several years of discussion, he asked if it was time for him to appoint a committee; when my answer was yes, he did so immediately. And thus began the work which would produce the Women's Studies program.

Critical Mass

TCU was late in establishing a Women's Studies program, in part because establishing a critical mass of faculty with expertise and interest in the discipline was a very gradual process. In the late '80s and early '90s departments began to recruit women faculty who had those qualifications in their own disciplines. No program would have been possible without a critical mass of women (and some men also) who saw the need and were willing to expend energy to see it through. Working and collaborating with an incredibly bright and talented group of women and a few men from several

departments was an exhilarating time for all of us involved. As a group we decided what the basic courses should be and identified courses in departments that would be appropriate. Then we set about creating courses that would meet the requirements for a program/minor. From the beginning, the process was a group and interdisciplinary effort; the first class offered was team-taught (by Jean Giles-Sims from Sociology) and Priscilla Tate (from English.)

Biggest Challenges

The biggest challenges in the early years (and, indeed, for many years afterwards) were that there were no resources, funding, or space specifically for the program. The Director received no stipend. Faculty needed to negotiate with department chairs to allow their faculty to teach in the program. There were only two courses specifically titled WOST [then the acronym]—the introductory and the capstone courses. There was no space that was ours. (The first suggestion from the Vice Chancellor was that there might be a former storage room in the library that could be converted!)

Challenge: Establishing the Need for Interdisciplinary Programs

TCU had no process for proposing or funding interdisciplinary programs, with the exception of the Honors Program, which was one of the first to offer an occasional course focusing on a theme and taught from multidisciplinary perspectives. Course offerings across the university were conceived as departmental in nature. And there was little university-wide understanding that Women's Studies was, indeed, a discipline of its own. (One administrator asked why we couldn't just call the courses Sociology.) Dean McCracken was willing to counter this argument in his support for the program. (And it is worth remembering that nearly all administrative positions were held by men.)

Interrelated Challenges: Naming the Program (And Picking Battles)

While our initial discussions (with lively and strong opinions on all sides) offered various names for the program, including the word gender, we ultimately decided that fighting the battle of acceptance as a program might be lost if we brought gender and/or sexuality into the mix. The institution was simply not ready. Thus we chose the less controversial name, speculating even then that it might be changed at some later date.

We were so focused on generalized women's issues that the program did not expand beyond the experience of white heteronormative women. It is an omission that I now regret and am pleased to see as a crucial part of Women and Gender Studies in 2020.

In Conversation with Dr. Bonnie Melhart on Promoting Academics and Feminist Programming

Emily Dorward

I met with Bonnie Melhart during the fall 2019 semester and began by asking her to recount her unusual career path, from a doctorate in computer science to Associate Provost. Her transition to an administrative role would prove vital for the promotion of WGST programming on campus. I talked with her about her experiences in academia and as an administrator, and about how she has seen the WGST program at TCU come into its own over the last three decades.

A Twenty-Nine-Year Journey, From Computer Science to Administration

Bonnie Melhart began her career at TCU straight out of her doctorate. It was her first full-time job, and she would spend her entire career at the university. She retired last year after twenty-nine years at TCU, but you could hardly call her career one-track.

Melhart began in 1990 as a member of the computer science faculty. She spent nine years as a computer science professor, received tenure and was on track to becoming full professor. But when Associate Dean and friend Priscilla Tate left TCU, she encouraged Melhart to apply for her vacated position. Melhart had always admired Tate and "thought her career was meaningful." She applied and received the job, which brought her career to an impasse. The opportunity to work on individual research is what had spurred Dr. Melhart toward a career in academics, but she was also drawn to the opportunities of an administrative role with such wide reach. She negotiated to continue her research instead of continuing to teach while taking on the role of Associate Dean.

Bonnie's career shifted drastically as she moved to administration. Her research partner passed away in the midst of their project, leaving her cut off from her work in computer science. The Associate Dean job also became decentralized after her first year as the college split into two: Science and Engineering and Humanities and Social Sciences.

"The thing I loved about what I always called Pricilla Tate's job, but it was my job for a year, was that I was the Associate Dean for almost the whole university. That Arts and Sciences college was vast. And, I don't know, there were forty-some departments and I was handling all the graduate programs, so I got to see the research that went on and the programming and I just loved it. I loved being involved with academics in so many different areas. I guess I'm a generalist in that sense."

So when a job opened up to be Associate Provost, which was back at the university level, she applied. She landed the job and remained in that position for thirteen years, and though it was her longest-held position, the nature of the role shifted continually. But in her work as Associate Provost she found again what she had loved about "Priscilla Tate's job."

"I liked that central university kind of job and I didn't know that at first. I think it's hard to know that until you've done other things and you've seen it, and then you say, 'Gosh this fits me so well, and I didn't even know about this.' And I suppose that's what I liked about Dean Tate's job, was that she just kind of knew about everything that was going on…. Next thing I knew I had colleagues in English and history and social work and design, as well as my colleagues from my science departments that I saw every day. I just loved knowing what they were all doing, and sometimes they could even work together."

She strove to simultaneously support the goals of the Provost and the faculty and constantly strove for collaboration. And as a self-proclaimed generalist, she was spurred to form cross-departmental connections and interdisciplinary work.

"I liked the interdisciplinary but I also liked promoting the university. I sought out others at the university who could help. Like Nancy Bartosik, she worked in publications; she was just wild about research but nobody would've known it; she produced the TCU magazine. So I just had a couple of conversations with her, and then I saw she was just thirsty for research. I said, 'You can help me because we need to bring back the research magazine. Because everybody tells me it costs too much to publish, nobody reads it, it's silly to have. I said, 'The reason to have it is because the faculty want to see that we include their work in our research magazine. That we want to talk about what they do.' I would find people like Nancy, that were interested in helping to promote this going forward."

Overcoming Gender Bias in Academics

Though Melhart speaks generally of her career as the product of collaborative relationships and particularly a practice of women faculty raising up other women in the university, her early academic experiences were shaped by and against the sexism she experienced.

"There's a certain era and you'll talk to people and it will be their dads who were either so super-supportive, or they weren't supportive at all. But their dad always drove them to where they went. My dad wouldn't let me take high-school physics — 'You have to take typing because that is what you'll use.'" Her twin brother had no such constraints, and though she excelled in math in high school she says, "My high school teachers were not encouraging."

In college she became determined to pursue mathematics, despite her father's disapproval. "So I took the test and I think I got like a 47 and [my dad] said, 'Well see, I knew she shouldn't be in this.' And [the examiner] said, 47 is the highest grade and she should start in honors calculus.' And he said, 'No, she shouldn't start in calculus; she's not smart enough.' There was no way I wasn't gonna do math after that."

Despite early resistance, and the gendered status quo in math and science in upper-level classes, it became obvious she belonged there, and she had a marvelous and encouraging female teacher. But that bias never truly faded, and was prevalent in her teaching career as well.

"As I took on more advanced stuff, I was the only one in the room when I was taking those classes, and I was the only woman in the room when I was teaching them.
Which was a shame. I tried to tell my majors class at TCU there was a Women's Studies program; it had to do with women in science. I said, 'You all should go to this; this is an interesting thing,' and

one of them said, 'Why would we go?' And I said because we need more women. And he said, 'No, we don't. We are happy the way it is.'"

She went on to relate how this kind of thing happened on a regular basis, that in small ways her expertise and position were undermined regularly as a professor. "Yeah, I felt deflated by that. And even in my classes, and I would call them on this sometime, I wasn't hung up on titles but they would call me Mrs. Melhart and my male colleagues Doctor. And one of the women students said, 'Well I would think you would want to be called Mrs. more than Doctor.' And I said, 'I worked a lot harder for the Doctor than I did for the Mrs.'"

She says over her decades at TCU she has seen change for the better in science departments, though it is hardly drastic. "Some of the faculty who were there when I first came are leaving now. Things are changing. There are more women in science classes. I do worry that there aren't more women training to be faculty in the hardcore sciences. They don't feel welcome. I always felt like I was going to push against them until the wall fell. Not everybody wants to do that, and you shouldn't have to want to do that."

Systems Management for Colleges, not just Computers

Though she earned an undergraduate degree in math, a Master's in both math and computer science, and then a Ph.D. in computer science, she originally had no designs on becoming an academic. Melhart did her Ph.D. in California, and was partially funded by the projects she did for Hughes Aircraft, saying "I was going to go work for them, buy myself a nice little Mercedes car, and drive up and down the freeway. But then I found out I didn't like California, and I didn't like money that much."

Teaching was a product of her lifestyle and desire to research more than a passion in itself. With three young kids and a drive to do her own research, academics became a logical solution. Despite having taught throughout graduate school to earn assistantships and spending nine years as a professor, her background in computer science was not only useful as an academic, but in administration as well. In systems management she saw interdisciplinary potential.

"I wanted us to change our Master's program; our Master's was in software engineering. I wanted us to change it to systems management and include engineering students and business students, but my department wouldn't go for it. But yes, that management experience did help, and I think everything I did helped. I used to laugh that my own kids trained me to be an administrator."

Her role in administration used skills she picked up as a professor, a mother, and from the technical training in her career in computer science, namely the ability to manage and to organize: "Administratively, everything I did—I was a Girl Scout leader—organizational skills to piece it together out of nothing, to get people to volunteer, had to be organized. You can't go to graduate school with three little kids [and not be organized]. I was teaching two classes and taking two classes, and still had three little kids, and one wasn't in school yet. You have to be organized."

Involvement in WGST

Melhart does not claim any involvement in getting the WGST program started, saying, "That was Priscilla [Tate] and Jean [Giles Sims]. They went to Dean McCracken and they hounded him until he let them have a program. He let them have a program. But it was all on the backs of already busy faculty."

At the start there was no stipend, and while humanities faculty could participate in the program by "double dipping" their classes, it was harder to organize science courses that could both meet a requirement for a program/major in the sciences and be accessible to non-majors. In that context, while Melhart may not have been integral to the founding of WGST at TCU, she was undoubtedly instrumental in making it what it is today.

When TCU underwent a budget reduction (the only one in her memory), the administration agreed to spread it out evenly over several years: "I think it was an 8% cut, and most people did it across the board. I didn't do that. Instead, I eliminated some underutilized programs and shifted funds from general areas. After covering the cuts for all my reporting units, I had some monies leftover. So I looked at the budget for Women's Studies. Basically there was no budget. It was less than $3000. So I took the rest of the money and I made a budget, a regular budget for Women's Studies. I am probably prouder of that — and not everyone knows that's where the money came from, and even then it was probably only $24,000; it wasn't a huge amount. But it was a huge increase for them and none of my units had to take cuts."

Melhart gave the program financial heft when it had next to no resources, which allowed the program to take on bigger initiatives and eventually become a department. The WGST department has since exceeded her expectations. And "The fact that they finally have a major" is what has most impressed her.

"WGST is full of substance you need to know for life. We are doing that for students. And one of the things faculty at a university should do, I think, is prepare students for things they expect will come and also for the unexpected they didn't know they would face. But in addition, for those students struggling with a gender identity or those who know someone who is, [this field] is enlightening."

Some had told her that academically she didn't deeply know the theory for Women and Gender Studies, but she had lived it and that was enough. In her mind the program combines academic rigor and lived experience in equal parts. "Allows you to put both the 'I've lived it' and 'here's the theory' together. So it's not just a place for women to feel included. No, this is a place of real academic study."

Throughout her career Bonnie Melhart has done just that: she has combined her technical training and knowledge with lived experience, honing her administrative skills through both motherhood and computer science, and facilitating connections across the university. She used her position to pull others up and fostered a spirit of collaboration that is especially visible in the nature of the WGST department and its academic programs at TCU today.

How to Take It: An Interview with Linda Moore

Kelli Gill

About Linda Moore, Ph.D.

Dr. Linda Moore is an Emeritus Professor of Social Work and serves as president of the TCU Retirees’ Association. Her academic specialization is in policy. She was hired in 1977 in the university’s Sociology department. After Social Work gained department status, she served as a professor and Department Chair. When the department added a graduate program, she served as Director of the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program. During her time at TCU she was a force for Women and Gender Studies not only in the classroom by training social workers, but also through her community activism. In this interview, doctoral student Kelli Gill invited Dr. Moore to reflect on her past 40 years in the TCU community.

“I've been fairly outspoken” – Linda Moore

When Dr. Linda Moore answers the phone, a raspy voice asks me, “Are you ready to roll?” I get the impression that she has always been ready to roll. Moore comes off as the type of woman who is fearlessly outspoken. Since 1999, she’s been quoted in the TCU Daily Skiff over 120 times advocating for campus change and community activism. She’s published academically over topics ranging from the NAACP, to gender, to homophobia. She’s been actively engaged in disability, LGBTQ, and race activism on campus since she was hired in 1977. Although Moore recalls colleagues who were concerned about her activism potentially preventing her from getting tenure, she states that administration was always supportive of her work.

It became clear throughout our interview that at the heart of Moore’s success as a feminist and

WGST faculty affiliate are resources and advocacy. As Moore stated during our conversation, "I believe firmly that we [social workers] have a unique ability to find and use resources and then create them if they're not there."

As a Rhetoric and Composition scholar, I have not always considered resources as part of my academic tool kit. Many of my courses have focused on texts—to me, books are my resources. However, my conversation with Moore made it clear that many kinds of resources are invaluable to feminist practice and are pivotal to the future of the Women and Gender Studies Program. In reflecting on how our conversation taught me about resources, I've organized our interview according to resource type. I hope that this interview will itself serve as a resource for anyone interested in promoting change in a university's culture.

The Money

KG: So how did you become involved in Women and Gender Studies at TCU?
LM: Even when I interviewed, I was asking questions like, "Do you have Women's Studies? Do you have equal pay?" I came in the sociology department. I'm a social worker and our department did not become a full-fledged department until 1990. So, we were a program within sociology. All of us were paid exactly what men were paid in that department. But one of my really good friends was in another department. She was making significantly less [than male colleagues]. My response to her was you should sue, and her response was, I don't want to rock the boat.

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Throughout our conversation, it became clear that money is a major resource that determines power. For Moore, equal pay was a major part of gender equity among faculty and staff on campus (still a major social issue today in 2019). Female faculty not only struggled (and continue to) with achieving equitable pay, but also the money for childcare.
LM: We started a women's group, I don't even remember the name of it, but several of us [were] leading it. And I was chair of it for a while, and at the same time I was working with a class, actually it ended up being several classes, that were concerned about childcare at TCU, of which we still have none. And I had several health classes do research. We sent out surveys to everybody on campus: faculty, students, staff. We sent surveys to department chairs about whether they wanted or needed childcare. What we found was that there was a significant number of them, both staff and faculty on campus as well as students, who had children, who would use childcare, and several departments that would use a center as an educational resource. We fought that battle for probably 15 years and there, you know, we just couldn't get support from the administration.

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TCU is still fighting the childcare battle. I noted to Moore during our interview that the graduate student senate is currently doing the same process as what she had tried years ago: sending out surveys, doing research, asking departments. I noted that there is a tendency (and I am guilty of this) to think that we (current graduate students) are the first to bring these concerns to the table. The reality is that faculty like Moore have been advocating for these campus changes for the past forty years. Thus, one resource we both agreed on as important, in addition to funding for such projects as these, would be the advocates that have come before us—the people who are and have been doing the

work for decades. Moore has clearly demonstrated the value of people as a resource, as she noted when she talked about community members' contributions.

The Community

KG: If someone were interested in activism and bringing community members on campus, do you have any sort of advice? How would you start doing that work?
LM: I believe firmly that students take us for granted in terms of our knowledge about or willingness be a part of the community. You know the old attitude of "If you can do, you do. If you can't, you teach"? That's not true. And many of us have had a lot of experience in the community. So, I said let's bring the folks here.

I was pretty active in the community. I was involved in organizations for women, and I was running marches in Dallas. So, I was involved, and I had a lot of people that I knew from the community. I was also the Director of internships for the Social Work Department. I knew lots of folks from the agencies because I was placing students with them. I'd bring everybody in and, if I had an issue or a topic, it seemed to me we should hear from people who were actually living that life. If I want to talk to you about the gay, lesbian, transgender community, you need to hear about people who are addressing those issues.

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Moore not only brought in panels of marginalized groups. She (and her classes) organized on-campus programs such as HIV testing centers. She had her students consider the lived experiences of community members who were disabled by making her class members navigate campus in wheelchairs. When Moore spoke of these resources, she always related this potential social agency back to the students—to how interaction among community members would make her students better social workers—better people.

Students... And Their Parents

It was clear throughout our conversation that Moore did not consider students to be merely vessels for information or takers of resources—but also resources themselves. When administrators were unreceptive to campus change, Moore noted how powerful students proved to be.
LM: When we first started in social work, we had two faculty and we wanted a third faculty member, and we kept asking the dean, you know, we have this many students, we need more resources, blah, blah, blah. So, the students said, well, we're going to get it. Then they did a petition and they contacted all the deans and the provost, and they had letters written by themselves, by our instructors and by their parents.

Moore is clearly proud, in recalling that push for program growth, that it was students who succeeded in achieving the goal of securing additional faculty. As an organizer, I think I've neglected to consider the power students have. I told Moore that informally I'd been told by members of my department that the way to make change at TCU was to get the undergraduates on your side, to which Moore responded, "That's where the money comes from." This dialogue with Moore was definitely leading back to money again, but also helping me understand that, as a resource, students are invaluable.

Allies

Throughout our conversation, Moore emphasized how male allies had and have been an important resource, making it clear that women are not the only advocates for Women and Gender Studies at TCU.

LM on William H. Koehler: Our comments to him were, you need to be more aware of the issues that women face on this campus, the lack of women in leadership, the difference in pay. You need to respond to them, and you need to do something about them. And he did, and he was very responsive, and he would call us if some emerging issue [needed our input]. We would … talk about it, which was, I think for me it was really exciting, at least a step in the right direction.

LM on Michael R. Ferrari: He created a diversity council, which was something we had been pushing for a long time. And I was one of the founding members of that diversity council. And in it we talked about all the EEOC categories as well as LGBTQ and others that might not have been included. And that was the first time in the university where there was really a sort of a link to the administration that said, we can do something here.

