

Forum on Gender Research
Meeting of 7 November 2007

Summary

Sixteen people attended the first FGR meeting. The group included academic staff and PG students from a range of departments: DELC, Politics, EdRes, Sociology, ICR, Geography, IHR.

After Anne-Marie Fortier's introduction and outline of her vision for future FGR activities, three short interventions were heard from Carole Thomas (IHR), Allyson Fiddler (DELC), and Elaine Swan (LUMS – in absentia). This was followed by an open discussion.

It was generally agreed that the FGR is an important and quite unique interdisciplinary space for researchers in GWS on campus. Some suggested that we don't 'drop' the teaching side from the FGR's remit, and indeed, there's no reason to exclude teaching as one of the broad areas covered by the FGR. Some also expressed the hope that the FGR be a fluid and 'enabling' structure, that more departments take part, that perspectives other than Anglophone and European be heard/discussed, and that it remain a constant anchor for GWS on campus, while at the same time, the challenges posed by sustaining such a forum in the long run were acknowledged. In this regard, several useful suggestions were made about using other tools to support the formation of GWS networks on campus, such as the internet and the CGWS website as spaces of interaction and exchange – e.g. blog, gmail, VLE space, posting articles/essays.

Several suggestions were made about topics to address at the FGR, and they included: wider issues about the relationship (tension?) between 'personal' choices in research and their 'political' implications (e.g. RAE, promotions, etc.); accommodating research on masculinities; innovative methodologies; working in research teams; practicalities of writing bids, finding different sources of funding, disseminating strategies or translating academic language for 'user groups'; developing teaching based on our research; supervising PGs.

Overall, there seems to be a desire for a space such as the FGR to run, with sessions at least once per term, if not more. Several people who had experienced the Interdisciplinary Feminist Forum (FGR's earlier incarnation, in the days of the IWS), pointed out how much of an important space it was, and expressed their hope that the FGR continue that work.

More specifically, AMF put forward a suggestion for a small-scale CGWS event – which could be its 're-launch' event. The proposed working title would be 'gendered field', and the 1 to 1.5 day event would consist of discussing where 'GWS' are in various disciplines and/or areas and, crucially, what are the key current debates and future directions. This could be an excellent way to take stock and to think about how GWS at Lancaster University can contribute to these future directions. We would invite external speakers, and perhaps hold the annual book launch (revived from a former IWS tradition) during that event. Maureen McNeil suggested that one of the outcomes of the event could be a revised version of the WS textbook currently used in

WS 101 – *Women, Power, Resistance* (1997). The participants at the FGR support the event, and some offered to be part of the organising committee.

Finally, Allyson Fiddler proposed that the next FGR meeting be devoted to meeting with other colleagues following a ‘speed dating’ format. All enthusiastically agreed! So watch this space!

Anne-Marie Fortier
9 November 2007