

**SPECIAL FEATURE:  
CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST THOUGHT IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND  
Feminist contributions to New Zealand political science**

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**Abstract**

Feminist political science scholarship has burgeoned internationally since the 1980s, evidenced by the volume and diversity of work published in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals, editions and book series. In New Zealand we have witnessed a plethora of feminist analyses that have focused on some element of the 'political'. However, feminist engagement with 'mainstream' New Zealand politics has been more limited, while traditional New Zealand political science has tended to view 'official' politics within and between states as gender neutral. This article explores this historically tense relationship and what it has meant for the development of New Zealand feminist political science. I identify four strands of feminist scholarship in New Zealand politics that have emerged in recent years. However, I suggest that despite increases in this scholarship, in the number of women hired, and in the work undertaken by the women in New Zealand's political science professional association to address the concerns of women in the discipline, these contributions have remained on the margins of New Zealand political science. Reasons for this marginal status may include the relatively small size of the field, and that there are few senior feminists in the field of New Zealand politics. But it may also be that New Zealand feminist political scientists are more comfortable engaging with the gender politics community internationally. I conclude with a brief discussion of what this might mean for the future of feminist political science and New Zealand politics.

**Keywords**

*feminist political science, politics discipline, gender, women, New Zealand*

**Introduction**

It is not uncommon in scholarship on women and politics in New Zealand to find claims that there has been significant progress in the name of women in the political arena (Vis-Sommer, 2002; Weatherall, 2003). New Zealand women were the first in the world to win the right to vote in 1893 (Grimshaw, 1987; Hutching, 2010) and even earlier, were making their presence felt in local government (Belich, 2001). Indeed, New Zealand was the first country in the British Empire to see a woman mayor elected (Mogford, 2012). Their early engagement with the state, through the establishment of a wide range of women's and community organisations (Else, 1993; Preddy, 2003), provided women and children with a range of benefits and services (Nolan, 2000; Scott, 2001; 2003). This activism continued throughout the twentieth century, in a range of forms: indigenous and imported (Coney, 1990; Daley & Nolan, 1994; Du Plessis & Higgins, 1997; Irwin, 1992; Simmonds, 2011); pragmatic and radical (Cahill & Dann, 1991; Dann, 1985; Devere & Scott, 2001; 2003; Grey, 2008; 2009; Scott, 2003). When a formal party system emerged in the early 1900s, women were sufficiently well-organised to ensure sustained grassroots presence within the major political parties (Baysting et al, 1993; Burness, 1997; Wilson, 1989; 1992).<sup>1</sup> And, despite a first past the post electoral system, and recalcitrant party leaders, women's representation reached 21 per cent in the national parliament by 1993 – a comparatively unusual political feat (Catt, 1997; Curtin, 2012; Gilling & Grey, 2010; Hayward, 2014; McLeay, 1993; 2006; Tremblay, 2005). In the twenty-first century New Zealand women have achieved a number of top roles in politics, the bureaucracy, the law,

and with international organisations (Curtin, 2008a; Curtin & Sawyer 2011; Henderson, 2006; Simms, 2008; Vis-Sommer, 2002).

However, these successes in descriptive representation have not always been followed by symbolic or substantive successes (Grey, 2002; 2006). Research internationally and in New Zealand demonstrates women political leaders have continued to face a hostile media (Devere & Graham Davies, 2006; Fountaine, 2002; McGregor, 1996; McGregor & Comrie, 2002; McMillan, 2009; Ross & Comrie, 2012; Trimble & Treiberg, 2010). Paradoxically perhaps, feminists began to access the bureaucracy from within (Curtin & Sawyer, 1996; Curtin & Teghtsoonian, 2010; O'Regan, 1991; Teghtsoonian, 2004) at the same time that the welfare state, public sector and labour market were being significantly restructured with tangible gender effects (Briar & Cheyne, 1998; Curtin & Devere, 2006; McClelland & St John, 2006; Nolan, 2010). Although recent Labour governments have ushered in a number of female-friendly policy reforms (Abel et al., 2010; Chappell & Curtin, 2013; Curtin, 2008b; Harrington, 2012), and appear to have been rewarded by women voters (Banducci & Karp, 2000; Curtin, 2014a; Else, 2009; Vowles, 1993), feminist scholars (and non-feminists) also critiqued the heavy emphasis given to women's labour market participation over women's caring responsibilities (Dommett, 2009; McClelland & St John, 2006; Stuart, 2003).

