Introducing Women's Studies

Also by Diane Richardson

Women and the AIDS Crisis

Safer Sex: The Guide for Women Today

*** *Women, Motherhood and Childrearing***

Theorising Heterosexuality: Telling it Straight

*** *Published by Macmillan Education***

Introducing Women's Studies

Feminist theory and practice

Second edition

Edited by

Victoria Robinson

and

Diane Richardson

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*For my mother and father and in memory of my grandmother,
Fannie Hinchliffe*

(Diane Richardson)

*For my mother, Sandra Robinson, my nana, Nellie Robinson, and
in memory of my grandmother, Winifred Thompson, for their
strength and dignity.*

(Victoria Robinson)

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Sheffield

DIANE RICHARDSON

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Sheffield

VICTORIA ROBINSON

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June Hannam teaches Women's Studies and labour history at the University of the West of England, Bristol, where she is head of history. She has published articles on feminist and socialist politics in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and has written a biography, *Isabella Ford, 1855–1924*. She is now working on a book (with Karen Hunt) entitled *Debating Socialist Women, 1880–1930*.

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Stevi Jackson is Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Strathclyde. She is the author of *Christine Delphy* in the 'Women of Ideas' series (1996). She has co-edited *Women's Studies: A Reader* (1993), *The Politics of Domestic Consumption: Critical Readings* (1995) and *Feminism and Sexuality* (1996). She has also published a number of articles on romance, sexuality and family relationships. Forthcoming books include *Concerning Heterosexuality* and *Childhood and Sexuality Revisited*.

Margaret Marshment lectures in Media and Cultural Studies at Liverpool John Moores University. She has also taught on the Women's Studies MA at the University of Kent, and the Popular Culture and Changing Experience of Women courses for the Open University. She is co-translator, with Grazyna Baran, of *Fat Like the Sun*, a volume of Anna Swir's poetry; and co-editor, with Lorraine Gamman, of *The Female Gaze* (1988). Her research interests are in the fields of feminism, representation and popular culture.

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Jackie Stacey lectures in Women's Studies and film studies in the Department of Sociology at Lancaster University. She is co-editor of *Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies* (with Sarah Franklin and Celia Lury, 1991), *Working Out: New Directions in Women's Studies* (with Hilary Hinds and Ann Phoenix, 1992), *Romance Revisited* (with Lynne Pearce) (1995) and author of *Star Gazing: Female Spectatorship and Hollywood Cinema* (1994) and *Teratologies – A Cultural Study of Cancer* (1997). She is also a co-editor of the film and television studies journal *Screen*.

Liz Stanley is Reader in Sociology and Director of Women's Studies at the University of Manchester. Working class by birth, a lesbian by luck and a northerner in England by choice, her interests focus around epistemology. Recent books include: *The Auto/Biographical I: Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/Biography* (1991); *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology* (1993, with Sue Wise); *Sex Surveyed 1949 to 1994* (1995); and *Knowing Feminisms: On Academic Borders, Territories and Tribes* (1996).

Fiona Williams is Professor of Social Policy in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. She has also been Visiting Professor in Women's Studies at the Queen's University of Belfast. She has written widely on social policy and social divisions, especially in relation to gender, 'race', class and learning disability. She is best known for *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction. Issues of Race, Gender and Class* (1989, revised edition forthcoming). Her current research interests are in comparative social policy and in social policy and the politics of intimacy.

Jan Winn is a lecturer in Sociology at Teeside University. Previously she has taught on the Women's Studies BA and MA courses at Sheffield Hallam University. Her teaching and research interests include feminist theory, male sexual violence, and sexuality. She is currently engaged in research on female violence, including notions of 'serial murder'.