LM on Andy Fort: Andy Fort was on the Religion faculty for almost as long as I was in Social Work and he was very active on campus, involved in faculty Senate, lots of committees and all that. For I guess about six to eight years, he would not have any meetings or any classes after three o'clock, because he picked up his kids from school every day and that was his job. And that was his choice. And he said, "I prefer to do that than anything else related to my work. I will always get my work done. I will get my publishing done. I will teach my classes, but I will not be on any committee that meets after three." You go, guy.

On Language and Advocating for Yourself

For Moore, gaining and cultivating power for students interested in WGST at TCU depends on visibility and advocacy.

LM: I teach social work majors, who tend to be nice people, and I've taught them they need to be much more assertive. They need to be advocates for themselves as well as for others that can't. You have to speak truth to power. That means we need to advocate if we're not from a marginal group. For me that means women may have to fight for their own power, but they also have to help other groups fight to get theirs. And part of that for me has always been linked with other issues. Relating to sexual orientation, relating to ethnicity, of course gender status, disability. For me, they have always been linked.

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During our interview, Moore noted that, "People don't give you a trophy. You have to take it." I interpreted this statement as self-advocacy. Whatever your trophy is, whether it is a WGST department, equitable pay, childcare—Moore's example shows that administration is not going to award anything without marginalized groups speaking up for themselves.

As she notes, those (such as myself) who are privileged must also advocate for others. As the WGST department celebrates its 25th anniversary, we should remember early leaders such as Dr. Linda Moore who have been fighting for our trophies since the 1970s. And we need to remember to seek, with determination, the resources required for us to take today's sought-after trophies too.

TCU's WGST History through the Eyes of Dr. Nadia Lahutsky

Katelyn Thompson

Early Beginnings as an Advocate

Dr. Nadia Lahutsky, a recently-retired faculty member of TCU's Religion department, was involved in TCU's Women and Gender Studies program throughout her time on campus. Those who know Lahutsky would be unsurprised to learn that she has been an advocate for awareness of women's issues since before arriving at TCU over thirty years ago. During her time as a graduate student, Lahutsky displayed the values she would later bring to the university here in Texas.

"When I left Vanderbilt, I was a poor graduate student, and I sent $10 to an advocacy group that had been organized around a woman in English who had been denied tenure. She was doing Women's Studies work, and the English department [there] was still stuck in the 1930s. It was called WEAV—Women's Equity at Vanderbilt—and I just knew that there was something important there. She had a publication record that wasn't stellar, but it was at least as good as [that of her colleagues] who had denied her tenure. That was the norm. A woman had to be twice as good to be perceived as about the same," Lahutsky said. "That was a case of really gross, bad-taste-in-your-mouth kind of inequity, and it galvanized a lot of energy. It wasn't long after that that they developed a Women's Studies program [at Vanderbilt]. TCU was slower to get programming going."

Faculty Women and "Their" Issues

Lahutsky has retained this attitude of supporting equity concerns since leaving her graduate program. In fact, stepping into the academic world as a faculty member allowed her to see the need to broaden the university's understanding of Women and Gender Studies issues in a new light.

"I can tell you that [being a female professor] makes a difference in the classroom, even though it's very difficult to explain it to male colleagues. Eventually, some of them got it. The Religion department [at TCU] was a really good place to be—I had good colleagues, and we disagreed about a number of things, but I never felt put upon because I was a woman," Lahutsky recalled. "There's something about the authority of being [a woman] in a classroom that I think a lot of people, even liberal Protestants, have a problem with."

Later, via email, Lahutsky recalled the extra steps she had to take to succeed as a female faculty member. "When most faculties are male and you are one of the first women hired, you have a decision to make that has to do mostly with style. My personality led me to avoid fighting some issues head on, preferring to do my work well and then to address some issues in a strategic manner. For example, when I arrived in 1981, the World Religions class was titled The Religious Experience of Mankind. Fight that? Not my first term, but by my second year, it had been renamed. The time was right," Lahutsky wrote.

This diplomatic attitude helped guide Lahutsky as a faculty member. However, this same attitude (and the need for diplomacy instead of outright confrontation) illuminated a need for building a campus-wide understanding of (and support for) Women's Studies on TCU's campus–a program that, at the time of Lahutsky's arrival, was nonexistent.

"There was [no Women and Gender Studies] when I arrived on campus in 1981. There were a handful of faculty women interested in the issues," Lahutsky explained. "I have memories of a group getting together maybe every year, or every other year. We had very informal groups just discussing things, and someone would, literally, send out a written memo through campus mail, and you would have to pick a room and hope that people could come. There were a lot of informal conversations before anything organized into the minor. I was interested in the questions, so if anyone was having a meeting, I was there."

"This informal group talked a lot about the need for quality on-campus day care. It came up in a campus-wide survey that the group conducted, as did the cranky responses from an older generation of faculty whose attitude was that we younger women faculty should just keep those personal problems to ourselves. Needless to say, the calls for day care were always ignored."

Lack of Educators—Not a Lack of Interest

Though Lahutsky brushes aside any mention of herself as foundational to the formation of the Women and Gender Studies program, her history disputes her claim that her role was of minor importance. When coupled with her involvement in the beginning of the program, Lahutsky's status as one of the first professors on campus to offer a Women's Studies course affirms her rightful place in TCU's Women and Gender Studies history.

"For thirty years—maybe a little less—I taught a course called Women and Womanhood in Western Religion, and it was by virtue of teaching that course that counted as Women's Studies that I played a role. And Religion always attracted some students who were Religion majors and Women's Studies minors, who helped move [the creation of the program] along," Lahutsky said.

Though the early days of the Women and Gender Studies program saw a few interested faculty, there was still a distinct shortage of professors available for teaching courses that would contribute to any version of the program beyond departments' discipline-based classes. Lahutsky said she found this deficiency frustrating.

"We couldn't say [to other departments], 'Why don't you hire someone to teach [Women's Studies]? This is a big issue! You should have someone.' Even if someone could have done it informally, to a friend, there isn't a guarantee that they could have taken it to the whole faculty. We would have a woman … who wants to teach, and then she'd be gone in a year or two. We would go back to square one. You had to have not just six courses that might meet inquiry into women's issues, but more than six so students have some options," Lahutsky indicated, in revisiting the necessary steps for constructing a formal minor.

On the subject of men's connections to the early days, Lahutsky noted: "I don't remember many men being involved in Women's Studies. Some of them taught classes that carried credit, and that grew, but the program probably existed for two student generations before you had more than a few men teaching classes that carried credit. It was always an option [to be in the program] for women,

and it became more obviously an option for men when [gender] was brought in" to the program title.

Facing Change on Campus

According to Lahutsky, the most important issues have to do with faculty. "In some cases, it was a simple matter of generational differences. The difficulty seems to me less to be that women [didn't want to teach Women's Studies] than assumptions on the part of men observing all of this, wondering 'Why do some women not get involved?' And I can tell you how I manage [to work around that] — mostly by ignoring them," Lahutsky said.

However, Lahutsky and her similarly minded colleagues were able to outlast the forces that opposed their desire for change. "Basically, the two options are you come onboard—you're overwhelmed with the evidence—or people retire. You have to outstay them and hope that they get replaced with someone who sees the world in more complex ways," Lahutsky said.

As a result of spending over thirty years at TCU, Lahutsky has done just that. However, she also offers credit for these changes to the world outside of TCU.

"I think the changes were just too big in the broader culture to contain, and departments began to see the need for somebody to address these questions. Gradually, the culture did shift so that, suddenly, you look around and it's firm, it's cemented, it's not going away. It reached a tipping point," Lahutsky said.

Clear Issues, Clear Improvements

Though the ideas both in and around TCU had begun to change, the Women's Studies program still needed to grow on campus before it would reach the status, and title, it has today.

"Initially it seemed to be a cobbled-together kind of minor. Now, there were the introductory course and then the capstone class….It [grew] very incrementally, until a few years ago," Lahutsky said. Lahutsky credited the positive changes of what would become the Women and Gender Studies undergraduate degree and department to the appointment of a director at a key moment and the strategies that talented administrator brought with her.

"Theresa Gaul became director and, under her leadership, [the program] linked more with other units and became co-sponsor of speakers on campus. You have to have a critical mass of faculty, and then you also have to keep some momentum going with activities and things that stimulate people's thinking. The program really grew. You could see its reach in a lot of different places. I think at that time it was primarily an AddRan project, and [Gaul] helped make it more of a university project," Lahutsky said.

Simultaneously, the ever-changing student body contributed to the development of the program. In pointing to the change in the student population on campus, Lahutsky also emphasized the new ideas and interests they brought with them, to explain the sudden speed in change.

"Feminist theory is in motion, but so too is the student body and what they bring," Lahutsky said. "The questions that are raised in the classroom intersect with students, but they are not disembodied thinkers—they come out of particular cultures. The kinds of questions that you could ask and get intelligent responses to were always shifting."

Future Growth within TCU

Similarly, Lahutsky said she believes that any future progress within the Women and Gender Studies department must come from students. More specifically, Lahutsky hopes to see changes in the way new students are brought to TCU's campus and educated about the resources provided.

"There's something about our recruitment which makes students not immediately, or even on the middle term, open to what's done in a WGST class. I'll take it back to my primary life experience here: teaching religion. In my day, we all taught two sections of an introductory class, and most students really didn't want to hear that Muslims weren't all bad. They didn't want to hear that there's a benefit to being a Buddhist. They just didn't want to hear it because they were locked in their own view. People were locked into those attitudes. There was always something about taking people out of this comfort zone and moving them to a different place and, really, unless you're going to be a better Christian somehow, that's the only reason to require people to study religion. To get out of your comfort zone and see the world through someone else's eyes," Lahutsky said. "I remember going to college thinking, 'This is it. This is where you make the big shifts; this is where you become who you want to become.' You weren't tied to those first eighteen years, whatever people thought of you in high school. I don't necessarily see that anymore [in all incoming students]. As long as the recruitment patterns remain the same, I don't know what's going to happen."

Though the increased discussion of some Women and Gender Studies issues in co-curricular spaces seems to have benefited students as a whole, Lahutsky said she sometimes sees a downside to having co-curricular programming dominate over the curricular pathway. Furthermore, Lahutsky said she believes the academic dimension of the program offers something every student can benefit from. "There is a sense in which you're wearing a kind of shroud over your eyes, whether it's religion or gender, and studying that can break that shroud so that you can see what the world is really like. And with gender, the feminist theory helps people break that shroud so that men, women, and non-gender-conforming people can live their lives to the fullest. It really is about living life fully," Lahutsky explained. "There's a lot of learning that goes on outside of the classroom, but the classroom is the reason this place exists. A lot of women's programming for students came to substitute for the intellectual version of what students would have gotten in the classroom. A lot of students that never would have darkened the door of a Women and Gender Studies class got a lot of information through those things, which is great, but sooner or later, something will happen in your life that you can only explain through the lens of feminism."

For Lahutsky, ultimately, however exciting and productive the many co-curricular pathways now available for students to be introduced to issues associated with women, gender, and sexuality as fields of inquiry, TCU's WGST Department should never lose sight of the academic curricular endeavor as central. After thirty-eight years of working to educate university students in the fields of both Religion and Women's Studies, Lahutsky still, clearly, believes in the value of an education that encourages students to get out of their comfort zones. And she sees the classroom as a vital place for doing that important learning.

"What I hope that students get out of their experience in a WGST class, or minor, or major, is an entirely new way of viewing the world that enriches them," Lahutsky said. "Women and Gender Studies is a good way for all people to flourish."

Australia Tarver, Interviewed by Andreley Bjelland, Profiled by Marisa Thomas

Note from the Editors:

Of all the chapters in our collection, this one may best convey in its trio of voices our recovery project's goals. Many other pieces in the anthology also illustrate the power of feminist story-gathering's theory and praxis. But, in this case, we share three voices which, taken together, highlight the special vitality of cross-generational feminist and womanist learning. Our contributors for this story include a recent undergraduate major (Marisa Thomas), who was also enrolled in the Feminist Inquiry course during her final TCU semester; the 2019-20 graduate student assistant to WGST (Andreley Bjelland), who now embarking on her own Ph.D. studies; and a long-time faculty affiliate whose modestly-described leadership is, so rightly, the focus of this chapter: Dr. Australia Tarver.

Profile of Australia Tarver by Marisa Thomas

Dr. Australia Tarver is an emeritus associate professor at TCU in the department of English and, before retiring in 2014 after nineteen years at the university, also served as an affiliate of the Woman and Gender Studies Department. Dr. Tarver began her education at Fisk University, graduating with a B.A. in English. Tarver then went on to get an M.A. in English from Ohio University before earning a Ph.D. in American Literature from the University of Iowa. Her scholarship focuses on current and historically significant, yet underrepresented, Afro-American and minority literature. One of her more prominent works is New Voices on the Harlem Renaissance: Essays on Race, Gender, and Literary Discourse, which she co-edited. The classes she taught during her time at TCU ranged from freshman-level to graduate-level courses including Major American Writers, Introduction to Fiction, African American Literature, Women's Writing Across Borders, and Modern American Literature.

Putting her interests into a long-lasting tradition, Dr. Tarver cemented her legacy at TCU through the Yancy Austin and Georgia Ellis Austin Prize. She founded this scholarship to honor her ancestors who persevered against many odds to own a large portion of land and pass it along to their heirs. The scholarship is given annually to a WGST student who creates a research or creative project that demonstrates "interest in the history, literature, or culture of a marginalized social identity or community," according to the WGST website. This ongoing legacy represents a true marriage of Dr. Tarver's work in academia with her personal family history.

As the interview transcript below will indicate, her interest in Women and Gender studies as a field of inquiry, scholarship, and teaching did not begin during her undergraduate degree work but later, as she was engaged in her graduate program.

Reflection by Andreley Bjelland on the Interviewing Experience:

On a dreary Thursday afternoon in January 2020, I dialed the phone number of Professor Emerita Australia Tarver. Admittedly, I am of the generation who relies on texting : I don't know if my voicemail even exists, much less how to check it. That said, I felt a little bit nervous placing this call,

but the second Dr. Tarver answered the phone, my butterflies melted away. From the first moment, it was so clear that Dr. Tarver is one of those people who is just genuinely kind – a person who brightens everyone's day a little bit just by being part of it.

We made plans to meet at the TCU bookstore a few days later, and I compiled a list of questions. We sat upstairs, in a cozy, quiet corner, and Dr. Tarver wove a captivating narrative of her time as an educator, from her undergraduate studies, to the beginnings her secondary school teaching, to graduate school, to her time in the TCU English Department. She gave anecdotes from multiple moments along the path of her career, from finding her passion in the literature of underrepresented populations, to watching students and colleagues succeed, to recalling how her interests grew and developed along the way. I spent the better part of two hours listening, but it felt like only minutes had gone by. Dr. Tarver's enthusiasm was infectious. She thanked me multiple times for taking time out of my day, but really the interview was a gift to me. Dr. Tarver is the kind of educator anyone going into teaching professions of any kind should aspire to be. Her generosity was evident in every word she spoke, every story she told. Dr. Tarver left me with syllabi, a reading list, and the desire to do as much good in the world as she has.

Dr. Tarver spent her time at TCU changing the nature of the institution and adding to the presence of WGST in quiet but essential ways. She introduced queer authors to her classes, faced major pushback from students, but quietly forged ahead and changed many student minds. Dr. Tarver taught books and themes that she knew were important, made space for minority and LGBTQ+ authors in a discipline that up to that time had only had room for Western/Euro, male voices. She established the Yancy Austin and Georgia Ellis Austin Prize to encourage today's WGST students to do the same in their own research. However, had I not had this interview, I may never have known any of this. Dr. Tarver is why collaborative research matters. There are other stories out there, of quiet, heroic educators, changing the perspectives of their students and colleagues one book, one lesson at a time. The students and educators of today can learn so much from their words, their stories, and their successes, if only we are willing to listen.

Transcription of the Oral History, with a few subsequent additions from Dr. Tarver:

How did you first become involved in WGST as a field of scholarship and teaching?

In Michigan, in my early teaching years during the '60s, I had an unexpected opportunity to teach some courses outside of the traditional courses I had been teaching, like Shakespeare and Chaucer. When the "opportunity" came, I rejected it outright because I had no training outside traditional courses in English or books at home given to fill in summer learning. My bestie, an adventurous co-worker, confessed she was given a chance to teach the first Black studies course in the school, prompted by a group of determined students who demanded a Black history course. Such a course would be unusual, since there were only a handful of minority students in the entire school. My bestie felt this course would place her in the spotlight. I preferred the comfort of the traditional courses. When my bestie saw the class roll, she changed her mind: most of the students who signed up were Black. She then confessed she was too afraid to be the white teacher responsible for interacting with Black students. I would be a better fit, she thought. I rejected her idea. I thought "Why me?" and although I appreciated her honesty, I was still upset at having to teach in unfamiliar territory until I

began reading.

This first experience in reading and teaching in Black lit, history and culture taught me how rich and life-changing teaching could become for me. I was determined to respond to students' needs in minority literatures and it encouraged me to ask myself, "Who are the writers, what is the history, what do these histories pull from, how can I show the impact of these experiences for students who themselves are as green as I am?" I think this transformation led me to seek opportunities for further studies. I must add, in thinking of the early '60s,,though that my undergraduate college, Fisk University, while its English Department offered Eurocentric courses (i.e., the Chaucer course required students to learn long passages in Middle English), its wider culture and history helped the entire student body understand the connection of the university to the Black past. So the famous story of the former slaves who traveled around the world to raise money for the first building on campus was well known.