This cursory overview of milestones and setbacks reveals that feminist politics in New Zealand has played out in the public sphere for well over a century. And yet, 'mainstream' New Zealand political science has been slow to recognise the contributions of women as political actors and scholars, and even slower to engage with gender as an analytical category of import. This resistance is not unique to New Zealand (Waylen et al., 2013; Johnson, 2014; Lovenduski, 1998; Mackay, 2004; Sawyer, 2004; Vickers, 1997; 2012). Rather, despite, or perhaps because of, the long-standing ambivalence of traditional political science to include women as political actors, feminism as a theoretical lens, and gender as an analytical construct, a more explicit 'feminist political science' literature began to emerge internationally in the 1980s and has grown significantly since then, evidenced by the volume and diversity of work published in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals, editions and book series.

So what does feminist political science involve? Vickers argues that, methodologically, it is critical to take a woman-centred approach, 'starting from where women are' but ensure the analysis is undertaken in context to account for differences between women (race, class, region, nation and ethnicity) as well as similarities (1997, p. 48). Alongside this, she maps out the political sites, or arenas, where women 'are', or can and should be, 'seen' by researchers, in order to write women's experience into political analysis (for a more contemporary reading of the variants, theories and methods underpinning gender politics scholarship past and present see Waylen et al., 2013). Krook and Mackay (2011) also offer a useful summary. They argue that feminist political science is characterised by three features: expanding the definition of politics to include both formal political institutions and the informal spheres of civil society and interpersonal relations (and the interaction between the formal and informal); going beyond seeing sex as a 'variable' to incorporating gender as a relational concept and analytic category; and, informing the pursuit of political change and transforming gender relations both inside and outside the state (see also Driscoll & Krook, 2009).

In New Zealand we have witnessed a plethora of feminist analyses that have focused on some element of the 'political'. However, feminist engagement with 'mainstream' New Zealand political analysis of government, parties and elections has been more limited, compared to international trends, while traditional New Zealand political science has tended to view 'official' politics within and between states as gender neutral. In the remainder of this

article I explore this historically tense relationship at both the international and local levels. I identify four strands of feminist scholarship in New Zealand politics that have emerged in recent years. However, I suggest that despite increases in this scholarship, in the number of women hired, and in the work undertaken by women in the New Zealand Political Studies Association (the discipline's national professional body) to address the concerns of women in the discipline, these contributions have remained on the margins of New Zealand political science. Reasons for this marginal status may include the relatively small size of the field, and that there are few senior feminists in the field of New Zealand politics. But it may also be that New Zealand feminist political scientists are more comfortable engaging with the gender politics community internationally. I conclude with a brief discussion of what this might mean for the future of feminist political science and New Zealand politics.<sup>2</sup>

### The feminist turn in political science

Susan Moller Okin (1946-2004), New Zealand-born feminist political theorist, states that in order to understand women's political inequality, 'it must be recognised that the great tradition of political philosophy consists, generally speaking, of writings by men, for men, and about men' (Okin, 1979, p. 5). In her seminal text *Women in Western political thought*, Okin reveals the extent to which key political canons that speak of individuals either implicitly or explicitly exclude women from their imaginings of a good society, equality, human nature and participatory democracy. She then systematically traces how four 'masters' (Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau and Mill) enunciated principles 'as if they were universally applicable and then proceeded to exclude all women from their scope' (1979: 6). Satz (in Okin, 2013) argues Okin was part of a pioneering generation of feminist scholars who helped to rework political theory by insisting that the condition of women and the family was integral to any conception of justice and to achieving substantive political equality for women (see also Crosthwaite, 1987).

In her challenge to the discipline, titled *Reinventing political science: A feminist approach* (1997), Jill Vickers asks why political science has continued to prove so resistant to feminist interpretations of political ideas and practices. Similarly to Okin, Vickers argues that the modern political science paradigm refused to challenge the key tenets of early thinkers: the public/private split, generic terminology most obvious in the idea of the 'rational, self-interested man' and genderless notions of individual rights (Vickers, 1997, p. 24; see also Jones, 1988; Lovenduski, 1998).