Anne Witz is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Strathclyde and has recently been Marie-Jahoda International Visiting Professor in Feminist Studies at the Ruhr University, Bochum in Germany. She is the author of *Professions and Patriarchy* (1992), co-author (with Susan Halford and Mike Savage) of *Gender, Careers and Organisations* (1997), and co-editor (with Mike Savage) of *Gender and Bureaucracy* (1992). She has also written on gender and contemporary nursing, women's work in nineteenth-century coalmining (with Jane Mark-Lawson), women survivors of child sexual abuse (with Liz Ross), and gender and class analysis. She is currently working on a book, *Gendering the Social*, which explores the impact of feminism on sociology.

Introduction

Women's Studies has become established as an important field of study in many countries across the world. It continues to be a rapidly expanding area both in terms of the number of courses available and in the proliferation of feminist theories from a variety of perspectives. Also, other academic disciplines such as Sociology and Literature have been transformed, to varying extents, as a result of the debates and ideas that have emerged from within Women's Studies.

Despite these developments, when we wrote the first edition of this book, in 1993, there had been few attempts to provide a Women's Studies textbook that offered a comprehensive overview of past, present and future developments in feminist knowledge and theory. Since that time, a number of books which cover diverse aspects of Women's Studies have been published (for example, Kramarae and Spender, 1993; Evans, 1994; Evans, 1996; Stanley, 1996). This includes introductory texts to Women's Studies such as Cosslet, Easton and Summerfield (1996) and Madoc-Jones and Coates (1996); Readers in Women's Studies such as Jackson, (1993), as well as books dealing specifically with current debates about the teaching and learning process in Women's Studies (for example, Griffin, 1994; Griffin, Hester, Rai and Roseneil, 1994; Ang-Lygate, Corrin and Henry, 1996; Maynard and Purvis, 1996). This proliferation of materials is to be welcomed as part of the necessary and continued development of Women's Studies as a field of enquiry and, for many, a form of political practice. However, there is still a clear need for an up-to-date introductory text which covers the major debates in a comprehensive and accessible manner. This is one of the reasons why we felt it was important to provide a revised and enlarged second edition of *Introducing Women's Studies*. Further, when we first edited the book we acknowledged that there were some important gaps and omissions. In our aim to extend the scope and therefore the usefulness of this collection for students and tutors of Women's Studies, we have incorporated new chapters on social policy, feminist critiques of science and technology, and feminist methodologies. Nevertheless, it remains the case that no one book can do justice to the variety and richness of the diversity of feminist ideas available within the broad parameters of Women's Studies. What this book does offer is a comprehensive overview of the key themes and issues in major subject areas within Women's Studies, from an interdisciplinary perspective. It introduces the main feminist ideas and perspectives on such issues as sexuality, the family, work, 'race', history, violence, reproduction, science and technology, feminist theory, motherhood, health, education, language and literature, representation, and debates within

Women's Studies itself to students of Women's Studies, and those studying feminism and gender relations on other courses. Each chapter benefits from the writer's specialist knowledge of their subject, and contains a summary of the research and a critique of the main arguments, highlighting differences between feminists. At the end of each chapter there are suggestions for further reading. These recommended texts are useful overviews or collections, allowing the reader to explore the issues raised in each chapter in more depth.

For those new to Women's Studies there are a number of dictionaries available which are useful in helping to explain and expand upon concepts and terminology used in this book (Kramarae and Treichler, 1985; Humm, 1995). In addition, there is the *Feminist Encyclopedia* in four volumes (Kramarae and Spender, 1997). The use of the term 'race' in quotes is to indicate that 'race' is a socially constructed category rather than a biologically determined one. Also, the word Black with a capital is used in some chapters to indicate that it is a political category rather than purely a descriptive term, referring to the experiences of racism directed at non-white people. The term Women of Colour rather than Black is preferred by some authors.

Finally, we would hope that this second edition of *Introducing Women's Studies* informs and inspires a new generation of feminist scholars who will be committed to theorising and challenging the position of women both locally and globally. Our aim is that this book will stimulate further discussion and analysis, taking Women's Studies into the next century.

DIANE RICHARDSON
VICTORIA ROBINSON