I couldn't come back to Afro-American or minority literature until I got to graduate school, where the chair of the African American literature department at U of Iowa said, "There's a world out here you can explore as a graduate student." So I said, "Okay, let me try a course in African American women's lit." It was so wonderful. I focused on poets like Phillis Wheatley, asking questions like, "Who is she? Why is she so revered? " So even in 1972-73, I included myself as a student and confessed to these Iowa students that I was learning with them. "What did she mean in some of her famous poetry?" We concluded even then that she was coding. She said one thing in eighteenth-century language but meant something different, which had to do with the position of the enslaved, and the position of women during slavery. To explore these perspectives was completely unheard of, for me. As a master's student and undergraduate, I didn't get any of that. T.S. Eliot, Shakespeare's plays, yes. No Black writers, though. Nobody like me, at all. Journeying into this field, I was learning right along with my students, which was wonderful. And so, from that point to now, I've been interested in what women writers have to offer, but my interest has broadened from African American women to Caribbean women writers to women of color of the Americas to women of color internationally. Going across borders is what began to interest me as I got closer to retirement. I thought, "This is just stupendous."

What was your experience like at TCU?

Student responses at TCU to me as a professor were kind of "eh." But I think the graduate students' response to me was very, very positive. I began looking with graduate students more broadly into these international corners. As far as undergraduates, some were amazed that there were writers outside of the writers that they were familiar with, and that these writers were not only popular, but revered in other colleges and universities. But these writers/perspectives just had not gotten here yet. TCU has come a long way, and the students themselves have come a long way, with a broader awareness of the arts. With undergraduates, I would give myself between a B and a C. With graduate students between a B and an A. Graduate students were looking at themselves from the perspective of being professors and what they would be challenged by—new writers and new ways of thinking, which is even more true now.

One positive in all of these spaces, the thing that I loved, was the teaching; the actual act of sharing knowledge and challenging students to think in ways that were different from what they were used to. My pull was always, "Can you look at the language of the work? Can you see something in that language that extends beyond your notes? What do YOU think?"

Teaching was both the most wonderful and most frustrating experience, whether I was in a predominantly Black or white institution. There were lonely moments, the feeling that I had no one to talk to, unless I could be with friends on other campuses. I remember once, as an instructor at Florida A & M University (1978 or 79) listening to a group of Black faculty visitors who marveled at being on a HBCU campus. They loved the moment of escape from their predominantly white campuses. Thought they were being overly enthusiastic about being among other Blacks. In later years at TCU I understood how they felt.

I remember once, I had given an assignment of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man.* A student said, "You assigned this; you're trying to make me read this, and I don't want to. I don't like this writer; I can't identify with anything this writer is saying." When we think about women's studies and literature, we think of the concern by women of being invisible; of being viewed as nobodies and having to fight through that sometimes to create images for themselves that they doubted initially until confronted with the reality of, "I've got to do something about this, I've got to make people see me in ways I'm just learning to see myself." If that's not Ralph Ellison, I don't know what is. And yet I realize that there are studies of *Invisible Man* which critique Ellison for his limited views of women characters, including characters and images that are not what women writers or audiences who value presence of women in texts really approve of.

Did you experience a culture shift at TCU? If yes, how?

The culture definitely changed. It changed, but I have to confess the college that I came from was predominantly male, so I learned to deal with, or go around or under or through, the obstacles that were troubling. It's interesting that I'm just now thinking about TCU in ways that I really didn't have time to think about it as a faculty member. One of the things that I appreciated in working with faculty members in the English department, and other departments as well, was their willingness to work come hell or high water. They worked in ways that made me feel that what I was doing, what little I was doing, when I think of the kinds of contributions I made as a faculty member to and for and with other faculty members, I think, I don't really know that I was that much of a help. But what it inspired me to do was to work as hard as I could to make a contribution. I'm thinking also of those faculty members who were quiet like me, not very outspoken at all. It's interesting that at TCU in particular these were the faculty who other students would quote in class.

At TCU there were moments when with administrators I was not happy. But because I had come from situations that were just like that, that is, questioning my views about certain issues or my judgement, which I would have to say pissed me off both at TCU and other places, but I didn't really speak out. I didn't say very much, thinking that the best thing for me to do was get through this and enjoy what I really loved to do, which was to teach.

I would say overall, though, when I first came to TCU, there were incidents where I thought, well

how nice, they gave me such a positive feeling about being here, but I have to admit, okay so it's been six years since I retired. I really miss the teaching. That's at the top of my list. There was so much work to do that I really did not get a chance to know as many faculty as I would have liked.

Even though there were students that I really loved to work with, there were students who, bless their hearts, they just did not get it. In one class, talking about an LGBTQ issue (in 1997), and after class, a group of students came up to me and said that they were going to report me to their parents because what I presented to them was "just abhorrent." And I said, "Well, you know, it would be a good idea for you to tell your parents and maybe you could have a discussion about LGBTQ issues."

One of the things that I learned all the way through being at TCU was that issues that challenged certain notions—some of them just were not well-received at all, not even in terms of a multi-ethnic literature class. In the class I presented an Asian writer who dealt with the Asian notion of LGBTQ experience. And I thought coming at it from that particular cultural angle, for example in certain Asian cultures, masking and performing, especially by men who themselves were gay, was viewed by this particular writer as amazing. And the way that this Asian writer documented and presented performance was absolutely amazing. And it was just really not well-received. And I know what I would love to teach undergraduates is what some Native American cultures regard as, well we would regard it as the gay experience, but the way that they present it is so natural, so amazingly creative, and wonderful, and I think we still haven't quite gotten there yet, maybe more certainly than even five or six years ago.

Being the only Black person in an entire department or an entire meeting or an entire anything on campus, it was not new because that's where I came from. But it was at some moments tough for me to realize that if I said certain things, people would not be happy to hear that at all. And I still think that. Although I am so thrilled at seeing departments challenge themselves in terms of what they teach, how they teach, and departments which have included, like my own department, African Americans and minorities in numbers that I had not imagined at all then.

What would you like to see from TCU and WGST moving forward?

What I would love to see from TCU has a lot to do with WGST and smaller arenas also, not departments, programs. What I am so happy to see (that I'm wishing other departments could or would pull from) is this combining of resources and ideas. When I look at the women's studies program, I see it being combined with cultural studies, minority studies, latinx studies, and all of that. So when these programs and departments put their forces together, it makes a comment-at-large for students, for parents, for faculty, and for the larger community, which says we're going to look at the human condition from a wider perspective. And WGST is doing that in ways that I really didn't think would happen. Even before it became a department, what it did was to find as many funds as it could to support programs, guest speakers, to present to students and to the community what women are experiencing from a broader base than just the backyard at TCU. And I have loved that. I thought "This is just amazing." So, I want TCU to support this department in ways that I see other Women's Studies departments at other colleges and universities show off what is possible with Women's Studies. Now I know faculty members at TCU WGST look broadly, and what I'm beginning to see in

conference papers that students are giving, faculty members are giving, is this notion, that we want to move wider and further and want to take our students with us. So, when TCU looks at what this department is doing, it can learn what would be possible in other avenues in their own departments. I would love to see WGST get all the money, and more, that it needs. The bottom line is funding so that these students can really benefit.

Can you expand on the beginnings of your WGST award, The Yancy Austin and Georgia Ellis Austin Prize?

The scholarship idea came from a longstanding hope that I had once I began to learn something of my own history, and being so amazed at how people can manage to create such beauty, not only in themselves but in their descendants as a natural course of things. When I think of great-grandparents, when they were discussed as I was growing up, my eyes would roll over. But as I got older and learned more about them, I learned how they managed to acquire land and how right at that turn of the century, I was hearing about these people who had in the 1860s and 1870s had to pretty much do their best with the little they had. It was just amazing. So now when I go to Crockett, TX, which is where my dad's side of the family is from, and I look at this house that's still standing, and I think as a child, it was really no big deal, when I think about it now, I think, "How did they get the material to build this house?" But what I have is what they did: how hard they worked to keep the land, how they borrowed, and put things up for collateral, and worked the land to hold on to what they had. When you look at this history of that period, you begin to understand, oh my God, they were hated. They were absolutely rejected by every imaginable corner.

Here I am, benefitting from their work. Just because I'm me, not because of what I've done, but because I am a descendant in these people's family. So I thought if I ever got a chance to really say how much I appreciated and honored what they were able to achieve, I would do something. I really have their land, which we've kept to some degree. When oil and gas leases started going, I started saving my money like mad. When it got to a certain amount, I thought: "This might be respectable." I asked if I could establish this award, could I name it after these two people who were original owners of this land? Of course Dr. Nino Testa, who is just amazing, was the one who sat me down and said, "Okay give me what you have; let's talk."

Any final thoughts?

Looking at myself now and when I first came to TCU, the difference is so broad. What I would give for those moments when students back in the '60s would walk into the classroom and say, "You're the teacher?"

Interview with Dr. Claudia V. Camp

Susannah B. Sanford McDaniel

I arrived at the campus bookstore coffee shop a few minutes early. I ordered a coffee, read over my notes, and tried to compose myself. I should not have bothered with the deep breaths and personal pep talk. Dr. Claudia Camp came breezing in with a smile and a friendly introduction. She is personable and focused, making eye contact immediately and taking a moment to set me at ease.

One thing becomes clear quickly: Dr. Camp finds relationships with individuals incredibly important. She makes sure to tell me about specific people. She remembers who founded programs, who made decisions, who took meetings, who said "no," who said "yes." We spoke for more than an hour over warm coffee, and as we talked, I wrote down over a dozen names and lists of personal details that Dr. Camp remembered: individuals who helped build the Women and Gender Studies program at TCU and the specific parts they all played.

Susannah Sanford: Megan Solomon interviewed Dr. Giles-Sims, and she talked about a whole bunch of "firsts," and the dynamic of having less than ten women faculty on campus. I'm curious what you thought and were seeing when you started at TCU.
Claudia Camp: I started in the Religion Department in 1980. AddRan, at the time, included Math and Science; they weren't two separate colleges. There was a long-time person in an instructor position in Biology, a woman, and she was certainly interested and supportive of the Women's Studies program. But if I think of the humanities and the social sciences, there was me, Dr. Jean Giles-Sims, Dr. Kathryne McDorman in History, Dr. Marjorie Lewis in English, Betsy Colquitt—she was a published poet—and of course Priscilla Tate, who later became an Associate Dean. And Dr. Linda Moore in social work. There might have been one or two more. I can't remember who came exactly when, but my recollection is that in AddRan there were about half a dozen women.
CC: There were so few women, and it didn't increase for a while. I think of Religion as sort of indicative of what was happening. I think maybe in English they were gradually hiring more women, but, you know, they hired one more woman in History and she left as soon as she could. She did get involved in the program but she went to UT and has had a very successful career there.

Dr. Camp insists that several departments at TCU worked hard to include women in their searches for faculty. Along with all those recruitment efforts, the small-but-mighty force of women on campus worked on two major projects. They did not divide their time and efforts, but multiplied.

CC: We always had two things going on. One was the question of whether we could get a Women's Studies program started, and the other was whether we could get childcare on campus. So, we had a small cadre of people trying to work on two major things. Linda Moore was really spearheading the childcare work then. She organized her classes on at least two different occasions to do surveys and studies on the need for childcare and what it would take, but both times they submitted these reports and the answer was a polite nod and vague agreement.
SS: The childcare still hasn't really happened, yet.
CC: Nope.
SS: I have two kids, and it would be great to have something on campus.
CC: Part of the problem with it is people age out. The students come and go or the need becomes less urgent and we get focused on other needs. It's like a lot of things in the university environment: if you can't get it done in four years….
SS: The Women's Studies program did happen, though!
CC: Yes, and we talked about that from, basically, the moment I walked onto campus. Jean [Giles-Sims] and Priscilla [Tate], who were the point people in getting it started, had been talking about it from when they began the year before me. So, fifteen years of talking.

Dr. Camp returns to people over and over. In fact, she suggests it took fifteen years to begin the Women's Studies program at TCU because "it took that long to get enough people." The networks of people researching and teaching about women finally coalesced into a codified program: an undergraduate minor. Unfortunately, people could also slow things down.

CC: About five years ago, there were a number of us who wanted to call it "Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies," and we got pushback on that. We were told we were not allowed to use the word "Sexuality."
SS: "Not allowed?"
CC: Oh, yes. Not allowed. We had a meeting with the Provost [then Nowell Donovan] about it and, without naming any names, the message was that at least one person on the Board [of Trustees] would object. Now, could we have fought? Some of us thought so. But, the problem there was that we were told if we went along with this [leaving out the word "sexuality"], they [upper-level administrators] would make sure we got a position the next year.
SS: That feels dirty.
CC: It was dirty.

Women's Studies began as an undergraduate minor.There were six required courses; one was an introductory course, and the final course was a sort of capstone. The number of students remained small for several years, small enough that the co-taught capstone course was cut back to just one professor after a few years.

Dr. Camp believes there were a few reasons the minor grew incredibly slowly. One of those was "just getting the word out," and another was the complicated nature of the requirements in the minor. Some students did not choose the minor until late in their undergraduate career and had to take both

the introductory course and the capstone course in the same academic year.

If the minor began slowly, graduate student interest took off quickly. After looking at other similar university programs, Dr. Camp introduced the idea of a graduate certificate program, which was established a year after the end of her tenure as Director of Women's Studies at TCU.

As the program grew, so did the need for more courses for students. Reciprocally, the number of women faculty increased around campus.

CC: There was one point when I was walking around campus and I didn't know all the women. That would have been unthinkable early on, not to know all my women colleagues. New people were getting tenure and being hired, and all of a sudden there was just a plethora of courses that could be offered. We had talked about a major before but had to say "with what?"

Unknowingly, I began to catch some of the enthusiasm. Dr. Camp had been talking about women faculty and activism for over half an hour, and I was excited to be even cursorily included in the network. As a graduate student earning the Women and Gender Studies Certificate, I realized I was joining a long line of committed teachers and researchers hoping to build the program here at TCU. I did have one gender-related (versus women's) question, though:

SS: Were there very many men associated with the program? The first graduate of the WGST program as a major is a young man.
CC: Not many, no. There was Alan Shepard early on. He was a very effective Chair of the English Department and is now the President of a university in Canada [Western University in London, Ontario]. He's had a very successful career in administration. David Gunn came to the Religion department around 1993, and that was just as the program was getting started, but he got involved and started teaching. He and I traded off teaching some of the WGST courses [in the Religion Department].There was a man in Nursing who was here in the 2000s. But no, there were not many men.

Thus far, Dr. Camp had been discussing program development and courses. We had been focusing on teaching, so I was naturally curious about the students. At the time of our interview, I had been teaching lower-level literature courses for several semesters, but Dr. Camp had taught at TCU for over thirty years.

SS: Have you noticed any big changes in the student population? Perhaps in their interests and how they decide to take courses? Or how excited they are?
CC: Well, there is a new DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] initiative and the CRES [Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies] program that began in the last few years as I retired. So, there have been a lot of changes recently. I had to learn what those initials meant because they didn't exist when I started teaching. A lot has changed structurally.The last semester that I taught, I taught an Honors colloquium and there were about ten or twelve students.Everybody identified as a feminist, and to me that was shocking. In fact, I had a couple of students who insisted that men could not be

feminists. To me, that was totally retro and I was shocked, but I think to them that felt like an assertion. I couldn't argue too hard with their experience except to tell them some of the histories.
CC: There was definitely a long phase of "I'm not a feminist but--". I think when I first started teaching my Love and Sex in the Biblical World class, there were a number of women who thought they were going to get married and their husband would be head of the family. He would be the decider. I didn't hear that so much by the end.
SS: I would hope not!
CC: That sentiment is still there, but maybe they just weren't taking my classes. I think part of what changed in the student body across my thirty-six years teaching is that TCU became less parochial. I mean, when I first came here, pretty much everybody was from Texas. My sense was that very few of them had ever been out of Texas. Part of the work on diversity in admissions was that they at least started going to other states looking for students. Although that doesn't solve all the problems by a long shot, it really does open up the parochialism. I think TCU has its newer diversity initiatives and the study abroad program and such, so there are students with more experience of the world.

The change in student population also changed the WGST program. Students come to TCU with different demographic and geographic backgrounds, and WGST benefits from the diversity.

Inevitably, we must come to the subject of budgets.WGST has not historically had a large budget, and Dr. Camp is happy to share her early experiences with such limited funds.

CC: If you look at budgeting, Jean Giles-Sims was Director for six years, and she had no budget. None. Maybe she had a course reduction, but I'm not sure she did.
SS: Wow.
CC: When I came on for the next three years, 2000-2003, Jean had wangled, as a parting gift as it were, a one-course reduction. At that time, we were all teaching 3-3, so that brought my teaching down to a 3-2. And there was a $2000 stipend, and there was maybe another $600 or $1300 for things. But, we were really working on a shoestring.
SS: No kidding. That really is a shoestring budget.
CC: I think that's really been part of the problem in the program. We've always been willing to work on a shoestring budget. You know, we started it, in a sense, by saying to the university, "This won't cost you a thing. We'll use the courses we have and develop just two more. We'll use the people we have." My department was willing to let WOST [Women's Studies, original name for the program] and WGST courses count as one of my courses, but other departments weren't always the same. It got hard to staff the courses. But we were trying not to cost the university hardly anything. We lingered doing that for too long, and we had sort of locked ourselves into that path. So, when we started making demands for more money or more staff, the response was really slow. In fact, when I was Director, the Dean then in charge of AddRan, where program was housed at the time, was talking about cutting the budget. We made a big pitch and kept our $1300, but she was looking for places to cut. We only had four or six Women's Studies minors.
SS: They wanted to cut the $1300? That isn't much.

CC: It was twenty years ago, to be sure, but yes. That's the kind of university attitude we were dealing with. It was slow growing partly because it was seriously underfunded. And yet we were being held accountable for the slow growth.

Dr. Camp has been thinking back in time for a while, but I would like to hear about where she thinks WGST is headed in the future. She has seen nonexistent budgets grow to modest amounts and now a separate WGST department. She has taught for over thirty years and continues to be a stable presence at TCU, coming out of retirement in spring semester 2020 to serve as Interim Chair for the Department whose early years as a "program" she had been so instrumental in guiding.