Moreover, in addition to inheriting the intellectual practice of ignoring women, the development of political science in the post-WWII period, particularly in the United States, included a desire to become more scientific in its approach. This scientific turn led to a growing reliance on quantitative techniques and 'objective' observation and measurement of state activities, elections and public opinion. Vickers argues that over time a cognitive community formed around what 'counted' as political science – limiting its theoretical, methodological and empirical scope – and consolidating the absence of women or gender in the study of formal politics (Vickers, 1997, pp. 24-28).

The significant social and political changes wrought by women's movements around the world in the 1960s and 1970s were such that cognate disciplines began to revisit the relevance of gender to their core ideas and approaches from the 1980s onwards. Such trends are less evident in political science, and Vickers suggests two key reasons why the discipline has been an outlier in this regard. The first is that its epistemology is one that views knowledge as primarily about government and politics from the perspective of the powerful; the elites that govern and participate in formal political institutions and the organisations that have influence within these

institutions. Voting behaviour studies examine the attitudes of individuals in societies, but draw on ‘objectively’ designed surveys rather than from engagement with the lived experiences of men and women. The latter, Vickers argues, are seldom categorised as contributing what might count as ‘reliable’ knowledge. This decision to define politics narrowly is self-imposed and continuing, and has excluded women as subjects (see also Pateman, 1988; 1989).

Second, Vickers argues that the absence of women in political elites enabled male scholars to argue that they couldn’t study what couldn’t be seen. This builds on Virginia Sapiro’s (1981) argument that the structural and virtually invisible position of women within the discipline resulted in the reproduction of androcentric biases, and as such, privileged male perspectives on what categories and methods were most valid and worthy of further study. More recently, the number of women working in political science departments has increased significantly, albeit incrementally over time (Curtin, 2013; Matonyte et al., 2012). And it appears that this increase in the number of women, along with the intellectual determination and ground-breaking work of a generation of pioneering women political scientists of the 1980s and early 1990s, has led to the generation and consolidation of feminist political science as a subfield internationally (Waylen et al., 2013; Krook & Mackay, 2011; Lovenduski, 1998; 2005; Vickers, 1997).

For example, in 2009 the European Consortium for Political Research’s Standing Group on Gender and Politics held its inaugural biennial European Conference on Politics and Gender, attracting 300 scholars from around the world; the third such conference in 2013 hosted 500 participants, and the fourth took place in June 2015 in Uppsala. At the International Political Science Association Congress in 2012, the three dedicated research committees working on aspects of feminist politics<sup>3</sup> had the second-highest number of panels after the Public Policy Research Committee. In addition, the journal *Politics and Gender*, launched in 2005 and endorsed by the American Political Science Association, was ranked sixth among the 139 political science journals included in the ISI ranking of journals by impact factor in 2010. This journal sits alongside other highly ranked feminist politics journals including, but not limited to, the *International Feminist Journal of Politics* and the *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, and several publishers run specialist gender politics series (including but not limited to Routledge, Palgrave, and Rowman and Littlefield). In addition, the European Consortium for Political Research annual Joint Sessions have included gender politics workshops almost every year for the past 10 years and in 2014 two separate gender politics workshops were hosted over five days; one on gender and executive power and the other on gender and candidate recruitment (ECPR, 2014).

These trends bode well for feminist politics scholarship, although less clear is the extent to which mainstream political science engages with this research. As Beckwith and Cowell-Myers (2003) note, increasing the numbers of women will not necessarily challenge what remains deep-seated male domination in both politics and political science. A cursory review of the *Oxford handbook of political science* (2009) indicates that Beckwith and Cowell-Myers’ assessment is fair. In his introduction to the state of the discipline Robert Goodin (2009) argues that political science is primarily interested in how power can and should be exercised and constrained, giving particular emphasis to checks and balances, separation of power, political accountability and political competition. Within the discipline, practitioners recognise a set of ‘shared codes, traditions, standards, and practices’ that enable us to channel our collective energies and undertake ‘collaborative attacks on common problems’ (2009, pp. 10-11). It is interesting that in this relatively recent ten-volume handbook, feminism is dealt with primarily in a chapter in the Law and Politics volume. The chapter focuses on Western debates concerning the ‘woman question’ and feminist legal positions (Baer, 2009). There is some discussion of philosophy, jurisprudence and psychology, but the chapter’s source