SS: Where do you see WGST at TCU going, if you had to make a prediction? Or, what would you like to see?
CC: Well, now that it's a department, it needs to be taken seriously as a department. You know, a department needs to have faculty, number one.
SS: Yes! Please!
CC: So, I think they need to decide what they need in the way of faculty and how you're going to allocate those. And, it would be nice to have a long-term Chair, whether from the inside or outside the university. I think sometimes, bringing someone from the outside can kick start a program, but we've had mostly successful Directors from the inside. Then, we have to ask where the money is for that. Even now [in fall 2019, when this interview was held], the Chair is a sociologist and we're still trading on pulling people from other departments.

I think you've got to get, as a start, an assistant professor, a senior professor, a Department Chair. We need to bring in a Department Chair of Women and Gender Studies fully housed in WGST, not someone who is from another department who needs to return to that department. Nothing against Jeannine [Gailey] or people doing that; it's just a structural issue.
SS: Sure. It's a new department. We need to do something new.

As part of a focus on faculty and staff, Dr. Camp envisions developing research within the new WGST department. There is, after all, a research award named after her. It is clear she would love to see the focus on teaching balanced with attention to research.

CC: I think the emphasis on research is growing. We really used to focus mainly on teaching. When I was Director and somewhat before and after that, we had a very active person who was in Student Development Services. They actually had a Women's Resource Program in Student Development. There was a woman who ran that, Marcy Paul. Marcy was super active and very good; she didn't, at that time, have a PhD. But, she was really great with students and really creative. That, during my tenure as Director, was what really kept the program going, because she had such a good touch with the students. But, it was really all about teaching and [co-curricular] programming. This question about research was just kind of let go.

Dr. Camp mentions that Women's Studies used to hold an annual faculty research celebration featuring presentations on colleagues' publications, along with wine and food. There was also a research institute for a few years under the directorship of Joanne Green and Marcy Paul that eventually lost funding and ended. Over the years, there have been several attempts to promote research, and, for Dr. Camp especially, "figuring out how the program really promotes faculty research and encourages faculty to talk together about their research would be a real enlivening, relationship-building kind of thing."

We talked for a few more minutes about research and teaching and the relationship between the two. But, among all the questions I asked her, Dr. Camp asked me one big question herself, highlighting an issue with which WGST will continue to grapple: "How do you build the relationships through the program now that it's a lot bigger?" Her question led me to realize an important point. In the end, Women and Gender Studies at TCU is not about fancy flyers or flashy programs; it is about the people that make up that program and carry out the work. In sum, as my dialogue with this dedicated longtime leader made clear, it is about relationships.

Leading On

Oral History from Dr. Joanne Green
Interviewed by Dr. Sarah Ruffing Robbins; Fall Semester, 2019

Profile of Joanne Green

In a spring 2020 email announcing the appointment of Dr. Joanne Connor Green as Interim WGST Department Chair for the upcoming academic year, Dr. Karen Steele (Dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies) emphasized Green's longstanding commitment to WGST. Wrote Dean Steele: "I would hazard to guess that there are few faculty on our campus who know the department, its history, and evolution as well as Dr. Green, nor few who have dedicated so much of their TCU career to the department's growth and wellbeing: she has served as Director and Interim Co-director (with Dr. Camp) of Women's Studies, back when it was a program; she was also a founder of the (now defunct) Institute for Gender Studies at TCU. In the fall of 2018, she served superbly as interim associate dean for the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, and she has many years of experience as Chair of Political Science."

Complementing her vital institutionally-oriented leadership in WGST at TCU, Dr. Green has taught a wide array of courses in the Political Science department, including Texas and American Politics, Scope and Methods of Political Science, Political Parties and Interest Groups, and Campaigns and Elections, as well as Women and Politics. Like her teaching, her scholarly publications often bridge between the fields of Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies. A graduate of the University of Buffalo, she earned both her M.A. and her Ph.D. from the University of Florida.

Oral History Overview from Sarah Ruffing Robbins

During the same time period when students in the 2019 Feminist Inquiry course were interviewing WGST leaders for this collection, I (Sarah Robbins, their instructor) sought out Dr. Green for an oral history conversation, which appears in very lightly edited form below. Editing, in this case, was preceded by WGST graduate assistant Andreley Bjelland's producing a transcript of the audiotape made during the initial conversation. I (Robbins) then checked and copy-edited the transcript before sending it on to Green for her input, including giving her a chance to update wording in any passages from the original conversation that might benefit from clarification. (As editors of this collection, Meagan Solomon and I have followed a practice of inviting interviewees to update and clarify their material, refining, if they chose, the preliminary texts prepared by the students participating in the project. This approach affiliates with calls by scholars of feminist and Indigenous story-telling [cited below] to co-create texts like those in our anthology as co-authored narratives rather than narratives

with a researcher reporting "on" a "subject.")

Oral history is not an inherently "feminist" research method, of course. Still, scholars like Susan Geiger have argued that the form lends itself well to feminist knowledge-making if two basic elements are in place, one related to content emphasis and the other to methodology. Thus, a feminist oral history would address topical content focused on gender (such as how a group of women's experiences, placed in historical context, have been shaped by gender, particularly in connection with additional identity factors such as race or class). Further, a feminist oral history would apply rhetorical techniques that "emphasize understanding rather than controlling the material or information generated and conceptualize the interpretive task as one of opening rather than closure" (Geiger, 170). For instance, such a stance seeks to make the dominant voice in the oral history that of the interviewee, whose own story-making process drives the bulk of the conversation, rather than to foreground commentary produced by the interviewer, either "in the moment" or later.

Our strategy for doing oral history also draws from Native American studies scholar Shawn Wilson's work, Research Is Ceremony, as applied in Robbins's 2017 Learning Legacies monograph, and from associated research on critical Indigenous strategies for trying to decolonize power relations in knowledge-making (Fobear). Thus, Robbins envisions feminist oral history as doing research "with" rather than "on" someone, and she sees the resulting story as co-authored, with the interviewee (here, Joanne Green) as the central maker of resulting knowledge and therefore primary author. In other words, Robbins and Green co-created text through collaborative work that generated —and, hopefully, for future readers, will generate—a dynamic shared path to further learning. They both thank Andreley Bjelland for contributing substantially to this multi-faceted collaboration by carefully transcribing the original audiotape.

Our dialogue began with me (Robbins) suggesting two open-ended questions as a focus: "What challenges have you personally—and the WGST academic program more broadly—faced across your time at TCU? How would you envision the future of WGST now, looking beyond the twenty-fifth anniversary year?"

Transcription (with minor edits by Green and Robbins having been applied):

SR: So, challenges

JG: Challenges. Okay.

SR: And it could be challenges to you as a woman at TCU or it could be challenges as the program was trying to get started.

JG: Okay, well I guess I can answer on both levels. First of all, as a woman at TCU. When I joined, I was the first woman hired in a tenure-track position in the Department of Political Science. So, that represented a lot of challenges. The faculty, for the most part, the men in the department tried hard to facilitate my success, but there were a number of situations where, not because of ill intent, there were just circumstances that really made it very bad. During my probationary period I almost left, because I was sexually harassed by someone in my department. And it was very difficult. I was

officed, fortunately, separately from the rest of the department, and I shared like a little suite with Don Jackson. And I just tried to avoid people for a long time, and that helped me in a way because I got very close with women on campus, and I'd always been involved in the Women and Gender Studies program. I started my first semester going to meetings, which is the first semester the program existed. And those were my lifelines, and that's literally why I didn't leave because at that time I was also recruited to go somewhere else, so I had to think long and hard if I wanted to leave.

I decided to stay. The department had determined the individual did in fact create a hostile work environment for me. And at the time I decided I was unwilling to be the only person uncomfortable, so I pushed it. And we went through gender sensitivity training and then for a while, I would say, many people in our department were uncomfortable. And I was okay with that because I shouldn't be the only one that is always uncomfortable. It was when I was pregnant and there were just some grossly inappropriate comments made. At the same time there was a woman in the history department, a friend of mine who left, that was also treated inappropriately during her pregnancy. Jean Giles Sims, primarily Jean Giles Sims, and a couple of the other women in the Women and Gender Studies program, actually created a document of things to say and not say to pregnant women to share with people in the college, and then I think it got shared maybe a little more broadly across the university. A woman in history would walk into department meetings and they would say things like “Oh, here's our little mother.” And “How's your little football?” and the most patronizing, paternalistic kind of things. I was given repeated, unwelcome and unsolicited advice by a man who watched his wife have a baby once, and about my diet, about my weight gain, about how I was carrying, about how I looked, about how I should exercise. The final straw came when I gave birth, on April 28, which was about a week before the semester ended. I stopped teaching on Friday. I gave birth on Monday and I had to come back to grade my finals. I came to campus and noticed that someone posted a picture of the baby on my office door, without my permission, which I guess was okay. Anyway, he came up to me and said, I shouldn't “close my factory” because I produce such good babies.

SR: That's astounding.

JG: And this is when I had a Cesarean section. I had an infection following the Cesarean section, and I was nursing. I was in a very physically, emotionally, weakened state, and it really affected me badly.

SR: I believe it.

JG: Fortunately, there was one person in the department, Don Jackson, who, when I finally got the courage to say something absolutely saw it for what it was, both a hostile work environment and illegal. And he was the one that really pushed the department. And it took a while til things got better.

There would just be some comments that were just unaware. But there were also times where people were greatly supportive. But it was hard being the only woman. And it was really hard at the university, because there were no policies whatsoever at the time. For example, the woman in history got a reduction of teaching, twice during her probationary period. The second time she got pregnant,

she got a reduction of teaching. She still had to teach, but she got a course reduction that she had to pay back when she came back in the fall. So instead of teaching three classes, she to teach four with an infant.

The Provost at the time was Bill Koehler, and he had gone on record of saying that people have a choice. And either you can choose to have a child or not. Our tenure/promotion policy at the time said you could get an extension in your tenure clock for extraordinary circumstances beyond an individual's control, which pregnancy was not beyond your control. There were no provisions whatsoever for leave, there are no provisions for an extension of the tenure clock, there are no provisions whatsoever for a reasonable accommodation, though there were for medical emergencies, any kind of medical leaves, any kind of health problems. It was a very difficult time at the university.

Because of that, there were a group of women that came together and made presentations to the Provost and the Chancellor at the time to try to institute some reasonable policies to make this environment more supportive, and we were unsuccessful. And then we made another presentation too, when we had a new Provost, and we were unsuccessful. And then we had a new Chancellor and Provost at the same time, and we made the same presentations, and we were successful on a number of them. I presented all three times on the issue of stopping the tenure clock and family leave. Another person, for instance, presented on partner benefits. I recall very specifically, Chancellor Boschini when he found out we didn't get an extension of time to achieve tenure for a birth/adoption at the person's request, he's like, “Well you should.” And when he found out we didn't have any kind of partner benefits, he just instituted it. Used some social capital, and actually made a number of changes, just because they were the right thing to do. In his very first year.

And so that really, it was very nice. For instance, when I was department chair, I got to—when I interviewed people—I got to say, “Whether or not this pertains to you, this speaks to the culture of our campus,” and talk about the policies that we have that benefit all. I think it says a lot to how supportive we are of people at different points in their careers.

And that was a very nice change, but that didn't happen naturally. That was a lot of hard work on the part of a lot of different people. I got some pushback, actually, from women. One woman said to me, who was actually involved in the program, and in the leadership way, said, “I didn't realize that you plan to have more children, and—"

SR: Astounding.

JG: Yeah, it was astounding because I, in fact, didn't plan to have more children. I just realized that it was so wrong that I didn't want it to happen to another woman. I had experienced a lot of difficulties—I was sexually harassed in graduate school, I had this circumstance here. It was a very hostile environment for me for a while after that because a couple of them in the department really didn't like the policies—I was really, I was seen as very pushy. And that was in my probationary period. But I believed very fundamentally in my whole life, I want to leave the world a better place than I found it. And specifically, professionally. So when I heard that from a person who I respected, because she was a leader in the Women and Gender Studies program, I was really shocked, because it wasn't

about self-interest at all. No, I was never going to extend my probationary period. By the time we got it, and I was really advocating for it, I was already tenured. No, I was never going to take a family leave because I was never going to have another child, that was for sure. I had two and I was done. Just this whole idea that a woman would even think that the only reason I'm making these arguments —

SR: Is for self-interest

JG: That always bothers me because it goes with the idea that, like how white people can better advocate for people of color because it doesn't look like they're in their self-interest, which is just so fundamentally troubling to me. Because human beings should care about other human beings regardless of their own circumstances. So, all in all, I was talking to somebody not long ago who took the family leave policy. And it was a man who had no gratitude whatsoever.

SR: We've had men in our department take it, and they don't know this history.

JG: Almost the only people I know who have taken it are men. I've only known a couple of women who had used the policy. We've had more men take it than women. I think campus-wide it's disproportionately benefiting men.

SR: That would be interesting to track with data.

JG: More men are taking it. And then the way that Human Resources, this is a pet peeve of mine because I worked to get that policy instituted, the way the policy is written and the way the Human Resources department has instituted it, it has a disparate benefit on men, because they allow men to choose when they take the leave within the qualified, within one year of the qualifying event. Women must take the leave, while they're giving birth, the semester they give birth. So men can wait until the infant is like nine months old.

SR: Wow.

JG: Someone in our department taught the whole semester, taught over the summer, and the baby was over nine months old, and then got a full semester of paid leave, where if he was a woman he would have had to take it to actually accommodate for the physical demands of childbirth, not take it while his baby was already no longer an infant, and was in daycare. And so it's really, there are a lot of men on campus who are exploiting it. Now there are some men who are doing it, I think in a way that was intended, is that their spouse works elsewhere, so if you both work at the university, only one of you gets it. But their spouse works elsewhere and takes a leave, and then they take the leave so they can have more time with the infant and actually care for it.

SR: I know someone over in journalism who did that, as his wife is a schoolteacher. And she had to go back quickly in the fall, and in the summer, you know, they were both home, and then she went back and then he, I know he did the childcare because I saw on Twitter and Instagram what he was doing, so he was literally using it the way it should have been used.

JG: But others are not, and it's very troubling because of the way they've allowed the policy, that they give the choice to the man but not the woman, because the reality is when the men, when their partners give birth, they usually are absent. And they're getting people to cover their classes. And then they're still getting family leave. They're not giving women the same choice, and I find that very troubling.

SR: It is troubling.

JG: Yes, I've raised it formally, and it has been ignored. It went up to our Dean of AddRan College and the Dean said he raised it with Human Resources to investigate why they've chosen to read—the policy doesn't have to be interpreted that way—so why they've chosen to interpret it that way for men, it's beyond me.

So institutionally it was difficult, being in the ’90s, being here. There were no reasonable accommodations. We've never had childcare. You didn't get to stop the tenure clock even if you wanted to. Many people didn't want to, if you look at the long-term financial implications. But if you needed to, there was no option for that. There were no reasonable accommodations you could get; it was individually negotiated. I kind of became a point person for people; all women all over campus would contact me informally to ask what they could ask for. And even when we got the tenure extension instituted, that was still being abused because what initially they started to do in some areas of the university, I know because I was sort of like a point person on this for a long time, women called me and said that now their department expects them to produce more research, because now they have an extra year. And so whatever essentially the normal research expectation had been wasn’t sufficient, like it was adding a year in their minds, and so that means they had added expectations, which was contrary to the policy, so then we had to go through and get that clarified that that's not in fact what the policy means. So even with the policies in place, we still had to then fight.

All of the benefits, which I'm glad we have right now, don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to take, claim, credit for this—a lot of really hard and dedicated work went into this by a number of people. None of that happened naturally. And it was a lot of effort, and it was hard.

I used to bring my daughter to work sometimes, and she was one of those ideal kids to bring to work because she would just, she would like to be my little helper, hand out things; she could sit in the back of the classroom and color. My son, on the other hand, was very active so I couldn't bring him. But sometimes there wouldn't be daycare or she'd be sick but not contagious and so I'd have to bring her up here, and a Dean at the time, not Mike McCracken but I'd rather not name names, came up to me and said, “I didn't realize it was ‘Bring your daughter to work day.’” And I said, “It was either ‘Bring your daughter to work day’ or it was ‘mom doesn't come to work day.’” It felt very hostile. The person then compared the responsibility of having cats to the responsibility of having

children under five. And this is the kind of environment we were in. And it was hard. I am just so pleased that things are better now. They're definitely not perfect, but they're a far cry from where they used to be.

Dr. Green then turned to the second part of Robbins's original question: challenges faced by the WGST program in its foundational years.

JG: So, challenges with the program early on. Mike McCracken, in many ways, was a good Dean to serve under because he acknowledged that he didn't know, and wished to be helpful, versus a Dean who asserted that they supported the program and was a feminist but really wasn't. That's harder to deal with. Mike McCracken did some things that really were unique to him as far as I can tell. He had studies done, I'm not sure at his initiative or requirement; I don't really know the behind-the-scenes back then. I had no ties to anybody. He didn't even know my name, and I was happy with that. But he did some studies to look at pay equity, and I at least once or twice got a pay bump, maybe $2,000 or something because our salaries are lower than the men's. He paid attention to that and did a lot of equity studies, and I was grateful for that.

Early on in the program, he was very supportive, because we knew that there was a need. He acknowledged he didn't know what he didn't know. And so he gave us a lot of autonomy. He created a budget with, a very limited budget; I think it was like $1350 or $1450. But was a huge step, and as somebody who studies bureaucratic theory, having an actual formal budget is an important step.

When Jean [Giles Sims] was the Director, she didn't get any kind of course reduction or anything, and we pushed for that, I'm pretty sure either when Claudia Camp became director or when I was director, because that also is a measure of institutional support. I don't know if Claudia got it. I know I got a one-course reduction once a year. But there was no Graduate Fellow, no Student Assistants, nothing. At one point, when the program was still in AddRan, a dean serving before Andy Schoolmaster decided to cut the program budget by $50, I believe because of frustration with the program. At the time there were other budget cuts, but cutting our budget by $50 said a lot. So we went from either $1,350 or $1,450 to $1,300 or $1,400.

SR: Symbolic, but it hurt.