materials are primarily drawn from North American scholars, while there is little recognition in the remaining volumes of the influence of feminist political science thinkers on the traditional subfields of institutionalism, voting behaviour, political economy, public policy or political theory. The latter sub-field does feature several women ‘leaders’ (Iris Marion Young, Hannah Arendt, Seyla Benhabib) and a few are noted on the leader-boards in other subfields (including but not limited to Pippa Norris, Jane Mansbridge, Kathryn Sikkink, Elinor Ostrom and Theda Skocpol). Nevertheless, the number of women pales to insignificance by comparison with the extensive list of male scholars listed. Moreover, of the nine key texts Goodin lists that we, as political scientists, should become more familiar with, none are authored by women. Making the ‘leader board’ is most often dependent on citations, and elsewhere there are indications that this process is in itself gendered (Curtin, 2013).

If this ten-volume handbook is a fair representation of the state of the discipline, it is unsurprising that feminist political scientists have produced a separate *Oxford handbook of gender and politics* (Waylen et al., 2013). The downside of this outcome is that while feminist political scientists now view gender and politics as a legitimate subfield within the discipline, ‘mainstream’ political science scholarship is yet to see it as such, despite the manifestly evident (and observable) gender inequalities in the exercise and constraint of social and political power. There also remains the risk that compartmentalisation of feminist politics as a subfield may reinforce the marginalisation of such work within the discipline as a whole. Feminist political scientists have recognised this tension, and have increasingly sought ‘mainstream’ outlets for their research (Chappell & Waylen, 2013; Chappell & Curtin, 2013; Mackay et al., 2010; Squires & Wickham-Jones, 2004; Waylen, 2014).<sup>4</sup> However, it remains to be seen if traditional political scientists view this work as relevant to their own: future citation rates will be the measure of impact of such feminist scholarship on the discipline.

### The ‘woman question’ in New Zealand political science

The first department of political science was established at Victoria University College in 1939, with courses offered in the areas of history of political thought, comparative political institutions and modern democracies. As staff numbers grew, courses were expanded to cover the study of parliament, New Zealand politics and international relations. Over the next 30 years, political science departments were established in other universities around the country. From the 1950s, a growing scholarly interest in elections, government formation and voting behaviour both in New Zealand and from a comparative perspective emerges. However, unlike its American counterpart, New Zealand political science did not wholly embrace the ‘scientific’ shift. ‘Political Studies’ or ‘Politics’ became, for the most part, the departmental title of choice while there was limited demand for the production of large ‘n’ studies and the use of game theoretic approaches.<sup>5</sup> Audits of the discipline’s signature journal *Political Science* indicate a wide range of scholarship has been published over time which has led the discipline to be characterised as informed by an eclectic range of epistemological, theoretical and methodological traditions (Curtin, 2013; Nicholl & Cousins, 1998).

It might be reasonable to assume that New Zealand political science would, as result of its lack of rigidity, be relatively open to the study of gender politics in its various guises. However, upon closer inspection this does not appear to be the case. Rae Nicholl and Margaret Cousins (1998) provide a comprehensive review of the discipline and the journal *Political Science* and highlight that in its first 50 years (1948-98) only 21 (3.8 per cent) of the articles published featured women or feminism as the subject, and 12 of these were authored by women. Prior to the 1980s, women’s absence, as authors and as the subject of political inquiry, was particularly

pronounced both in the journal and within other volumes and editions works published in or on New Zealand. For example, Nicholl and Cousins draw attention to the fact that Austin Mitchell makes no mention of women in his survey of New Zealand Parliaments 1935-60, during which time eight women were elected, one of whom became a cabinet minister (Nicholl & Cousins, 1998, p. 43). In addition, the journal seldom appears to have solicited manuscripts from women political science scholars for general publication or special issues in its first 40 years, and few books about women, gender or feminism featured in the book review section. Nicholl and Cousins note some glaring omissions between 1963 and 1985, such as the seminal texts by Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer, but also noticeably absent were Marilyn Waring's contributions (1985; 1988) and Susan Moller Okin's four sole-authored and multi-authored works.