JG: It said a lot. Another challenge was, there were a lot of people who wanted the program, who were in support of the program, but we would have faculty meetings and there would be maybe eight people there, and it would be a different eight people. There was always a core group of people. I mean four or five core people. The other people sort of switched in and out, and so that was a challenge. And that's still a challenge, because everybody that does labor for the department, except for the new people that work in the department, everyone else is doing labor in a way that's unrecognized and unacknowledged.

SR: And sometimes resisted.

JG: Sometimes discouraged, in a way. And so, staffing the classes, getting people to do committee work, all that sort of thing, almost all fell to the program director. So that was a challenge, too. But it was also such a safe haven for so many women that worked in departments, and it was such a breath of fresh air for the rest, for some of us that, like when I interviewed for Political Science, Priscilla Tate was the Associate Dean, and she had to arrange a luncheon with women faculty, so I could see that there were women.

SR: That there were women here.

JG: Right. So for those of us who worked in departments that were all male, it was just such a safe haven. Like-minded individuals that were just supportive and that cared about the things we did, did research in the same kinds of things we did. And it was just, literally, without the program I would have left. And that's why I've always cared so much about it.

SR: That makes sense. Looking ahead, what gives you optimism? Looking ahead, what concerns do you have?

JG: I have a lot of optimism, more optimism than I've ever had. The fact that the university made it a department, I think is really good. The fact that we have an Associate Director who can really do a lot of labor, that really can oversee a lot of initiatives, that faculty are really doing some of the labor for, but really need the push. Nino Testa, particularly, is amazing in that job. And even if it weren't him, it's still great to have somebody that is in a support position.

I feel very optimistic because the budget's increased. I feel optimistic we are offering undergraduate degrees. I feel optimistic that we have so many core people, and that our faculty meetings are so large that we have to get bigger rooms. The number of people who feel ownership in the program is the largest it's ever been. People are willing to go above and beyond, and your service is the best it's ever been. I feel like it's on the safest footing it's ever been.

I think there are still some frustrations regarding some resistance we get from, like, the naming of the program. I reflect back on when I was the Director of the program, there was an initiative in the Student Development Services to bring the *Vagina Monologues* to campus, and it was shut down at the Vice Chancellor level. In fact, because the person found the *Vagina Monologues* to be too controversial, threats of firing staff were made if the production were brought to campus. Meanwhile it wasn't remotely cutting-edge. It'd been happening all over the country, all over Texas. It wasn't like new and revolutionary. It was just new and revolutionary here, saying "vagina" out loud. So, the next year, a student organization brought it to me as the Director and said, "Would you sponsor, would the Women's Studies program sponsor the monologues?" and I said, "Absolutely." It was a lot of work because in order to do that, you have to do a lot of fundraising. To qualify to do the *Monologues* in public with no cost. The Women's Studies program had to do it. We had to raise money and all of that. When the same Vice Chancellor found out we were doing it through the Women's Studies program, he complained to the Provost. The Provost at the time was Nowell Donovan, and he called me to his office and said, "What are you doing?" and I said, "We're doing this," and I explained how

many other universities had done it, it's a form of academic freedom, and he 100% backed us. The Vice Chancellor said, “This is going to be a huge failure; we're going to have protests; we're gonna lose donors,” like this dire prediction. And it was fabulous. There were no protests; sold-out audience; production was wonderful; students in the TCU Department of Theatre got involved. It was amazing, and since then we've had it regularly, since that very first year.

And so we go from that to where we are today, is huge.

The fact that the university is worried about us using like gender and, you know, sexuality in our title. It's still, I think, problematic, because of the implicit challenge to the autonomy of the departments. But on the other hand I do kind of understand that a university has to be concerned about its branding, particularly when they're launching this huge capital campaign, and so I get it from both perspectives, but it's still, you know, I think it shows that we're a little behind the times.

There are some things I'm concerned about for the future. The Women and Gender Studies Program has always been marginalized by many people. And I had hoped when the new School of Interdisciplinary Studies was started, that would be less the case. But I've talked to people in other colleges, particularly in Business and some of the other schools like Science and Engineering. And in many ways in their minds it’s more marginalized, because they really sort of see the School of Interdisciplinary Studies not as the School of Interdisciplinary Studies but as a school of social justice, with a very particular slant.

SR: Interesting.

JG: I feel concerned about that for the long term. Because while we're interested in social justice, Women and Gender Studies is more than what some label a trendy (and controversial) ideological movement. We are an academic department that fosters critical feminist inquiry, academic research, unique pedagogy, curricular study. Activism has always been, and will always be, central to Women and Gender Studies as it is central to feminism. But Women and Gender Studies is not synonymous with social justice as it’s currently being used in American politics today.

For the last few years I chaired the University Advisory Committee, and I was in a meeting recently and I mentioned to the Provost, that the School of Interdisciplinary Studies doesn't have representation on the University Advisory Committee, nor does Honors, and they all should because now they both have tenure-track faculty.

SR: Yes, yes.

JG: And that was met with great resistance, not by the Provost but by some faculty. Several faculty members from a number of colleges have been very resistant to ideas like this.

SR: What does it take? Is it numbers?

JG: Well, partly it’s the numbers. They say they are concerned that each representative from SIS would be representing fewer people than representatives from other schools and colleges-- essentially

a situation of malapportionment. For example, Women and Gender Studies may only have two tenure-track faculty, and CRES [Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies] may only have two or three, so for SIS to get equal representation on the University Advisory Committee while only representing five to six faculty, or ten to twelve total if we include all fulltime faculty, is seen as an issue when other people represent many more people. However, we already have unequal representation. For example, the College of Education gets one person and has only around thirty faculty, while Harris College and Schieffer each have one representative even though they have more than one hundred faculty each. However, we are also representing the school/college, not the faculty. But then they were kind of like, well they're really not academic, was essentially the second argument.

SR: Wow.

JG: And that troubles me. A lot. Because I was so excited we got the school, we got a Dean. And then also the fact it's not like, in many people's eyes, it's not a regular school, it's not a real school; it has a different chain of command. I've heard that there's going to be resistance to getting it under the regular chain of command. I've heard other people say it might.

SR: I think it is under the regular chain of command now, from what I heard from Karen Steele [Dean of SIS], so you're not reporting to Vice Provost Susan Weeks anymore. I think under the new Provost, maybe that's already changed. I think that's important.

JG: So, will they also be eligible for all of the Chancellor's teaching awards, representation on all those committees? Will they be eligible for everything?

SR: I remember when I was interim-ing over in Honors, I asked for us to have a seat at the table for selecting the Chancellor's award. Because we didn't. And I said, even as a transition, I would like for whoever the Honors Dean is to be in the room, when the award discussion happens among the Deans. I said, a lot of people on campus work for Honors and do things for Honors, and I would have valuable information to share in the selection process, even if we're not yet eligible to nominate someone ourselves. It seemed unfair to faculty who were contributing so much across units.

JG: Right, and so until they're at that status, and they're treated like a regular department and people see them as a regular college, I'm worried that they could even be further marginalized. I'm also troubled by the way it sometimes may appear to some that CRES and Women and Gender Studies are now in competition. And some of that we were worried about from the beginning, and it seems to be reaching fruition. That there appears to be a zero-sum allocation of jobs and lines, and I find that very troubling because our goals and our missions are so similar.

SR: And so compatible.

JG: Right and so I find that very troubling.

SR: So working out that relationship long-term?

JG: Working out that relationship long-term, and not allowing ourselves to diminish the power of both departments by creating this unnecessary dichotomy and false competition. And I think having the school focus, the social justice element of the school I think is okay, but I think also having more of a sense that all kinds of interdisciplinary studies are welcome in the school, because right now I've actually heard people say that they're not. And there's not a sense that it's really a School of Interdisciplinary Studies. What they really think is, in a school of social justice, only certain kinds of interdisciplinary studies are really gonna be welcome there. And I think that if it continues like that, we've really missed a great opportunity.

SR: That's a really good point.

What else do you want to say? About anything.

JG: Well I'm an optimist, on the whole; that's just my personality. I'm very optimistic about the future. I think that, in the time I've been here, the university has changed dramatically. We used to have, in AddRan, fewer than five women full Professors.

SR: Look at us now.

JG: Look at us now. Let's be clear though, power disproportionately at the university is still in the hands of men. And the true decision making is still in the hands of men, and there's still a lot of resistance to putting too many women in power.

And there's still a lot of sexism by people in power, certainly not all or perhaps even most. And we also now have the largest number of women leaders, and women that are in positions to help other people, that we've ever had. And I do believe that more of the women that are in positions to facilitate change are more supportive of the idea of mentoring and of giving back, and making the world, the university, better for other disadvantaged groups, not just women. Focusing more on the DEI stuff, as you look, a lot of leadership in DEI is coming disproportionately from women. And if you look at, when you start doing these DEI inventories of the departments, I think you're going to see most of the DEI work is being done by women of all races and all different demographics, all disciplines, all races, all orientations, all identities. And I find that very optimistic. And so, I feel like we're at a place where we can make some real substantive change. I feel very optimistic.

SR: I do, too.

JG: Good.

SR: I do too.

JG: Yeah, I think we could really capitalize on a lot of this. It's a good time, I think, to be at TCU.

SR: I think it is, too. And I think one of the ways that we keep it moving forward, is by not losing this history. Because when you know more of the history, you appreciate the progress. It also empowers you to push for more, because you see what's been achieved. And you recognize that it took effort. And I think, on the one hand, that maybe keeps us from getting too discouraged when we do hit a setback—because of the things that have been achieved. Your story of the three different times trying to change the leave policy: to me that's inspiring.

JG: Well, it was the lead policy, this childcare policy which we never got, it was the partner benefit policy. There is a list of—there were at least five people presenting, so at least six, seven different areas. We were successful over half of them. So, yeah, it was your continued effort, it was like literally trying and failing, trying and failing, and trying and being successful, partly. And all because of one person. Chancellor Boschini. But how many times do we hear also from people in leadership that, "Oh I support women; I have a wife. I support women because I have a daughter."

"I support women because I have a female dog." When you hear things like that, it's also like, ugh. But, still, I'm optimistic.

SR: I'm glad you're here. I'm glad you stayed. I'm really, really glad you stayed.

JG: I am, too.

SR: What a loss it would have been to the institution, if you had not stayed

JG: Thank you. It was a rough couple of years.

SR: I'm sure it was.

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A Conversation with Karen Steele: A Pivotal Figure in Women and Gender Studies at TCU

Jen Earthman

Dr. Karen Steele, when interviewed in fall 2019 serving as Dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies at TCU, is a most impressive figure. Steele attained her Bachelor's Degree in English before going on to earn her Master's and Doctoral degrees in English and Ethnic and Third World Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Her areas of study include Modern British and Irish literature, Irish women's cultural production, media history, women's writings, and gender and sexuality studies. Steele is a specialist in feminist media history; her interests self-professedly come from a perspective that foregrounds women and gender.

As a graduate student in the process of obtaining a Master's degree in Art History at TCU, I was happy to learn of the potential of acquiring a certificate in Women and Gender Studies (WGST) through Art History seminars and papers focusing on women and gender, in addition to a Feminist Inquiry seminar, available to both graduate and undergraduate students. In my fall 2019 class, the seminar foregrounded feminist theoretical frameworks and research methods.

In 2018, the year I came to the university, the WGST program moved to the new School of Interdisciplinary Studies and became the Department of Women and Gender Studies. The year 2019 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Women & Gender Studies/Women's Studies at the university. As such, I was honored to interview a person so instrumental in the history of Women and Gender Studies at TCU as Dean Steele. My conversation with Dr. Steele concerned the strengths of an interdisciplinary approach overall, battles and triumphs she experienced as director of Women and Gender Studies, and a promising future for the department.

Interdisciplinary Studies and Feminism

JE: "As an English professor, how does your literary scholarship dovetail with women and gender studies?"
KS: "I am a feminist media historian, so everything I examine considers the intersection of gender, history, and culture. But what centers everything I study is women and gender. That's the integrative element for every project I touch, research, and write about."

JE: "What do you think are the strengths of an interdisciplinary approach?"
KS: "I think the strengths of interdisciplinary approaches are similar to the advantages of diversity:

both are premised on the understanding that we are more successful in approaching complex challenges when we draw from multiple methods and perspectives. Our society's most difficult contemporary issues-- for example, #blacklivesmatter, #metoo, or climate change-- cannot be solved using just one perspective, method, or tool. Interdisciplinary approaches provide more nimble mechanisms for creative and successful solutions."

I became exposed to feminism at an all-girls high school in which an emphasis was placed on women scholars and women's achievements. This interest of mine increased in college and even more so in my advanced art history seminars at TCU. My professors often employ feminist methodologies in art analysis, and two of my courses have focused exclusively on women artists. To me, a feminist is someone who is interested in, of course, equality for women, but there are many implications beyond that, particularly with intersectionality and the many aspects that make up personhood such as race, class, ethnicity, access to education, etc. I was thus interested to hear how Dr. Steele herself views feminism. She shares a similar perspective.

JE: "How do you personally define a feminist?"

KS: "Well, I think there are many ways of defining a feminist. If I had to choose, it would be bell hooks' simple statement, "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression." It's important, for me, to note that feminism is not gender identification, nor is it gender politics: it's feminist politics to end exploitation and oppression-- for all. This means that feminism involves activism on behalf of all those who are oppressed and being attentive to the intersections in all of our identities. So feminism entails allyship, advocacy, and support on behalf of women, yes, but also many other communities, such as those who are LGBTQ, African-American, Latinx, Asia-American, undocumented, migrant, foreign-born, Indigenous, financially precarious, neurodiverse, and so on."

Women and Gender Studies at TCU

JE: "What initially sparked your interest [in Women and Gender Studies] here at TCU?"

KS: "When I was a job candidate visiting TCU for the first time, I asked to meet with faculty involved in Women's Studies. This was my first chance to talk to Priscilla Tate, Jean Giles-Sims, and Rhonda Keen, who were founding members of the program. I knew that Women's Studies faculty, both in and out of my academic home in the English department, would be important intellectual supporters for me, because of our shared theoretical, methodological, intellectual, and activist commitments; these commitments were central to my own research and my own understanding of myself as a professional. I thought that Women's Studies would be an important lifeline—it was and still is."

The year 2005 was important, as fifteen courses in the Women's Studies program were approved, and TCU had its first production of *The Vagina Monologues*. Dr. Steele played an instrumental role in this exciting moment.

JE: “Do you have any favorite memories of important events in the program’s history?”

KS: “Before I became director of Women’s Studies, I was involved in bringing *The Vagina Monologues* to our campus. This was, initially, a real battle. There were several high-level administrators who were resistant to the university staging this play. Yet Provost Donovan felt that it was a matter of academic freedom that Women’s Studies be supported in sponsoring the play, and the show went on. I was particularly proud of the way Women’s Studies leaders like Joanne Green and Marcy Paul advocated for the play and its importance for our students. That first year in particular was kind of a watershed for us.”

Dr. Steele was director from 2006-2009. The certificate program, of which I am thrilled to be a part, began in 2008 under her direction. She told me about this important addition as one of her favorite memories in the history of Women and Gender Studies at TCU, and how important it was to her both personally and professionally.

KS: “Another cherished memory was starting up the graduate certificate and developing programming and events for graduate students, some of whom, at that time, had little support for feminist scholarship in their home departments. I had the chance, early on, to develop and teach the required course for the certificate: Feminist Theories and Methodologies. Teaching graduate students across the curriculum about feminism is surely one of the most rewarding experiences in my career. In fact, I credit teaching that class for keeping me balanced and sane when I was tapped, unexpectedly and mid-year, to take on a challenging administrative position for the university. Teaching that class grounded me by reminding me why I was doing what I was doing. Another highlight was when we brought to campus the internationally-renowned scholar Inderpal Grewal, who was the chair of Women and Gender Studies at Yale. Grewal affirmed the important work that we had labored to accomplish while also helping us to imagine how we could evolve and grow. Another important moment was when Theresa Gaul, who at the time was director of the program, successfully advocated to bring in three external reviewers for the program’s first formal review. The preparatory work was instrumental in conveying to the reviewers that TCU needed to invest in our program. The reviewers certainly helped make the case that WGST needed to be a department that awarded bachelor’s degrees—and to do this work, we would need designated full-time faculty and staff as well.”

JE: “Were there any difficulties you faced as director of the program?”

KS: “I mentioned the challenges of bringing *The Vagina Monologues* to campus; it continued to be a struggle to mount productions of this play for the next few years. More positively, I learned more about the valuable contributions of professional staff in student affairs who do so much to support our students with robust co-curricular training and programming. As a faculty member, I had always considered the professoriate the end-all and be-all of every university. Working on *The Vagina Monologues* taught me how lucky I was at TCU to partner with talented, thoughtful, resourceful,

courageous colleagues who work outside of academic affairs. I also was reminded of the privilege of being a tenured faculty member whose job was secure, even when working on an enterprise that made many members of the TCU community deeply uncomfortable."

The faculty voted to change the name of the program from its original title of Women's Studies to Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies in 2014, but instead renamed it Women and Gender Studies per the advice of the administration.

JE: "Could you tell me about when the word gender was added to the program?"

KS: "As I understand it, what to name our program was a topic of debate from its very inception in 1994. The founders felt that it was essential that 'woman' be the center of that area of study. This insistence on 'Woman's Studies' rather than 'Gender Studies' or 'Gender and Sexuality Studies' was a response to TCU's culture but also a reflection of the field in the early 1990s. Over the next twenty years or so, the program frequently engaged in a process of reflection, re-evaluation, and re-assessment about its name. During Theresa Gaul's first term as director, the affiliated faculty lobbied to change the name, so the program leadership engaged in a systematic study among peer and aspirant universities of how they were naming their programs or departments. By that time, both Women's Studies and Women and Gender Studies, while used by a significant percentage of programs, were definitely viewed by those in the field as passé. Among core Women's Studies faculty, it was felt essential that not only 'gender' but also 'sexuality' be in our name, and ultimately, affiliated faculty and staff voted decisively for the inclusion of gender and sexuality into our name. Our university leadership, however, could not support a program with 'sexuality' in its name, so we renamed the program Women and Gender Studies instead."

The Future

JE: "Where do you see Women and Gender Studies at TCU going in the long run?"

KS: "I see the Department growing incrementally through hiring full-time WGST faculty and considerably increasing its reach through joint appointments so that faculty who are substantial contributors receive formal recognition for the sustained contributions that they make in teaching, research, and service. Like CRES, WGST is modeling for our campus how to partner intentionally with community organizations and how to avail ourselves of the extraordinary, and often untapped, talents of professional staff who have so much to contribute to our academic enterprise. As TCU works to implement the DEI essential competency, I see WGST (together with CRES) serving as crucial subject experts and thought leaders in how and what to teach for a diverse society and an inclusive campus culture."

Interviewer's Take-away

The department is only going to get bigger and become a greater part of the university in the future. I strongly encourage anyone with even a nominal interest to take a [WGST] course or see how they can get involved in an extracurricular fashion.

Dr. Nada Elias-Lambert on Collaboration within TCU's Social Work and Women and Gender Studies Departments

Elizabeth Theban

During the twenty-fifth anniversary year of Women and Gender Studies at TCU, the program (now department) sought multiple pathways to recover and document its history and current status. This story represents one contribution to that effort. Grounded in theories and methodologies explored by students enrolled in the Feminist Inquiry course during fall 2019, my interview with Dr. Nada Elias-Lambert highlighted several key strengths of the still-growing WGST enterprise that are also evident in other accounts within this collection: the benefits of drawing in disciplines from across campus, the influence of individual faculty leaders, and the power of collaboration.

Though WGST's longstanding connections with disciplines in the AddRan College of Liberal Arts remain strong, as a university-wide endeavor and an interdiscplinary field, TCU's Women and Gender Studies Department strives to create partnerships and accessibility beyond the humanities and social sciences situated in that unit. In particular, the Department of Social Work has strong ties with the program in a number of capacities. Continuing the legacy of Dr. Linda Moore, who as a key leader during the foundation-setting years and who is profiled earlier in this collection, Dr. Nada Elias-Lambert has maintained that productive connection. Dr. Elias-Lambert serves not only as the Director of the Masters of Social Work, but also as an affiliated professor with the Department of Women and Gender Studies and the Department of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies. Additionally, she has held a position promoting Inclusive Teaching for the Koehler Center for Instruction, Innovation & Engagement.

Dr. Elias-Lambert began teaching at TCU in 2013, after completing her Doctorate in Social Work at the University of Texas, Arlington. Throughout her career, Dr. Elias-Lambert has focused, in her scholarship and outreach practices, on the prevention of gender-based violence.

"As an undergrad, I attended a Take Back the Night rally at the university I was at. I was just wowed. I heard a lot of stories and different experiences that were shared at that speak-out. So I just became more involved in that movement as an undergraduate," Dr. Elias-Lambert recalls.

"After graduating, I started working at a rape crisis center, so I was doing a lot of education work

around that issue as well, around sexual harassment and sexual violence, like in the schools. And then as I pursued my Master's in Social Work, I got really invested in the topic there too. I just continued learning more; my research focus in my PhD was also around that."

Bystander Intervention Training

Much of Dr. Elias-Lambert's research connects with the culture of campuses, including that of TCU, and ways to effectively reduce sexual violence through community-oriented approaches. She developed and implements a training titled Bystander to Upstander: Transforming Culture for faculty and staff on campus, both through introductory workshops and Train-the-Trainer sessions to further spread the message on campus.

Dr. Elias-Lambert explains that the Bystander to Upstander program provides "a different way to address the prevention of sexual violence. In the past and currently, we have programs that typically address a female population and we call them 'risk reduction.' Basically, the program teaches women how to keep themselves safe." On a parallel front, she observes, "We have sexual violence prevention programs that typically target male populations," saying, essentially, "'Don't commit this crime. Don't do this.' Research has shown that neither one of those is really very effective. The participants usually become defensive and don't really want to hear those messages, which I think is appropriate."

Affiliating with a vital alternative approach, Dr. Elias-Lambert has prepared and studied "bystander intervention programs where we can address everyone who attends, regardless of gender, and ask them to be an ally. If they were to see something happening that was inappropriate or made them uncomfortable, they are given the skills and the tools to actively intervene in that situation. And intervention can be both direct and non- direct, so it doesn't have to be directly inserting yourself, but it could be just observing the situation and seeing if you need to de-escalate." Thus, this approach is about "teaching strategies on how to de-escalate those situations" while "taking into account your personal safety."

Elias-Lambert's publications include "Bystander sexual violence prevention program: Outcomes for high- and low-risk university men" in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence (2016) and "Bystander Sexual Violence Prevention Programs: Are They Working with High-Risk University Males?" presented at the Society for Social Work and Research 2014 Annual Conference.

Both the training programs she delivers and her scholarly writing are based in the belief that "we all have a responsibility to do something" about sexual violence.

Women and Gender Studies: Inviting and Interdisciplinary

While it may seem like her research and outreach, activist programming would have created a clear path to involvement in Women and Gender Studies very early in her academic career, Dr. Elias-Lambert never linked up with a program or department until she became a professor at TCU. In that context, Dr. Elias-Lambert notes that some Women, Gender, and Sexuality (WGS) programs are tied

so closely to humanities traditions that they may appear unwelcoming to those affiliated with other kinds of disciplinary training. An example would be Social Work, which has a professional, applying-knowledge emphasis more than a theoretical one. In contrast to how some WGS academic enterprises might marginalize a praxis-oriented discipline like Social Work, she credits WGST at TCU for being particularly welcoming to faculty and students from diverse backgrounds.

Looking back to her prior days in academia versus coming to TCU, she reflects: “There wasn't just ever space to connect with Women and Gender Studies. When I got here, I learned about it my first year here, and so I affiliated. I mean, I think my first week here I affiliated, and I was interested to learn more, and so as I started to get more and more involved, two things happened. I found definitely a group of like-minded faculty and staff colleagues,” which she felt was “a space where people were trying to make a change and advocate.” For Elias-Lambert, that activist stance “very much aligned with my goals. I also found there was opportunity to make changes, I guess, in the way that the program engaged students and faculty and staff from professions like social work or education or nursing.” Overall, she observes, TCU’s WGST community offered her, from the start, a “really open space.”

The Relationship between Women and Gender Studies and Social Work

The partnership between Women and Gender Studies and the Department of Social Work goes beyond faculty affiliation. Dr. Elias-Lambert works with the new WGST department to encourage students in fields other than the humanities to pursue coursework at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Adding a new course, Feminist Inquiry, to WGST’s offerings will, she predicts, make it more possible for graduate students in Social Work to complete the certificate for Women and Gender Studies.

Dr. Elias-Lambert has herself served on the advisory committee for Women and Gender Studies, helping to create a bridge between the WGST department and her home unit in Social Work.

“I feel like a lot of what I learned from [the WGST] department, I'm often bringing to our home department and vice versa.” For Elias-Lambert, in other words, connecting those two units is partly just about information-sharing in both directions. But it’s also about shaping the identities of WGST affiliates like her. “I mean, when we say affiliate faculty, I really do feel part of the Women and Gender Studies department, so I consider it very much another role I play as a faculty member on campus.” Blending those two connections, she says’ “fills my cup.”

For Elias-Lambert, one benefit of this sustained connection is being able to co-sponsor events and to connect with other community stakeholders within and beyond the university. She continues to find WGST affiliates to be “extremely collaborative.” So, for instance, her WGST ties help her blend her research and teaching effectively. Besides producing scholarship on sexual violence and on bystander intervention, she teaches “an Intimate Partner Violence course in the spring semester, and Women and Gender Studies [has] co-sponsored several different activities or programs that came out of that

course, but that were larger university events." As an example, she references "a panel about law and intimate partner violence" which had "several different community members come in and talk about the impact of different policies and laws around survivors of intimate partner violence." She also describes a Take Back the Night activity on campus co-sponsored by WGST.

Take Back the Night

Take Back the Night is a nonprofit that holds events across the globe with the purpose of ending sexual, relationship, and domestic violence. Events can include rallies where people speak to their experiences, as well as marches and vigils to protest these types of violence. Dr. Elias-Lambert began coordinating Take Back the Night activities at TCU in 2016.

"I organized Take Back the Night events at many different campuses previously. So when I got here and they weren't doing Take Back the Night regularly, I talked with the students in my Intimate Partner Violence class to see if they would be interested in helping put one on, and they were, so as a class project we did the first one. I think that was four years ago. And then we implemented it for the next two years through the class as well. So really it was Social Work students in collaboration with Women and Gender Studies and other units on campus who put on that event. But the students really kind of took the lead. I guided them in creating kind of a schedule for the activity and a keynote and all of that, but they really took charge of it."

Recently, Elias-Lambert explains, additional important leadership has come from Leah Carnahan in the TCU Care office and Brad Stewart in the TCU Wellness Center. Their involvement has shifted ongoing implementation to more of a co-curricular space on the Student Affairs side, a change which Elias-Lambert views as "really good. So to me, that has now become a much more institutionalized event and it's not just happening based on one class."

The Future of Women and Gender Studies at TCU

Overall, similar to individual initiatives like Take Back the Night, Women and Gender Studies itself has become increasingly institutionalized at TCU, Dr. Elias-Lambert observes. Hallmarks of this process include the evolution of the program to a department, with the responsibility for WGST's academic and co-curricular activities now more formally recognized and supported by university as a whole rather than being dependent on a small, informal group of faculty and staff, as in the early days. Given this maturation process, Dr. Elias-Lambert has an optimistic view of the department's continued trajectory.

"I think the future of the Department of Women and Gender Studies is very bright. I am excited to see this department hire full-time faculty and continue to engage and support students in working to make positive changes on campus and in our communities."

Ebony Rose Reflects on the Importance of Community and Connection:
A TCU Staff Member's Vital Contributions to WGST

Taylor Jones

Ebony Rose is a Senior Learning and Development Consultant in TCU's Human Resources department. Her job requires her to deliver training on professionalism for faculty and staff members from all across campus. Perhaps most importantly in that context, Rose provides Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training to the multiple professional audiences on this campus. Her commitment to that ongoing endeavor is reaffirmed through her active involvement in WGST at TCU—including in her multi-year service on the Department's Advisory Committee. In such contributions, Rose represents an ideal example of the ongoing centrality of staff leadership in the history and future growth of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies on our campus.

Prior to beginning her current position in HR, Ms. Rose had spent years in Student Affairs doing student development and leadership work. She has been very involved with TCU's Lead On campaign, which focuses on diversity and inclusion, student experience, and student support. Rose also created the Intentional Dialogue program, which trains members of the TCU community to communicate meaningfully with one another across various backgrounds. Rose's work with undergraduates is what made her a perfect candidate for her new position and also a great person to interview in connection with WGST's 25th anniversary. On September 6th, 2019, I sat down with Ebony Rose to discuss her ties to WGST, her new job, the importance of space and connection, and what cultural changes she would like to see on this campus. Below, I present a lightly edited record of our conversation along with some reflections Rose generously added later in the editing process for this project. Section headers signal the key themes we discussed.

Why WGST?

Why you have been so willing to give time and energy—surely in short supply for someone as busy as you are in HR—to the WGST program (now department)?

In working with the WGST department I've found a lovely community of folks on campus. Folks committed to the good and challenging work of educating and building awareness on issues of feminism, gender, and the intersection of all other identities. So, making time to contribute is an easy "yes" for me. I'm also thankful that I've been able to use my academic interests to support the

programs and classes. Since my full-time position on campus is not on the academic side, my work with WGS keeps me connected to my own areas of research and learning.

What changes (if any) in the WGST community, its vision, and its overall impact on TCU have you seen over the course of your involvement?
When I started at TCU in 2012, I didn't know WGST was an area of study. It was still a program then, but I didn't hear students talking about it much. And then, it seemed almost overnight, I started seeing active marketing on campus and students talking about this "new" program on women and gender and there was great energy and enthusiasm. So that's how I found my way to WGST, through students I knew who were loving the classes and the faculty. I think under Dr. Gaul's guidance there was a real increase in program awareness and excitement to be a part of the program for both students and affiliates, and it's been great to see that energy build over the last few years and to see an increase in class offerings and programs and community engagement. The department is really an impactful part of the TCU community and it's been great to be a part of that growth.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In 2018-18, TCU's faculty senate voted to add a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion component to the curriculum. TCU has been making huge efforts to diversify its campus and to create a new, more inclusive culture. That work can't just be done on the student level. In order for real change to happen, everybody on this campus has to be invested—including staff leaders like Ebony Rose. And, in her new position in Human Resources (HR), Rose can have wide and deep impact on DEI all across the campus.

What were the pushes and pulls attracting you to Human Resources?
My whole career had been in Student Affairs working with students on leadership and engagement. But, over the years as I've done more leadership development, community building, and social change work, there started to be an overlap in me also working with adults. So, when the opportunity presented itself to do employee engagement, employee development, and employee leadership education, the transition made a lot of sense. It works on the same ideas that if we're doing it right, people on college campuses are lifetime learners and they want to take "classes" and learn and develop and be educated. Employees are in their own state of growth, development, and curiosity. So, it's been fun to transition and continue to do learning and development around diversity and inclusion, community building, and connection and identity for an adult audience.

What does the staff development training look like?
I work with everyone in this institution. TCU has about 2500 employees and we work with all of them. I do DEI trainings to address diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The trainings include reflective work, identity work, and small group work. The importance of employee education is that you have everyone ranging from shift workers who get paid minimum wage to the 1% who make millions of dollars. It's a diverse set of employees and we owe it to them to offer the same amount of educational services and impact across the board.

Do you ever encounter pushback from the audiences for your training?
Change and adjustment are difficult for some. We have to help people navigate change. People get used to doing what they do and as educators we are confident in our abilities. Someone coming in and saying that you need to do things differently can really be difficult to hear. We try to push that idea of "There is always opportunity to learn." To encourage a lens of "education as a lifelong process." Even if you're one of the experts in your field.

It's hard to mandate trainings at TCU that aren't legally required, but student voices have a huge impact on what faculty and staff view as important. So now it's less about what the university mandates and more about what the students are pushing. DEI curriculum was a student pushed agenda. Students have a lot of power that they don't always use well….They are power machines, but they don't know it because they are being drowned out by systems that tell them they're not. It takes bravery and confidence for the students to say that there is a problem on this campus. After feeling like it was on a standstill, systematic changes finally started to make changes within the past year and half (including in implementation of DEI curriculum and changes in Common Reading, changes in students being recruited for student organizations. Students are the drive behind the DEI overlay and they are making themselves heard.

What changes do you want to see on campus that haven't happened yet?
Mandatory education for employees. There are specific competencies that employees need in 2019 to be good leaders and to do their jobs well, specifically for DEI initiatives, and those things shouldn't be optional. Every employee should be required to take a "DEI 101" course when they start working here, not only because it's important to being an aware employee, but because if we're trying to make a cultural shift at TCU, we can't let people opt in to that shift. We need people to be committed to that shift and in order to do that we need to mandate it. And that's difficult because when you make things mandatory, people feel targeted and they hate it, but when you don't, only the people who identify within a marginalized community and allies come. The neutral folks won't do it. I don't want to be in a room where half the people are angry and don't want to do it, but I also don't want to be in a room where people already know the information. However, as an education space, we owe it to our students and to one another to commit to the work, and it should be an expectation of employment at TCU.

Would it be possible to make such training a requirement for tenure track faculty?
Yes, what we'll probably see and what will be easier to implement is saying if you want to be this level of an employee, this is something you will be required to do. On the faculty side, these are the people who will be your deans and department chairs, and on the non-faculty side they'll be the supervisors, managers, VPs. If you want to move to a position where you are supervising others or expected to oversee committees and hiring, then you will have to be a step up. It would be easier to say "Are you interested in being a leader on our campus? Well in order to do that you have to do these things."

Space

A reoccurring theme throughout our conversation was the concept of space. For people whose identities exist within marginalized groups, there can a hyper-awareness of the space that they take up and difficulty in navigating spaces where they may be tokenized. In this section, I share reflections from Ebony Rose about how her personal experiences have affected the way she navigates space, the impact people have on the spaces around them, and the way that space evolves.

How did growing up in a multi-racial household impact the work you do today?

Growing up with clear understanding of being biracial was pretty important. My mom was like "These are both of your cultures. These are both of the things that you live and do."

So, even at a young age I was able to navigate spaces pretty freely, because I kind of had to learn how to do that even in my family unit. And as an adult that helps as well, because I don't tend to feel like I don't belong in space, because I'm used to feeling like I need to learn how to belong in a space. What I think is helpful for who I am now and the work that I do stems from that ability to navigate culture and spaces, being confident in what I bring into those spaces, and understanding that in some spaces I'm going to have to do work to make other people understand that I belong there. And that helps me help others navigate spaces, especially when they may be the only one like them in that space.

How are spaces changing on campus?

Professional spaces on campus are changing to make education and support more accessible for all members of our campus community. DEI has a larger voice on campus. Several departments have DEI coordinators, and the new provost has a connection to DEI and has already made moves to push forward a more inclusive agenda. The creation of the school of interdisciplinary studies is one example. And that's when some people started saying, "Oh wait, these changes are happening too fast." This journey is a marathon.

Do you think it's because of a demographic or generation change? (Last year [2018-19] was the first year that all of the traditional students on campus were Gen Z, and the past two years' entering classes have been the most diverse in TCU's history.)

I think it's both. People that want diversity have to understand that that looks like systematic change and inclusive support on the campus. Because demographics are shifting the recognition that to support and retain persons, we have to make changes in how those systems work. It's one thing to recruit a student, but it's a different thing to retain them. The recruitment is the diversity piece, the retention is the inclusion piece and the retention is the part that requires systematic changes. That's where people are feeling the most changes happening and the most heard. New students are demanding more, and they are great at articulating what they need and they are not afraid of articulating what they need and we have a job as administrators to meet our students' needs and our competition is also making changes.