One reason given by Nicholl and Cousins for the slow and erratic inclusion of women as a subject of intellectual inquiry was the lack of female political scientists employed within the discipline (around 6.8 per cent in 1974 increasing to 12.5 per cent by 1996), although we should not assume that all these women engaged in feminist political science research. Jeya Wilson (1983) also suggests that the absence of women from formal politics limited the scope of research that could be undertaken on women's participation. Several male scholars did direct their attention to women in this early period, and included chapters by and about women in edited volumes (Gold, 1985; Levine & Robinson, 1976), while Mulgan (1982) included gender as a 'social factor' in his pluralist analysis of politics in New Zealand. Interestingly, John Halligan's and Paul Harris' (1977) article titled 'Women's participation in New Zealand local body elections', was the 18<sup>th</sup> most highly cited article from *Political Science* while no women feature as authors of the top 10 works cited in the journal (as at August 2014).

As recently as 2004, Marian Sawer wrote that the discipline of political science, more than cognate disciplines such as history or sociology was, at a global level, less inclusive of women and feminist scholarship (Sawer, 2004; see also Brennan & Chappell, 2009; Johnson, 2014; Sawer, 2014). It is unsurprising then that we find topics that might otherwise 'count' as feminist political scholarship being undertaken by scholars in fields or disciplines where gender as a social construct and organising principle in society and the state has been recognised as worthy of interrogation. Thus, we see a range of scholarship dedicated to feminist analyses of the historical and contemporary role of the state in New Zealand and its impact on diverse groups of women (Armstrong, 1992; Jenkins & Morris Matthews, 1998); the nature of the public/private divide in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Cox, 1987); the development of feminist theory and ideas in New Zealand from diverse perspectives, including Māori (Irwin, 1992; Rei, 1998; Simon-Kumar, 2011); indigenous feminism and the challenges offered by post-colonial feminists to 'western' liberal and radical feminist ideas (Johnston, 1998; Simmonds, 2011; Waitere & Johnston, 2009) and feminist policy analysis (Hyman, 2009; 2010). However, most of these feminist scholars were trained and located in sociology, history, Māori studies or women's studies. Periodically a feminist political scientist features in these volumes, and chapters on New Zealand women and politics have become more common in generic politics texts (Devere & Scott, 2001; 2003; Du Plessis & Higgins, 1997; Julian, 1987; Scott, 2003; Wilson, 1997; 2001), but there are few comprehensive editions dedicated to feminist political ideas, actors and practice in New Zealand political science.

Not all have been deterred by the discipline's scholarly ambivalence, instead questioning the lack of intellectual curiosity in seeking to explain the low rates of political participation by women in formal politics. For example, Halligan and Harris (1977) acknowledge (in a footnote) that while Ada Norris had provided a cursory examination in 1968 (and Duverger before that in 1955), there remained a yawning gap in the discipline's understandings of similarities and differences between the sexes in all things political. However, the analysis by Halligan and

Harris is representative of a range of studies that emerged over the next two decades, which would not be labelled feminist, or even gendered in orientation, but which focus on ‘women’ as a group and sex as a political variable. So Halligan and Harris find that sex does not impact on successful election at the local level, but it does impact on recruitment and candidate selection, with women needing to be more willing to offer themselves for election. That the processes of recruitment, internal party practices, or the informal rules and norms surrounding candidate selection might be inherently gendered is not discussed in any depth, but the data and findings lay the foundations for later, more explicitly feminist political analysis (see also Aimer, 1993; Miller, 1993; Unsworth, 1980a; 1980b; and on sex as a political variable in voting behaviour studies see Vowles, 1993).

### **Feminist contributions to New Zealand political science**

It is important at the outset to recognise that compared to other regions, the political science discipline in New Zealand is relatively small. A recent audit indicates around 89 academics are located within eight universities, 32.6 per cent of whom are women (Curtin, 2013).<sup>6</sup> These women have long been aware of their minority status, establishing an informal women’s caucus with the New Zealand Political Studies Association (NZPSA) and a *Women Talking Politics Newsletter* ([www.nzpsa.com](http://www.nzpsa.com)) both of which helped to ameliorate their sense of isolation and to disseminate their own research and publications, and build networks beyond the profession. Several NZPSA women also convened a workshop in 2012, where the opportunities and constraints facing women academics in political science and international relations were discussed (Al Janabi et al., 2014). The report that resulted documented the difficulties faced by female academics, primarily as a result of, or exacerbated by, hostile or chilly departmental cultures, the virtual invisibility of feminism in the curriculum and in mainstream publications, and a struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Nevertheless, the report concluded that there was also much to be positive about, not least because of the support and enthusiasm shared by so many women in the discipline (Al Janabi et al., 2014).