Connection

Connection is an integral part of human existence, and it's a necessary component to feeling like a happy, fulfilled person. The reason people tend to leave certain environments, whether it's their job or their school, is often because they don't feel connected or involved in that space. Whenever the topic of diversity came up in our conversation, Rose often tied that goal to the importance of making and sustaining connections.

What do you think women of color need to have and do in order to be successful at TCU or environments like it?

Every space looks and feels different, but it's absolutely about every person being able to find their people and find their connection. So those human resource groups are super crucial, because folks are looking for people who can validate their experiences. And any way that we, as an institution, can create opportunities for people to connect, means we're doing the work. That gets really hard because we are employed here and we're doing our jobs the expectation is "You come in. You do your job. You go home." We forget that people are living their lives while they're here. I don't just come and do my work. I'm still on the phone with my kids or trying to set up an appointment with my doctor. I'm still grieving about loss of a parent or I'm still struggling to pay this bill. Whatever life is throwing at you is still coming to work with you. You don't just leave it at home.

When we can create opportunities for people to live into those experiences fully, feel supported, and feel connected, we're doing a better job. And for those who live on those margins of identity at any place of employment, it takes extra effort to make sure that they're finding connection and feeling authentically supported. And that requires effort from everyone, not just bosses. It's on colleagues and peers to invest into one another, and part of what my work is and the role I have is helping people understand being a supportive and active community member. And that's not about position. That's not about a title or a job. It's about the recognition of humanity to each other and how we owe to one another to show up to work authentically and to support people authentically and to recognize that some days all of us are going to be succeeding on a level ten and some days some of us are going to be at level one, and we're still going to want to feel valued and important.

So, that's what I would ask of people: whatever your space of influence is, do it with kindness and awareness of each person's value in it and that you do it actively. Community building is not a passive experience. You have to engage in it and talk to folks. That's when people feel really good about their jobs, when they feel like they'd been seen and heard that day. I think that's a really important piece for people to get.

Links to WGST

In my conversations with Ebony Rose, I heard multiple ways that her thinking about her work and about our institution resonated with concepts from my own studies in WGST. Still, I was eager to hear what she herself would say about how her position's responsibilities and opportunities link up with the broader field of Women and Gender Studies at TCU.

How do you see your job intersecting with Women and Gender Studies?
One of the things that's really interesting for me about Women and Gender Studies is the way that we talk about professionalism. There are still a lot of really sexist practices in professional spaces. In a number of spaces I enter, sexist comments are the norm, and it usually happens in rooms where there are older persons who identify as men. The comments they make, the things that think are okay to say, the assumptions they make about persons, I really struggle with that. That's an opportunity for education, I think, for folks to understand that they're sexist or generating microaggressions against women.

A majority of our groundkeepers are men, and a majority of our housekeeping staff are women. It's very rare that we see overlap, and when we do, folks are like "Ooh you do that?" There are spaces where we talk about, and it's a really interesting topic to consider, family leave, whether that's maternal or paternal leave for families. That is a thing that we have to do better as a nation but within Human Resources that's a huge component. Persons who are pregnant and have to take unpaid time off, how are they going to make that work? Persons who choose to leave and don't come back, how do we combat that? There's a lot to do around families and how we support them, which often means how do we support women, but not always.

We also oversee health and wellness in HR because we oversee insurance benefits and coverage. A lot of folks on our team also oversee pay equity, which is definitely an issue around women and gender. There's also work that we have to do around identity and acceptance. One of the things that we support with Human Resources involves what we call employee resource groups. They're similar to student groups but we help employees form groups usually around marginalized identities, and it's really there to help them connect with one another. We have an employee resource group for persons who identify as Black women, and they meet and connect and share space with one another. We have an employee resource group for persons who identify as women of Hispanic and Latinx connection. We have a new employee resource group for employees who identify as LGBT+. And all of those things surrounding gender and sexuality play into the way that we provide space for our employees and finding ways to connect folks through those employee resource groups is really important right now. We're also building one for men of color on our campus. And it's nice because they're for professionals. It's really an important way to see the intersection of identities for our employees.

Conclusion

Ebony Rose's multi-faceted leadership is vital to making TCU a more diverse and inclusive university. It could be easy for her to become disillusioned about the possibilities of progress, but after all these years, she still addresses every issue with a sense of optimism and kindness.

In spending time with her through this interview project, I learned an affirming lesson. She truly believes in the power of students, and she values what they bring to this campus. But she also doesn't lose hope for the generations of people that are often written off by my age group as hopeless. According to Rose, everyone has the ability to make a change, and talking to her would inspire anyone to do just that.

Celebrating Alum Leaders

Opening the Floodgates: The Impact of Women and Gender Studies on a Trailblazing Black Woman

Marisa Thomas

Dr. Altheria Caldera, simply put, is a trailblazer for Black women in academics. In 2016 Dr. Caldera was the first African American woman to earn a graduate certificate in Women and Gender Studies (WGST) from TCU. Her achievement should not be understated, as it highlights a twenty-five-year gap in access for women of color in a program intended specifically to amplify the voice and empowerment of intersectional women, women just like her.

In October 2019, when our conversation took place, Dr. Caldera was employed as an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University in Commerce, where she was specializing in critical teacher education, Black girlhood, critical pedagogies, and critical race feminisms. This interview shares a dialogue in which I (Marisa) attempt to understand Dr. Caldera's experiences with TCU's campus/atmosphere while she was a student on campus. Dr. Caldera was kind enough to agree to being interviewed and to give an account of her experiences with the WGST program. I asked Dr. Caldera about how she came upon WGST, how she navigated campus as a Black woman at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), and how her experiences with WGST impacted and shaped the focus of her research post-graduation. Dr. Caldera originally narrowed her Curriculum Studies Doctorate coursework to the topic of dismantling racism in education. However, during her second year in the program, as a result of a special connection with her advisor, the late Dr. Sherrie Reynolds, she was inspired to expand her interest beyond race and pursue the graduate certificate in WGST. Originally, Dr. Caldera was not interested in WGST, or Feminism, primarily because of her exclusive focus on race and racial equity. She didn't see the importance of adding gender analysis to her work. Dr. Caldera describes WGST and her doctoral coursework at TCU as "opening the floodgates" of feminist inquiry and queer theory. During our interview, she articulated that learning "how gender, class, race, and sexual orientation all intersect to shape the lived experiences of minoritized people was eye-opening" for her. After initially focusing her studies on race, she began looking at additional identity factors that intersect with and impact marginalization.

Of her time at TCU, she said she often felt like she "didn't belong because [she] knew [she] was so different from the average student," in terms of race and social class but fortunately, her

connection with Dr. Reynolds led her to WGST classes. It was in these classes and spaces of/for WGST that she found herself with others, who "shared [her] values surrounding equity and justice." She discovered that, while she might not fit easily amongst the wider campus community, she easily belonged within the small community made up of students and faculty within WGST. After Dr. Reynolds advised her to explore Feminism, Dr. Caldera subsequently completed Reynolds's class, Feminist Studies in Education, in fall 2013. Of the class, Dr. C stated that her exposure to Black feminism "totally changed the trajectory of (her) doctoral studies". After that Feminist Studies in Education course, she had the opportunity to take a second class with Dr. Melanie Harris at Brite Divinity School on the topic of Womanism. Dr. C was interested in how Womanism was similar to Feminism and Black feminism. She praises both the class and Dr. Harris, citing, "This is just a testament to the people who teach as Women and Gender Studies affiliate faculty. [Dr. Harris] was able to craft a course to meet my needs and it pushed my learning to new levels."

Taking courses was not the only way Dr. Caldera built connections with WGST. After meeting Dr. Sarah Robbins (a WGST-affiliated faculty member and then the interim dean in the John V. Roach Honors College) through Dr. Reynolds, Dr. Caldera became Robbins' graduate assistant. In her last semester, Dr. Caldera was employed as an adjunct professor and co-taught Introduction to Women and Gender Studies with Dr. Wendy Williams, who had earned a doctorate degree from TCU in English with a graduate certificate in WGST. Dr. Caldera recalls her experience teaching the class as "delightful, because of the wonderfully inquisitive students." Additionally, she found her engagement with the Women and Gender Studies Research Symposium and attendance at multiple Garden Parties, hosted by WGST, to be rewarding experiences and only a few of the important ways she connected with like-minded people.

Since her graduation, Dr. C has kept her eyes on the current state of WGST at TCU through social media accounts like Facebook and says of TCU, "I have been extraordinarily impressed with some of the diversity and inclusion efforts that I've seen over the last couple of years. One of the major developments was the creation of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies. I think that was a phenomenal move, an important move, and an overdue move. I also think it is a great complement to Women and Gender Studies. For me, it is the perfect marriage of the two things I study. I can only imagine how the climate is changing. The kind of changes that TCU needs takes time. I am encouraged from what I have seen in terms of efforts toward diversity and inclusion, but the institution still has a long way to go."

She credits social media movements as enlightening her understanding with regard to the current atmosphere at TCU after graduating. She praised projects orchestrated by students of color and other minority groups on campus, including the #DearTCU

movement, which posted photographs of TCU students with empowering statements written on their arms to allow people to express themselves and represent marginalized TCU students and faculty when many were unable to represent or highlight diversity across TCU in other ways.

Dr. Caldera believes that it is nearly impossible for one to earn a Woman and Gender Studies certificate or degree at TCU without encountering major feminist writers or becoming inspired by their work(s). Influential scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, Cynthia Dillard, Angela Davis, bell hooks, and Kimberlé Crenshaw were among the first to inspire Dr. Caldera to begin studying Black feminism. Additional inspirational theorists and authors Dr. Caldera has come across, either brought to campus by TCU or via projects she worked on for her studies, include Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, the TCU English Department's Green Honors Chair in the Fall of 2013, who delivered a lecture on "Boundaries, Borders and Barriers: Mapping the Future of American & African American Studies." It was Dr. Reynolds who encouraged her to attend the Wallace-Sanders presentation, Dr. Caldera recalls. As such, this lecture is noted as the first experience Dr. Caldera had hearing a Black feminist scholar speak.

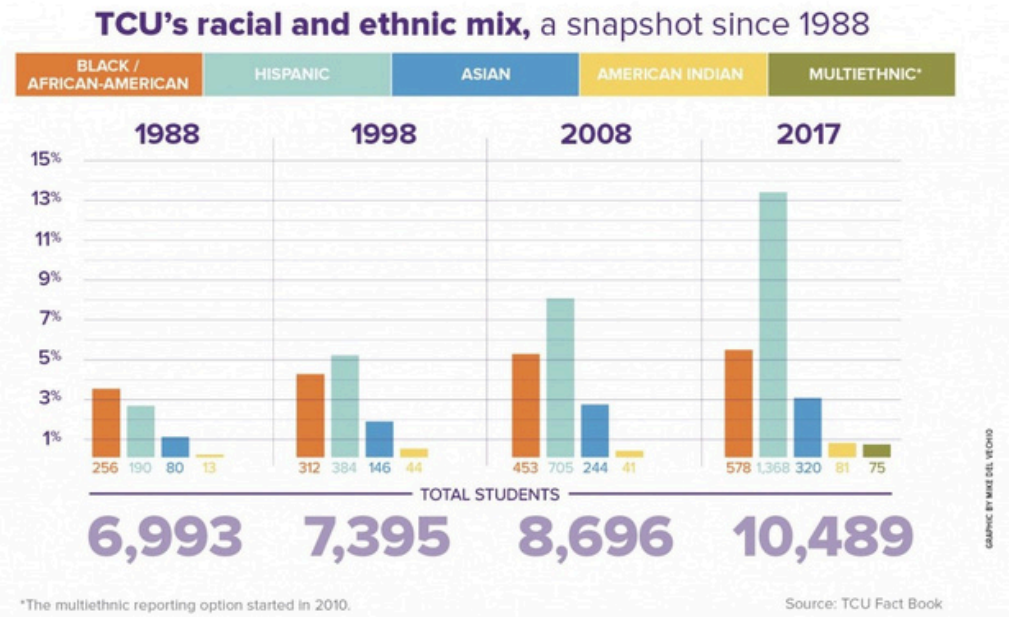
An anthology of essays called *All the Women are White, All the Men are Black, But Some of Us are Brave*, published 50 years ago and edited by Akasha (Gloria T.) Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, has had the greatest impact on Dr. Caldera's life with regard to Black feminism. More recently, however, Dr. Caldera has studied and is influenced by Black feminists Brittany Cooper, Venus Evans-Winters, Feminista Jones, Stephanie Y. Evans, Moya Bailey, and Melissa Harris-Perry.

Dr. Caldera's time in WGST changed the trajectory of her career, and because of this impact, many of her recent publications have explored how Black girls are treated and how these young women experience disproportionate suspensions due to unfair discipline policies. She credits the shift in her scholarship to the WGST program at TCU as it assisted in her understanding of multiple intersections which problematize and complete individual identities and how these identities are then encountered culturally and socially. Dr. Reynolds once asked her how many names of feminist studies scholars in education she could write down and Dr. Caldera realized that there weren't many she could write. She then realized that her work could fill those gaps. Her dissertation, entitled "African American single mothers as curricula and teachers: A qualitative study," accordingly focused on Black women from low-income backgrounds who were single mothers. As a result of her WGST studies, she can now say that she's a teacher educator whose work is deeply informed by feminist theory. This influence will be evident in her upcoming book, *Woke Pedagogy.*

Dr. Caldera recently completed a manuscript about her time at TCU which will be published in early 2020 and focuses on her experiences as a woman of color with a low-income background. Though it seems Dr. Caldera's experience at TCU improved to become more welcoming as she ventured further into the WGST program, it also included moments of unease. Dr. Caldera says, "Implicit bias and stereotyping did occur on campus" and many of her experiences forced her to question her place at the university. One example she gave that will be available to read about in her manuscript includes an encounter with a classmate who wasn't involved with the WGST program. During one class, a fellow student was to give a lecture. During the lecture, the classmate had everyone draw a picture of their childhood home. Dr. Caldera says this made her feel embarrassed because she came from extreme poverty growing up, and looking around, she saw other students with

affluent backgrounds and became afraid to draw her mobile home. It made her question why she chose the school in the first place, as she did not want to be outed as poor. A second example she gives of her experience at TCU is a time when she attempted make photocopies in the staff workroom. Being a graduate assistant for Dr. Reynolds in the College of Education at the time, she frequently made copies. Someone walked into the room and said to Dr. Caldera, "This room is for staff only," a comment which hurt her and made her nervous, understandably so. Dr. Caldera informed the person that she worked for Dr. Reynolds and although the person accepted her response, she still asks herself why that person did not think she belonged in that space.

In terms of what Dr. Caldera hopes to see more of in the future, she mentions wanting to see more of a marriage between the CRES and WGST programs and the purposeful recruiting of more students and faculty from diverse backgrounds. She praises TCU for bringing U.S. Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson to speak at TCU in spring 2019, but she says she would love to see more intersections among departments to bring more nuanced and complex understandings of intersectionality to students at TCU.



The experiences Dr. Caldera had during her time at TCU, as well as many others, have forced her to become a more conscious and sensitive professor, leading her to ask, "Who might not feel included; what might I do differently?" Outside of the negative experiences she encountered at TCU, with people not involved in Dr. Caldera's graduate certificate work, WGST confirmed her space and gave her a community on campus that no other program appeared to offer. Dr. Caldera says her experience with WGST allowed her to see that she made the right decision when deciding to attend TCU. Elaborating further, Dr. Caldera stated, "The people who were working in Women and Gender Studies at that time were just phenomenal and very welcoming. These are the people I have tried to model myself after in my teaching and in my scholarship."

In the years since Dr. Caldera's graduation, the course offerings of WGST have grown in number, WGST has become a department with two undergraduate majors to choose from, and the department has started to pair courses with CRES to bring more complex views of the human experience to

campus. In hearing of the changes and additions TCU and WGST have made recently, Dr. Caldera was especially excited to learn about new courses WGST and CRES have paired to offer, including Intersectional Activism and Social Justice, Transnational Gender and Sexuality, and Women of Color Feminisms. In line with such energizing developments, Dr. Caldera agreed that the fall 2019 semester WGST theme of "Looking Back, Moving Forward" was also embodied in her own ongoing progress, as well as in the recent graduation of the department's first undergraduate major, J. R. Hardy. All of these milestones, she affirmed, show that WGST at TCU is history in the making.

K Wyrick's Reflections: Women & Gender Studies at TCU—Trajectory and Impact

Jennifer Yuhas

This story draws on my interview with K Wyrick, a former graduate assistant for WGST at TCU, about the beginnings of the program, its evolution, and their experience while affiliated, as well as how the program impacted their life. Wyrick completed their undergraduate degree at Abilene Christian University and is currently a PhD candidate in the English Studies doctoral program and a Library Specialist at TCU. A vegan, lover of snakes, and self-described triple-A individual, Wyrick identifies as Agender, Asexual, and Aromantic. With the intent of respecting how they wish to be represented, gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them/their are used throughout this piece in reference to Wyrick.

As the first graduate assistant of the Women & Gender Studies Department (at that point still a program), Wyrick witnessed, alongside then-director Dr. Theresa Gaul, the evolution and growth of WGST on campus. After being accepted into the English Studies graduate program, Wyrick was delighted to be offered the assistantship in WGST: "When I was in undergrad and I was applying to different schools, I applied for the English [Studies graduate] program here. After that I got a call from the department saying they had an interesting opportunity for me if I was interested, because based on the application I sent, they thought I might be a good fit. TCU had apparently gotten funding for a graduate assistant position for [what was then] Women's Studies, and so rather than coming in as an English graduate assistant, they were going to let me take that role. And I was like, "That sounds amazing." So, I accepted the position right then. And when I came in to start, I met Dr. Gaul, and from there we had three years together."

Wyrick spoke with appreciation of Dr. Gaul's initiatives and how those achievements greatly impacted the program and its reputation: "I mean, Theresa was a powerhouse. She just had so much vision and so much energy and was able to stay super-organized with all her ideas and goals. She wanted to create events and market them really hard to raise awareness all around campus. She wanted to get the committees going. She wanted to reach out to students and get their input on what they wanted from the program."