Alongside this, a recent review of *Political Science* since the 1980s indicates there has been an overall, albeit stuttering, increase in the number of women authors published (Curtin, 2013). This is partly a result of four special issues edited by women: the suffrage celebration issue edited by Helena Catt and Elizabeth McLeay (five of the nine articles were authored by women); one on local government edited by Jean Drage in 1999 where five of the seven articles were authored by women; and two by Kate McMillan – one on politics and the media (2005) where six of the ten articles were authored by women, and the 2013 issue (with Hilde Coffe) dedicated to women and politics, where all five articles were written by and about women. These recent developments are promising; the percentage of women authors is now almost 30 percent and so almost comparable to the proportion of women in the profession (32.6 per cent) and similar developments are evident in terms of book reviews. Women have become increasingly visible as reviewers, and there has been a steady upturn in the reviews of books written and edited by women. Although feminist journals or gender-specific special issues may be an example of ‘compartmentalisation’ of the subfield of feminist political science, such volumes remain an important avenue for the promotion of scholarship on women and by women. This is particularly so if such scholarship is seen by traditional political scientists as marginal to the discipline.

So how might we characterise the development of feminist political science in New Zealand since the 1980s? In part perhaps because of the eclectic traditions associated with New Zealand political science, and because of the small number of feminist New Zealand political science

scholars, any attempt to categorise these works will appear arbitrary. Nor can I claim that this review will capture the full and increasingly rich range of literatures authored by New Zealand women in the discipline. Indeed, there are numerous New Zealand feminist researchers who have contributed to various subfields within the discipline of political science outside of New Zealand (as a place or a subject) whose work does not feature here (see for example Lam, 2015). As such, the remainder of this article focuses on feminist research on New Zealand politics with four variants appearing over the past three decades. As will become clear in the necessarily brief summary below, obviously there exist connections and overlaps between the categories. Moreover, the works included may not meet all the criteria of Vickers and others. But I would argue all have sought to write women in, in a way that either explicitly or implicitly seeks to go beyond the ‘sex as a variable’ or the ‘add women and stir’ approaches.

The first (and not in any way primary) variant focuses on feminism and the history of political thought and practice. Feminist theorist Valerie Bryson (1992) reminds us that, contrary to popular opinion, feminist theory did not begin with Mary Wollstonecraft at the end of the eighteenth century. Certainly, for the most part early public debates on matters political were conducted by men, and women’s absence was seldom deemed problematic, although feminist scholars have continued to investigate the ambiguity of women’s political position in early history (Devere, 1999; Okin, 1979).<sup>7</sup> The connections between antiquarian and seventeenth century political thinking on the status of women are taken up in the work of New Zealand scholars (McCrystal, 1993; 1996; Springborg, 1996). For example, McCrystal (1993) argues that Mary Astell invoked a radical, if not revolutionary version of women’s rights discourse, countering Locke’s male-centric view of natural rights. Astell’s arguments reflect what was to become a core liberal feminist belief, reflected in the writings of Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor (with John Stuart Mill) and Catherine Spence. Feminist scholars have documented how these liberal feminist ideas were imported to New Zealand and taken up and adapted by feminist activists in the 1800s and into the 1900s (Coleman, 2008; Daley & Nolan, 1994; Dalley, 2000; Else, 1993; Nolan, 2000). While the activism of early feminist activists translated into the right to vote in 1893, the lack of substantive political citizenship in theory and practice, and the struggle around this inequality continues to be interrogated by contemporary feminist politics scholars in New Zealand (Hayward, 1993; Holmes, 2004; Lam, 2012; Stringer, 2014; Voet, 1998; Waring, 1988; Yeatman, 1994).