Aside from arranging activities which would benefit WGST, another project Wyrick delved into with Dr. Gaul was building a timeline of the history of the WGST program. In order to recover that history, Wyrick and Dr. Gaul worked to recover the files of previous directors, organized them, and interviewed current and retired faculty with a memory about their involvement in WGST at the university. Wyrick credits the establishment of the program as being so "momentous" that the memories need to endure despite the passage of time. Thus, Wyrick says, they were excited to be aiding in the process of recovery.

Extending their reflections on WGST's growth in the number of participants during their time as

graduate assistant, Wyrick eagerly remembers how much the program's self-presentation to many audiences (its "look") improved, as well as how its connections to multiple disciplines increased: "The most noticeable thing is in the number of people. We had so much support from so many people across the board. A lot of people were invested in seeing this program succeed because everyone realized how important its work is," they observe.

For Wyrick, there are many significant, concrete dimensions of this expansion—specific material markers of growth: "We have a long list of affiliates now, and a growing number of courses with the WGST attribute, and more students taking those courses even if they don't add the minor (or major). And part of why we can grow so much is because the program is interdisciplinary, and so many subjects can open up in interesting ways when you add gender to your analysis of it. And we keep growing because we can prove that that analysis is valuable. And on top of our presence in classes growing, we're also increasing our marketing and swag supply. I hear [Associate Director] Nino Testa's working on getting some cool new stuff because as the program gets bigger, the budget gets bigger too. And that means we look more professional and like we're a legit program and not something floundering on the university's edges just trying to survive. And as much as we want to be cool mavericks, there are benefits to having a polished and official look too."

While a major aspect of interviewing Wyrick was concerned with discussing WGST and its history, it likewise seemed important to reflect together on both Wyrick's and my (the interviewer's) experiences in the program—its impact on our lives. During our conversation, Wyrick stressed their understanding of the significance of the program and its mission. Yet, despite their philosophies intertwining in areas such as providing a platform to those marginalized in society and foregrounding issues associated with gender, Wyrick explains that they eventually felt a disconnection. As an individual who identifies as agender, asexual, and aromantic, for Wyrick, WGST's ongoing focus on such specific topics as women and sexual violence felt distant at times. Coming to this realization was a turning point for Wyrick and led to them decreasing their involvement in the program somewhat: "My lack of participation, in a way, stems from my lack of investment in gender as a concept. So, on the one hand, I know how important this all is. I know we are nowhere close to, you know, having full gender equality. Just trying to get and protect women's rights is still a huge struggle and needs to continue. And I know that most people would look at me and instantly categorize me as "female," so it's not like just because I reject gender I'm immune to the consequences of sexism in my society. I recognize that the current state of sex-and-gender does involve me even as I personally feel separate from it. So I feel like I do have a responsibility to be involved somehow, but honestly, I want to skip over the part of fighting for gender equality and jump to the part where we're able to just get rid of gender because we don't even need the concept anymore."

Wyrick's concerns regarding the name and mission of the program were enlightening, given that I had never thought about how including "Women" in the title might be alienating for some, not just for men but for other gender identities as well, undercutting the mission of inclusivity that WGST seeks to achieve. Perhaps, I began to think, a future consideration for the program would be a rebranding that is more inclusive of the wider community of individuals it seeks to represent. While I understand the program does address wider issues beyond those pertaining to women, a nod in the right direction, I speculated, might be to consider a re-naming that would open up the program to a

wider spectrum of individuals.

In spite of their current complex feelings towards the program, Wyrick indicates that, if ever invited, and time permitting, they would be willing to participate in WGST from a behind-the-scenes position, which would make it easier to preserve their own sense of identity: "Just being seen gives me a kind of dysphoria. It bothers me knowing that when people look at me, they see what they're trained to see and not how I see myself. And it feels tedious fighting for rights for a sex or gender that others are putting on me when I want something so beyond that. Obviously there's still a long way to go when it comes to women's status, but I feel a much stronger draw toward queerness. For me, queer kind of embodies this idea of going or being against the norm, you know? Sometimes it's an active rebellion against what you feel pressured to be, and sometimes it's just existing as what you are without feeling shame. Queer is such an open word. It's less a specific act or aesthetic and more a way of relating to social pressure. So in a way, if we got to a point where there was no social pressures at all to conform to, then there wouldn't be a need for the concept of queer, and I think that's why I like it. It aims for its own obsoletion. So for me, being queer means I reject there being a social norm to rebel against in the first place, and I aim for a world where people are free to be and express themselves however feels right to them. To me, queer isn't just or specifically about being gay or trans or poly or whatever, it's about feeling like something is off between you and the world, and maybe you don't know what it is, but you know you're not purely heterosexual, or purely cis, for example, but you're something, something else, and you want to be able to explore that without fear. I've never been afraid or ashamed to say I'm asexual, which is what I knew I was first. And I'm not afraid or ashamed to say I'm aromantic or agender. I want that for everyone, no matter what identity they are."

It is not surprising that, given Wyrick's viewpoints on gender and sexuality, these themes would play an important role in their own work. As a dissertating student in the English Studies doctoral program, Wyrick is currently researching fiction that explores the complexities of being human: "My project is, I'm writing a fantasy story where the main character is an asexual, aromantic, agender person and meets other characters that are some flavor of queer and in the meantime gets really involved with this fantasy being, and they have a relationship and they are talking about, you know, what does it mean to be human? So basically a more fantastic version of my own life experience where I get to talk about how I see the world. How I see myself through this character and how the way I feel as a triple-A person makes me see the world. Relate to the world. Feel about the way people relate to me. That kind of thing. And that's why I have the main character interact with the human world and this fantasy being that they have a relationship with, so I can describe how different it is to have someone who recognizes you for who you are versus engaging with a world that doesn't even understand what makes someone a man or woman."

The very complexities that Wyrick seeks to explore in their dissertation exemplify how our experiences can influence our area of study and may very well also reflect some of the complexities that Women and Gender Studies at TCU will need to navigate as it moves forward with a diverse community of individuals seeking to understand and question all the social constructs operating in our society. So, as we approached the end of the interview, one of my overarching questions to Wyrick was, "How important has Women and Gender Studies been—and is it now—to TCU?" Their

reply may well provide the most fitting way of concluding this piece: “I think as we grew, people became aware of how lacking the university was before we became active. There’s so much missing from your education if you don’t learn how gender affects basically everything. We provide such a necessary element to a university curriculum, and we contribute valuable scholarship and research to so many fields. And we also create space for personal growth, where people can learn more about themselves and the people around them. We care about the well-being and success of students, faculty, and staff and provide networks for them to socialize and get emotional support they might not have anywhere else. And you know, like me, a lot of people tend to be drawn to things to study based on personal interest. A lot of students, when they go through the introductory class and learn about how gender inequality manifests and impacts their own life and others’ lives, they experience a dramatic change in the way they see everything, and it can change the course of what they study from then on. And so, I think that one of the highlights of the program is that it can help people discover things that they want to do in life, while also exposing them to new information and experiences that can help their compassion and understanding grow.”

Feminist Frogs: Mayra Guardiola Connects

Sophie King

Mayra Guardiola boasts an impressive resume. A North Texas native and Mexican-American, Mayra earned her undergraduate degree in English from the University of Texas at Arlington. After multiple professors there encouraged her to continue her studies, she applied to TCU's M.A. program in English Studies. While working on her degree, she served as the Graduate Assistant for Women and Gender Studies (WGST) the same year (2018-19) that the program became a department. In that role, she developed innovative approaches for promoting WGST, participated in numerous off-campus community initiatives, and completed her M.A. along with a certificate in WGST.

Always interested in feminist research, Mayra had jumped on the opportunity to work in the newly-created WGST department. She recognized the strong match between its community vision and her own. In referencing this match during our interview conversation, she expressed multiple commitments in line with the department's mission statement: *TCU's interdisciplinary department of Women & Gender Studies puts women, gender, and sexuality at the center of academic investigation. The department promotes inquiry into the intersections of gender with other identity categories; the workings of power in society; and the means of advancing social justice and equality. Through research, teaching and learning, and collaboration, the program fosters feminist and interdisciplinary analysis across social, historical, cultural and global contexts, products and practices.*

At the time when Mayra was serving as graduate assistant in WGST, the department was building on past success as a program to grow its major. J.R. Hardy became the first student to complete that major in spring 2019, as Mayra was rounding out her term. Along the way throughout that academic year, Mayra explained, she was able to encourage and track WGST's expansion alongside its ongoing commitment to supporting all identities on campus and to providing a home for individuals who might otherwise feel marginalized on a heteronormative white campus. Underscoring WGST's commitment to growth during Mayra's assistantship year, then-Department Chair Dr. Jeannine Gailey identified such specific targets as "strengthening the department's relationship with campus and community organizations, launching several efforts to recruit majors, as well as continuing to advocate for resources for the department, including tenure-track faculty lines."

Broadening Engagement in WGST

While the department was doing its best to be as diverse and impactful as possible throughout Mayra's term as graduate assistant, the limited number of faculty and still-modest budget created a lot of challenges during its first year. That's where Mayra and her energy came in as major resources. Once hired, Mayra began using her position to spread increased awareness of the program among all constituencies on campus, and she accomplished this aim in part by enhancing WGST's social media presence. Her broad goal was to cultivate intentionality in all her work for the department, she explained to me.

She wanted WGST to engage students even more directly than in the past and show them that it was not only a department filled with amazing courses, but also a group of people who are here for you, As Mayra recalled through our dialogue, "I just wanted to be able to celebrate ourselves, because that celebration is a part of feminism; it's radical in and of itself! So, let's let our hair down sometimes and celebrate, because we've come so far."

One aspect of her promotional activities involved encouraging a more intersectional environment within the department. For instance, she used her social media access to raise awareness concerning lesser-known feminist leaders and to work closely with WGST's sister department, Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES), an effort which helped expand the whole university community's awareness of intersectionality. Looking back, she could see that she gained momentum as the year progressed and she used her voice with increasing effectiveness. For example, she worked to create more events that would directly involve students on campus and also enable students with differing identities to interact, as in the Spectrum Drag Show. This widening range of WGST events, she believed, got more students excited about WGST.

Encouraging Civic Activism

Meanwhile, the activism Mayra was learning about and participating in through her work as WGST graduate assistant was consistent with a longstanding commitment she had to community engagement, a commitment that had already been shaped by her previous course work. She reflected when we talked: "I enrolled in a course on Latin-Ex Civil Rights. From the start it was obvious the class was going to be centered around the present state of our Civil Rights. It was an amazing experience. Everyone was intentional about how this political engagement, especially for Mexican - Americans, was going to affect our everyday lives. That lit a fire under my butt, once Trump announced he was ending DACA, that was personal. It was infuriating. My community was affected by this—and that reaches further than Mexican-Americans. It affects all people seeking an education."

Mayra decided to use that fire to do something. She created a Facebook event and invited all her friends to join her in an on-campus Pro DACA march. Describing this event to me, she told how "Honestly, I expected to be the only one standing in front of Sadler holding a sign, and that was fine for me because at least I was trying."

That was not the fate of the march. Twenty-five TCU students showed up at the spring 2017 march, chanting "Si, se Puede" (yes, we can) while DACA beneficiaries spoke on the negative effects of the possible national policy change. The momentum from the spring 2017 march would carry over

to the second DACA rally Mayra hosted, this time in Fall 2018 in response to more federal challenges against DACA. The 2018 protest gained enough attention to generate a meeting between Chancellor Boschini and Mayra. However, they disagreed about how to handle the issue. Mayra and the other activists requested a proactive statement from the Office of the Chancellor. Yet, he felt it was more appropriate not to make an official University statement. Though they were disappointed by his decision, Boschini encouraged the students to continue their activism on campus. So Mayra and her fellow students could feel their voices had been heard.

In writing about this event, I (Sophie) have been able to reflect on Mayra's commitment to feminist activism and to her push for engaging with important social issues. DACA, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, along with its links to larger questions about immigration, is one of those. Through interacting with Mayra for this interview project, I learned about DACA. In place since June 2012, DACA has been part of an immigration policy set in place by President Barack Obama, to allow anyone illegally brought to the county before the age of 16 to apply for temporary status to remain in the US. Mayra's mentoring through our interview process led me to better understand how DACA had been challenged by the Trump administration and, at the time when this story was first written in fall 2019, was expected to go to the Supreme Court of the United States for confirmation as being either constitutional or unconstitutional.

The first march Mayra organized was so successful that it sparked a follow-up six months later, during her graduate assistantship for WGST. At that point, the Chancellor issued a campus-wide email concerning the potential effects of DACA's future on students and the campus community. The email's signaling the vibrant presence of undocumented students at TCU affirmed their presence in positive terms and showed how political activism from within TCU's student body could help make change. The second march was also instrumental in showing students that they may be indirectly affected by DACA without ever realizing it. A student possibly facing deportation could be your roommate, your sorority sister or you peer, and without a campus full of voices, their future is unknown.

Not only did the march give TCU students an opportunity to learn about and become directly involved in political activism, but it gave undocumented students a platform on campus. In turn, these students could hear their peers saying: "It's time to start talking about this. We are here for you. We are your home. We support you." Thus, leadership like Mayra's helped shift the perspective toward immigrants on a mainly white campus; no longer was DACA merely a subject on the news: it was a person, another member of the horned frog family, whose life was in danger of being uprooted.

As Mayra reported during our interview conversation, the march approach was not without its fair share of critiques. TCU 360, an online journalistic published by and for TCU students, released an article entitled "Move to End DACA is Met with Protest," highlighting the work Mayra and others were doing on campus.

The way Mayra was written about in the article sparked some commenters to bash her, writing things like, "If you are a proud Mexican, you are on the wrong side of the border" and "Grow up and go to class." However, Mayra said that such comments did not dissuade her from her core commitment to feminist activism and to seeking out learning opportunities in line with that stance.

Considering the WGST department was in its first year, Mayra did not expect the level of vocal

support she received. She found her employers, Dr. Nino Testa and Dr. Jeannine Gailey, helped bring these issues to the classroom as important to learn about. Several professors also participated in the march, carrying signs with notes such as "support undocuqueers." The level of support Mayra received encouraged her to continue her feminist activism. She began attending other related events, helped with the translation of DACA applications, and forged partnerships with local activists she had met through the march.

Advancement Since Mayra's Assistantship

Two years after the DACA march she organized, Mayra began work as an event planner at UTA. Not long afterward, she returned to TCU in a new role, as the Faculty Development Coordinator for the School of Medicine. In her role, Mayra works to support medical educators with the tools they need to succeed throughout their academic careers at the School of Medicine. Using her WGST background, Mayra is able to work with other departments in the School of Medicine, such as Diversity and Inclusion, to provide faculty members with support for their cultivation of inclusive pedagogies, through professional and faculty development opportunities that will directly impact medical students. Mayra has also been able to grow through her new role at the School of Medicine by learning more about the role of Women and Gender Studies within the sciences and medicine and the need to continue to support faculty in training and teaching the next generation of physicians with a diverse patient population in mind.

In spring 2020, when the WGST affiliate community held elections for members to serve on the department's Advisory Committee, Mayra was on the ballot. Now a full-fledged, full-time TCU staff member, she was elected to a new role in WGST, one linking her previous contributions as a graduate assistant to expanded leadership opportunities now and in the future.

As a core affiliate and Advisory team member, she hopes to help the department grow, including by working to receive more faculty lines on campus. Once the department attains the amount of personnel support it needs, she hopes to see all TCU students take at least one WGST course during their time on campus. At the same time, Mayra's dedication to the larger community beyond campus will continue to inspire, and, she hopes, encourage others involved in WGST to embrace the possibilities of activism.

Looking Ahead

Thoughts toward a New Era
Nino Testa, Associate Director of WGST in 2020

As I read this impressive twenty-five-year history of what is now called Women & Gender Studies, I am most struck by a moment of recognition that is repeated in several interviews. In each case, the interviewee narrates years of advocacy work around a particular feminist issue, and a proverbial lightbulb turns on for the interviewer, who draws quick and powerful connections to contemporary advocacy efforts at TCU. This repeated moment throughout the stories is an important reminder of the value of intergenerational community spaces and public history projects. As the introduction to this project suggests, the opportunity to sit down with someone whose life experience at the same institution may at first appear far removed from our own, often reveals how power relies on *institutional forgetfulness* to prevent progressive social change. So much history is erased each time we hear phrases like, "Much progress has been made…" or "We know we have more work to do…" or "We are starting conversations about this important topic…". These rhetorical devices tend to obscure decades of labor in the forms of research, community organizing, and advocacy. The feminist work of historical recovery gives us the tools we need to say, "This is not new," to recognize continuity across generations that can help make us better feminist actors today.

This historical project in particular demonstrates the resilient history of Women & Gender Studies at TCU. From *Vagina Monologues* to Drag Queen Story Hour, the history of WGST has been one of identifying and resisting institutional and cultural norms that have been damaging to those most marginalized by gender and sexuality. Active critical engagement with our own history and the application of feminist methods to community engaged projects are central to our pedagogical mission. I want to thank Dr. Sarah Robbins, Meagan Solomon, and the students of WGST 50103 (fall 2019) for their incredible work on this project, which will continue to teach, inspire, and challenge us into the future.

Each time a student says that a Women & Gender Studies class has changed their life, I am reminded of the radical, transformational potential of the Women & Gender Studies classroom and the countless people who have worked for decades to ensure that these spaces continue to exist on campus. We are about to welcome our first tenure-track faculty member, Dr. Randa Tawil, whose contributions to feminist research, teaching, and activism at TCU will further shape the direction of WGST. Her arrival is the culmination of the labor and community building you have read about in

this project's rich and diverse interviews. As we enter a time of austerity and institutional uncertainty amidst a global pandemic, reading this impressive history reminds me that the spirit of Women & Gender Studies has always been about doing the work, above all else: the work of advocating for students, centering the most marginalized in our communities, and organizing for change. I continue to draw inspiration from the wisdom and ingenuity of our program's founders; the dedication and labor of faculty, staff, and alums who have shaped our history; and the vision and creativity of our current students who are finding new ways to articulate and embody the feminist and queer values that will continue to change our world.