The second category of feminist political scholarship is perhaps the most distinctive although it is seldom recognised as such. The ideas and practices that informed the creation and development of our political institutions, formal and informal, were influenced not only by liberal thinkers but also by local Māori understandings of Tino Rangatiratanga (Awatere, 1984). Much has been written in *Broadsheet* and elsewhere of the internal divisions within the women’s liberation movement (Rosier, 1992), although separate Māori women’s organising in the form of the Māori Women’s Welfare League predated Nga Tamatoa (Szaszy, 1990). From the 1970s onwards Māori feminist scholars have built an important body of work that is too rarely read by mainstream feminist political science scholars. This literature articulates how best to understand what has come to be known internationally as ‘intersectionality’ (Irwin, 1992; Jahnke, 1997).<sup>8</sup> For example, the ideas and discourse of Mana Wahine Māori, first written about in the 1970s, are informed by indigenous understandings of what it means to be tangata whenua, Māori and woman, and what strategies follow in the pursuit of self-determination. To date most of this scholarship has appeared in journals outside the political science discipline, reinforcing the narrow purview of the latter, but Māori feminist scholars are continuing to explore the ‘narratives and experiences of ... Māori women’ in Aotearoa-New Zealand (Simmonds, 2011; Smith, 1999).



Studies of New Zealand women's political activism, what Vickers describes the 'unofficial' arena of politics, have been a source of feminist scholarship by sociologists as well as political scientists, particularly since the advent of the women's liberation movement. Scholarship representing this third variant includes ideas about how we might conceive of feminism and the multitude of feminist strategies, including post-feminist projects (Coleman, 2009; Coney, 1990; Devere & Scott, 2001; Jones & Guy, 1992; Kedgley & Varnham, 1993; Lacey, 2010; Stringer 2014), their relative success or failure, and the extent to which we can identify a contemporary women's movement (Grey, 2008, 2009; McCulloch, 2012; Owens, 1993; Schuster, 2013). Despite this range of research being available to political scientists in New Zealand it has rarely featured in key politics textbooks over the past ten years, signalling to students that feminist political activism is marginal to 'mainstream' New Zealand politics and political science (Curtin, 2013).<sup>9</sup>

The fourth category focuses on 'official' politics: that is, on the gendered nature and processes inherent in the political institutions, electoral and party rules and norms, the operations of the machinery of government and in the policies decision makers construct for and about women. This scholarship is varied in its theoretical and methodological approaches, ranging from institutionalist and behaviouralist to post-structural. However, all seek to put women at the centre of their analysis in order to, as Vickers requests, transcend the male-norm that predominates in traditional political science.

Feminist scholars initially began to document the experiences of women who were elected to public office, at both local and national level (Baysting et al., 1993; Burness, 1997; Davies, 1988; Drage, 1993, 1999, 2009; Julian, 1997; McCallum, 1993; Motion, 1999; Waring, 1985; Wilson, 1983). Much of this material is drawn from original interviews, Hansard, or is (auto) biographical and rich in detail. In addition to building new knowledge on women in politics descriptively, much of this literature lays the groundwork for further gendered analyses of the roles of political parties and leaders in the process of candidate selection (Hayward, 2014; Horn et al, 1983; McLeay, 2006; Nicholl, 2001; Wilson, 1992). Critical reviews of women MPs' personal goals, political careers, and their desire and capacity to speak and act as feminists once elected are also increasingly common (Curtin, 2008b; Curtin, 2014b; Curtin, 2014c; Grey, 2002, 2006; McLeay, 1995; Tremblay, 2007).

Alongside this has come a renewed interest in women as voters. Heather Devere's research on the conceptualisation of the left-right spectrum by women in New Zealand challenged traditional methodological approaches to attitudinal research in political science (Devere, 1993; see also Curtin & Devere, 1993), while the adoption of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system and the election of Helen Clark as leader stimulated additional scholarship exploring the power of women's votes (Banducci, 2002; Coffe, 2013; Curtin, 2008a; 2011; 2014a; Else, 2009). Indeed, the introduction of MMP led to a range of feminist research on how electoral system change would impact on the representation of women and the relative success of women across parties in terms of list positioning and selection for seats (Arseneau, 1997; Catt, 1997; Curtin, 2006, 2012; Gilling, 2009; McLeay, 1993, 2006; Tremblay, 2005).

Finally, where official and unofficial politics have come together is around women's engagement with the state. Vickers (1997) argues that while political science resisted the study of women and politics, feminist scholars often resisted official politics. Although feminists in both Australia and New Zealand had a long history of seeking support, protection and enabling policy from the state, so too were they suspicious of the state's intentions. This tension played out most evidently when the Ministry of Women's Affairs was first established and New Zealand's version of the 'femocrat strategy' developed (Curtin & Sawer, 1996; McKinlay, 1990; O'Regan, 1991; Washington, 1988). The Ministry went on to undertake some critical

work on behalf of women, in terms of policy advocacy (at least initially), gendered research and analysis, and in establishing tools and training to achieve what internationally is known as ‘gender mainstreaming’ (Curtin & Teghtsoonian, 2010; Hyman, 2010; Teghtsoonian, 2004; True & Mintrom, 2001). With few exceptions the simultaneous advent and institutionalisation of neo- (or advanced) liberalism by successive New Zealand governments undermined or tempered many of the policy wins women had achieved or once aspired to achieve (Curtin, 2014d; Harrington, 2012; Lerner, 2002).

## Future prospects

Celis et al. (2013) argue that the discipline of political science has been transformed. Along with the increase globally in the number of women studying and researching political science, the opportunities for women to be promoted within the discipline, and publish gender and feminist politics research in subfield-specific and generic politics journals makes it ‘impossible to deny that there have been significant efforts and achievements’ (2013, p. 3). Perhaps the same can be said about feminist political science contributions to New Zealand politics. There has certainly been an increase in the depth and range of research published over the past twenty years, and local feminist scholars are increasingly taking their work on New Zealand to global audiences, engaging with both international feminist and political science scholarship. Moreover, women political scientists continue to mobilise around issues of marginalisation and promotion within the discipline. As Carol Johnson has noted in the Australian context, this constitutes a positive sign (2014, p. 131). However, we cannot assume engagement with the ‘mainstream’ will automatically lead to traditional political science being more open to accepting feminist political science as a legitimate and permanent core sub-field. Evidence of progress needs to be tracked and measured through citations, the teaching of feminist political science scholarship in New Zealand politics courses, the inclusion of feminist scholarship in course required reading lists, a more diverse range of feminist writing in local politics textbooks, and the proliferation of feminist political science postgraduate work. As we are small in number, and likely to remain so in the current economic and higher education environment, it is not a given that the next generation of feminist scholars will find the environment any more supportive. But as is demonstrated here, those who are following have a quality tradition of foundational feminist politics scholarship on which to build.

## Biography

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## Endnotes

- 1 Prior to 1891, political parties were not organised or formalised as they are now; parliamentarians created factions based on personal ties, regional interests, and ideological positions and candidates usually ran as independents. The election of the Liberals in 1891 marked the first step towards a more formalised 'party' in government, with the Reform and Labour parties emerging in the early 20th century (Miller, 2005, pp. 27-33).
- 2 No single essay can encompass all the work that might count as both feminist and political that has been published in Aotearoa/New Zealand or internationally. As such, I have limited this review primarily to feminist contributions to the study of New Zealand politics, published in New Zealand, and this is how I define New Zealand political science.
- 3 These were Research Committee 19 - Gender Politics and Policy; Research Committee 52 - Gender, Globalisation and Democracy; and, Research Committee 7 - Women, Politics and Development Nations (see [www.ipsa.org](http://www.ipsa.org))
- 4 This is not a representative sample by any means. A full audit of feminist political science publications in 'mainstream' journals is another project. This article refers primarily to scholarship published in New Zealand journals and feminist political science scholarship that addresses New Zealand politics, which appears in publications outside New Zealand. It is hoped that readers will find the reference list useful for teaching and research purposes but there are no doubt omissions.
- 5 'n' stands for the number in the sample; large 'n' studies enable the identification of patterns and statistical analysis that is oriented towards determining causation.
- 6 While most of these women would probably self-identify as feminist, at most one-third would consider themselves engaged in feminist politics research. Forty-three women scholars (from graduate students through to senior academics) participated in the 2012 workshop.
- 7 *Women in Western political thought* is based on Okin's doctoral dissertation, an early section of which she published in the *New Zealand Journal of History* (1973). The 2013 second edition of this book has already attracted over 1,000 Google scholar citations – a significant impact from a project Okin pursued despite her adviser arguing that 'women are not a topic' (Satz, in Okin, 2013).
- 8 Feminist intersectional analysis within political science is not limited to the inclusion of Māori. See, for example, the contributions to the *Women's Studies Journal*, Volume 25 Number 2, December 2011.
- 9 The sixth edition of *New Zealand government and politics*, edited by Janine Hayward (May, 2015), includes a chapter on the New Zealand women's movement by Julia Schuster.